Statistical bulletin

Gender pay gap in the UK: 2026

Differences in pay between women and men by age, region, full-time and part-time, and occupation.

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1 . Overview

The gender pay gap for full-time employees has continued to decline in the UK. It was 6.8% in April 2026, down from 7.2% in April 2025. This compares with 9.4% a decade ago and 16.4% 25 years ago.

The gender pay gap measures the difference between median hourly earnings (excluding overtime) of men and women, as a proportion of men's median hourly earnings (excluding overtime). It is a measure across all jobs in the UK, not of the difference in pay between men and women for doing the same job.

All main long-term trends observed in the gender pay gap for full-time employees continued in April 2026. The gender pay gap for full-time employees in April 2026 was:

- positive for all major occupation groups (men in full-time employment earned more than women in full-time employment)
- larger for employees aged 40 years and over than those aged under 40 years
- larger among high-paid employees than among lower-paid employees, with the share of women employees in high-paying occupations decreasing with age

The gender pay gap for full-time employees continued to be larger in all English regions than in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. It was negative in Northern Ireland in April 2026.

Upcoming revisions

All estimates for 2026 are provisional. The final 2026 data will be published in October 2027 as per our annual revision policy.

2 . How to use these statistics

With these statistics, you can:

- learn about gender pay gap differences for different types of employee jobs, such as a specific occupation or working pattern; the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) collects information on employee jobs rather than employees, but because most employees have one job only (97% in April 2026), we use the terms "employee" and "employee job" interchangeably

With these statistics, you cannot:

- determine whether men and women are paid differently for doing the same or similar work with similar skills and experience, because our gender pay gap measure does not assess this; it measures the difference in average hourly earnings between men and women across the workforce
- directly compare to the mandatory employer-reported gender pay gap statistics published through the UK Government's Gender Pay Gap Service, because the two measures are designed for different purposes and use different data sources, populations and methodologies; find more information in Section 9: Definitions
- attribute all the differences in levels and growth rates in pay to changes in earnings only, because ASHE is a sample-based survey and its estimates are also affected by the composition of the employee workforce (both in the UK population and in the ASHE sample), which varies year on year; find more information on the quality of ASHE in Section 11: Quality, methods and data sources

3 . Pay differences between men and women

Figure 1: Full-time median hourly earnings (excluding overtime) were £21.51 for men and £20.05 for women in April 2026

Gross median hourly earnings (excluding overtime) by employment type and sex, UK, April 2026

Notes:

1. Estimates for 2026 are provisional.
2. Employee jobs include those on adult rates with pay unaffected by absence.
3. Full-time is defined as employees working more than 30 paid hours per week, or 25 or more for the teaching professions.

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In April 2026, median hourly earnings (excluding overtime) for full-time employees were £21.51 for men and £20.05 for women; for part-time employees, they were £14.74 for men and £15.05 for women.

4 . The gender pay gap

What we mean by the gender pay gap

The gender pay gap measures the difference in pay between men and women on average, as a percentage of men's pay. Our measure of the gender pay gap is defined using median hourly earnings (excluding overtime): it is the difference between the median hourly earnings (excluding overtime) of men and women, expressed as a proportion of men's median hourly earnings (excluding overtime).

A positive gender pay gap reflects that men are paid more than women, a negative gender pay gap reflects the opposite, and a 0% gender pay gap reflects they are paid the same on average. The larger the gender pay gap in absolute terms, the larger the difference in pay between men and women.

This gender pay gap measure is unconditional; by this, we mean it measures differences in pay on average for men and women employees across the UK, without taking into account their individual characteristics (such as skills, age, occupation or work experience).

The gender pay gap for employees in the UK

Figure 2: The gender pay gap for all employees and full-time employees in the UK continues declining and has fallen by around a third over the last decade

Gender pay gap for median gross hourly earnings (excluding overtime) for all, full-time and part-time employees, UK, April 1997 to April 2026

Notes:

1. Estimates for 2026 are provisional.

2. Employee jobs include those on adult rates with pay unaffected by absence.

3. Full-time is defined as employees working more than 30 paid hours per week, or 25 or more for the teaching professions.

4. The gender pay gap measures the difference between men's and women's hourly earnings (excluding overtime) as a percentage of men's hourly earnings (excluding overtime).

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Median hourly earnings (excluding overtime) for full-time employee jobs in April 2026 were £21.51 for men and £20.05 for women, a difference of £1.46. The gender pay gap has been declining over the years, from 16.4% in April 2001 (25 years ago), to 9.4% in April 2016 (a decade ago) and 6.8% in April 2026.

Among all employees, the gender pay gap decreased to 12.3% in April 2026, down from 13.0% in April 2025. For part-time employees, the gender pay gap was negative 2.1% in April 2026, meaning that women in part-time employee jobs earned more than men in part-time employee jobs. This was a decrease in absolute terms from April 2025, where it was negative 3.0%.

The gender pay gap is higher for all employees than it is for full-time or part-time employees. This is because there are more part-time employees who are women, and part-time employees have lower hourly median pay compared with full-time employees. In April 2026, 83% of employee jobs done by men were full-time jobs, compared with approximately 60% of employee jobs done by women.

Figure 3: The gender pay gap for full-time employees is largest among top earners

Gender pay gap for median gross hourly earnings (excluding overtime), full-time employees at the top and bottom deciles and median, UK, April 1997 to April 2026

Notes:

1. Estimates for 2026 are provisional.

2. Employee jobs include those on adult rates with pay unaffected by absence.

3. Full-time is defined as employees working more than 30 paid hours per week, or 25 or more for the teaching professions.

4. The gender pay gap measures the difference between men's and women's hourly earnings (excluding overtime) as a percentage of men's hourly earnings (excluding overtime).

5. There arediscontinuities in the 2006, 2011 and 2021 ASHE data.

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The gender pay gap for full-time employees is larger for top earners than for low earners, as Figure 3 shows. In April 2026, it was:

- 17.3% for employees in the 90th percentile (those who earn more than 90% of other employees, but less than the remaining 10%)
- 6.8% for employees in the median or 50th percentile (those who earn more than 50% of other employees, but less than the remaining 50%)
- 1.5% for employees in the 10th percentile (those earning more than 10% of other employees but less than the remaining 90%)

The gender pay gap for full-time employees is largest for the highest-paid employees (those in the top decile or 90th percentile), a trend that has been consistent over time since records began in 1997.

It has also experienced the slowest decline over time (3.4 percentage points between 1997 and 2026), compared with the declines observed in the gender pay gap for employees at the median (10.6 percentage points reduction) and bottom-decile (12.1 percentage points reduction).

5 . By age

The gender pay gap is the largest for employees aged 40 years and over, compared to younger employees. This pattern has been observed over time and shows that the gender pay gap increases considerably around the age of 40 years, which is largely explained by the impact of motherhood.

The gender pay gap for full-time employees aged 40 to 49 years was 8.2% in April 2026, much higher than for those aged 30 to 39 years (4.1%).

The gender pay gap for full-time employees in April 2026 was lowest for the 18- to 21-years-old age group, at 0.3%, and highest for the 50 to 59 years-old age group and the 60 years and over age group, at 11.0% and 11.2%, respectively.

Figure 4: The gender pay gap is decreasing for all age groups, but is consistently highest for full-time employees aged 40 years and over

Gender pay gap for full-time median gross hourly earnings (excluding overtime) by age group, UK, April 1997 to April 2026

Notes:

1. The 16-to-17-years age group has been excluded from this chart because this data is more volatile due to small sample sizes.
2. Estimates for 2026are provisional.
3. Employee jobs include those on adult rates with pay unaffected by absence.
4. Full-time is defined as employees working more than 30 paid hours per week, or 25 or more for the teaching professions.
5. The gender pay gap measures the difference between men's and women's hourly earnings (excluding overtime) as a percentage of men's hourly earnings (excluding overtime).

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6 . By occupation

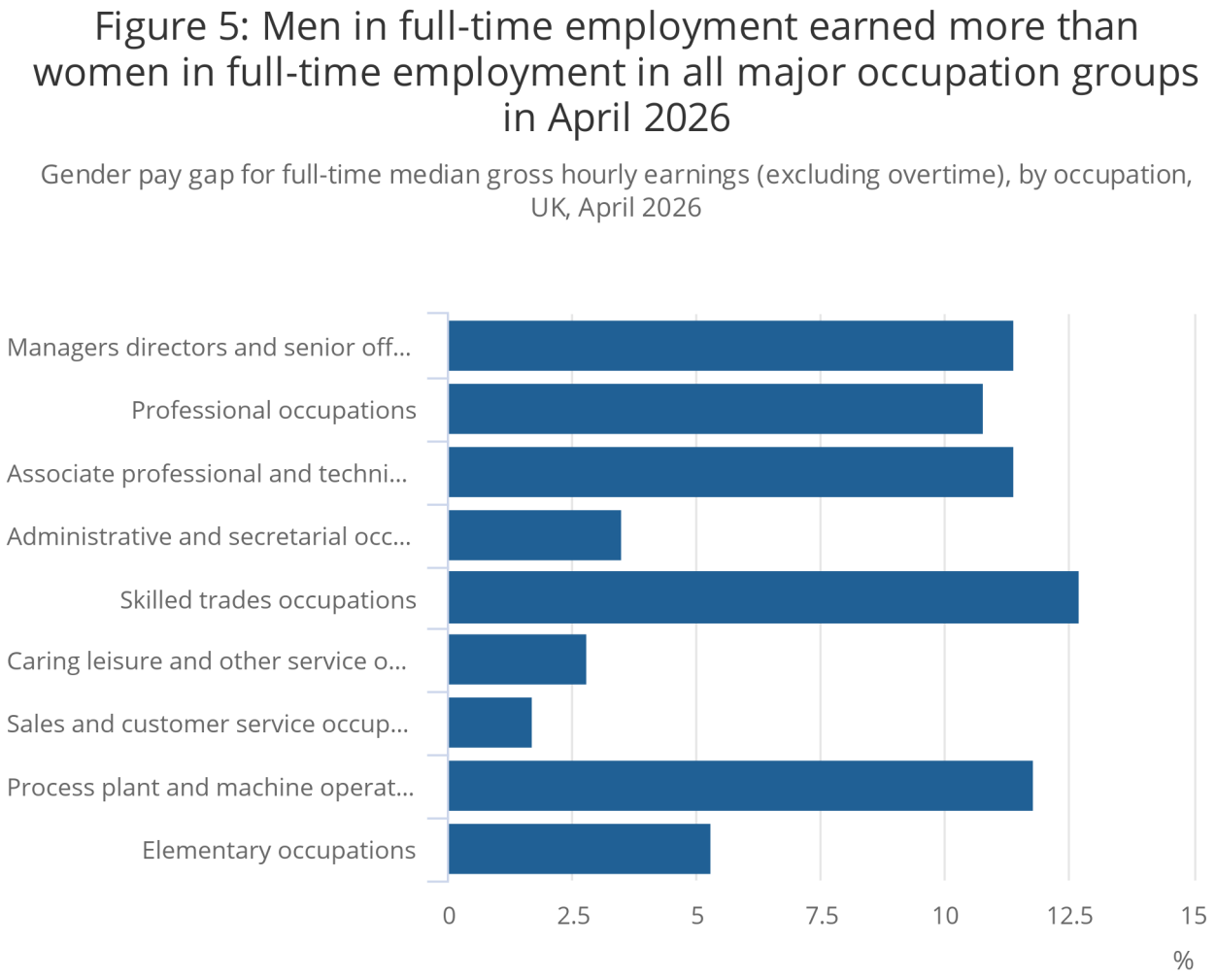
The gender pay gap for full-time employees is positive in all nine major occupation groups, which means that median hourly earnings (excluding overtime) are higher for men than for women in all occupation groups. The gender pay gap for full-time employees is particularly large for the three highest-paid occupation groups.

In April 2026, the gender pay gap was largest for:

- skilled trades occupations (12.7%)
- process plant and machine operatives (11.8%)
- the three highest-paid occupation groups; these were associate professional and technical occupations (11.4%), managers, directors and senior officials (11.4%), and professional occupations (10.8%)

Figure 5: Men in full-time employment earned more than women in full-time employment in all major occupation groups in April 2026

Gender pay gap for full-time median gross hourly earnings (excluding overtime), by occupation, UK, April 2026



Source: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Estimates for 2026 are provisional.
2. Employee jobs include those on adult rates with pay unaffected by absence.
3. Full-time is defined as employees working more than 30 paid hours per week, or 25 or more for the teaching professions.
4. The gender pay gap measures the difference between men's and women's hourly earnings (excluding overtime) as a percentage of men's hourly earnings (excluding overtime).
5. Occupations are defined by the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) 2020.

Our Gender pay gap explorer interactive tool allows you to compare the gender pay gap for any occupation at a detailed level (for example, caretakers, chefs, data analysts, or hairdressers and barbers), and both for full-time, part-time and all employee jobs.

7 . By occupation and age

The gender pay gap is particularly large in the three highest-paid occupations (see Section 6: By occupation) and is largest for employees aged 40 years and over (see Section 5: By age).

Combining occupation and age together shows a clear pattern that is consistent over time: the proportion of women in high-paying occupations also decreases with age. This also impacts the larger size of the gender pay gap in these occupations, as these are the occupations where pay increases most with age and experience. This is shown in Figure 6.

For the three highest-paid occupation groups:

- the proportion of employee women in those occupations is lowest for the older age groups (this is shown in the x-axis, where they are positioned further to the left of the x-axis than younger age groups)
- these occupations are also the ones where pay (median hourly earnings, excluding overtime) increases most with age (this is shown on the y-axis, where the older age groups are positioned higher on the y-axis than younger age groups)

For example, 50.1% of employees in professional occupations aged 22 to 29 years were women, while only 45.2% of employees aged 50 to 59 years were women. Median hourly earnings (excluding overtime) in that group were £21.51 for employees aged 22 to 29 years, and £30.40 for employees aged 50 to 59 years.

In comparison, for employees in occupation groups that have lower pay progression, such as caring, leisure, other service occupations or elementary occupations, the proportion of women does not decrease with age (all age groups in these occupational groups are positioned at a similar height on the y-axis).

Figure 6: The proportion of women decreases with age in occupations where pay increases with age, including for managers, directors, and senior officials

Median gross hourly earnings (excluding overtime) by the percentage of full-time employees in each group who are women, for age and occupation group, UK, 2026

Notes:

1. Estimates for 2026 are provisional.
2. Employee jobs include those on adult rates with pay unaffected by absence.
3. Full-time is defined as employees working more than 30 paid hours per week, or 25 or more for the teaching professions.
4. Occupations are defined by the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) 2020.
5. Some data are unavailable, as they are considered unreliable because of their small sample size.
6. The quality of earnings estimates varies by occupation. Quality measures are available in the accompanying published data tables.

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8 . By region

Among employees, in April 2026, men earned more on average than women in all regions in England, Wales and Scotland, and women earned more in Northern Ireland.

The gender pay gap for full-time employees was smaller in Scotland (0.9%), Wales (3.2%) and Northern Ireland (negative 1.6%) than in every English region in April 2026. In contrast, in April 1997, the gender pay gap was smallest in London.

The largest gender pay gap in April 2026 was in London, followed by the South West and the South East. This is likely to be partly because these regions have a higher proportion of employees earning the highest pay, and the gender pay gap is larger in the highest-paid occupations.

The gender pay gap differences between regions are largely explained by differences in the composition of the employee workforce between regions. Northern Ireland's negative gender pay gap in April 2026 is largely explained by differences in women's participation in the labour market and a higher proportion of employee jobs in the public sector compared to the rest of the UK. More information is available in Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency's Employee earnings in NI 2026 publication.

Figure 7: The gender pay gap is higher in all English regions than in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland

Gender pay gap for median gross hourly earnings (excluding overtime) for full-time employees, by work region, UK, April 1997 and April 2026

Notes:

1. Estimates for 2026 are provisional.
2. Employee jobs include those on adult rates with pay unaffected by absence.
3. Full-time is defined as employees working more than 30 paid hours per week, or 25 or more for the teaching professions.
4. Figures represent the difference between men's and women's hourly earnings (excluding overtime) as a percentage of men's hourly earnings (excluding overtime).

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9 . Definitions

The gender pay gap

The gender pay gap is calculated as the difference between average hourly earnings (excluding overtime) of men and women, as a proportion of average hourly earnings (excluding overtime) of men's earnings. This means that a positive value for the gender pay gap indicates that, on average, men earn more than women. A negative value indicates that, on average, women earn more than men.

The estimates compare earnings between men and women. The Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) collects this information using a binary male or female variable derived from HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) Pay As You Earn (PAYE) administrative records. In producing the estimates, ASHE records are weighted to Labour Force Survey employee population totals by sex. While our measure is based on reported sex categories (men and women), we use the term gender pay gap because it is the internationally recognised and widely used name for this statistic.

These statistics are based on the ASHE and are separate from mandatory employer-reported gender pay gap statistics published through the UK Government's Gender pay gap service. The two measures use different data sources, populations and methodologies and are designed for different purposes. You can find more detail in our Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, Low pay and Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings pension results quality and methodology information (QMI) report.

Our gender pay gap measure uses hourly earnings, instead of weekly or annual earnings, to better account for the fact that men work more hours per week on average than women. The gender pay gap estimates presented here do not include overtime. Overtime can skew the results, because men work more overtime hours on average than women.

Full-time and part-time

Full-time is defined as employees working more than 30 paid hours per week, or 25 or more hours for the teaching professions.

Part-time is defined as employees working less than or equal to 30 paid hours per week, or less than or equal to 25 hours for the teaching professions.

Standard Occupational Classification

The Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) is a common classification of occupational information for the UK. The current SOC for the UK is SOC 2020, and it has been used in ASHE data since the ASHE 2021 revised estimates.

Information on the impact of the change from SOC 2010 to SOC 2020 is available in our Measures of employee earnings based on SOC 2020, UK: 2021 bulletin.

10 . Data on the gender pay gap

Gender pay gap
Dataset | Released 22 October 2026
Annual gender pay gap estimates for UK employees by age, occupation, industry, full-time and part-time, region and other geographies, and public and private sector. Compiled from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE).

11 . Quality, methods and data sources

Quality and methodology

Information on data sources, and the quality and methodology of Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) data is available in our [Employee earnings in the UK: 2026 statistical article]https://www.ons.gov.uk /employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/bulletins/annualsurveyofhoursandearnings /2026#quality-methods-and-data-sources).

Uncertainty

Sampling variability for ASHE estimates is provided in our accompanying datasets.

Accredited official statistics

These accredited official statistics were independently reviewed by the Office for Statistics Regulation in June 2013. They comply with the standards of trustworthiness, quality, and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics and should be labelled "accredited official statistics".

12 . Related links

Understanding the gender pay gap in the UK
Article | Released 17 January 2018
This analysis builds on the raw gender pay gap, using regression techniques to provide more insight into the factors that affect men's and women's pay.

Decoding the gender pay gap: how a Bletchley Park codebreaker helped explain a strange paradox
Blog | Released 16 April 2019
Our National Statistical blog post explores the paradox found in the gender pay gap, and how occupation and type of employment affect the statistics.

Comparison of labour market data sources
Methodology | Last revised 27 April 2022
The strengths and weaknesses of the main data sources we use to produce the labour market figures, including the advantages of new administrative data sources and limitations of some of our published figures.

Income and earnings statistics guide
Methodology | Last revised 2 September 2026
Explains the relationship between income and earnings data and outlines the statistics produced by the Office for National Statistics, Department for Work and Pensions, and HM Revenue and Customs.

Ethnicity pay gaps: 2012 to 2022
Article | Released 29 November 2023
Earnings and employment statistics for different ethnic groups, using regression analysis to provide more insight into factors that affect pay.

Disability pay gaps in the UK: 2014 to 2023
Article | Released 17 October 2024
Earnings statistics for disabled and non-disabled employees in the UK, using regression analysis to provide more insight into factors that affect pay.

13 . Cite this statistical article

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