

Show me the money – an exploration of the gender pay gap in higher education

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Contents

Foreword by Professor Karen O'Brien	4
Executive summary	5
Part 1 – Introduction	8
• <i>Gender and changing trends in higher education</i>	
• <i>What is the gender pay gap?</i>	
• <i>The UK gender pay gap over time</i>	
• <i>What causes the gender pay gap?</i>	
• <i>Why does the gender pay gap matter?</i>	
• <i>Methodology</i>	
Part 2 – Data from higher education gender pay gap reports	16
• <i>Progress across the higher education sector 2017 – 2022</i>	
• <i>The gender pay gap in higher education in 2022 – rankings by institution</i>	
• <i>Median gender pay gap</i>	
• <i>Mean gender pay gap</i>	
• <i>Percentage point change in the median gender pay gap in five years</i>	
• <i>Percentage of median gender pay gap eliminated in five years</i>	
• <i>The number of years until the institution reaches pay parity</i>	
• <i>Heroes or villains</i>	
• <i>Employment structures and the impact on the gender pay gap</i>	
• <i>Bonus culture and the impact on the gender pay gap</i>	
• <i>Intersectionality</i>	
Part 3 – Themes from interviews with institutions and recruitment firms	40
• <i>Overarching themes from institutions</i>	
• <i>Subsidiary organisations</i>	
• <i>Recruitment practices</i>	
• <i>Family-friendly policies</i>	
• <i>Part-time work</i>	
• <i>Maternity and paternity pay</i>	
Part 4 – Conclusions and recommendations	53
• <i>Conclusions</i>	
• <i>Recommendations</i>	
Endnotes	59
www.hepi.ac.uk	3

Foreword

**Professor Karen O'Brien, Vice-Chancellor and Warden,
Durham University**

The challenge of a gender pay gap is undoubtedly a serious one faced by Durham University, the higher education sector and society more broadly.

Mandatory gender pay gap reporting has successfully drawn attention to the importance of reducing pay gaps. Real progress will require long term strategies and action plans to address inequalities and bring about systemic change. This is the approach we have taken at Durham University.

We have made year-on-year improvements in our gender pay gap. This has, in part, been achieved through a comprehensive and targeted action plan, drawn up in partnership with our staff networks and trade unions. I am determined that we should make further inroads.

We proactively encourage and foster recruitment of staff from a wide range of backgrounds and support career progression at every level.

Our initiatives to support staff with their caring responsibilities include our sector-leading, progressive family-friendly policies, as highlighted in this report. We also offer further support for international staff and their families by paying visa costs for all new staff members, regardless of their contract length, and pay the full Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS) for new staff for the first year. We have also committed to contributing toward the cost of the IHS for all existing staff until they are eligible to apply for indefinite leave to remain.

Durham also recognises that barriers to achieving pay diversity are complex and multi-faceted, and not only linked to gender. We have introduced voluntary enhanced reporting to include other protected characteristics such as ethnicity and disability. This is important in ensuring our action plan addresses pay diversity in its wider sense.

We know we have much more to do, and continuing to reduce the gender pay gap is a strategic priority for Durham University. Sharing good practice, expertise, experience and innovative approaches are vitally important. I am therefore delighted that Durham University has been able to contribute to and sponsor this important report.

Executive summary

This report provides an in-depth analysis of the gender pay gap in the UK's higher education sector. Despite significant strides in female representation within both the student body and workforce, women continue to earn, on average, 11.9% less than men across all roles in higher education.

However, there is good news for the sector. The gender pay gap in higher education is smaller than the national gender pay gap, currently reported at 14.4%. Higher education providers have also made more progress to narrow their gender pay gap (a reduction of 4.4 percentage points) since reporting began in 2017 than seen across the UK (where there has been a reduction of 4 percentage points).

Higher education providers have therefore seen a larger proportional reduction in their gender pay gap over this time. Providers have reduced their gender pay gap by 27% in the past five years, compared to a 22% reduction of the gender pay gap across the UK.

However, variation between institutions is extensive – with higher education providers reporting median gender pay gaps in 2022 from 0 to 41%. The report ranks Universities UK (UUK) member universities, who reported their gender pay gap to the Government's portal for both 2017 and 2022 by:

- median gender pay gap;
- mean gender pay gap;
- percentage point difference from 2017 to 2022;
- the percentage of the pay gap that was eliminated between 2017 and 2022; and
- the number of years it will take each institution to reach pay parity.

Pay gaps can be complex and looking at the data across each of these measures, and across the five years, is key to understanding the progress, or lack of progress, at each institution.

This report details interviews with institutions and recruitment firms, identifying best practices and areas of concern. The successful institutions have a deliberate focus on gender parity, backed by robust action plans

and leadership commitment. A colleague at Regent's University London, which has a median gender pay gap of 0%, stated:

This is in our DNA. The leadership team genuinely prides itself in equality and diversity. It is part of who we are as an institution.

Conversely, other institutions show an acceptance of societal norms, impeding progress. The report also delves into the biases inherent in academic metrics like the H-index and the impact of recruitment practices on gender equality.

The report also discusses the structural barriers contributing to the gender pay gap. This includes that:

- Women are over-represented in the lowest pay quartile, and this over-representation is more prominent in institutions with a large pay gap.
- Opportunities for part-time working are severely restricted in the higher education sector. This is a particular issue at higher pay grades. The lack of part-time or flexible roles at higher pay grades was consistently cited as an issue leading to the gender pay gap.

The report emphasises the importance of paternity leave and flexible working for fathers – as well as maternity leave and flexible working for mothers – as a catalyst for gender parity.

Recommendations include:

1. Institutions should prepare for, communicate and implement the new Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023 and consider how more roles can be offered on a part-time or flexible basis.
2. Institutions and research funding councils should review their respective recruitment, promotion and grant-awarding processes to consider if there is an over-reliance on metrics, including the H-index and M-index and previous funding awards.
3. Gender-diverse recruitment panels should be a requirement.
4. Institutions and recruiters should refrain from asking applicants to declare their current salary, or salary expectations. Declaring a salary immediately ties the hands of women who may already be paid less.
5. Institutions should promote the uptake of paternity leave, shared parental leave and part-time or flexible working by fathers.

6. The Government should consider more active forms of paternity leave, including the 'use it or lose it' model seen in Sweden.
7. Russell Group and other research-intensive universities should pay particular attention to their pay outliers, that is, those who get paid the very most, and those who are paid the very least.
8. Institutions should monitor their gender pay gaps by a broader set of protected characteristics than gender. This should include ethnicity, disability, LGBTQ+ and religious-based pay gaps.

Part 1 – Introduction

This section of the report will consider:

- *Gender and changing trends in higher education*
- *What is the gender pay gap?*
- *The UK gender pay gap over time*
- *What causes the gender pay gap?*
- *Why does the gender pay gap matter?*
- *Methodology*

Gender and changing trends in higher education

The University of London was the first UK institution to award degrees to women, in 1869. Nine women completed the 'General Examination for Women' and six were awarded honours.¹ Despite the first steps of these pioneering students, this practice was not widespread. The University of Cambridge did not award degrees to their female students until 1948.² Previous attempts to change the status quo at Cambridge had been met with violent protests by men who believed that their degrees would be worth less if women could receive them.

A hundred years after the first degrees were awarded to women, female students made up 30% of the undergraduate population. The Sex Discrimination Act of 1975, which legislated that universities could no longer 'refuse or deliberately omit to accept an application' from a woman, based on her sex, increased female enrolment rates further, reaching 40% of the undergraduate population by 1980.³

In the 1980s, female students were less likely to be awarded first class honours degrees. Dr Ernest Rudd, a researcher in higher education, argued in 1984 that on examination, the 'only explanation that fit all the facts' was that women were just not as clever as men.⁴

Despite the steadily increasing number of female undergraduates, the pipeline to an academic career remained heavily unequal in the 1980s. While women made up 40% of undergraduate enrolments, they made up only 13.2% of staff in higher education and only 2.3% of UK professors.⁵ The

pipeline from student to professor can take decades but female students undoubtedly lacked a pathway of role models into a higher education career.

Recent figures from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) show that women are now more likely to enter higher education than men. Women make up 57% of undergraduate students. Figures are more equal in postdoctoral research degrees, with 51% of these students being women.⁶ We should continue to be concerned about and address male under participation in higher education, which HEPI has written about previously, including in the HEPI report *Boys to Men: The underachievement of young men in higher education – and how to start tackling it*, by Nick Hillman and Nicholas Robinson.⁷

Female students are now more likely to gain a 'good' honours degree – a first or a 2:1, although the proportions of first-class degrees awarded are relatively equal. Perhaps if Ernest Rudd could repeat his examinations from 1984, he may conclude that women are, in fact, just as clever as (or possibly, by this narrow measure, cleverer than) men.

Despite this, the HEPI report *Mind the (Graduate Gender Pay) Gap* published in 2020 showed that within a year of graduation, male graduates earn 7% more than their female counterparts, and by 10 years after graduation this gap stretches to 24%.⁸

In terms of staffing in higher education, women now make up 49% of the full-time workforce in higher education, and 60% of the part-time workforce. Further, women make up 43% of the academic workforce (including 40% of senior academic contracts) and 63% of the non-academic workforce.⁹ However, only 28% of UK professors are female, and we are yet to see gender parity in terms of vice-chancellor appointments.

Presently, women are proportionately more likely to access higher education as students, than men, and make up a large proportion of the higher education workforce, including in senior academic roles. Yet across all roles in higher education, women are paid, on average, 11.9% less than men. While women now make up 47% of the workforce in the top pay quartile, they also make up 66% of the workforce in the bottom pay quartile.

While significant progress has been made in terms of female student access and participation in higher education, there is still work to be done in the staff sphere. This may represent a natural pipeline lag. However, this report will consider some of the structural and procedural barriers that are holding back progress in staff gender parity.

What steps can the higher education sector take to continue the progress seen over time, and eliminate the gender pay gap? What are the structural inequities in the higher education system that lead to this pay gap? What good practice can be shared to ensure progress continues in a timely manner?

These are some of the questions that this paper sets out to answer – both for the sector, and wider employment practices. It is hoped that it will continue the conversation towards gender pay equity, and equity more broadly, in higher education and beyond.

What is the gender pay gap?

In 2017, the UK introduced legislation on mandatory gender pay gap reporting.¹⁰ Employers in the private and voluntary sectors with 250 or more employees, must report their gender pay gap data every year. Specified public-sector employers (including universities) in England must also report annually.¹¹ These employers report the data to the Government which is published online.

Equal pay and the gender pay gap are two different measures. It has been illegal to pay men and women different amounts to do the *same* job since the Equal Pay Act of 1970. However, analysis of the average hourly wage across *all* jobs in the UK shows that women earn less than men. This is the gender pay gap. It measures the percentage difference between men and women's hourly earnings, across all jobs.

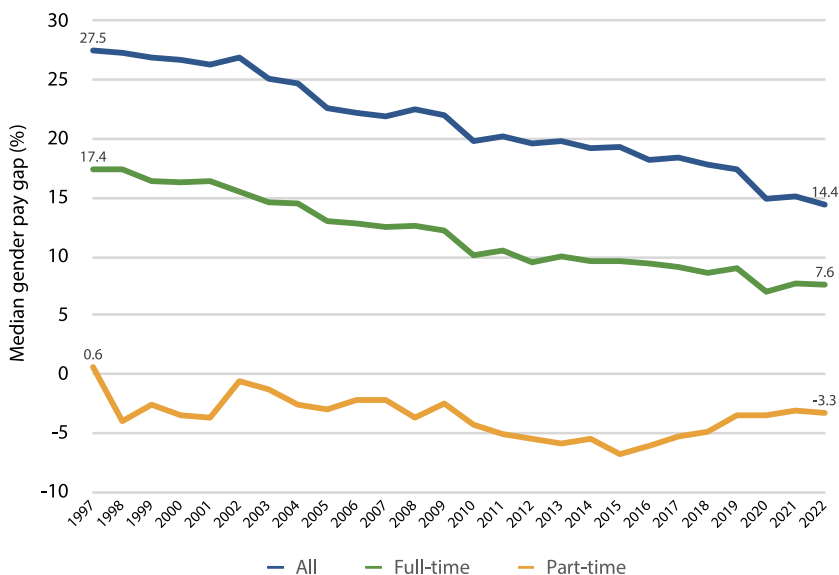
The gender pay gap is a longstanding phenomenon and its causes are complex. According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the median pay for all employees (full and part-time) in the UK was 14.4% less for women than for men in April 2022.¹²

The UK gender pay gap over time

The full-time pay gap has been getting smaller since 1997 and the overall

pay gap has also decreased over this period. The pay gap has fallen by approximately a quarter over the last decade among full-time employees and all employees. The part-time pay gap has generally remained small and negativeⁱ, with women earning more than men on average – see Figure 1.¹³

Figure 1: Gender pay gap for median gross hourly earnings (excluding overtime), UK, 1997 to 2022



Data source: Office for National Statistics, Gender Pay Gap in the UK: 2023

What causes the gender pay gap?

This paper seeks to examine structural issues within higher education that lead to the gender pay gap in the sector. However, there are well recognised structural and societal issues that lead to the gender pay gap

ⁱ This report refers to ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ gender pay gaps. For example, an institution with a pay gap of 10% has a positive pay gap. It pays men – across all jobs – 10% more per hour than women. An institution with a pay gap of -10% has a negative gap. It pays women – across all jobs – 10% more per hour than men. This language is a numerical reference only, and these are recognised phrases used in discussions about the gender pay gap. They are not a commentary on one pay gap being more welcome than another.

across all sectors. This includes:

- The genderisation of subject choices and job roles, or 'occupational segregation'. From an early age, young people absorb societal stereotypes about suitable jobs for men and women – and the latter are the ones that are paid less. Research shows more than half of young women feel their career options are limited by their gender.¹⁴
- Women (particularly mothers) are more likely to work in part-time roles. 38% of women work part-time, compared to 14% of men¹⁵. Part-time jobs tend to be in lower-paid roles, and the lack of flexibility in more senior roles prevents employees from accessing higher wages. Almost 60% of mothers felt their careers had not progressed since becoming a parent and 80% felt stuck because they were unsure they would be able to work as flexibly elsewhere.¹⁶
- There is some evidence to suggest that men behave differently to women during the job application process – and that recruiters behave differently towards male and female applicants. For example, male job applicants are more likely to negotiate a higher salary at interview than female applicants. However, female applicants, if they do try to negotiate a higher salary, are more likely to be 'socially penalised' for this than men.¹⁷

Why does the gender pay gap matter?

As an average, across all workers in all jobs, women are paid less than men. This is problematic in itself. In addition, what the gender pay gap demonstrates is that women are more likely to work in lower-paid sectors (including social care and childcare) and are more likely to be in lower-paid roles. This is a problem in terms of equity of pay, but also in terms of equity of job choice, job satisfaction and wellbeing. Further, inequity in pay leads to inequity in the ability to build a healthy pension.

The gender pay gap leads to a perpetual cycle of lower pay for women, and an entrenching of gender-based roles in society. For example, in a family with a mother and a father, if the mother is already in a lower-paid role than the father, they are more likely to work part-time to undertake family caring roles for economic reasons as well as societal ones – restricting their choice of job and ability to earn a higher salary. This in

turn leads to inequity for men, where fathers are less able to choose to take part-time work to spend time with their children or fulfil other family caring roles.

There is also a significant economic impact on increasing pay equity. Estimates suggest that £23 billion could be added to the UK's gross domestic product (GDP) annually, if the gender pay gap is closed.¹⁸

Methodology

There are differing views on whether the mean or median pay gap measure is the most useful. The median pay gap is the mid-point of the hourly pay of all employees. The mean pay gap is calculated by adding all the employees' rates of pay together, and dividing by the total number of employees. The mean pay gap can be disproportionately influenced by a relatively small number of high-paying jobs. From a purely statistical standpoint, the median is considered a more useful measure as it is not skewed by very high or very low hourly pay. However, as the very highly paid tend to be men, the mean is an important statistic as it reflects the structural issues that can affect the mean gender pay gap. As the mean gender pay gap includes the most extreme pay rates, the mean gender pay gap tends to be slightly larger than the median pay gap and can be more difficult to address. We see this reflected in both the national and sector statistics.

As it is considered the more useful measure, and the median pay gap data outside of the sector is more easily available for comparisons, this report will mainly focus on the median pay gap. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) figures are used for comparison to the UK-wide median gender pay gap. However, this report will provide commentary on the mean pay gap where this provides additional useful data for the sector.

This report ranks higher education providers by a number of metrics relating to the gender pay gap. Rankings can be a blunt tool, and the rankings in the report should be considered alongside each other, as they view progress through a number of different lenses. Rankings can also increase engagement in the topic, allow institutions to compare themselves against the rest of the sector, provide information for potential employees and, as no institution wishes to find themselves in last place, can themselves be a tool for progression.

This report ranks higher education providers by the following metrics:

1. their median gender pay gap in 2022;
2. their mean gender pay gap in 2022;
3. their percentage point decrease in the median gender pay gap between 2017 and 2022;
4. the percentage of the 2017 median gender pay gap that has been eliminated over five years; and
5. the corresponding years left to achieving pay parity if progress continues at the same rate.

For metrics 1 and 2, this data was taken from a list of UUK member institutions that reported in 2022/23. For metrics 3 to 5, these rankings were produced using a list of UUK member institutions that reported on the Government's gender pay gap website in both 2017/18 and 2022/23. The reporting requirements in the devolved nations are different to those in England. While several higher education providers from devolved administrations now choose to report in this way, very few did so as early as 2017/18. Therefore, the following institutions were included in the current (2022/23) ranking, but not the earlier comparison data:

- Aberystwyth University;
- Bangor University;
- Cardiff Metropolitan University;
- Swansea University;
- University of South Wales;
- University of the Highlands and Islands; and
- Wrexham University

In addition, Regent's University London has only been required to report to the Government's gender pay gap portal since 2020 – hence the inclusion of Regent's in the first two rankings, but not the following comparison rankings.

This explains the difference between two figures in the report. The average median gender pay gap figure for 2022/23 for institutions who reported each year from 2017/18 is 11.9%. This was calculated from the 114 UUK member institutions which reported each year from 2017/18 to 2022/23, and is used for comparison to the national average. The average median gender pay gap figure for 2022/23 is 11.5%. This was calculated from the 122 UUK member institutions who reported in 2022/23.

Reports submitted to the Government's pay gap portal do not differentiate by academic and professional services staff. Understanding the gender pay gap data by these cohorts of staff at both an institution and sector level would likely be helpful. This would be a good topic for a future piece of work, but it is outside the scope of this report.

In addition to the data collected from the Government's gender pay gap portal, Freedom of Information requests were sent to 30 higher education providers and in-depth interviews were conducted with eight providers. These were a mixture of institutions which had succeeded in reducing their gender pay gap, and those that had faced challenges in doing so. This aimed to understand the work of institutions in tackling the gender pay gap, and any themes leading to success. Informal interviews were also held with recruitment firms, researchers and research organisations. HEPI particularly welcomes any feedback that would enable us to build up a more complete picture.

The author notes the contribution of non-binary colleagues to the higher education sector. The pay rates and pay gaps of non-binary colleagues are not required to be included in the reports to the Government portal, and therefore there is no accessible data on the sector-wide pay gap for non-binary colleagues. More data is needed to understand the non-binary pay gap more widely and in the higher education sector in particular.

Part 2 – Data from higher education gender pay gap reports

This section of the report will consider:

- *Progress across the higher education sector 2017 to 2022*
- *The gender pay gap in higher education in 2022 – rankings by institution*
 - *Median gender pay gap*
 - *Mean gender pay gap*
 - *Percentage point change in the median gender pay gap in five years*
 - *Percentage of median gender pay gap eliminated in five years*
 - *The number of years until the institution reaches pay parity*
- *Heroes or villains?*
- *Employment structures and the impact on the gender pay gap*
- *Bonus culture and the impact on the gender pay gap*
- *Intersectionality*

Progress across the higher education sector, 2017 to 2022

Since 2017, higher education providers in England, with more than 250 staff, have been required to report their gender pay gap to the Government. As outlined above, there are different specific duties in Scotland and specific duties in Wales.¹⁹ However, some institutions in the devolved nations of the UK choose to report to the Government portal, and this is increasingly the case.

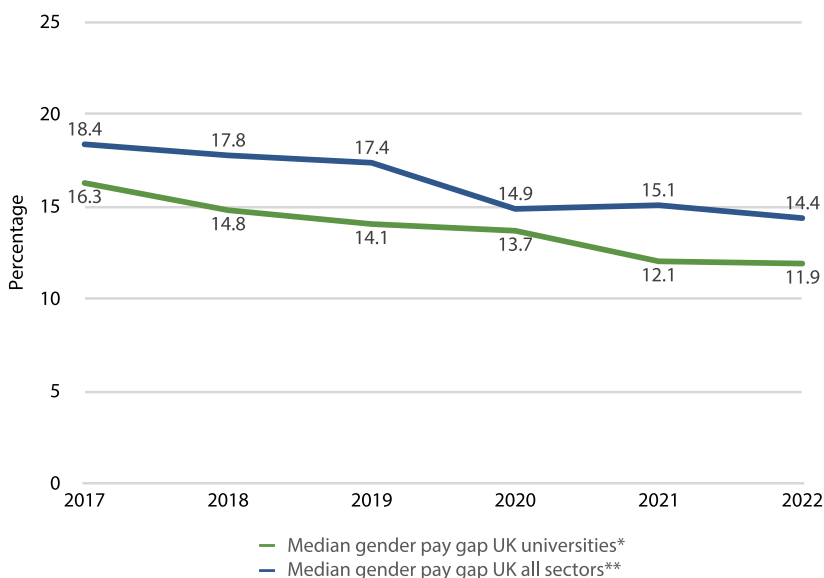
Note that figures for 2020 especially, but also 2021, should be treated with some caution. Some people were on furlough with reduced pay and figures for 2020 were particularly affected by disruptions to the collection of data from businesses.²⁰

The median gender pay gap in the UK higher education sector is smaller than the UK-wide median gender pay gap. Analysis for this report shows that the median gender pay gap in the higher education sector was 11.9% in 2022, compared to 14.4% across the UK as a whole. Higher education providers have made slightly more progress to narrow their gender pay

gap (a reduction of 4.4 percentage points) since reporting began in 2017 than seen across the UK (a reduction of 4 percentage points).

Higher education providers have therefore seen a larger proportional reduction in their gender pay gap over this time. Higher education providers have reduced their gender pay gap by 27% in this time, compared to a 22% reduction of the gender pay gap across the UK.

Figure 2: Gender pay gap for median gross hourly earnings - higher education sector compared to all UK sectors



* Figures calculated using UUK membership institutions whose data was published on the Government portal from 2017 to 2022.

** Figures acquired from the ONS Gender Pay Gap in the UK report for 2023.²¹ The ONS statistics are calculated from the Annual Survey for Hours and Earnings (ASHE), not the Government gender pay gap portal. Therefore, comparisons should be treated with an appropriate amount of caution.

Presuming (and these are large and somewhat crude presumptions) that the gender pay gap will continue to narrow at the same rate, the higher education sector will take 14 years to eliminate its gender pay

gap, compared to 18 years for all UK employment sectors. This is a crude assumption because, over the past five years, we do see – other than in 2021 – a slowing of the rate of progress year-by-year. Given that we only have five years of data, and the jump in progress recorded in 2021, we do not have sufficient data to know whether the rate of progress is slowing, or whether this picture will be more mixed. It is also possible that the final steps needed to eradicate the gender pay gap may be the most difficult. Monitoring progress over the next five years will help to give a clearer picture.

Tribute should be paid to the higher education sector, and colleagues working in this field, to achieve the narrowing of the pay gap over the past five years. However, there is still some distance to travel before parity is reached.

The picture is more mixed when we look at specific institutions. Some providers have made exceptional progress narrowing, or even eliminating, their gender pay gap, and some have struggled to make progress. This report will look at UK higher education providers in terms of their current gender pay gap, and the improvements they have made over time.

The gender pay gap in higher education in 2022 – rankings by institution

The following tables show the top 15 and bottom 15 institutions in each ranking. Full tables are available on the HEPI website [here](#).

Median gender pay gap

Table 1 ranks higher education providers by their median pay gap in 2022.

Table 1

Rank	Employer	Difference in hourly pay rate – median (%)
=1	Regent’s University London	0.0
=1	Royal College of Music	0.0
=1	Solent University	0.0
=1	Staffordshire University	0.0
=1	Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance	0.0

6	University of Bolton	1.0
7	The Open University	1.6
8	University of the Arts, London	2.4
=9	Anglia Ruskin University	2.9
=9	Wrexham University	2.9
11	Canterbury Christ Church University	3.0
12	Prifysgol Aberystwyth Aberystwyth University	3.9
13	Royal Central School of Speech and Drama	4.1
=14	Manchester Metropolitan University	4.5
=14	Oxford Brookes University	4.5
<p>The average median gender pay gap in 2022 was 11.5%. The full tables can be viewed here.</p>		
=111	University of Essex	18.6
=111	University of Exeter	18.6
=111	University of Leicester	18.6
=111	University of Warwick	18.6
=111	University of York	18.6
112	University of Reading	18.7
113	Lancaster University	19.0
114	University of East Anglia	19.6
115	Liverpool Hope University	21.0
116	Keele University	21.3
117	University of Southampton	21.5
118	Durham University	23.5
119	Loughborough University	25.4
120	Liverpool John Moores University	28.1
121	Royal Veterinary College	28.8
122	The University of Buckingham	41.0

Five providers have eliminated their median gender pay gap completely: Regent’s University London; The Royal College of Music; Solent University; Staffordshire University; and the Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance.

Sixteen institutions have a median gender pay gap of less than 5%. It is interesting to note the differing sizes and types of institutions in this bracket. From small specialist institutions – such as the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, to the largest provider – The Open University. However, when institutions are weighted by size (using the mid-point of the ‘employee’ size data submitted to the gender pay gap portal) the median gender pay gap is 12.1%. This may suggest that larger institutions have slightly higher gender pay gaps.

There is a geographical spread across these institutions too, including providers inside and outside of London.

We also see eight providers with a large pay gap of over 20%. The University of Buckingham is a significant outlier, with a median gender pay gap of 41%.

Research-intensive institutions, including Russell Group universities, are spread relatively evenly throughout the table.

The University of Worcester makes for an interesting case study. In 2021, the University returned a median gender pay gap of 0%. Therefore, if this report had been written 12 months earlier, it would have ranked ‘joint-first’ across several measures. In 2022 it returned a median gender pay gap of 11.1% – slightly less than the sector average. David Green, Vice Chancellor of the University of Worcester, explained:

60% of Worcester staff are female, over 70% of its students are female. Worcester has an unusually large earn-as-you-learn scheme for students, which roared back to life post pandemic, accounting for over a quarter of all employees. As participation in the earn-as-you-learn scheme was proportionate to the 70:30 female:male student mix, there was a marked effect on all the gender pay gap statistics. The Worcester median gender pay gap with student employees is the 11.1% reported. Without student employees the gap is 0%.

The University of Worcester highlight this impact in the gender pay gap report on their website – an example of good practice in terms of understanding (and the transparent publishing of) gender pay gap data. Other institutions have noted the impact of the ‘snapshot date’, set by the

Government for collecting gender pay gap data, and the outcome the number of student employees has on the resulting gender pay gap. As providers seek to increase opportunities to provide work on campus to support students through the cost-of-living crisis, institutions should look carefully at their employment statistics, to ensure parity of opportunity (where possible) and understand and publish the impact of student employees on their gender pay gap data. This case study also points to the need to understand gender pay gap progress over time.

Mean gender pay gap

Table 2 ranks higher education providers by their mean gender pay gap in 2022. As a reminder, the mean gender pay gap is more heavily influenced by outliers, particularly the highest paid roles.

Table 2

Rank	Employer	Difference in hourly rate – mean (%)
1	University of the Arts, London	0.0
2	University of London	1.2
3	Royal Central School of Speech and Drama	-1.6
4	Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance	2.3
5	University of East London	3.0
6	Wrexham University	3.3
7	Solent University	3.5
8	The Open University	4.1
9	Regent’s University London	4.5
10	Goldsmith’s University of London	4.6
11	Royal College of Music	4.8
12	Manchester Metropolitan University	5.2
13	Norwich University of the Arts	5.3
14	Canterbury Christ Church University	5.4
15	SOAS, University of London	5.7

The average mean gender pay gap in 2022 was 13%. The full tables can be viewed here .		
108	University of Reading	19.4
109	University of Oxford	19.6
110	University of Nottingham	20.1
111	University of Warwick	20.3
112	Keele University	20.8
=114	Cranfield University	21.0
=114	University of Liverpool	21.0
=116	Durham University	21.1
=116	University of Leicester	21.1
=118	Lancaster University	22.0
=118	Loughborough University	22.0
119	London School of Economics and Political Science	24.7
120	Royal Veterinary College	30.1
121	London Business School	30.4
122	The University of Buckingham	31.0

As seen in wider UK gender pay gap data, it is more challenging to close the mean gender pay gap than the median. This is demonstrated by the average mean gender pay gap across the sector landing at 13%; 1.1% higher than the average median. Despite this challenge, the University of the Arts, London, has returned a mean gender pay gap of zero in 2022. The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama has a mean gender pay gap of -1.6%.

Eleven providers have a mean gender pay gap of under 5%. Again, there is a spread of size, type and location of institutions in this group.

Thirteen institutions have recorded a mean gender pay gap of over 20%. Three institutions have recorded a mean gender pay gap of over 30%: the Royal Veterinary College; the London Business School; and the University of Buckingham.

Research intensive universities appear to struggle more with their mean gender pay gap. Except for University College London (UCL), all Russell Group universities have recorded a higher-than-average mean gender pay gap. This may suggest that these institutions have some very highly paid employees, creating a barrier to pay parity. This report will discuss some potential reasons for this.

Percentage point change in the median gender pay gap in five years

Table 3 ranks higher education providers by the number of percentage points they have narrowed their median gender pay gap by, between 2017 and 2022

Table 3

Rank	Employer	Difference in hourly rate - median 2017/18 (%)	Difference in hourly rate – median 2022/23 (%)	Percentage point change in the median gender pay gap
1	York St John University	37.4	16.3	21.1
2	Royal Holloway, University of London	33.8	15.4	18.4
=3	London Business School	23.3	5.5	17.8
=3	Teesside University	34.0	16.2	17.8
5	Falmouth University	27.5	11.1	16.4
6	Canterbury Christ Church University	19.3	3.0	16.3
7	University of Hull	27.8	12.4	15.4
8	University of Wolverhampton	26.8	11.6	15.2
9	Staffordshire University	15.0	0.0	15.0
10	University of Sunderland	20.9	6.0	14.9

11	De Montfort University	23.0	8.5	14.5
12	Solent University	13.7	0.0	13.7
13	Nottingham Trent University	24.5	11.1	13.4
14	The Open University	14.9	1.6	13.3
15	University of Hertfordshire	19.0	6.0	13.0
Institutions reduced their median by gap by an average of 4.4 percentage points. The full tables can be viewed here .				
=101	University of Kent	9.8	12.4	-2.6
=101	Kingston University	5.4	8.0	-2.6
102	University of Cumbria	8.0	11.1	-3.1
103	University of East London	5.1	9.0	-3.9
104	The University of Buckingham	37.0	41.0	-4.0
105	University of Southampton	17.4	21.5	-4.1
106	London South Bank University	5.4	10.2	-4.8
107	Liverpool Hope University	16.0	21.0	-5.0
108	Liverpool John Moores University	22.6	28.1	-5.5
109	The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama	-1.9	4.1	-6.0
110	Leeds Trinity University	11.5	17.9	-6.4
111	Royal College of Art	0.0	8.0	-8.0

112	The University of West London	2.7	11.8	-9.1
113	University for the Creative Arts	8.4	17.7	-9.3
114	Plymouth Marjon University	0.0	18.4	-18.4

Some rounding has been applied.

York St John University has decreased its median gender pay gap by 21.1 percentage points over the last five years, and Royal Holloway, University of London has reduced its by 18.4 percentage points.ⁱⁱ Without taking away from this significant work, it is worth noting that both institutions started with very large gender pay gaps and still have higher than average median pay gaps. Continuing on this significant trajectory should see these institutions continue to narrow their pay gaps dramatically.

London Business School narrowed its gender pay gap by 17.8 percentage points to 5.5%, and Staffordshire University knocked 15 percentage points off its gender pay gap – returning a median gender pay gap of 0% in 2022/23.

We also see movement in the other direction. The University of West London and the University for the Creative Arts increased their median pay gaps by over 9 percentage points, and Plymouth Marjon, who started with a pay gap of 0%, increased this to 18.4%.

For simplicity, this report does not provide a ranking by the mean gender pay gap beyond that seen in Table 2. However, it is worth noting that institutions reduced their mean pay gap by an average of 2.7 percentage points. Again, the London Business School has undertaken some stellar work, knocking almost 15 percentage points off its mean gender pay gap. Given its starting point, however, it still has a very large mean gender pay gap of over 30%.

The University of Buckingham has seen its mean pay gap increase by 10 percentage points to 31%.

ii Royal Holloway, University of London reports the Government's gender pay gap portal as Royal Holloway and Bedford New College.

Percentage of median gender pay gap eliminated in five years

Table 4 ranks higher education providers by the percentage of their median gender pay gap they have eliminated, between 2017 and 2022. This helps to contextualise the percentage point decrease seen in Table 3, against the gender pay gap recorded in 2017.

Table 4

Rank	Employer	Difference in hourly pay rate - median 2017/18 (%)	Difference in hourly pay rate – median 2022/23 (%)	Percentage point change in the median gender pay gap	Percentage of the institutions’ 2017 median gender pay gap that has been eliminated
=1	Royal College of Music	0.0	0.0	0.0	100
=1	Solent University	13.7	0.0	13.7	100
=1	Staffordshire University	15	0.0	15	100
=1	Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance	5.1	0.0	5.1	100
5	University of Bolton	10.8	1.0	9.8	91
6	The Open University	14.9	1.6	13.3	89
7	Canterbury Christ Church University	19.3	3.0	16.3	84
8	London Business School	23.3	5.5	17.8	76
9	Anglia Ruskin University	11.9	2.9	9.0	76
10	University of Sunderland	20.9	6.0	14.9	71
11	University of Hertfordshire	19.0	6.0	13.0	68
12	Oxford Brookes University	13.7	4.5	9.2	67
13	University of the Arts, London	7.1	2.4	4.7	66
14	De Montfort University	23.0	8.5	14.5	63

15	London School of Economics and Political Science	14.9	5.6	9.3	62
As an average, institutions eliminated 27% of their median gender pay gap. The full tables can be viewed here .					
100	University of Kent	9.8	12.4	-2.6	-27
101	London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine	9.4	11.9	-2.5	-27
102	Liverpool Hope University	16.0	21.0	-5.0	-31
103	University of Cumbria	8.0	11.1	-3.1	-39
104	University of Roehampton	5.2	7.7	-2.5	-48
105	Kingston University	5.4	8	-2.6	-48
106	University of Westminster	5.1	7.6	-2.5	-49
107	Leeds Trinity University	11.5	17.9	-6.4	-56
108	University of East London	5.1	9.0	-3.9	-76
109	London South Bank University	5.4	10.2	-4.8	-89
110	University for the Creative Arts	8.4	17.7	-9.3	-111
111	The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama	-1.9	4.1	-6.0	-316
112	The University of West London	2.7	11.8	-9.1	-337
	Royal College of Art*	0.0	8.0	-8.0	
	Plymouth Marjon University*	0.0	18.4	-18.3	

Some rounding has been applied.

*Given that these institutions had a median pay gap of 0% in 2017, and now a wider pay gap, the calculation used to determine the percentage of the pay gap eliminated to date was not suitable for these institutions. As such, these institutions have been included for completion, but not ranked.

The Royal College of Music has done an impressive job of maintaining a 0% gender pay gap over the last five years. Solent University and Staffordshire University have both eliminated their median gender pay gaps, from relatively significant starting points.

As an average, institutions eliminated 27% of their median gender pay gap.

There are also several institutions whose median gender pay gap has widened over time. While we would expect to see year-on-year fluctuations in the data, seeing this increase over a period of five years is disappointing. There are some institutions where this has been significant. This includes Plymouth Marjon University, which recorded a 0% pay gap in 2017, and now has a significant pay gap of 18.4%.

Table 4 demonstrates why this set of rankings should be considered as a collective. The pay gap at The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama has increased, placing them almost at bottom of this ranking, but their median gender pay gap remains much smaller than the average, at just 4.1%.

For comparison, institutions eliminated 14.6% of their mean gender pay gap.

The number of years until the institution reaches pay parity

Table 5 ranks higher education providers by the number of years until they close their median gender pay gap – if they continue narrowing their gender pay gap with the same rate of progress.

Table 5

Employer	Number of years until the median pay gap is eliminated in this institution
Royal College of Music	0.0
Solent University	0.0
Staffordshire University	0.0
Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance	0.0
University of Bolton	0.5
The Open University	0.6
Canterbury Christ Church University	0.9

Employer	Number of years until the median pay gap is eliminated in this institution
London Business School	1.5
Anglia Ruskin University	1.6
University of Sunderland	2.0
University of Hertfordshire	2.3
Oxford Brookes University	2.4
University of the Arts, London	2.6
De Montfort University	2.9
London School of Economics and Political Science	3.0
As an average, institutions will take 14 years to eliminate their median gender pay gap*. The full tables can be viewed here .	
Birkbeck, University of London	As the gender pay gap at these institutions has increased between 2017 and 2022, these institutions will not reach pay parity at their current rate of change.
University of Central Lancashire	
University of Essex	
University of Surrey	
University of Worcester	
University of York	
Middlesex University	
Bishop Grosseteste University	
University of Exeter	
The University of Buckingham	
University of Suffolk	
The University of Lincoln	
University of Southampton	
Liverpool John Moores University	

University of Kent	
London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine	
Liverpool Hope University	
University of Cumbria	
University of Roehampton	
Kingston University	
University of Westminster	
Leeds Trinity University	
University of East London	
London South Bank University	
University for the Creative Arts	
The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama	
The University of West London	
Plymouth Marjon University	

*This figure was calculated from the sector average progress (note – not weighted by employer size) in eliminating the median gender pay gap over the past five years. This was extrapolated until the sector average median pay gap reached 0%.

Four institutions have already eliminated their median gender pay gap and at the current rate of progression, 26 institutions will close their median gender pay gap within five years. However, the progress of other institutions is much slower. At the current rate of progress, the University of Leeds and Loughborough University will take more than 50 years to close their gender pay gaps and the University of Oxford will take 680 years to close its gender pay gap. Institutions that have failed to see a narrowing of their data reported in 2017 and 2022 are noted as not being able to pay parity at their current levels of progress.

Heroes or villains?

Clearly, expecting all institutions to have a gender pay gap of zero each year is unrealistic. Bouncing between small positive and small negative gender pay gaps should be normal and accepted. If work to narrow the gender pay gap is successful, we will eventually see a number of institutions with a small gender pay gap in favour of male colleagues, and a similar number of institutions with a small gender pay gap in favour of female colleagues. There will be fluctuations between these each year.

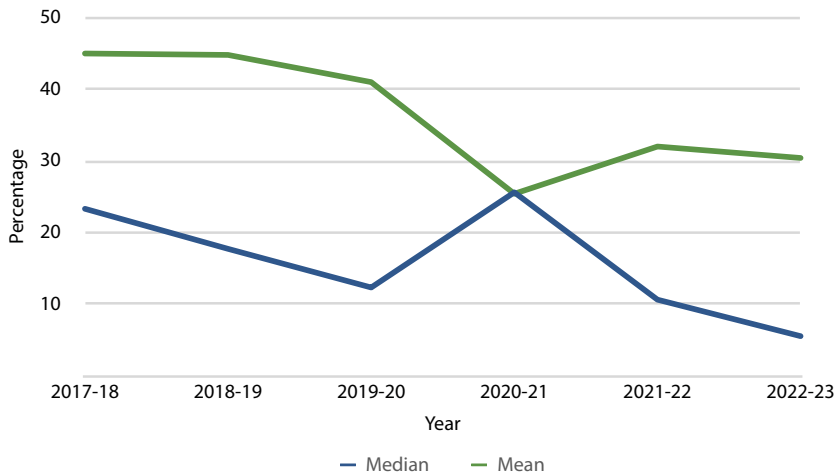
We are still far from this, with just one institution returning a negative mean gender pay gap in 2022/23. This was The Royal Central School for Speech and Drama, with a mean pay gap of -1.6%. This means that when averaged across all roles at this institution, women are paid 1.6% more than men. No institutions returned a negative median pay gap. The balance we would expect in a sector without a pay gap is not yet present.

While it is tempting to want to divide institutions into gender pay gap heroes and villains, the preceding tables demonstrate that the gender pay gap picture is complex. For example, the University of Westminster has seen their median gender pay gap increase by 2.5% over the last five years, and if this rate continued, the University would never reach gender pay parity. However, we must of course note that Westminster has a small median gender pay gap of 7.6%, much smaller than the average, and year-on-year fluctuations should be expected.

Conversely, the London Business School has seen a huge percentage point reduction in both its median gender pay gap (by 17.8 percentage points, therefore eliminating 76% of this pay gap) and its mean gender pay gap (by 14.6 percentage points, therefore eliminating 32.4% of this pay gap). The London Business School should be acknowledged for this impressive progress over the last five years – however, they do still have the second highest mean gender pay gap in this ranking, of 30.4%, having reduced this from the starting figure in 2017 of 45%.

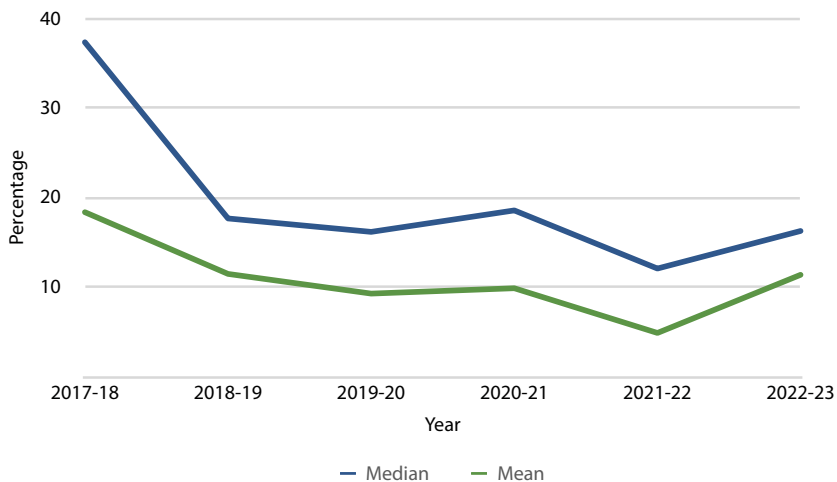
Looking at individual institutions' progress over five years is a good indicator of the success and consistency of their work to narrow their gender pay gap. As demonstrated by the graph in Figure 3, there are fluctuations in the returns from the London Business School, but over time, its gender pay gap is decreasing.

Figure 3: London Business School - gender pay gap over time



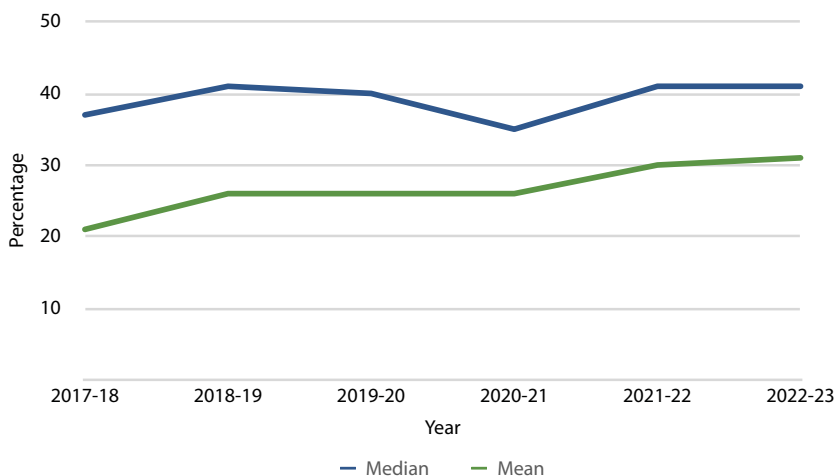
We can also see that this is the case for York St John University, in Figure 4.

Figure 4: York St John University - gender pay gap over time



However, if we look at the progress over time at the University of Buckingham, the results returned this year are not an unfortunate blip, but rather an increase in its already high gender pay gap over time.

Figure 5: University of Buckingham - gender pay gap over time



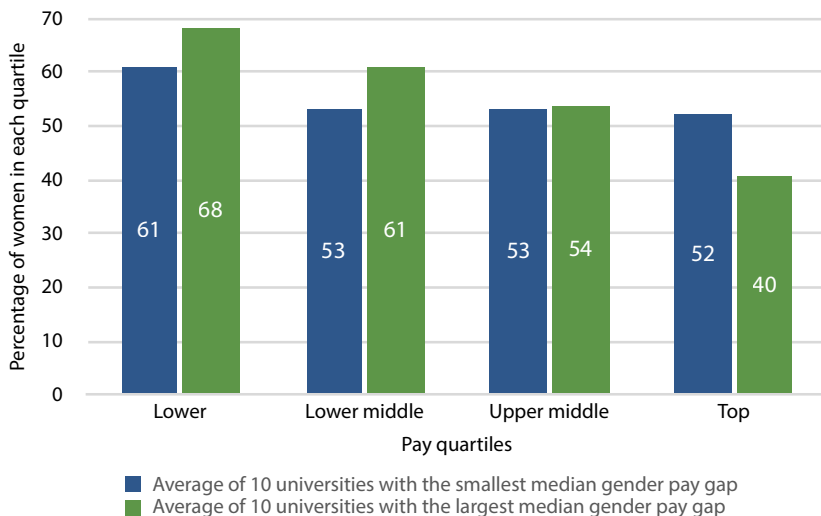
Some higher education providers have performed well across all these metrics and should be celebrated, and some have performed poorly across all metrics and should be held to account by their staff and governing bodies. However, ensuring that all metrics, their interacting complexity and their progress over five years are considered together, will be the key to further progress.

Employment structures and the impact on the gender pay gap

As well as returning figures for their mean and median gender pay gaps each year, providers are also expected to outline the percentage of employees in each pay quartile that are women.

This distribution was compared between the 10 institutions with the smallest median gender pay gaps and compared to the 10 institutions with the largest median gender pay gaps (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Workforce distribution in pay quartiles and the median gender pay gap (2022)



The institutions with large median gender pay gaps (green) had much larger imbalances across their four pay quartiles. Women are over-represented in their lowest pay quartile with 68% of the lowest paid colleagues being women. Women are under-represented in the top quartile, with only 40% of the highest paid colleagues being women. In institutions with the largest median gender pay gaps, women are more likely to be working in the lowest paid quartile by almost 30 percentage points compared to the highest paid quartile.

This disparity is recognised within the sector. Advance HE's Research Insight Paper *The gender pay gap in English higher education* analysed the narrative portions of gender pay reports from across the sector from 2018. It found that over 80% of institutions cited vertical occupation segregation (that is, women more likely to be in lower-paid roles) as a reason for their gender pay gap.²²

The distribution of colleagues by gender in the institutions with small gender pay gaps (blue) was much more even, with female employees

making up 53, 53 and 52% respectively of colleagues in the lower-middle, upper-middle and top tiers. Women are still over-represented in the lowest-paid quartile at 61%. Work should continue to address this balance, as the lowest-paid job roles are often insecure, adding to the burden on female colleagues. Interviews with institutions suggested that women are likely to take these lower-paid roles as they fit around caring and family responsibilities. While this may be the case, women would have more choice of role if the same level of flexibility were offered at more senior levels.

Institutions should build pipelines and pathways into better-paid jobs and ensure that flexible working is provided in more senior roles. Recruiters could consider targeting advertising of lower-paid roles to male colleagues. It may be uncomfortable to consider actively recruiting male colleagues into lower-paid or insecure roles. However, if this is the case, careful thought should be given to the pay and conditions of the female colleagues already in these positions. Further, this targeted advertising should only happen when promotion and recruitment for women already in these roles has been implemented and proven to be successful. Without this in place, there is a risk that women who do need work to fit around their caring responsibilities will be pushed out of the only roles available to them.

Bonus culture and the impact on the gender pay gap

Organisations who report their mean and median gender pay gap to the government must also report on the percentage of women receiving a bonus and the percentage of men receiving a bonus. Further, they must include the mean and median bonus pay gaps. A positive bonus pay gap indicates that across all jobs, men are awarded a larger bonus than women. A negative bonus pay gap indicates that across all jobs, women are awarded a larger bonus than men.

Figure 7 outlines the differences in bonus culture between institutions with small and large gender pay gaps.

Figure 7: Bonus culture and median gender pay gap differences (2022)

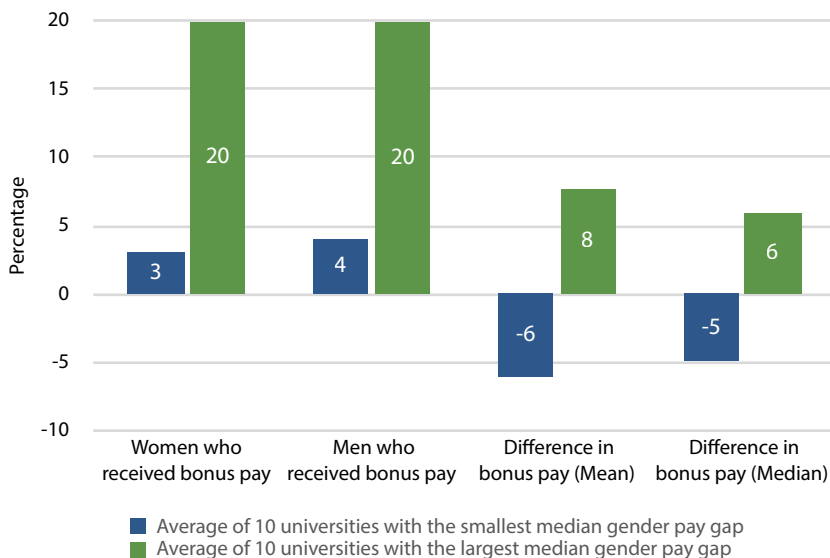


Figure 7 shows that institutions that have a large median pay gap have a much larger overall bonus culture. That is, colleagues are much more likely to receive a bonus. While the percentage of male and female colleagues receiving a bonus is equal, men are more likely to get paid a larger bonus. This is true across both the mean and median measures of the bonus pay gap.

Institutions with an overall smaller median pay gap are less likely to give bonuses. Men are slightly more likely to receive a bonus, however, bonuses paid to women are higher. This is shown by the negative mean and median bonus pay gaps.

The difference in bonus culture between institutions with the smallest median gender pay gaps and the highest is stark. It is more likely that the bonuses are a small contributing factor to the overall gender pay gap in these institutions, rather than an overwhelming factor. However, unequal bonus structures in these institutions may point to a larger culture of inequity.

Bonus culture in higher education providers can include bonuses that are built into remuneration packages. During the research for this report, recruitment colleagues explained that male applicants are more likely to accept a salary package with a lower salary but a larger bonus than female candidates. However, they also explained that this type of bonus structure was being phased out of institutions, due to the difficulty in providing equality of key performance indicators across different roles.

Bonus culture in higher education providers can also include one-off pay contributions, such as a one-off excellent contribution payment. Traditionally, these payments involved nominating yourself, or being nominated by your head of department. The set-up of these structures could lead to inequity. During interviews with institutions, colleagues working in human resources stated that male colleagues were more likely to nominate themselves for reward programmes than female colleagues, and those in closer proximity to leadership (already likely to be in higher-paid positions) were more likely to be nominated by those leaders. Higher education providers interviewed for this report had undertaken a series of measures to tackle this. The University of Durham introduced team awards into its bonus structure, in addition to awards for individuals. This saw an increase in the number of nominations for accommodation and cleaning teams, which were more likely to include women. The University of the Arts, London (UAL) began monitoring the outcomes of bonus schemes by gender (and other protected characteristics). While this gave insightful information as to the inequalities of the system, it did not lead to a shift in who bonuses were being awarded to. There was then an additional step of nudging heads of departments to consider how bonuses may best reflect the makeup of their teams – and this led to greater equity in terms of bonus culture.

Similar schemes should be considered when awarding additional pay increments as a reward structure.

Intersectionality

The organisations required to report their pay gap data to the Government's portal are only required to submit this in terms of gender. As a result, there is a large amount of data available on the gender pay gap, compared to pay gaps relating to other protected characteristics.

There is national data available on a number of pay gaps, helpfully published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), which states:

- *The disability pay gap, the gap between median pay for disabled employees and non-disabled employees was 13.8% in 2021.*²³
- *The gap is consistently wider for disabled men, than disabled women.*²⁴
- *Black, African, Caribbean or Black British employees earned less (£13.53) median gross hourly pay than White employees (£14.35), which has been consistent since 2012.*²⁵

However, ethnicity pay gaps are complex, as these can compare many different cohorts of employees, with different gaps dependent on the level of granularity used. For example:

- *Based on the five-category ethnicity measure in the UK, Asian or Asian British employees in 2022 earned more than White employees, with a pay gap of negative 3.3%. However, based on the more detailed ethnicity classification of Asian or Asian British employees in England and Wales, Chinese and Indian employees had higher earnings compared with White British employees, while Bangladeshi and Pakistani employees earned less compared with White British employees.*²⁶

There are similar complexities when looking at religious-based pay gaps. The ONS summarises that:

*Employees who identified as Jewish had the highest median hourly earnings of all religious groups in England and Wales in 2018 of £19.22. Employees who identified as Hindu had the second-highest median hourly earnings of £13.80. In comparison, Muslim employees had the lowest median hourly earnings at £9.63.*²⁷

There is limited data available about a UK LGBTQ+ pay gap. However, a YouGov survey for LinkedIn of 4,000 UK workers reported a 16% LGBTQ+ pay gap.²⁸

There is some data available in relation to these pay gaps in the higher education sector. The *Advance HE Staff Statistical Report 2023* records the following for 2021/22:

- *the overall median disability pay gap was 8.7%;*
- *the overall median ethnicity pay gap between UK White and UK Black, Asian and minority ethnic staff was 0.1%; and*

- *the overall median ethnicity pay gap between non-UK White and non-UK Black, Asian and minority ethnic staff was 8.5%.²⁹*

The Advance HE calculations do not include hourly paid or zero-hours contracted colleagues. Therefore, comparisons to either the ONS national data, or data taken from the Government gender pay gap portal should be treated with appropriate levels of caution. For example, Advance HE report the median sex pay gap in the sector to be 8.5% for 2021/22.ⁱⁱⁱ Given that casual jobs are more likely to be lower paid roles, and by their nature are likely to be part-time, we could expect to see more female colleagues in these roles, and therefore a wider overall pay gap if these roles were included.

The Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) published the *Caught at the Crossroads* report, examining the intersection between ethnicity and pay in 2018.^{iv} The report's author, Viola Salvestrini, concluded:

There are clear differences in labour market outcomes for different ethnic groups in the HE sector with men and women from Black ethnicities showing significant pay penalties relative to White men. These penalties remain even when accounting for level of education and demographic variables. While the sector's formidable work to improve women's careers should be noted, more attention is required for interventions to further improve the ethnic diversity of recruitment pools and actively address barriers to progression that are more likely to affect ethnic minorities.³⁰

More work is needed to understand the intersecting pay gaps by protected characteristics at the national and sector level. Following a consultation, the Government opted not to make ethnicity pay gap reporting mandatory, instead providing guidance on how organisations can do this voluntarily.³¹ There do not appear to be any plans to widen mandatory pay gap reporting beyond the focus on gender.

It would be wise for institutions to collect, analyse and publish pay gaps across several characteristics. Having access to this data will allow for targeted progress to be made in terms of pay parity for all colleagues with protected characteristics.

iii Advance HE report a sex pay gap rather than a gender pay gap.

iv UCEA regularly publishes reports on gender and ethnicity pay gaps. UCEA members can access the most up-to-date reports at www.ucea.ac.uk

Part 3 – Themes from interviews with institutions and recruiting firms

This section of the report will consider:

- *Overarching themes from institutions*
- *Subsidiary organisations*
- *Recruitment practices*
- *Family-friendly policies*
 - *Part-time work*
 - *Maternity and paternity pay*

Overarching themes from institutions

Several interviews were carried out with institutions which have succeeded in narrowing their gender pay gap significantly, as well as those that have struggled to do so.

The differences in approach are notable. Institutions which have done well in this area have a laser-like focus on the issue. There is a culture of continuous challenge to the societal status quo. They have gender pay gap action plans that are closely monitored and they report their work transparently. It is clear when talking to colleagues that their approach and model is mature and they have been focussed on this area for some time. They have serious buy-in from their leadership teams, and they monitor not just their gender pay gaps, but also their ethnicity pay gap, disability pay gap and, at some institutions, their LGBTQ+ and religious-based pay gap.

Institutions which have not done as well in this work, and agreed to be interviewed, were upfront about the challenges they face, and their input to this report is acknowledged and appreciated. There was occasionally an over-acceptance of the societal issues that build into the gender pay gap. Some institutions may also have faced more structural issues in addressing their gender pay gap. Providers with a decentralised or collegiate structure including the University of Oxford and Durham University noted that their devolved structure made it harder to drive change.

Subsidiary organisations

Institutions with larger pay gaps are often keen to emphasise that their employees are all in-house, including those at the lower end of the pay scale, including cleaners, accommodation and catering staff. This is an important value to these institutions. These colleagues are not outsourced to other companies, and they do not have subsidiary companies that employ their service-focussed lower-paid workers. It is unclear how many institutions outsource lower-paid work in this way. Given that most lower-paid workers are female, it is likely that structuring employment in this way could reduce an institution's pay gap without tackling the core issues. Solent University publish the gender pay gap data of Solent University Services Ltd alongside that of the University. Their report notes that Solent University Services Ltd is a wholly owned subsidiary company of Solent University and is the employer for most Professional Services roles and all campus jobs recruited after 1 October 2018. The gender pay gap for the subsidiary company is higher than that of the University – the data for their 2021/22 pay gap is shown below.

Organisation	Median gender pay gap (%)	Mean gender pay gap (%)
Solent University	0.0	3.4
Solent University Services Ltd	5.7	16.6

Publishing the pay gap data from both the University and the subsidiary organisation together is certainly good practice and should be adopted by other institutions which organise their employment in this way. However, there is a possibility that if mostly lower-paid workers are in the subsidiary company, and mostly higher-paid workers are employed by the university, that both pay gaps would appear smaller, than if they were combined and showing the full spectrum of the pay range. Therefore, for best practice, and full transparency, it is recommended that institutions provide a combined figure in their annual pay gap reports – even if the figures submitted to the Government's pay portal are separate.

Recruitment practices

In the research sector of higher education, there are several metrics which are often used to judge whether an academic candidate is 'good'. Three of these metrics, which may be problematic in this context are: the H-index; the M-Index; and research income.

Elsevier's webpage outlines:

*The H-index score is a standard scholarly metric in which the number of published papers, and the number of times their author is cited, is put into relation. The formula is based on the number of papers (H) that have been cited, and how often, compared to those that have not been cited (or cited as much). A good H-index score depends not only on a prolific output but also on a large number of citations by other authors.*³²

The M-index is the H-index divided by the number of years since the academic's first published paper. This does provide some contextualisation to the H-index, in terms of career length (and therefore, often, age). However, academics are still 'active' while on maternity leave and the M-index does not take into account part-time working.

The H-index, M-index and measures of research grant funding are not contextualised to subject (male-dominated subjects do better here), pro rata for part-time working or for career breaks – including maternity leave. This is an issue within academic promotion and recruitment and is a particular issue when recruiting for senior leadership roles. Elsevier's webpage further states:

*H-index scores are commonly used in the recruitment processes for academic positions and taken into consideration when applying for academic or research grants. At the end of the day, the H-index is used as a sign of self-worth for scholars in almost every field of research.*³³

There is also no consideration of the issue of citation bias when calculating the H-index. A recent article published by *Science* summarises research in this area, stating:

*Women's scientific contributions are often undervalued and cited less often than those of their male counterparts, including in neuroscience, astronomy, medicine – and, according to two new studies, physics.*³⁴

A paper published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* suggests that:

*Among members of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS), for example, men had on average about 14,000 more lifetime citations than women.*³⁵

It is problematic to use uncontextualised H-indices for comparing academics in the same field when female colleagues may struggle to maintain a higher H-index due to fewer working hours. However, this issue is magnified when it comes to the senior leadership level. At this stage, academics from different spheres are being pitted against each other. Due to a difference in publishing culture in different subject spheres, those from STEM subjects (still more likely to be male colleagues) will have naturally higher H-index scores. This is likely to be a particular issue for research-intensive institutions and may be a factor in research-intensive institutions having larger mean gender pay gaps. However, the recruiters we interviewed stated that institutions that are not research intensive are still using these metrics when recruiting senior leaders, even after the issues of relevance and equity have been raised by the recruiting firm.

These metrics are used in recruitment, promotion and when awarding research funding (which in turn is used in recruitment and promotion).³⁶ Yet they are fundamentally inequitable.

Compare two academics, both working in their field for 10 years. Academic A has worked full-time for 10 years. Academic B has worked full-time for two years, has taken two years off work for two periods of maternity leave and has worked 0.6 FTE (three days a week) for the remaining six years. Academic B has undertaken paid work in their field for 56% of the time of academic A. Yet their H-index is being compared as an equivalent, and their M-Index only contextualises the years worked (including while 'active' on maternity leave), and not the percentage of time worked.

Suppose that academic A has a H-index of 10, and academic B has an H-index of 8. On paper, academic A has a higher H-index, and has arguably had a greater research output and impact on their field. However, in terms of output in the time worked, academic B has been much more prolific in terms of publication and citation rate.

Not only is this index inequitable, but it is also unhelpful if you are trying to compare candidates with different career journeys.

The issues with the over-reliance on the H-index and M-index are well recognised in the sector, and yet they remain pervasive tools, used in recruitment, promotion and grant-awarding decisions. Movement in scholarship to address this issue exists via the San Francisco Declaration on

Research Assessment (DORA), whose recommendations include:

*Institutions should be explicit about the criteria used to reach hiring, tenure, and promotion decisions, clearly highlighting, especially for early-stage investigators, that the scientific content of a paper is much more important than publication metrics or the identity of the journal in which it was published.*³⁷

However, embedding recruiting processes that do not overly rely on flawed metrics remains a challenge.

Professor Margaret Sheil, Vice-Chancellor and President of Queensland University of Technology (Australia), stated in her work with Elsevier on evidence-based assessment, equity and opportunity:

*The reason metrics and other indicators have such widespread currency is not just because they provide the illusion of accuracy; it is because they are so convenient.*³⁸

In addition to the H-index and M-index, research grant funding is another metric used to measure what 'good' looks like during promotion and recruitment rounds.

UKRI's diversity data for funding applicants and awardees (2020/21) show that the representation of female grant holders overall was at 28% for principal investigators (PIs) and 33% for co-investigators. For both role types, this is below the benchmark for the wider academic population at 42%. (Representation for female grant holders was above this benchmark for fellows, at 49%.) The report also shows the median award for male PIs was £400,000 compared with approximately £300,000 for female PIs.

UKRI include several useful caveats in their report, including:

- the benchmarks used are not perfect comparators;
- the data differs across the seven different Research Councils (for example, the higher award rate for males at a UKRI level is a consequence of the higher percentage of male applicants and awardees at the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) and the Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC) which are the two Councils with the highest award rates); and
- advising against using these findings alone to draw causal inferences between diversity characteristics and application and award rates.

However, by bluntly using research income as a metric for 'good' in recruitment and promotion practices, these nuances may well be missed – and an academic with a higher number of larger research grants (more likely to be male) may be deemed to be 'better' than an academic with a lower number of smaller grants (more likely to be female).

In addition to the failure to contextualise the above metrics, recruitment experts at GatenbySanderson explained that there are further recruitment practices that can hold back equity in recruitment processes. These include institutions still using all-male recruitment panels. Colleagues from recruitment firms felt that challenging all-male recruitment panels on their bias is more difficult than challenging gender-diverse panels, and at times more poorly received.

It is sadly still not unusual to hear anecdotal stories from colleagues in the sector that unconscious bias and indeed blatant sexism persist in recruitment, and it is often down to the women (or woman) in the room, and often junior colleagues, to challenge this narrative. To think that unconscious bias, or even blatant sexism, does not persist in recruitment processes, or that adding one female colleague, Students Union Officer or recruitment manager into the process can successfully combat this is naïve.

So, what does work in terms of recruitment?

The Freedom of Information responses received for this report show that institutions that have a smaller gender pay gap are more likely to use:

- Data dashboards for each department showing protected characteristics at each stage of the recruitment process: application, shortlisting, interview, offer and appointment. Monitoring these dashboards to understand where issues arise in the recruitment process, and actions taken to address this – for example by targeted advertising of certain roles or providing further training for recruiting managers.
- Anonymous applications – removing names and identifying features from applications.

In addition to this, many institutions are now using:

- Gender neutral language on adverts. Recruiting for 'Accommodation assistants' instead of 'Porters' for example.
- Gender-diverse panels.

- Training for institutions on diverse recruitment practices.

It is pleasing, and not surprising, to see that these recruitment practices are taking place in institutions with small gender pay gaps, as well as those with large gender pay gaps. The research for this report suggests that many institutions with large or persistent gender pay gaps are undertaking work to address this. However, it is clear that unhelpful attitudes do still exist, and may be impacting the pay gap figures. One institution, with a very small gender pay gap across all metrics, told me:

When we work with recruitment agencies, we are explicit in the tender process that we expect diverse shortlists. If this isn't delivered, we give the shortlist back, and tell them to cast their net more widely.

Another institution, with a large gender pay gap across all metrics, stated:

We do try and have diverse shortlists, but sometimes the men are just better.

This quote demonstrates a disappointing over-reliance on outdated societal norms that 'men are just better'. There is also a lack of curiosity as to why the shortlists have only returned male candidates and a lack of action to ensure that recruitment pools are gender diverse. The above examples are anecdotal but demonstrate the difference in approach of two different institutions.

Family-friendly policies

The gender pay gap, including for graduates, exists from the early stages of employees' careers. However, UK-wide data show the gap widens considerably for women if they become a parent. By the time a first child is 20, women's average hourly wages are about a third below men's.³⁹ As such, the provision of family-friendly policies is imperative for ensuring equity of access to employment and progression. These include effective flexible working policies and maternity and paternity pay, which are considered in more detail below.

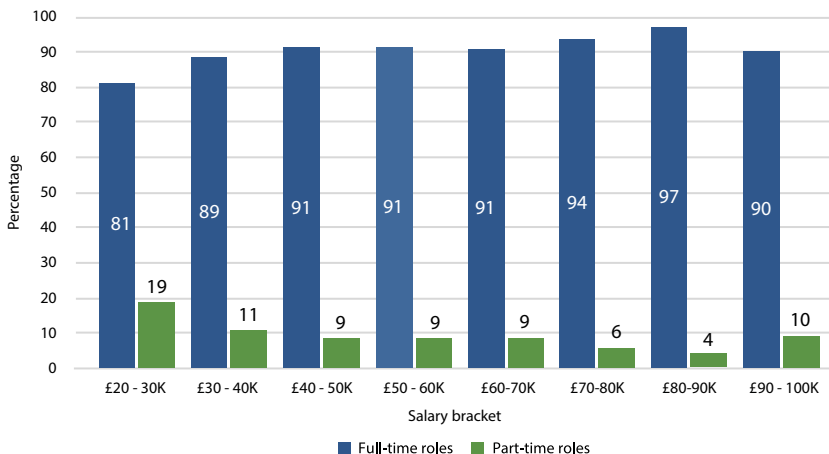
Part-time and flexible work

During the interviews with institutions, I heard repeatedly that women are over-represented in the lowest pay quartile because these roles are more likely to be part-time and therefore offer the flexibility that allows female colleagues to balance work with caring responsibilities.

To test this narrative, data was pulled from jobs.ac.uk on a weekly basis for five weeks – comparing the roles on offer on a part-time and full-time basis. The results are fascinating.

Figure 8 shows the percentage of roles advertised on jobs.ac.uk on a full-time or part-time basis.

*Figure 8: Percentage of roles available on jobs.ac.uk by salary bracket – full-time versus part-time**



*There will be some double-counting of both full- and part-time vacancies. Where the salary offer spans two salary bands, the vacancy will be counted twice.

Even at the lower salary scales, only 19% of roles are offered on a part-time basis. In the UK, 38% of women and 14% of men work part-time.⁴⁰ When considering the entire workforce, 26% of employees work part-time. According to the Universities and Colleges Employers' Association, 39% of female employees in higher education work part-time (the same percentage as in the wider workforce), as do 24% of male employees (a 10-percentage point increase compared to the wider workforce).⁴¹

Not only are the roles on offer in higher education not meeting the needs of the labour market, but they are also particularly disadvantageous to women. This becomes more pronounced the higher up the salary bracket. If only 4% or 6% of very highly paid roles are on offer to part-time employees (mostly women), how will the sector ever reach gender pay parity? In

addition to being an obstacle to gender pay parity, institutions risk missing out on great candidates by failing to create roles that are accessible to a quarter of the workforce.

It looks as though the part-time offer gets marginally more positive once figures reach £90,000 and above. However, closer inspection shows that these roles are almost exclusively in the field of medical education. Many are offered on a 0.2 FTE basis (that is, 0.2 of a full-time employment basis) 'allowing you to balance your clinical commitments seamlessly'. One was offered on a full-time basis for two years, then dropping to 0.8 FTE to allow for clinical commitments. These are part-time roles designed to sit alongside an already busy workload, not to support a work-life balance that involves caring responsibilities. Credit should be given to Brunel University which was offering a role at this salary level on a full-time basis but stating that part-time working or a job-share would be considered.

An additional penalty for part-time work is demonstrated in the HESA *Higher Education Staff Statistics UK Bulletin for 2021/22*. These data focus on academic staff, and show that academics are more likely to be on a fixed-term contract if they are part-time:

- 33% of all academics are on fixed-term contracts;
- 24% of full-time academics are on fixed-term contracts; and
- 51% of part-time academics are on fixed-term contracts.

Female academics are more likely to be on a fixed-term contract than male academics:

- 35% of all female academics are on fixed-term contracts; and
- 31% of all male academics are on fixed-term contracts.⁴²

Part-time work is less available, particularly at higher salary bands. It is also less secure, with over half of part-time academic staff working on fixed-term contracts.

Part-time and flexible working is also important for job progression as 60% of mothers feel their careers have not progressed since becoming a parent and 80% feel stuck because they are unsure they can work as flexibly elsewhere.⁴³ A report by the Fawcett Society shows that 77% of women

agree that they would be more likely to apply for a job that advertised flexible working options.⁴⁴

The figures are less stark but still striking for fathers. Half (50%) feel their career has stalled since having children and almost 70% of dads feel stuck because they are unsure they would be able to work as flexibly elsewhere. In fact, 42% of dads cite more flexibility in their workplace as the single thing that would boost their career development.⁴⁵

However, the career behaviour of mothers and fathers does differ in relation to flexible working. A survey of nearly 3,000 parents found two-in-five who applied for a flexible working arrangement were turned down. However, while 10% of men said they would change job because an employer had refused flexible working, for women the figure was much higher at 45%.⁴⁶ Denial of flexible working appears to be having a bigger impact on women's careers.

The Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023 was introduced to the Houses of Parliament as a Private Member's Bill by Yasmin Qureshi MP. The Bill passed and will come into force in 2024. The Bill amends the Employment Rights Act 1996 to:

- allow workers to request flexible working from day one;
- introduce a requirement for employers to consult with the employee before rejecting their flexible working request;
- allow an employee to make two statutory requests in any 12-month period (rather than the current maximum of one request);
- reduce the decision period within which an employer is required to administer the statutory request from three months to two months; and
- remove the requirement that the employee must explain in the statutory request what effect the change would have on the employer and how that might be dealt with.⁴⁷

This Act is welcome, and institutions should prepare for its implementation. However, even with this legislation, it is not a given that flexible work will be granted. Serious consideration should be given to increasing the number of part-time roles offered at the point of recruitment or offering roles on a flexible employment basis, particularly at higher salary bands.

In Figure 6 of this report, it was shown that institutions with a small gender pay gap have almost reached gender parity in their lower-middle, upper-middle and top pay quartiles. However, Freedom of Information requests show that when the most senior roles are considered – the colleagues on the executive board – even the institutions with the smallest pay gap have a 40:60 female:male ratio. This was the same as the institutions with the largest pay gaps. So even when there is gender parity in the top pay quartile, there is still difficulty reaching parity at the very top of an organisation. This is an issue of pay parity – and an issue of parity of representation on the boards of institutions. How long will it be until we see the first vice-chancellor role held on a job-share basis? (Credit should be given to the University of Reading who have been advertising Pro-Vice-Chancellor roles as job-shares.)

Maternity and paternity pay

The Freedom of Information requests sent to institutions as part of this report asked institutions how many weeks of fully-paid maternity or paternity leave they offer. As a reminder, statutory maternity leave includes pay on the basis of:

- 90% of your average weekly earnings (before tax) for the first 6 weeks; and
- £172.48 or 90% of your average weekly earnings (whichever is lower) for the next 33 weeks.

Research by the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) shows that the higher education sector is more likely to offer generous maternity pay relative to organisations in other sectors.⁴⁸

Institutions with a small gender pay gap offered on average 16 weeks of full pay on maternity leave, and institutions with a large gender pay gap offered on average 19 weeks of full pay on maternity leave. Again, it is pleasing to see the serious work that is being undertaken in institutions struggling to narrow their gender pay gap. However, the discrepancy in these figures may be skewed by the number of small and specialist colleges with small gender pay gaps, which were more likely to only offer statutory maternity pay.

Institutions with a smaller gender pay gap offered on average five weeks of paid paternity leave, compared to two weeks at institutions with large pay

gaps. Two of the institutions with a small gender pay gap, the University of the Arts London and Regent's University London, both offer 26 weeks of paid paternity leave.

These limited data do not show a clear correlation between gender pay gaps and maternity and paternity pay. However, it is interesting to note that institutions with a smaller pay gap have a smaller difference in the number of weeks of fully paid maternity and fully paid paternity leave. The difference is 11 weeks in those with small gender pay gaps, and 17 weeks in institutions with larger gender pay gaps. This data set is too small to draw secure conclusions – and it is important to note that Regent's University London have only recently introduced its equal paternity pay policy. It cannot therefore have had a direct impact on Regent's 2022 gender pay gap but may be indicative of an overall gender equity focussed approach. However, the Centre for Progressive Policy's analysis of The Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)'s data finds that countries with more than six weeks of paid paternity leave have a 4-percentage point smaller gender wage gap and 3.7 percentage point smaller labour force participation gap than countries that have less than six weeks – suggesting increased paid paternity leave may lead to greater equality.⁴⁹

During our discussions with institutions, we heard numerous examples of good practice in relation to maternity and paternity pay.

Durham University offers 26 weeks of full maternity pay from day one of employment. This is unusual as many employers require employees to work for a year before having access to enhanced maternity pay. At Durham, an employee could start a role at the university and immediately go onto maternity leave – with full pay for six months.

This is radical for the following reasons. It is well noted in women's career literature that women are less likely to move roles if they are pregnant, trying to get pregnant or considering trying to get pregnant in the near future. If a mother has more than one child, this can result in years of career stagnation. This happens partly due to the requirements of a period of continuous service to access enhanced maternity pay, and partly due to an unspoken belief that it is 'bad form' to take a new role and then go on maternity leave shortly after. This is a particular issue for

the many academics working on fixed-term contracts. Not only does the Durham policy change the logistics of this conundrum, but it also changes the narrative. This policy clearly gives the message that it is acceptable to apply for a job at Durham, or apply for a promotion at Durham, while being pregnant. As a trailblazer in this area, Durham has also given itself the opportunity to widen its employment market. Employees who feel unable to apply for jobs at other institutions would be able to apply for jobs at Durham, knowing that they would be financially secure. Yes, Durham will pay six months of maternity pay for some of its new employees – but if they can recruit the best of the best, and retain these employees for several years, the payoff may well be worth it.

Offering maternity entitlement from day one is a small but growing phenomenon in the sector. Clare Matysova outlined in a recent Wonkhe blog that around 20 institutions have changed their maternity leave (and other forms of parental leave) to day-one entitlement, including the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, Newcastle University, the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh, Exeter and University College London (UCL).⁵⁰

Statutory paternity pay is for up to two weeks of pay at £172.48, or 90% of the employee's average weekly earnings (whichever is lower). The UK has the least generous paternity leave entitlement in Europe.⁵¹

The University of the Arts London and Regent's University London both offer six months of full maternity pay and six months of full paternity pay. Again, this is a potentially expensive policy – but it challenges the narrative that career breaks are only for mothers. And again, as a vanguard policy, this may allow these institutions to attract the best of the best employees.

Considering paternity pay and flexible roles for fathers as well as mothers is important for gender pay parity. There will never be equity in the workplace until there is equity in the home. The existence of the gender pay gap makes this difficult. It perpetuates the cycle of mothers having to work part-time, and fathers having fewer options and a lack of equity when it comes to family-focussed choices.

Part 4 – Conclusions and Recommendations

This section of the report will consider:

- *Conclusions*
- *Recommendations*

Conclusions

There is plenty of good news for the sector in this report.

The gender pay gap in higher education is smaller, at 11.9%, than the national gender pay gap, at 14.4%. Higher education providers have made more progress to narrow their gender pay gap (a reduction of 4.4 percentage points) since reporting began in 2017, than was seen across the UK (a reduction of 4 percentage points). Therefore, higher education providers have seen a larger proportional reduction in their gender pay gap over this time. Providers have reduced their gender pay gap by 27%, compared to 22% across the UK. If progress were to continue at the same rate, the higher education sector would eliminate its gender pay gap in the next 14 years – by 2038.

However, progress over time may be slowing. As such, a renewed focus is needed on the underlying data at each institution, to continue to take informed steps towards pay parity.

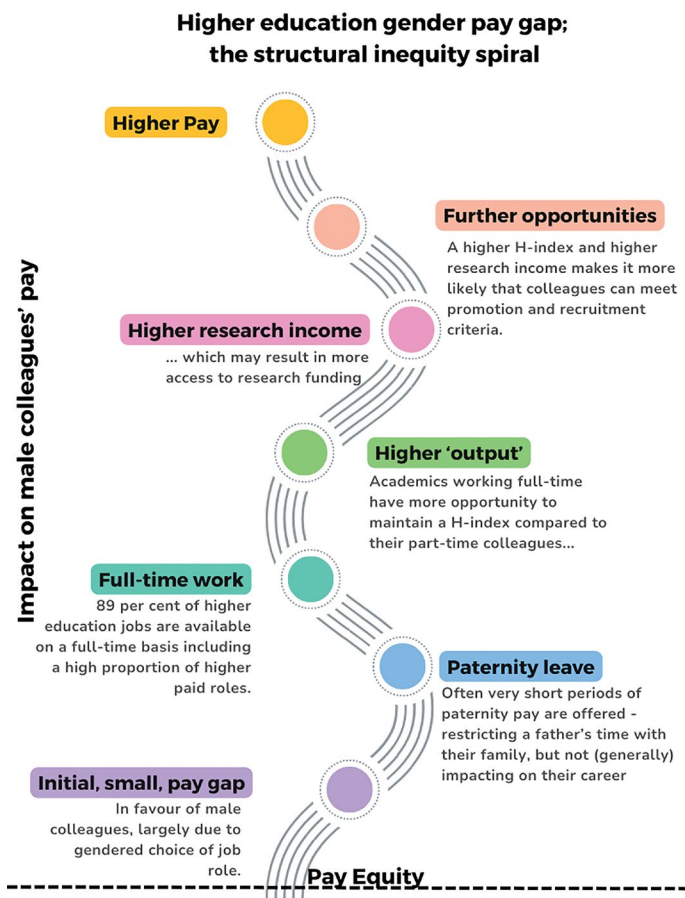
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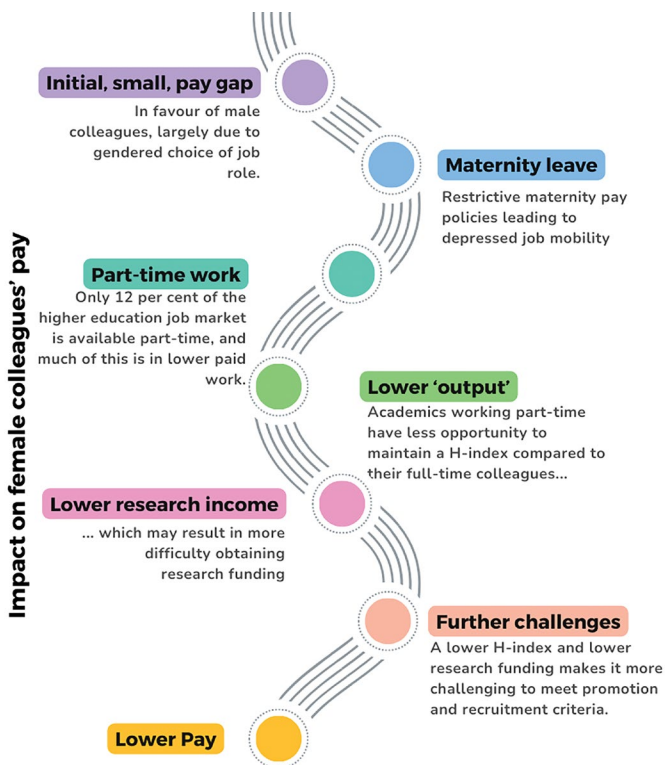
- understanding how women are represented across the four pay quartiles;
- knowing how bonus culture may be impacting the gender pay gap;
- undertaking a detailed mapping of part-time work and employment by gender; and
- analysing data for recruitment and promotion – at application, shortlisting, interview and appointment.

This report suggests a number of structural barriers which may be preventing pay parity. These include imbalanced maternity and paternity leave, unequal access to the job market for part-time workers and biased recruitment metrics. Figure 9 is simplistic and is not intended to be a representation of all mothers' and fathers' careers. Indeed, part-time female

colleagues may have larger H-indices than full-time male colleagues. However, it does show how the perpetual nature of these barriers, if not addressed, can spiral into widening inequity. Beginning from the middle of the diagram, where pay equity would exist, the diagram shows that the small, initial pay gap, prevalent in the early stages of colleagues' careers is compounded by structural inequities, leading to a widening of the gender pay gap over time.

Figure 9





Recommendations

Flexible working

1. Institutions should prepare for, communicate and implement the new Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023.
2. Institutions should consider how many more roles can be offered on a part-time, job share or flexible basis. The opportunities of hybrid working (when effectively managed) should be embraced, including for jobs offered at higher salary bands. To be truly progressive, flexible working should be the default, with a decision to advertise a job on a solely full-time basis made for operational reasons that cannot be mitigated. Jobs should be reconsidered

as a collection of tasks, and the appropriate amount of time allocated to these, rather than starting at a default position of a five-day week. Consideration should also be given to how part-time roles work in practice. If a role is offered on a 0.8 FTE basis, the institution needs to consider how the additional 0.2 FTE will be reallocated. Expecting employees to complete the same amount of work in less time for less money is not equitable.

Recruitment

3. Institutions should use demographic data dashboards in their recruitment, promotion and bonus processes. These can provide insights into leaky pipelines and issues in areas of recruitment, and ensure parity in bonus culture.
4. Institutions should consider the use of anonymous job applications, where possible, to remove issues of unconscious bias at the shortlisting stage. Institutions and research funding councils should review their respective recruitment, promotion and grant-awarding processes to remove an over-reliance on metrics including the H-index and M-index. Where these are included, this should be alongside a contextualised narrative about the academics' research journey and impact.
5. Gender-diverse panels should be a requirement.
6. Institutions and recruiters should refrain from asking applicants to declare their current salary or salary expectations. Declaring a salary immediately ties the hands of women who are paid less.
7. Institutions should consider both sides of the coin. Gender parity often focuses on encouraging women into traditionally more male fields. Encouraging women into STEM roles is a classic example. This is welcome and is an important part of tackling the gender pay gap. There should be equal encouragement of men into health and social work and education-based roles. If we feel uncomfortable encouraging young men into these career paths – perhaps due to their lower pay or perceived lower value – then this either needs to be addressed or we need to stop encouraging young women into these roles also. This work should of course

start from the early years, where children are given endless cues about their future roles from a very young age. Work to combat this gender stereotyping is essential. Previous work by HEPI in the *Mind the (Graduate Gender Pay) Gap* report outlines that, for graduates, the most significant factor in pay differences, within gender as well as between genders, is the subject of study.⁵²

Family-friendly policies

8. Institutions should promote the uptake of paternity leave, shared parental leave and part-time or flexible working by fathers. Aim to make this a normal practice at your institution.
9. Institutions should ensure that family-friendly policies are available on public-facing webpages.
10. The Government should consider more active forms of paternity leave, including the 'use it or lose it' model seen in Sweden. (Sweden allows 480 days of paid parental leave, which can be split between the parenting couple. However, 90 days of this are reserved for the father, and if the father does not take the leave, it is lost from the couple's entitlement. Men in Sweden now take one quarter of the parental leave offered to parents).⁵³ Given the important role that higher education providers have in diffusing egalitarian norms to other sectors and across society, institutions may want to consider implementing these models themselves or adopting the progressive models seen at UAL and Regent's University of offering equal maternity and paternity pay.

Research

11. The Russell Group and other research-intensive universities should pay particular attention to their pay outliers, that is, those who get paid the very most, and those who are paid the very least.
12. Institutions, funding councils, research bodies and publishers should continue to work towards more equitable metrics for measuring academic impact.

Further understanding and reporting pay gaps

13. Institutions should monitor their gender pay gaps by a broader

set of protected characteristics than gender. This should include ethnicity, disability, LGBTQ+ and religious-based pay gaps. This will help to build a broader data set on pay gaps more widely. The Government should expand its mandatory reporting requirements to cover ethnicity and disability pay gaps. More research is needed into LGBTQ+ and religious-based pay gaps.

14. For the purposes of transparency, institutions using subsidiary companies, or outsourcing employment of lower-paid employees, should consider publishing this gender pay gap data alongside the data for the main institution. They should also consider publishing a combined gender pay gap covering all employees, where it is feasible to do so.

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This comprehensive report delves into the persistent gender pay gap within the UK's higher education sector. Despite an environment where women are increasingly visible in both student and staff roles, a wage disparity remains, with women earning on average 11.9% less than their male counterparts across all roles.

The report quantifies the gap and celebrates the sector's progress which outpaces the national rate of improvement. However, it also uncovers substantial variances across institutions and brings to light the structural and procedural barriers that continue to hinder gender pay equity. Through research and interviews with institutions and recruitment firms, the report identifies best practices and pinpoints areas that demand attention.

This report is a call for action, offering strategic recommendations for institutions that aim to understand and bridge the gender pay gap. It is a critical resource for policymakers and institutions, and advocates striving for gender parity in higher education and beyond.



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