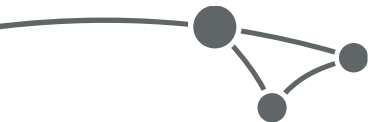




Gender pay gap In school trusts

June 2025





About the Confederation of School Trusts

The Confederation of School Trusts is the national organisation and sector body for School trusts in England, advocating for, connecting, and supporting executive and governance leaders. Our members are responsible for the education of more than three million young people.

Bringing together trusts from every region and of every size, CST has a strong, strategic presence with access to government and policy makers to drive real change for education on the big issues that matter most.

About Compensation Planning from Brightmine

Compensation Planning is one of the largest reported reward datasets in the UK with over 1.5 million employees. Compensation Planning is a Brightmine product, and part of the RELX Group – a trusted provider of data since 1968. It provides expert insight and practical tools to help organisations make fair, data-driven reward benchmarking decisions – from submission to using the data – as easily and efficiently as possible.

About Browne Jacobson

Independently recognised as one of the best education law and HR practices in the country, Browne Jacobson has a wealth of sector-specific knowledge and experience to assist School trusts, managing estate and construction projects, employment and HR issues and funding matters, to intellectual property, health and safety, defamation and disputes. The firm has bases in London, Birmingham, Manchester, Exeter, Cardiff, Dublin and Nottingham.



About this report

The deadline for gender pay gap reporting passed on 4 April 2025 and more than 10,000 organisations shared information on their gender pay and bonus gaps. This report on the headline data and unearth some of the trends.

All UK organisations with 250 or more employees must report six gender pay gap measures. This analysis is based on all organisations that had submitted data by 9am on Monday 7 April 2025, resulting in a sample of 10,728 organisations (including 436 with fewer than 250 employees).

We have also analysed pay data submitted to us as part of the joint CST initiative to capture and report on salaries of senior leadership roles across the sector, to provide comparisons with gender pay across the school trust sector. Finally, we analyse all data submitted to Brightmine for senior leadership roles, across all sectors.

What is the gender pay gap

In 2017 the government introduced mandatory gender pay gap reporting for employers with more than 250 employees

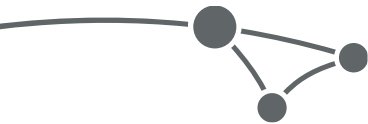
This was part of the government's aim to eliminate the gender pay gap and to "break the glass ceiling and create a more modern workforce"

For every £1 a man earns, what does a woman earn?



Expressed as a %, calculated as: $(\text{£ male hourly earnings} - \text{£ female hourly earnings}) / \text{£ male hourly earnings}$. If a mean gender pay gap is 15% female employees are paid 15% less than male employees or 85p for every £1 paid to men. If the gap is negative male employees are paid on average less than female employees.

Employers have to report their mean and median salary and bonus gaps (female pay as a % of male pay, as above), as well as the proportion of male and female employees in receipt of a bonus payment and



finally the proportion of males and females in each of 4 quartile bands - this involves dividing all roles into 4 quartile bands from highest to lowest paying – so of the highest paid roles what proportion are men and what proportion are women - organisations with no pay gap expect to see equal ratios of male and female staff in each of the 4 groups.

Gender pay gap reporting is a very blunt tool, looking at figures across the organisation as a whole and not accounting for some really critical nuances including differences in job level or seniority and job function or area of work of male and female employees

But it has been very helpful in drawing a focus on pay gaps and from there, to pay equity.

Gender pay gaps versus equal pay

Gender pay gaps and equal pay are not one and the same and the existence of a gender pay gap in an organisation does not equal unfair pay practices.

You can have a gender pay gap within your organisation without having an equal pay issue.

Under UK law men and women must receive equal pay for performing 'equal work' ie 'work which is the same, similar, equivalent or of equal value'. This has been the case for decades. To be considered equal it does not have to be 'the same role' or even 'the same function' –the level of skill, responsibility and / or effort are deemed to be equivalent or of equal value, even if the work itself is not similar. This applies to roles which on the surface can seem very different.

Gender pay gaps are commonly caused not by unequal pay (so paying men and women differently for equal work) but rather by unequal distribution of staff across roles – where male employees dominate the highest paying roles and female employees are over represented in the lowest paying roles you will have a gender pay gap – even if, like for like, male and female staff are paid equally.



Closing the Gap: How trusts Can Lead on Gender Pay Equity

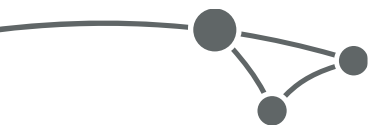
The gender pay gap isn't just a corporate problem—it exists in education too and as large employers, trusts are in a strong position to lead the way in creating fairer, more inclusive workplaces.

The good news? There are plenty of practical, proven steps trusts can take to make a real difference—many inspired by successes in both the public and private sectors. The key is turning good intentions into clear, sustained action.

Understanding where the issues lie starts with good data. Trusts should take a detailed look at pay, progression, and roles across all staff groups—teachers, support staff, leadership, and central teams—broken down by gender. The NHS does this well, publishing pay data by band and gender to identify where imbalances exist. Ts can apply the same approach to spot gaps and underrepresentation within their own workforce.

Encouragingly, recent data from CST members via Brightmine shows trusts are already ahead of many other sectors—with a mean gender pay gap of just 2.2%, far below the national average of 11.2%. This shows the importance of understanding not just the numbers, but workforce composition at each level. One of the clearest gaps is at the top. While women make up a large part of the education workforce, they're still underrepresented in senior roles. Trusts can support more women into headteacher and executive roles by investing in development opportunities—like coaching, shadowing, and sponsorship. Large firms like Deloitte and KPMG have had success with sponsorship, where senior leaders actively champion women's careers. Trusts could take a similar approach, ensuring promising talent gets the support and visibility needed to progress.

Other sectors can approach equalising policies for parents and enhancing family leave arrangements, this means offering enhanced parental leave, actively encouraging take-up by fathers, and monitoring participation rates. However, many public-sector organisations including trusts have defined pay bands, evolved from national collective agreements such as the Burgundy and Green books with clearly defined pay frameworks. This in itself presents many challenges in equalising policies and promoting more generous enhancements to compete with private sector organisations and contributing to closing the GPG. The vulnerability of education sector funding, nationally agreed terms and conditions and the many competing demands in schools and trusts would further inhibit any major policy changes or enhancements.



Often, pay gaps don't come from policy—but from how that policy is applied. Inconsistent or unclear processes around pay progression or promotion can create inequalities over time. Trusts can reduce this risk by putting in place clear, criteria-based systems and training line managers to apply them fairly. Even within the constraints of national pay frameworks like the Burgundy and Green books, consistency in practice goes a long way to build trust in their approach to closing the gender pay gap.

Flexible working is a major factor in making roles more accessible, especially for women more often having to balance work and care. But it needs to be available at every level—including senior leadership. Offering part-time SLT roles, job shares, and compressed working weeks can help ensure career progression doesn't come at the cost of work-life balance. Local Government has shown that flexible leadership can work—and helps retain great people. Parental leave is also a powerful lever. Encouraging both parents to take shared parental leave and offering enhanced policies can help level the playing field at home and at work.

The way a job is advertised and filled can either open doors or unintentionally dissuade ideal candidates. Inclusive language in adverts, structured interviews, gender-balanced shortlists, and blind recruitment all help reduce bias from the start. Training hiring managers in inclusive practices and setting clear goals—such as making gender pay equity a governance KPI—sharpens the focus of narrowing the GPS and sends a message to future candidates.

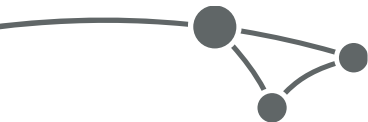
Policies are important, but culture is what really makes a difference and underpins change. Trusts can build inclusive cultures by establishing staff forums, leading internal awareness campaigns, and involving everyone—especially male allies—in driving equity forward. The Armed Forces, for example, have used male champions to support gender equity, showing that this is a shared goal, not just a women's issue.

Tackling the gender pay gap isn't about ticking a box—it's about making lasting change. Trusts have a unique role to play, not just as employers, but as educators shaping the future.

By focusing on fair practices, supporting diverse leadership, and building inclusive cultures, trusts can create workplaces where everyone has an opportunity—regardless of gender.

Progress takes time but with focus and the right steps, real change is within reach.

Tracy Foster, HR Consultant, Browne Jacobson



UK gender pay gap - 2024

Based on this full sample, the median gender pay gap was 8.6% in 2024, the eighth reporting year showing a gap in favour of men. Compared with all organisations that have now submitted for 2023, the median gender pay gap has fallen just 0.4 percentage points, from 9.0% (revised).

UK gender pay gap based on all UK submissions for 2024 reporting

8.6%

Median gender pay gap

11.2%

Mean gender pay gap

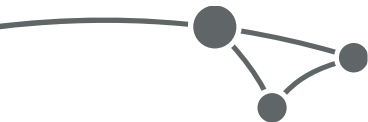
48.5%

% reducing their median
pay gap from 2023

Summary – on average (ie by the Mean measure) for every £1 a man earns, a woman earns 88p

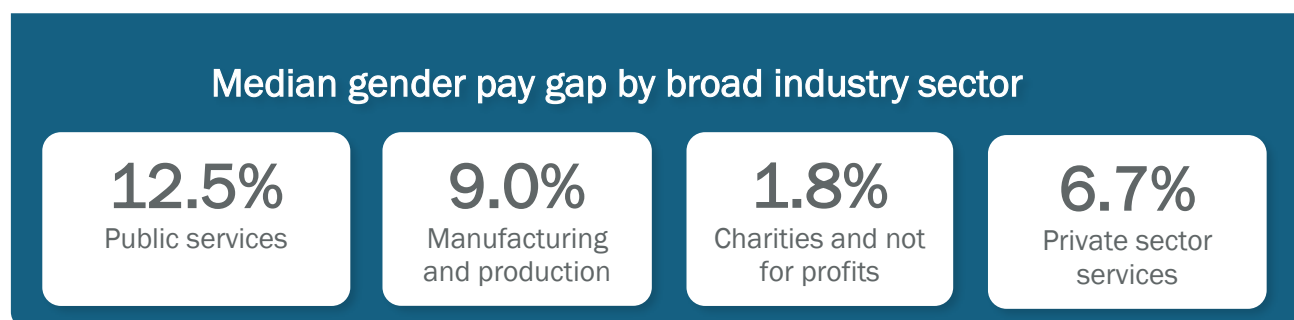
Progress on the gender pay gap based on the full sample of reporting organisations does not take into account how individual organisations have progressed since the year before. However, a matched sample analysis is possible, as 10,112 of the organisations that submitted data for 2024 also submitted for 2023. Tracking progress among this group, we find that 48.5% reduced their median gender pay gap over the year to 5 April 2024.

The greatest progress is recorded for organisations in the finance sector, where 60.2% have reported a lower median gender pay gap than in 2023. Just behind sits the chemicals, oil and pharmaceuticals sector, where 59.5% of organisations reduced their median gender pay gap.



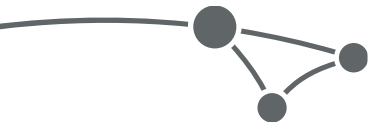
UK gender pay gap by sector

Perhaps the most interesting findings from the data are those by broad economic sector. Here, the public sector reports a higher gender pay gap than the other broad sectors:

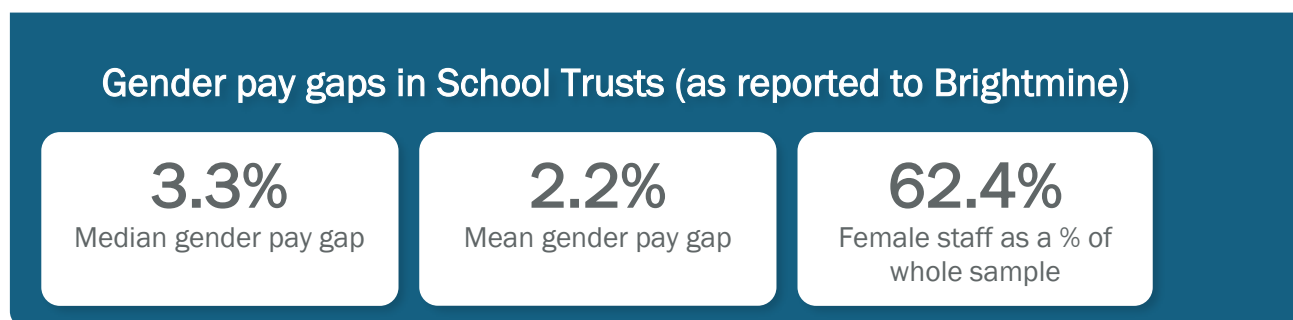


Overall, the public sector is more likely than any other to report a median gender pay gap in favour of men, as reported by 84% of organisations. Around half (51.1%) of public-sector organisations in our matched sample analysis have reported a lower median gender pay gap than for 2023.

Many public-sector organisations have defined pay bands, therefore we might assume that their gender pay gaps would be lower. However, this is likely to be a perfect example of the importance of understanding the data behind the headlines, especially workforce composition data, as where women sit in the job structure is likely to be playing a significant part in the public-sector data.



Gender pay gaps in school trusts



Summary – for senior leaders in school trusts, on average (ie by the Mean measure) for every £1 a man earns, a woman earns 97.8p

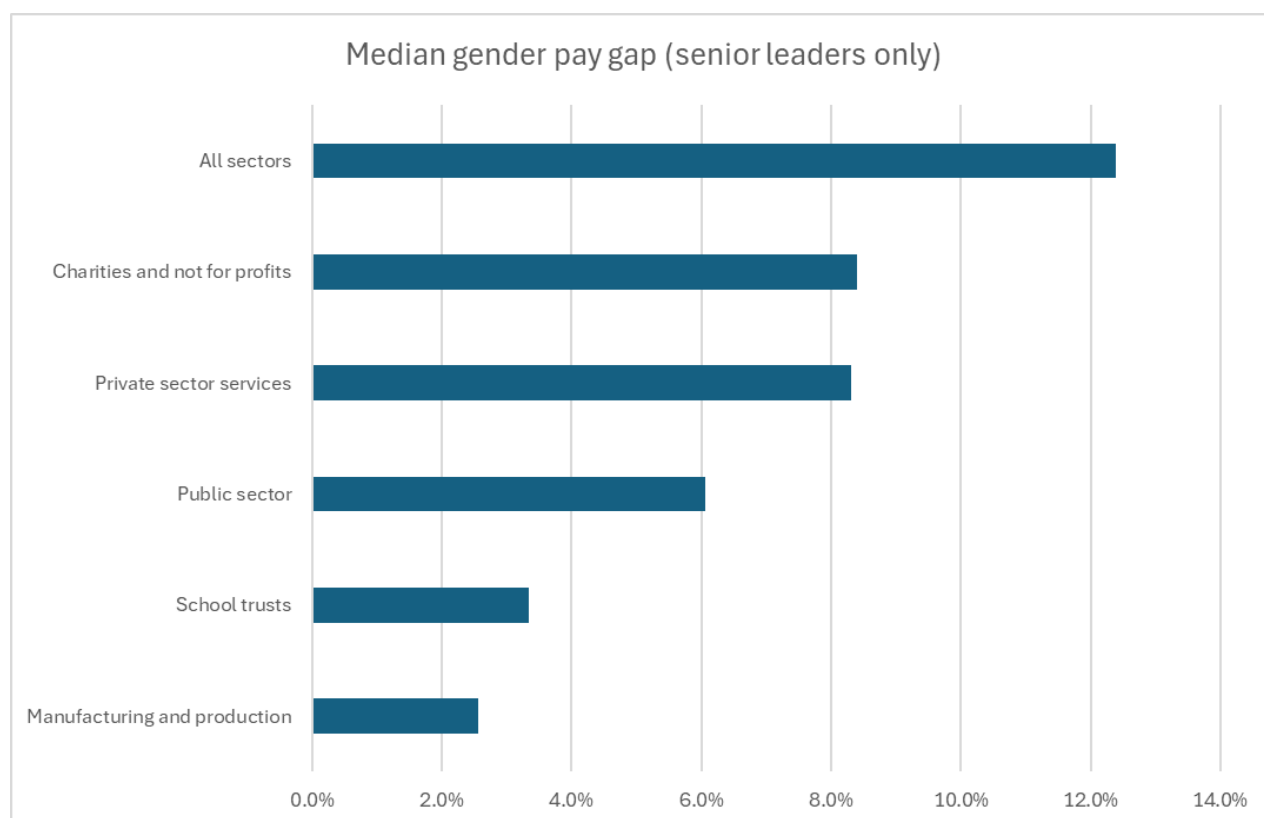
In contrast to the data reported to Government, an analysis of data from CST members reported to Brightmine (albeit over a slightly different reporting period) suggests that the gender pay gap is much lower for the school trust sector - with the mean gap standing at just 2.2%, compared to 11.2% for the mean gap as reported to Government and based on the entire government data set (ie not just senior leadership roles). The mean pay gap for school trusts is higher than that recorded by charities and not for profits across the entire government dataset (standing at 1.8%) but substantially lower than that recorded by the public sector as a whole (12.5%).

It must be noted that the data collected from CST members does focus specifically on the senior leadership population and so isn't a completely accurate comparison. To provide a close comparison we can analyse relevant data from other sectors submitted to Brightmine, focusing just on equivalent senior leadership roles.

Median gender pay gaps from data submitted to Brightmine (senior leadership roles only)

	Mean	Median	Females as a % of cohort
School trusts	2.2%	3.3%	62.38%
Manufacturing and production	7.4%	2.6%	24.83%
Private sector services	7.9%	8.3%	29.98%
Public sector	8.4%	6.1%	56.15%
Charities and not for profits	9.9%	8.4%	55.66%
All sectors	14.1%	12.4%	40.80%

When examining the Brightmine data for senior leadership roles we see that the school trust sector enjoys the lowest median gender pay gaps of any sector, whilst also having the highest female representation at senior level.





Gender pay gaps by pupil numbers

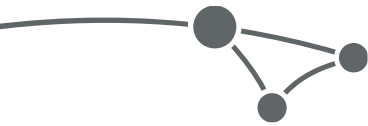
	Mean	Median	Females as a % of cohort
2000 or fewer	9.4%	11.3%	69.8%
2001-5000	6.2%	4.7%	56.4%
5001-10000	7.1%	8.0%	57.5%
More than 10000	10.3%	17.8%	60.8%

Pay gaps by number of pupils are very mixed – the largest and smallest have the largest overall pay gaps, though those with more than 10,000 pupils have the highest gender pay gaps overall for the senior leaders.

Gender pay gaps by number of schools

	Mean	Median	Females as a % of cohort
1-5	13.6%	13.2%	62.1%
6-10	3.5%	4.8%	55.7%
11-20	8.4%	10.8%	58.4%
21 or more	8.0%	8.9%	68.4%

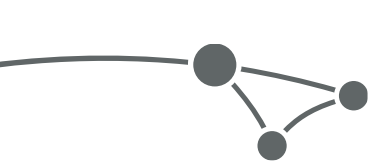
Looking at school trusts by the number of schools within a trust shows a similarly mixed picture as by number of pupils, though this time it is the smallest trusts with the largest gender pay gaps across their senior leaders.



Gender pay gaps by broad region

	Mean	Median	Females as a % of cohort
London	10.6%	8.5%	65.8%
Rest of the UK (excluding London)	9.1%	12.6%	61.0%

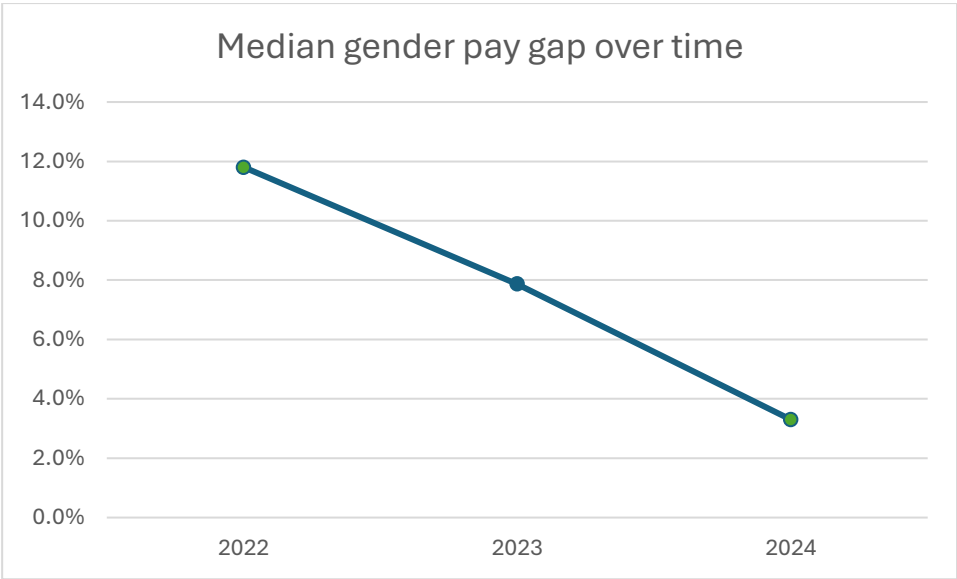
While the mean gender pay gap is highest in London, the Median is highest outside of London.



Gender pay gaps in school trusts over time

	Mean	Median	Females as a % of cohort
2024	2.2%	3.3%	62.4%
2023	7.9%	11.8%	63.2%
2022	11.8%	13.2%	64.3%

A look at the gender pay gap figures for senior leaders in the school trust sector across the last three years shows a very significant closing of the pay gap across this period.



A note on terminology

Mean pay gaps

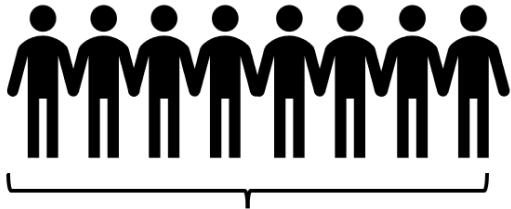


Figure A: average male earnings = total of all male earnings / number of males in sample

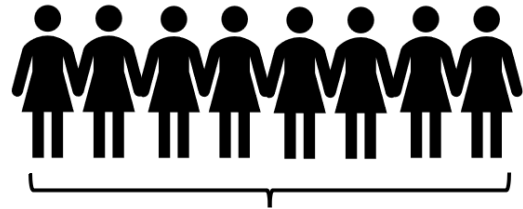


Figure B: average female earnings = total of all female earnings / number of females in sample

$$\text{Mean Gender Pay Gap} = (\text{figure A} - \text{figure B}) / \text{figure A}$$

The mean can give a very good overall picture of the gender pay gap but can be distorted by outliers at both ends - very large or small pay rates or bonuses.

Median pay gaps

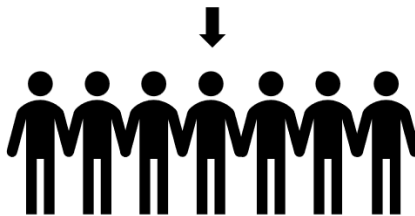


Figure A: median male earnings = male salary in the middle of the sample, ranked highest to lowest

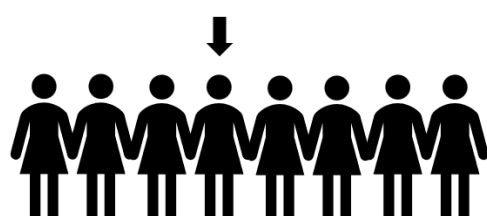
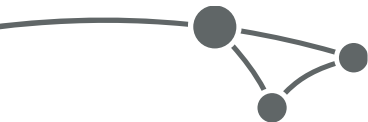


Figure B: median female earnings = female salary in the middle of the sample, ranked highest to lowest

$$\text{Median Gender Pay Gap} = (\text{figure A} - \text{figure B}) / \text{figure A}$$

The median is often used to indicate the “typical” gap as it is not distorted by very large or small pay rates or very large or small bonuses but is more impacted by the distribution of roles – high volumes of staff in lower paying roles will bring down the median.



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