

Gender Pay Gap Report

Report for the year 2023-2024

March 2025



Gender Pay Gap Report

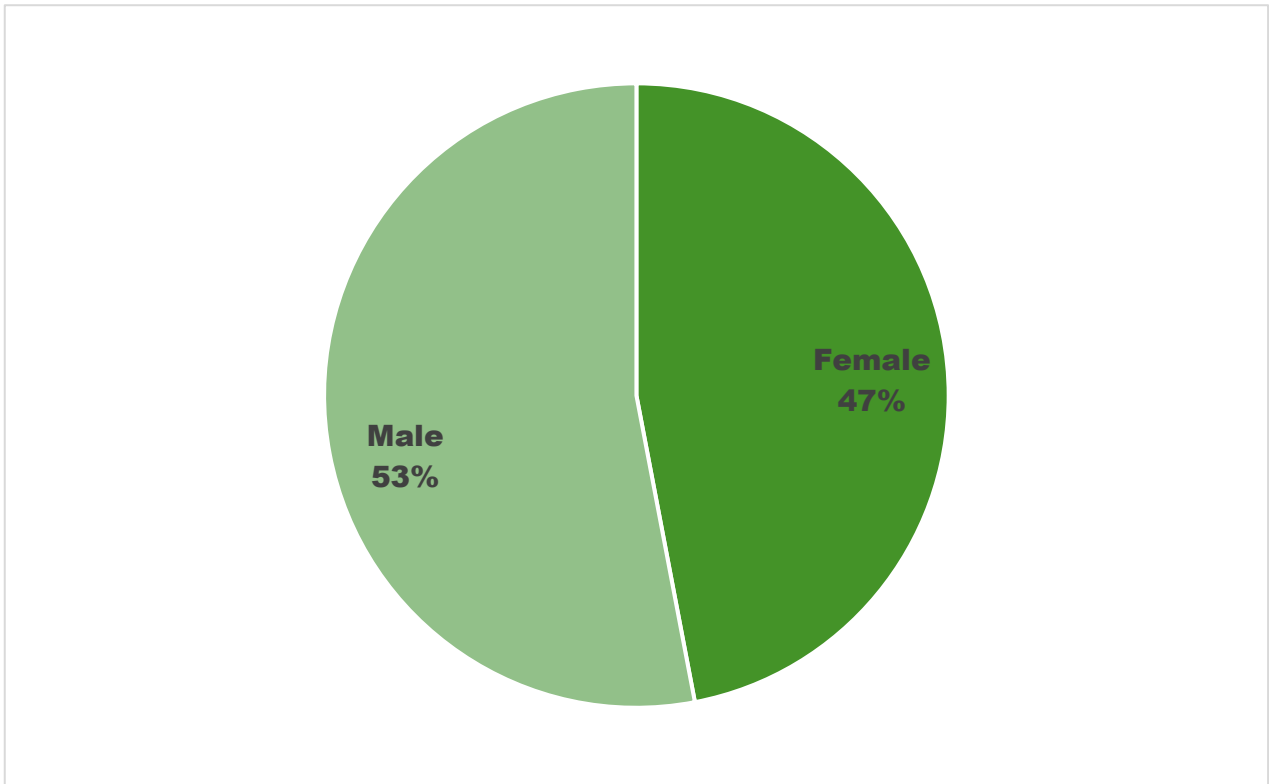
This gender pay gap report for the Forestry Commission covers the period 1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024. It publishes the mean and median gender pay gaps, the bonus pay gap and the proportions of male and female employees in each pay quartile.

The gender pay gap shows the difference in the average pay between all men and women in a workforce. If a workforce has a particularly high gender pay gap, this can indicate issues to address such as less women working in higher pay bands.

The gender pay gap is different to equal pay. Equal pay deals with the pay differences between men and women who carry out the same jobs, similar jobs or work of equal value. It is unlawful to pay people unequally because they are a man or a woman.

The Forestry Commission is committed to equality of opportunity for all and will continuously strive to reduce the gender pay gap.

Forestry Commission Gender Mix



47.0% of the Forestry Commission workforce is female, which is an increase of 1.7% from last year's report.

Forestry Commission Gender Pay Gap

Mean Pay Gap



2.96%

Median Pay Gap



0%

The average (mean) hourly rate for males is 2.96% higher than females. The median gender pay gap is at 0%. The mean pay gap has increased since last year's report where it had previously been 2.84%. The median has remained where it was at 0% last year. The median shows that of all the male and female employees of the Forestry Commission, the middle female salary is equivalent to the middle male salary.

Bonus Pay Gap

There are two bonus schemes within the Forestry Commission. However, they are only available to a small section of employees.

The first type of bonus is based on performance but is only available for the Senior Civil Servant grades. There were only 4 performance related bonus payments paid in this reporting period, which were all paid to males.

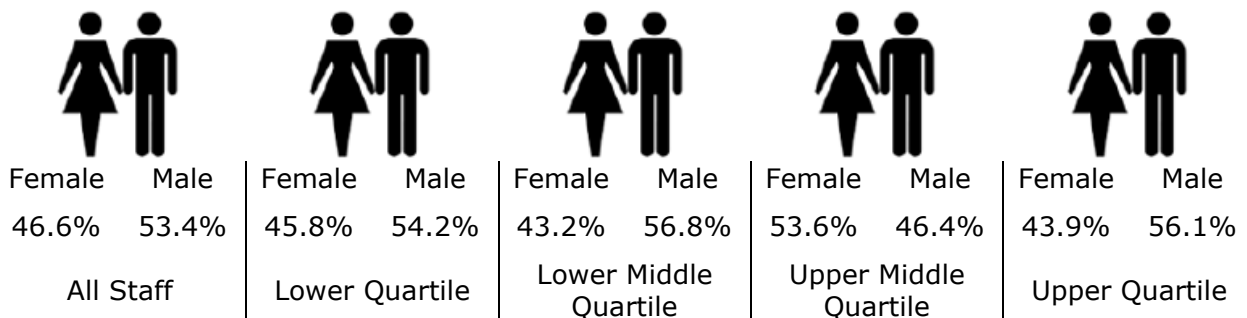
The second type of bonus is a non-consolidated payment to employees that are promoted from operational to non-operational grades, where the difference in salary is less than a 10% uplift.

Only two of these were paid during the reporting period, with a value of less than £10, both to females.

The Forestry Commission does not usually include the bonus pay gap percentages in its report due to the low numbers of employees impacted. Additionally, the majority of non-consolidated bonuses are minor amounts. The Senior Civil Servant performance bonuses are larger amounts. This creates significant volatility when trying to compare the mean and median changes year-on-year.

Pay Quartiles

Proportion of men and women in each hourly pay quartile



Quartile changes since March 2023:

Quartile	Female	Male
Lower	-2.6%	+2.6%
Lower Middle	+7.5%	-7.5%
Upper Middle	+2.9%	-2.9%
Upper	-1.8%	+1.8%

This year has seen a shift for female staff to move towards the two middle quartiles. The Upper Middle quartile is the only quartile where females overtake males, even though there are less females in the organisation overall. The lower quartile has the closest parity with the overall proportion of males to females.

Causes of the Gender Pay Gap at the Forestry Commission

Forestry work has historically attracted fewer female candidates than male candidates. This is particularly the case in forestry operational roles. This imbalance is improving, and the proportion of female employees has increased over the past few years from 35% to 47%. In 2005 the gender pay gap at the Forestry Commission was 21%. Significant work has been undertaken over recent years to reduce this to the current position.

Working to reduce the Gender Pay Gap

The Forestry Commission is committed to improving our gender pay gap and has several programmes underway looking to reduce it, these include:

Narrowing of Pay Ranges

Historical salary progression within a grade was removed across the Civil Service and recruiting external staff to the bottom of the pay band became the standard procedure. As a result of this, staff with a longer length of service within the same grade would often be paid more by virtue of being employed before the policy change. The Forestry Commission has sought to resolve this by moving from pay grade scales to spot points, whereby all employees within a grade are paid the same salary.

As of the October 2024 pay award, 80% of employees are now on a spot salary, or at the bottom of their pay range. It is anticipated that this will have a positive impact on next year's pay gap report.

Forestry Commission Women's staff network

The Forestry Commission's Women's Staff Network was launched in November 2022 and has over 230 members in its Teams channel. The network has hosted over 20 events and also has a Forestry Flushes menopause support Teams group.

It is a safe space to discuss everything from women in leadership to period health, along with supporting each other with ideas to help alleviate 'stress buckets', like sharing favourite reads and wellbeing tips.

In the last year, the network has also contributed to policies and guidance to make sure women are fairly considered, represented and catered for in organisational decision making. These have included the new menopause policy, updated welfare guidance and a new pregnancy loss guidance.

Forestry Commission staff engagement survey 2024

Every two years we carry out a staff engagement survey across the Forestry Commission.

The results of the survey, run by an independent, external provider, helps us to understand what makes the Forestry Commission a great place to work and where we need to make improvements.

All the work carried out in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion since the Staff Engagement Survey 2022, have no doubt helped to improve the diversity and inclusion scores in the Staff Engagement Survey 2024, for every relevant question (except for the awareness of our whistleblowing policy which dropped to 77% (-5)).

This includes the number of participants agreeing that:

- Their business area has a culture where discriminatory treatment, harassment and bullying are not tolerated – 77% (+4)
- They can report discrimination/bullying/harassment without worrying it would have a negative impact on them – 71% (+5)
- They are treated fairly at work – 85% (+4)
- Their business area respects individual differences – 82% (+4)
- Their business area makes them feel included – 76% (+3)

The results for women in particular were promising and scores were above the organisation average in several categories.

Notably, this includes the number of women agreeing that:

- They are proud to tell others they are part of their business area – 80% (+7 compared to the Forestry Commission overall)
- They feel valued for the work they do – 70% (+8 compared to the Forestry Commission overall)
- Their business area makes them feel included – 81% (+6 compared to the Forestry Commission overall)
- They can thrive and be the best version of themselves – 69% (+5 compared to the Forestry Commission overall)
- They have seen change in the last 12 months – 47% (+5 compared to the Forestry Commission overall)

Women's scores were also more than 4% points higher than the overall FC scores in relation to:

- Confidence in their executive teams
- Pay and benefits
- Health and wellbeing

The results were discussed with members of the women's staff network, and we will continue to work with the network to further improve the experiences of female staff especially with regards to professional development and leadership development.

Policies and Procedures

Through the application of our policies and procedures we are continuously striving to reduce the gender pay gap. For example, we have been considering the language used in job adverts across the board but particularly in senior roles. We want to widen the pool of who applies for senior roles.

In Forest Research, there are science promotion procedures. We are ensuring that the panel is balanced, and checks are made at each stage of the process to check for fairness (e.g. part time working/career breaks).

In light of the Workers Protection Act 2023 recently coming into effect, we have updated our Harassment and Bullying policy to include additional guidance on preventing sexual harassment. The revised policy:

- defines sexual harassment, providing some examples to help identify unacceptable behaviours.
- reminds staff that some concerns may be addressed informally in the first instance.
- outlines the available routes for raising formal complaints and explains how these will be handled under our Dispute Resolution policy.

The Workers Protection Act 2023 introduced new employer responsibilities which came into effect on 26 October 2024. The Act requires employers to take active steps to safeguard employees and strengthen existing protections against workplace sexual harassment.

To support the changes, we will be introducing training to help staff to understand and be confident about their role in preventing sexual harassment and fostering a positive work environment for everyone.

Everyone Belongs Board

The Everyone Belongs Board was launched in July 2023 with engaged members passionate about championing diversity and inclusion within the organisation.

The Everyone Belongs Board provides oversight, assurance and co-ordination of the Forestry Commission's compliance with Equality, Diversity and Inclusion legal and government requirements and championing a culture where everyone is welcome and included.

The programmes cover staff, visitors, communities and other stakeholders, and includes:

- Ensuring the Forestry Commission's compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty
- Supporting the delivery of the Forestry Commission's Inclusion Strategy
- Supporting the delivery of the Forests for Everyone programme

Diversity and Inclusion training

Forestry Commission staff have access to a workshop called Creating an inclusive workplace. This is a half-day session delivered by the Diversity and Wellbeing Manager and the Forests for Everyone Community Programme Manager.

The training covers a range of topics including unconscious bias, gender stereotypes, microaggressions, privilege, allyship inclusive language and diversity in recruitment.

This will ensure that all employees understand the importance of diversity within their teams and will challenge any bias stereotypes or discrimination, including around gender.

Inclusion Ambassadors

We currently have 32 Inclusion Ambassadors (plus 7 Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination Ambassadors at Forest Research) who have been trained to tackle both conscious and unconscious discrimination and promote inclusion using regular 'conversation starters' to increase knowledge and understanding of diversity alongside inclusive practice.

Leadership and management development

Our Professional Manager Programme (PMP) launched in September 2019 continues to support the growth of future leaders for the organisation. Its aim is to provide a consistent approach to leadership and management development, thus advancing opportunities for all. Open to managers at pay bands 5, 5 ops, 4 and 3, the Professional Manager Programme has been designed for the Forestry Commission, taking the very best in tools, materials and facilitator input the market has to offer.

Due regard has been paid to ensure balanced gender representation for both nominees and mentors participating in the programme. The programme presents an opportunity to nurture the leadership skills of women in the lower and middle quartile pay bands.

The PMP includes an Equally Yours Equality, Diversity and Inclusion session and an Inclusive Leadership workshop as core elements of the programme.

In addition, the Forestry Commission has three female staff members engaged in Forestry Commission/ Defra talent programmes with one of them also making it to the last three in the Civil Service rising star awards which recognises the potential of someone in the first five years of their Civil Service career.

The schemes in question are the Board placement schemes for Forestry England and Forest Services, and the Defra Aspire ethnic minority development programme.

Improving representation

We are continuing to improve representation by ensuring our digital assets for job advert campaigns, web pages, social media etc. include staff from diverse backgrounds, especially women.

Conclusion

The Forestry Commission remains committed to reducing the gender pay gap and fostering an inclusive workplace. While the median pay gap is 0%, the slight increase in the mean pay gap to 2.96% reinforces the need for ongoing action.

Progress is evident through increased female representation and initiatives such as leadership development, and the FC Women's Staff Network. Staff engagement survey results show positive impacts, particularly for women. Moving forward, the Forestry Commission will continue to refine its strategies to ensure equality, diversity, and inclusion remain central to its culture.