Ministry of Defence

UK Armed Forces Gender Pay Gap

Reporting Year 2025

Figure 1 - Military Personnel at Whitehall, London.

26 March 2026

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Headlines

The UK national median gender pay gap in 2025 was **12.8%, down** from **13.1%** in 2024. The UK Armed Forces compare favourably with this:

UK Armed Forced Gender Pay Gap

Median pay gap of **-0.01%**[1]**,** down **0.47 percentage points** from last year.

Mean pay gap of **-0.43%**, down **0.03 percentage points** from last year.

UK Armed Forces Gender Bonus Gap[2]

Median bonus gap of **0.00%,** no change from last year.

Mean bonus gap of **7.30%** in favour of male personnel**,** down by **12.57 percentage points** from **19.87%** last year.

Declaration

We confirm that data reported by the Ministry of Defence is accurate and has been calculated according to the requirements and methodology set out in the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017. Within those Regulations, the methodology adopted across government has been adjusted[3] so data is not directly comparable with previous years.

Jeremy Pocklington
Ministry of Defence Permanent Secretary

Esther Wallington
Director General People

[1] Percentages are rounded to 2 decimal places. Changes in percentages are calculated on unrounded data therefore percentage point changes quoted in the tables and text may not always be the same as differences calculated from the rounded figures shown in the tables.

[2] The UK Armed Forces do not receive any performance related bonus. However, there are payments which fall within the definition of a bonus in the 2017 Gender Pay Gap Regulation for more details see p.7.

[3] Methodology is described in Statutory Guidance.

Introduction

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has prepared this report as part of the legal requirement for public authorities to publish their gender pay gap on an annual basis.

In 2017 the Government introduced world-leading legislation that made it a statutory requirement for organisations with 250 or more employees to report annually on their gender pay gap. The legislation underpins the Public Sector Equality Duty and requires relevant organisations to publish their gender pay gap by 30 March annually. This includes the median[4] and mean[5] gender pay gaps and gender bonus gaps; the proportions of male and female employees who received bonuses; and the proportions of male and female employees in each pay quartile.

Since the first publication of the Gender Pay Gap report in 2017, there has been an initial increase and then reduction in the median gender pay gap within the Armed Forces, from **0.22%** in **2017** to **2.30%** in **2020** to **0.46%** in **2024** and mean gender pay gap from **0.93%** in **2017** to **2.20%** in **2020** to **-0.03%** in **2024**. More detailed information is contained in Annex A. The initial increase in pay gap from 2017 to 2020 reflects the UK Armed Forces base-fed recruitment model; efforts to increase the proportion of women in the Armed Forces will initially increase the proportion of lower paid women. However, as an increasing proportion of women has moved up the ranks the pay gap has decreased, initiatives that improve retention will have contributed to this trend.

This report fulfils the Department's reporting requirement and outlines our commitment to close the gender pay gap, covering the period from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

What is the Gender Pay Gap?

The gender pay gap[6] is different to the equal pay gap which relates to the pay differences between men and women who carry out the same or similar jobs or work of equal value. Under UK Law it is illegal to pay people differently simply because of their gender[7]. Gender pay gap shows the difference in the average pay between all men and women in a workforce, regardless of any differences in the work they do and as such can be influenced by how the workforce is made up (incl. profession, grade, location etc).

The gender pay gap is also based on hourly pay excluding overtime. This is calculated in line with the Armed Forces Continuous Working Pattern Survey[8] and the 2017 gender pay gap regulations. Hourly pay is the sum of ordinary pay[9] and any bonus pay (including any pro-rated bonus pay) that was paid in the pay period which ends on the snapshot date of 31 March 2025.

[4] The median average is the middle number in a sorted dataset, taken as the average of the two middle numbers when the sequence has an even number of numbers.

[5] The mean average is found by calculating the sum of the values and dividing by the number of values.

[6] Within this Report we use the terms male and female and man and woman interchangeably, aligning with statistical reporting and the Gender Pay Gap regulations.

[7] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gender-pay-gap-reporting-guidance-for-employers/overview

[8] CWP is used to determine the hours worked within each service, that then helps us to determine the hourly rate for personnel - CWP Survey

[9] Based on guidance from the Cabinet Office on Gender Pay Gap, calculations are calculated off Ordinary Pay.

Organisational context

Strategic approach

The Armed Forces operate in an environment that is evolving with unprecedented speed. The strategic landscape is increasingly complex and contested, with diverse and persistent threats that will continue shaping the character of conflict in the years ahead. To meet these challenges, we must build a force that is agile, resilient, and equipped with the broadest range of skills drawn from across UK society.

Central to this is our commitment to becoming a more equal, inclusive, and modern employer. As reinforced in the Strategic Defence Review 2025, a force that reflects the diversity of the nation is essential to operational effectiveness. Ensuring that everyone, regardless of background can contribute and thrive strengthens our capability, enhances decision making, and underpins the security, stability, and prosperity of the United Kingdom.

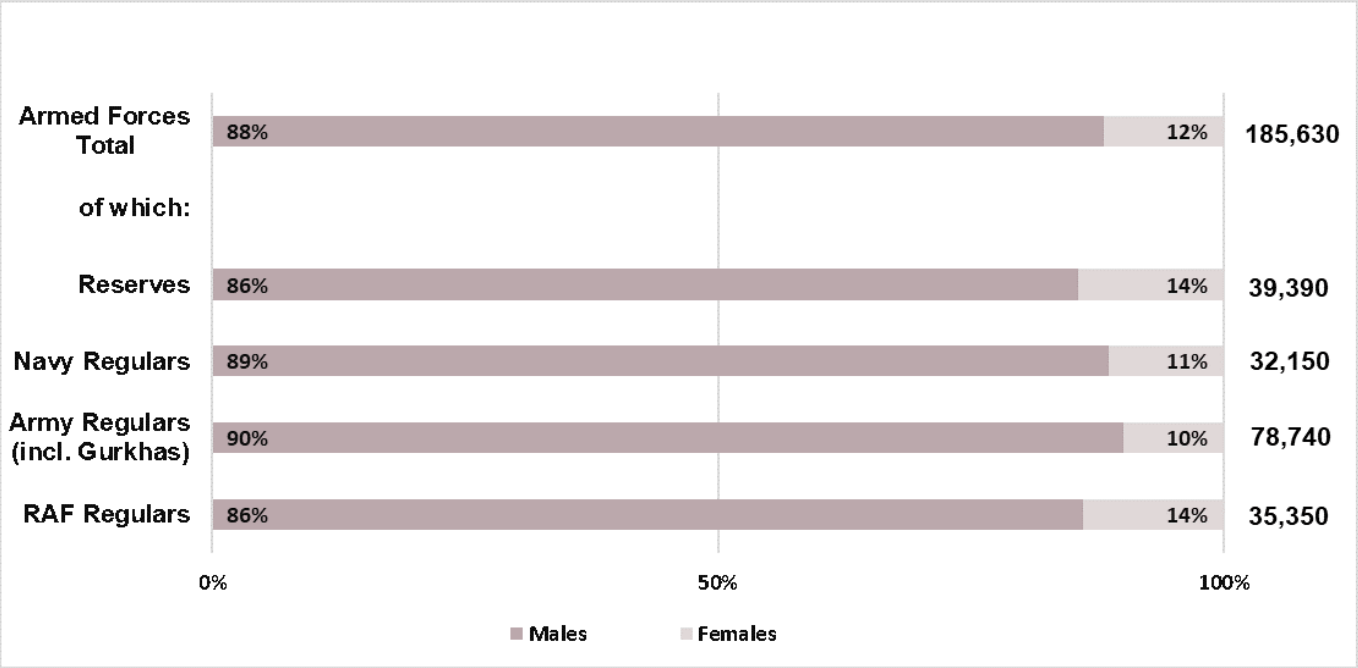
An important component of our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2018-2030 is making inclusion part of 'business as usual'. Defence has achieved this by integrating the Public Sector Equality Duty and embedding it within our leadership and culture so that we increase the retention and progression of people from under-represented groups.

The MOD is committed to ensuring everyone is treated with dignity, respect, and professionalism irrespective of gender. While we have made encouraging progress to improve Diversity and Inclusion, reports including the House of Commons Defence Committee Inquiry into Women in the Armed Forces, the Wigston Review, the Gray Report into Unacceptable Behaviours and the Haythornthwaite Review have highlighted we still have more to do to deliver essential cultural change.

Figure 2 - Royal Navy Servicewoman from HMS DRAKE.

Organisational structure

The UK Armed Forces is defined as: **Royal Navy** and **Royal Marines**, **Army (including Gurkhas)**, **Royal Air Force.** These all include the respective **Reserve**[10] **forces**. Cadet Force Adult Volunteers and University personnel are excluded from the report.



Graph 1. Gender ratio of UK Armed Forces personnel by Service, as at 31 March 2025

- As of 31 March 2025, the UK Armed Forces personnel headcount was 185,630.
- Only those on full pay are used to conduct this pay gap analysis. This population is approximately 165,250 Service personnel.

Figure 3 – A member of the UK Armed Forces Woman's Football Team.

[10] Reserves are defined by personnel that are within; Volunteer Reserves, FTRS, Additional Duties Commitment, MPGS, NRPS, Navy-Marines Non-Reg FTRS, High Readiness Reserve, Called Out Reservist, LEP-Gib Regt, LEP-Gib Regt VR, Sponsored Reserve. Definitions can be found within the Glossary of Terms."

UK Armed Forces Gender Pay Gap

Median Gender Pay Gap:

0.01% in favour of female personnel, down **0.47 percentage points**.

Mean Gender Pay Gap:

0.43% in favour of female personnel, down **0.03 percentage points**.
This difference equates to less than **1p** per hour between men and women.

For the financial year 2024/2025, there is a **median pay gap of 0.01%** in favour of female personnel, a decrease of **0.47 percentage points** from financial year 2023/2024. There is a **mean pay gap of 0.43%** in favour of female personnel, a change from **0.03%** pay gap in favour of female personnel last year.

There are several factors that could influence the size of the pay gap, and this report monitors such variables to explain the gap. The UK Armed Forces has a predominantly base-fed entry system. This means that most Service personnel[11] are recruited at the most junior rank, be that as Officers or Other Ranks[12].

Proportionally, there are more women in the Officer Ranks than in Other Ranks. In pay terms, Other Ranks represent the lower pay quartiles. Any drives to increase female representation will predominantly impact the Other Ranks, driving up the number of women in the lowest pay quartile which will in turn increase the overall UK Armed Forces gender pay gap. This would even out over the longer term as more women are promoted through service. Defence continues in its drive to recruit the very best people representing the society it serves, whilst also closely monitoring and working to reduce the gender pay gap where it exists.

Figure 4 - British Army stand ready for inspection on the parade square.

[11] A small number are recruited as Professionally Qualified Officers (Lawyers, Doctors etc) and enter some way up the organisational pyramid.

[12] Other Ranks in the Armed Forces refer to personnel who are not commissioned officers. The ranks for the Royal Navy and Royal Marines are: Warrant Officer Class 1 and 2, Chief Petty Officer, Colour Sergeant, Petty Officer, Sergeant, Leading Rate, Corporal, Lance Corporal and Able Rate. For Army, these ranks are: Warrant Officer Class 1 and 2, Staff Sergeant, Sergeant, Corporal, Lance Corporal and Private. For RAF, these ranks are: Warrant Officer, Flight Sergeant/Chief Technician, Sergeant, Corporal and Aviator.

UK Armed Forces Gender Bonus Gap

Median Gender Bonus Gap

a) **Median** bonus gap of **0.00%**, remained the same as last year.
b) **Median** bonus is at **£2,084** for men and women.

Mean Gender Bonus Gap

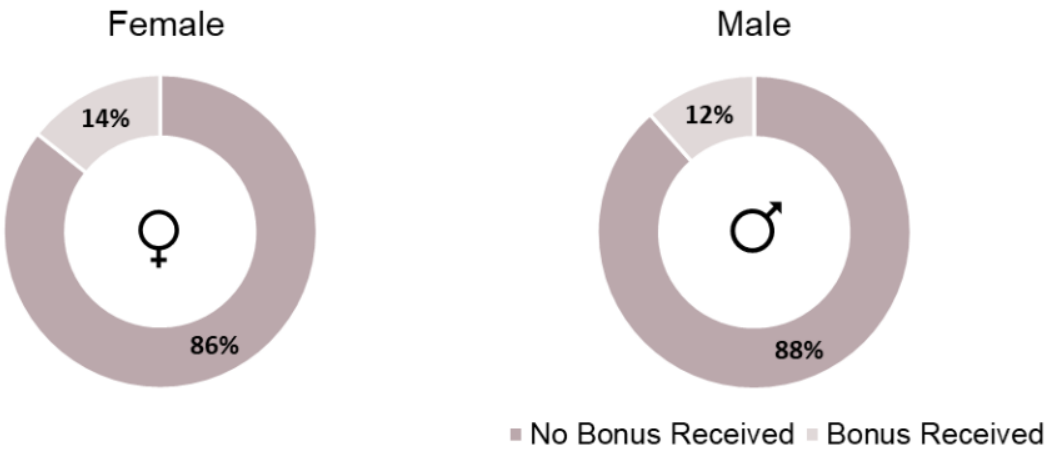
a) **Mean** bonus gap of **7.30%** in favour of men, down **12.57% percentage points**.
b) Men's **mean** bonus is **£259** more than women's at **£3,292**, compared to **£3,551**.

The UK Armed Forces do not receive any performance related bonuses. However, there are payments which fall within the definition of a bonus in the 2017 Gender Pay Gap Regulations.

The most common bonus payment received for Male UK Regular personnel is retro and non-retro "**Operational Allowance Discretionary**". For Female personnel the most common bonus received is retro and non-retro "**Operational Allowance**". Together these two bonuses account for approximately **50%** of bonuses received by UK Armed Forces Regular personnel. Operational allowances can be paid monthly while deployed (non-retro) or after a deployment (retro).

For UK Armed Forces Reserve Personnel, the most common bonus payment received for both women and men in the UK Reserve forces is the "**Annual Bounty Payment**[13]," accounting for almost **91%** of bonuses received by UK Armed Forces Reserve personnel.

For the financial year 2024/25, there is a **median bonus gap of 0.00%**, unchanged from last year. For the financial year 2024/25, there is a **mean bonus pay gap of 7.30%** in favour of male personnel, showing a decrease of **12.57** percentage points from financial year 2023/24. The percentage of male (**11.53%**) and female (**14.31%**) personnel receiving a bonus has decreased by **1.06 percentage points** and **1.14 percentage points** respectively since 2023/24.



[13] Annual Bounty Payment is to encourage Volunteer Reserve personnel to complete specified annual attendance and training requirements. Reserve Bounties are applicable to all Volunteer Reserve personnel who meet the eligibility criteria.

Graph 2. Proportion of UK Armed Forces by gender who received a bonus.

Although women receive proportionally more bonus payments than men, the value of these bonus payments is lower, the presence of a mean bonus gap reflects the fact that higher bonus payments are made to professions where women are heavily under-represented e.g. medical officers, pilots, engineers, submariners. All roles in the Armed Forces are now open to women, including those which receive the higher value payment.

Figure 4 - Royal Air Force fast jet aircrew member flying high.

Gender Pay Quartiles

The gender pay quartiles data shows the proportion of men and women in each pay quartile (Graph 3) when Service personnel (both Regular and Reserve) are arranged in order of hourly pay rate (see **Annex B** for long term trends).

Female representation in all but the lowest pay quartile has increased since last year's Armed Forces Gender Pay Gap Report, showing the progress of women through the UK Armed Forces rank structure. The changes in the quartiles are shown below:

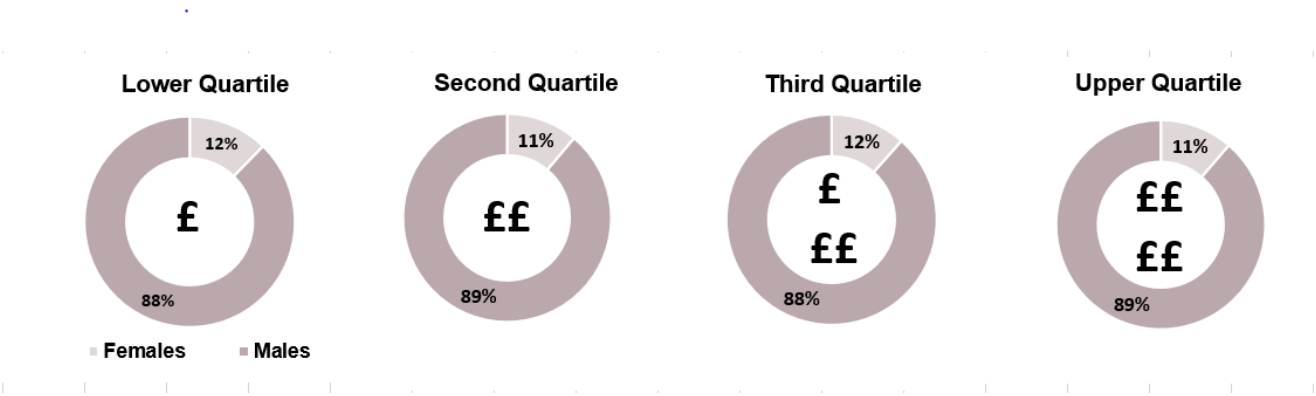
a) The proportion of female personnel in the **first** (lower) quartile **decreased** by **0.29 percentage points**.

b) The proportion of female personnel in the **second** (lower middle) quartile **increased** by **0.19 percentage points**.

c) The proportion of female personnel in the **third** (upper middle) quartile **increased** by **0.16 percentage points**.

d) The proportion of female personnel in the **fourth** (highest) quartile **increased** by **0.34 percentage points**, the highest increase across all pay quartiles.

For the UK Armed Forces, pay scales are a function of rank, seniority and qualification and are gender blind. However, the Armed Forces is **88% male and 12% female,** and the MOD recognises that more needs to be done to recruit, progress and retain women. Work is already ongoing to address this (see Targeted Actions).



Graph 3. Percentage of UK Armed Forces Male and Female personnel in each pay quartile.

Targeted Action

The MOD is committed to continuing to create an inclusive culture for women to thrive and progress in their career and to receive the financial reward they deserve.

Recruitment

The Armed Forces continue to deliver outreach and recruitment programmes designed to increase the number of women joining. This ambition is supported through improved support to candidates during the application process, running targeted marketing campaigns, increasing the representation of women in recruiting teams, and increasing capacity for female recruits in training establishments.

Flexible Service

a) The single Services have introduced new measures to improve women's recruitment, retention and progression, including targeted mentoring schemes, and initiatives across the Royal Navy and RAF to reduce barriers and support career development.

b) The Flexible Workforce Programme continues to support GPG objectives by strengthening Defence's ability to attract, retain and progress diverse talent through more agile workforce structures. Recent initiatives including the Armed Forces Offer survey and the expansion of the ZigZag Career Pilot, are providing critical insight and new pathways that enhance flexibility, widen access to specialist skills, and help address structural barriers impacting women's career progression.

c) The Armed Forces has offered a range of Flexible Working opportunities[14] since April 2019. In financial year 2024/2025, 497 Service personnel and their families benefited from Flexible Service, while thousands benefit from Alternative Working Arrangements each year. New figures from January 2026 show that a larger proportion of women are use Flexible Working than men.

d) The RAF has recently completed a 12-month campaign promoting Flexible Working, highlighting its benefits and encouraging uptake among personnel. Building on this success, the Army is planning to recommend a similar media campaign to raise awareness of Flexible Working opportunities. With the Flexible Working Policy review nearing final approval, this creates an ideal opportunity to align these efforts and further support and promote the policy across Defence

Childcare, Health and Wellbeing

a) Since the introduction of the UK Wraparound Childcare scheme in 2022, some 14,300 Service children have benefited from funded, high-quality childcare, with further global support delivered through the Wraparound Childcare Overseas (WACO) scheme in 2025 and the Primary School Aged Childcare Overseas (PSACO) scheme in 2026, ensuring families can access and afford appropriate childcare despite the mobility of Service life.

[14] These include Alternative Working Arrangements such as Remote Working and Compressed Working; and Flexible Service which offers temporary part-time working, and/or limited separation, where operationally possible.

b) Defence has simultaneously strengthened health and wellbeing provision for Servicewomen through evidence-based resources such as the Servicewomen's Health Handbook and the MOD/Defence Perinatal Handbook, offering guidance on fitness, nutrition, mental health, and recovery during pregnancy and postpartum.

c) Updated Breastfeeding and Menopause policies better equip managers to support personnel and foster healthier workplace cultures, while practical steps, such as the introduction of the Urinary Support Device and expanded Menstrual Supply Box provision across Defence sites address challenges in managing personal health in austere environments.

Female Optimisation Work

To build on earlier improvements around female uniform, equipment and health and wellbeing, the Female Optimisation Working Group has been established, drawing together stakeholders across Defence to focus on equipment, uniform, and health measures that enable female personnel to deliver operational outputs and focuses on;

a) Equipment and Workplace Protection – to include actions on body armour provision and other Personal Protective Equipment.

b) Support and Care – to encompass pastoral care, health, wellbeing and links to Raising our Standards.

c) Training, Optimisation and Loading – to include links to arduous training guide, nutrition and physiology.

Raising our Standards Programme

The Raising our Standards (RoS) Programme, established in September 2024, forms a central part of Defence's drive to strengthen culture, behaviours and professionalism across the organisation. It brings coherence to activity underway across the Department, providing constructive challenge and targeted support to ensure all areas of Defence uphold the highest standards expected of a modern, inclusive, and values-driven organisation. As a pan-Defence initiative operating through a federated model, RoS Programme enables change by empowering others, working across Services, Commands and enabling organisations to embed positive behaviours and improve the lived experience for everyone in Defence. Its work is closely aligned to Defence's wider reform agenda, including the Strategic Defence Review, ensuring consistency with broader strategic objectives and the future direction of Defence.

All activity delivered under the RoS Programme is expected to align with its aims, objectives and five pillars of encapsulating training, leadership, communications, behaviours and data, demonstrating applicability at the Whole Force level. As with all Defence programmes, the RoS Programme shows a commitment to value for money, ensuring that improvements to culture and behaviour are delivered efficiently, sustainably and with measurable impact across Defence.

Senior Leadership

As at **October 2025**, Senior female representation at OF6+ ranks has risen to **10.1**% of Regular Service Personnel and there are now **11** female Regular Service Personnel at 2* rank and above (OF7+), the number of Regular & Reserve female personnel in the feeder group (OF5 to OF6) has nearly doubled from **92** in **October 2018** to **178** in **October 2025.** This reflects the growing normality of seeing senior female leaders in varied and demanding roles across the

Armed Forces, proof of the impact of visible role models such as Vice Chief of the Defence Staff. Of note, the Army has just celebrated having a woman in every rank for the first time.

Talent Programmes

Defence's Women in the Armed Forces Talent Programme is specifically focused on increasing the number of senior female officers at OF7 (2*). This targeted initiative seeks to address gender imbalance at higher ranks by supporting professional development and advancement opportunities for women approaching or at the two-star level.

Staff Networks

Within MOD's large workforce, peer support is provided through gender specific focused employee support staff networks across Defence, with Armed Forces and Civil Service gender champions and advocates to ensure a range of views and experiences are heard at senior levels.

Annex A – Gender Pay and Bonus Gap

Table A1: UK Armed Forces Gender pay and bonus gap summary for 2023-24 and 2024-25 using new methodology.

		2023/24	2024/25	pp change
Median Gender Pay Gap		0.46%	-0.01%	-0.47%
Mean Gender Pay Gap		-0.03%	-0.43%	-0.4%
Median Gender Bonus Gap		0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Mean Gender Bonus Gap		19.87%	7.30%	-12.57%
Proportion of male and female employees paid a bonus	Male	12.59%	11.53%	-1.06%
	Female	15.45%	14.31%	-1.14%

Table A2: UK National and UK Armed Forces pay and bonus gap historic summary from 2017-18 to 2023-24 using old methodology.

		2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
UK National Median Gender Pay Gap		18.40%	17.80%	17.40%	14.90%	15.10%	14.40%	14.20%
UK National Mean Gender Pay Gap		17.20%	17.20%	16.30%	13.90%	14.70%	13.40%	13.20%
UK Armed Forces Median Gender Pay Gap		0.22%	0.09%	0.46%	0.78%	2.3%	1.54%	1.36%
UK Armed Forces Mean Gender Pay Gap		0.93%	0.81%	0.88%	1.23%	2.2%	1.97%	1.08%
UK Armed Forces Median Gender Bonus Gap		0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	3.47%	0.0%	0.00%	0.00%
UK Armed Forces Mean Gender Bonus Gap		7.88%	11.12%	18.03%	15.17%	12.2%	15.84%	17.72%
Proportion of male and female employees paid a bonus	Male	20.09%	21.25%	20.33%	24.51%	21.4%	15.60%	13.99%
	Female	23.89%	24.16%	23.35%	25.59%	23.0%	17.98%	16.59%

Note: percentage point changes are based on raw figures.

Source: Gender Pay Gap in the UK.

Annex B – UK Armed Forces Pay Quartiles

Table B1: Proportion of male and female employees in each pay quartile 2023/25 and 2024/25.

Quartile	2023-24	2023-24	2024/25	2024/25	Female percentage point change
	Female (F) %	Male (M) %	Female (F) %	Male (M) %	
First (lower) quartile	12.24	87.76	11.95	88.05	-0.29%
Second quartile	11.14	88.86	11.33	88.67	+0.19%
Third quartile	11.60	88.40	11.76	88.24	+0.16%
Fourth (upper) quartile	11.30	88.70	11.64	88.36	+0.34%

Table B2: Proportion of male and female employees in each pay quartile 2017 – 2024

Quartile	2017 – 2018	2017 – 2018	2018-2019	2018-2019	2019-2020	2019 - 2020	2020 - 2021	2020 - 2021	2021 - 2022	2021 - 2022	2022 - 2023	2022 - 2023	2023 - 2024	2023 - 2024
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
First (lower) quartile	89%	11%	89%	11%	89%	12%	87.48%	12.52%	87.64%	12.36%	87.39%	12.61%	87.39%	12.61%
Second quartile	90%	10%	90%	10%	90%	11%	89.35%	10.65%	89.17%	10.83%	88.96%	11.04%	88.96%	11.04%
Third quartile	90%	10%	90%	10%	90%	11%	89.43%	10.47%	89.13%	10.87%	88.85%	11.15%	88.85%	11.15%
Fourth (upper) quartile	90%	10%	90%	10%	90%	11%	89.42%	10.58%	89.28%	10.72%	88.96%	11.04%	88.96%	11.04%

Note: percentage point changes are based on raw figures.