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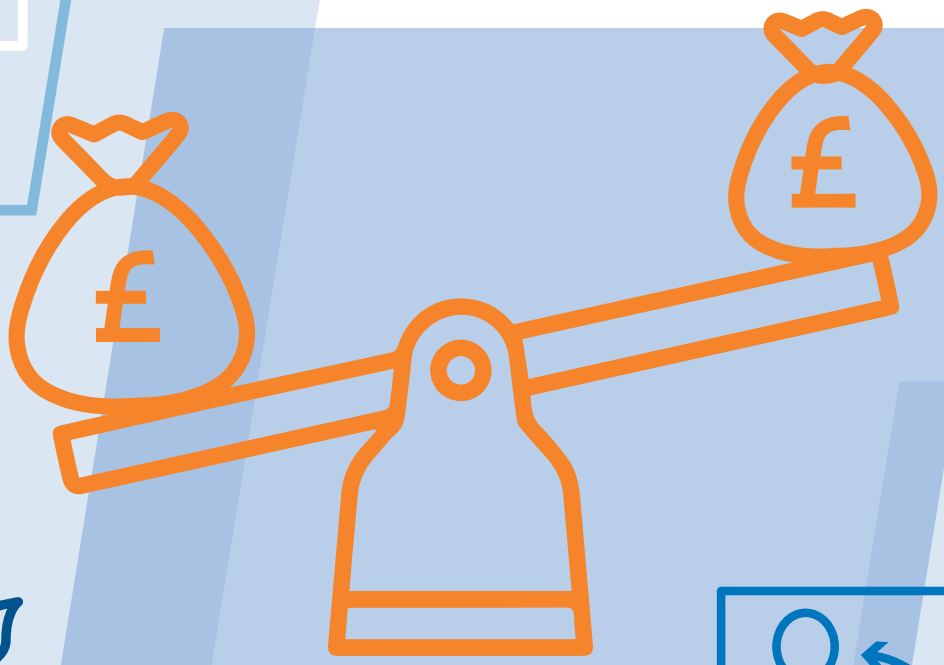







Intersectional Pay Gaps in Higher Education 2023-24

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Foreword

As highlighted by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), the gender pay gap is a longstanding phenomenon with complex causes. Social pressures and norms influence gender roles and often shape the types of occupations and career paths which men and women follow and their working patterns; with women being more likely to work part-time or take career breaks all of which impacts on their level of pay. Of course, pay gaps exist not only across gender but also across ethnicity and disability. Pay gaps can intersect across protected characteristics and provide a cumulative disadvantage.

With this in mind, we are delighted to present UCEA's fifth annual report on Intersectional Pay Gaps in Higher Education, which provides a detailed analysis of gender, ethnicity, disability and intersectional pay gaps to summarise the excellent progress that is being made in the sector to reduce pay gaps. This report seeks to provide Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) with a better understanding of how the interaction of gender and ethnicity affects pay equality as well as help them to identify their successes and areas for further focus.

Pay gaps data should, of course, not be considered in isolation from its relevant context. To address this issue, different elements of the Employee Experience must be linked. That is why our survey continues to ask HEIs about local action planning across four thematic areas: recruitment, promotion, employment policy, and organisational culture. This year's report details for a second time HEIs' voluntarily reporting of disability pay gap data. As such, this year's report shows that the higher education sector is well prepared for the Equality (Race and Disability) Bill which proposes the extension of statutory reporting of gender pay gaps to both ethnicity and disability pay gaps.

This year, a total of 107 HEIs participated in the survey, representing a continued commitment from three-fifths of UCEA's membership, showing the importance that HEIs place on our findings. *Promoting inclusion and sharing the steps HEIs can take to reduce the gender, ethnicity and disability pay gaps* remains a particular focus of UCEA's Strategic Plan (within employee experience, priority 1). We continue to work to produce case studies which reflect members' pay gap journeys, as well as from organisations outside our sector, to share learning with our wider membership.

It is heartening that the trends reported in the survey continue to be on a downward trajectory and that pay gap reporting from HEIs compares favourably with that for the wider economy:

- The median gender pay gap in higher education was 11.5%, which is substantially lower than the median pay gap in the wider economy (13.1% in 2024);
- The median ethnicity pay gap in higher education stands at 4.8% in 2024, which remains considerably lower than the median ethnicity pay gap when the survey was first introduced (5.8% in 2020);
- At the median HEI, the median disability pay gap is 8.2%, which compares favourably with the median disability pay gap in the wider economy (12.7%).

For a fifth consecutive year, the analysis provides unique insights into intersectional pay gaps across the sector. Gender pay gaps exist within ethnic groups and ethnicity pay gaps exist within genders. When compared to white men, the median pay gap experienced by ethnic minority women (16.3%) is wider than the median pay gaps experienced by ethnic minority

men (7.3%) and white women (13.0%), all relative to white men. When analysed by the five detailed ethnicity groups, the largest median pay gap between intersectional groups is that between white men and black women (20.7%).

We recommend that UCEA members continue to benchmark their pay gap data through our online interactive dashboard, which enables institutions to benchmark their pay gaps against the sector as well as institutions grouped by region, institution type and mission group. This interactive platform now reports on disability pay gaps as well as time series data for gender and ethnicity pay gaps.

UCEA's annual infographics, Examining the gender pay gap in HE, will explain occupational segregation in the sector and present data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and HESA to illustrate the gender pay gap and its causes.

We thank our member institutions that participated in this report for making it possible to capture this valuable benchmarking data as a platform for the sector to continue to make measurable progress towards minimising any gaps - we look forward to finding ways of supporting you further in our shared endeavour to reduce sector pay gaps.

Professor Jane Harrington, UCEA Board member and Chair of UCEA's Pay gaps Reference group; Vice-Chancellor and CEO, University of Greenwich

Roshan Israni, Deputy Chief Executive, UCEA

Executive summary

- 107 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) responded to UCEA's fifth annual Intersectional Pay Gaps in Higher Education survey, representing three-fifths of UCEA membership.
- This report presents data on ethnicity, disability and intersectional pay gaps in higher education. The UK Government has consulted employers on its draft Equality (Race and Disability) Bill, asking how incoming legislation on mandatory ethnicity and disability pay gap reporting should work in principle.
- This report includes data on action planning to close equality pay gaps, reporting initiatives across four thematic areas.
- 50 HEIs reported intersectional pay gaps data for five detailed ethnicity categories, reporting equality pay data for Asian, black, mixed ethnicity, white and other staff.
- In addition to gender and ethnicity pay gaps, a total of 73 HEIs voluntarily reported data about the disclosure of disabilities and disability pay gaps data to UCEA.

Gender pay gaps

- As of March 2024, the median gender pay gap in higher education is 11.5%. This remains lower than the median pay gap in the wider economy (13.1% in 2024;[1]). The mean gender pay gap in higher education is 13.6%, with this being lower than wider economy figure (13.8%).
- Three HEIs reported median gender pay gaps in favour of women and a further ten reported a median gender pay gap of between 0% and 5%.
- The median gender pay gap continues to close in higher education, down from 12.0% in 2023. The ONS, which calculates pay gaps from HMRC pay roll data, reported a median gender pay gap for higher education of 11.1% for 2024 and 10.3% for 2025.
- HEIs in London and the South East tended to have lower median pay gaps, as in UCEA's previous reporting. This is notable as, in the wider economy, the median gender pay gap tends to be larger in London than in other regions.
- 11.4% of women in the sector received bonuses, with this being greater than the proportion of men receiving bonuses (10.7%).
- The median gender bonus gap (excluding Clinical Impact Awards) stands at 11.7% with this statistic having increased since 2023 (7.1%).
- For both hourly pay and bonus gaps, the mean gender pay gap tended to be higher than the median gender pay gap. This is unsurprising as the median of hourly and bonus pay is less sensitive to outliers than the mean.

Ethnicity pay gaps

- The Government recently consulted employers on how it should extend statutory pay gap reporting to ethnicity and disability through its draft Equality (Race and Disability) Bill.
- Mandatory ethnicity pay gap reporting is likely to require employers with 250 employees or more to report data for as many ethnic groups as they can. It is expected that reporting will use the same six statistics as gender pay gap reporting, all of which

[1] Gender pay gap in the UK: 2025, ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings

are presented within this report. Given that 50 HEIs reported pay gaps data for five ethnicity groups and 57 did so for two groups, the sector is well prepared for the introduction of this legislation.

- The median ethnicity pay gap in higher education is 4.7% for 2024. While this remains lower than UCEA's initial reporting of ethnicity pay gaps in the sector (5.8% in 2020), the figure has increased since last year's reporting (3.9%).
- Compared to last year, 41 HEIs reported a median ethnicity pay gap that was the same or lower than in 2023.
- In 2024, a total of 25 HEIs reported an ethnicity pay gap that was in favour of ethnic minorities and a further sixteen reported a median ethnicity pay gap of zero.
- Data reporting for five ethnicity groups shows the importance of considering granular data regarding ethnicity pay gaps in the sector. While black staff experience the largest pay gaps in the sector (10.0% at the median and 13.9% at the mean), there is a median ethnicity pay gap of -1.0% in favour of staff from other ethnic backgrounds (i.e. staff who are not Asian, black, mixed ethnicity or white). For all ethnicities, the median ethnicity pay gap is lower than the median gender pay gap.
- While 13% of white staff received a bonus, only 10% of ethnic minority staff received bonuses.
- This year's survey showed considerable ethnicity bonus gaps in favour of ethnic minority staff (-44.2% at the median and -14.7% at the mean).
- One in ten staff in HE received a bonus: ethnic minority staff represent a fifth of these individuals. Across HEIs, there is variation in the value of bonuses and the proportion of staff that receive them. HEIs that awarded bonuses with higher median values or that awarded most of their staff a bonus represent outliers in the data.
- As fewer ethnic minority staff received bonuses than white staff, these outliers increase the average bonus of ethnic minority staff more than the average for white staff. This partially explains why there is an ethnicity bonus gap in favour of ethnic minority staff.

Intersectional pay gaps

- UCEA has taken an intersectional approach to equality pay gaps in the sector since 2018, publishing Caught at the Crossroads. The current survey format has captured five years of data, enabling a detailed analysis of how pay differs across these groups.
- Where sample sizes allow, the analysis exhibits the importance of analysing pay gaps through an intersectional lens. This approach shows that gender pay gaps exist within ethnicity groups and that ethnicity pay gaps exist within genders.
- This analysis shows that the median pay of men is greater than that of women of the same ethnicity. The median pay of white staff is greater than that of ethnic minority staff of the same gender.
- When compared to white men, the median pay gap experienced by ethnic minority women is 16.3%. This is larger than the median pay gaps experienced by ethnic minority men (7.3%) and by white women (13.1%).
- When considering five ethnicity groups, the largest median pay gap is that between white men and black women (20.7%). This compares to the smallest median intersectional pay gap, which is 6.3% between white men and Asian men.

- While white women experience a median bonus gap of 12.5% relative to white men, the data shows median bonus gaps in favour of both ethnic minority men (-36.8%) and ethnic minority women (-29.8%).
- Data on detailed ethnicity groups gives further insights into intersectional bonus gaps. The largest median bonus gap is that in favour of black men (-145%, compared to white men). The smallest median intersectional bonus gap is that in favour of Asian women (-27.3%) compared to white men.
- As some intersectional groups have small numbers of staff in receipt of a bonus, outliers in the data can affect the average bonus that is reported in this analysis. These outliers increase the average bonus of ethnic minority men and women more than that of white men and women. This partially explains the positive bonus gaps in favour of these groups.

Disability pay gaps

- The Government consultation on the draft Equality (Race and Disability) Bill will likely require all employers with 250 employees or more to report disability pay gaps.
- When it is introduced, disability pay gap reporting is expected to consider the same six statistics as gender pay gap reporting and to make use of the Equality Act 2010 definition of disability.
- 73 HEIs voluntarily reported one or more statistics relating to the disclosure of disability as well as hourly pay and bonuses by disability status.
- Across a sample of 70 HEIs, UCEA estimates that 8% of the HE workforce has declared a disability, 76% declared no disability, and 16% did not disclose this information.
- 68 HEIs reported their disability pay gap. At the median HEI, the median disability pay gap is 8.2% while the mean disability pay gap is 8.3%. Seven HEIs reported a median disability pay gap that was either 0% or in favour of disabled staff. The median disability pay gap in the wider economy is 12.7%.
- 45 HEIs reported on the proportion of staff in receipt of a bonus by disability status while 36 reported disability bonus gaps. At a local level, the proportion of disabled and non-disabled staff in receipt of a bonus tended to be similar. While the median HEI reported a median disability bonus gap of 0.0%, the mean disability bonus gap was 18.5%.

Pay gaps action planning

- By collating responses across the current and previous Intersectional Pay Gaps surveys, UCEA can now report on the local action planning from 119 HEIs to tackle equality pay gaps. The survey considered actions across four thematic areas: recruitment, promotion, employment policy and organisational culture.
- With regard to recruitment, commonly adopted actions include using neutral language and promoting flexible working in job adverts, monitoring data on inclusion outcomes, making use of skills-based assessments and positive action to encourage diversity group to apply for roles.
- Actions to support career progression include mentoring and coaching, leadership programmes such as Aurora and StellarHE as well as internal reviews of the processes and criteria for promotion.

- In terms of employment policy, HEIs have tackled equality pay gaps by encouraging flexible working, conducting equal pay audits, and assessing their reward processes against protected characteristics.
- HEIs have fostered a positive organisational culture by delivering unconscious bias / EDI training, setting up staff networks and ensuring buy-in and accountability from senior leadership.

The statistics we report

Since 2017, employers with 250 or more employees have been required to report gender pay gap data[2]. The statistics in this report aim to align with statutory reporting requirements as closely as possible. This enables comparisons with employers outside the sector and reduces the administrative burden on HEIs. The CIPD has recommended reporting two figures which demonstrate that ethnicity representation is as important, and linked to, equality pay gaps[3] (see box below); we also collect and report these.

Hourly pay

Pay quarters
The staff population is split into four bands according to their pay (lower, lower-middle, upper-middle and upper quartiles). The proportion of individuals that belong in each quarter is reported as a percentage.

Median pay gap
Each staff member in an intersectional group is ordered by hourly pay rate. The median is the value in the middle of that list. The gap is the difference between the median hourly pay of one group compared to another.

Mean pay gap
The basic hourly rates of pay of each member of staff in the intersectional group are added together and divided by how many staff are in the group. The gap is the difference between the mean hourly pay of one group compared to another.

Bonus pay (as defined here, gov.uk)

Median bonus gap
Calculated as median hourly pay gap using the amount received as bonus. Only staff who received a bonus are included.

Mean bonus gap
Calculated as mean hourly pay gap, using the amount received as bonus. Only staff who received a bonus are included.

Bonus proportions
The proportion of each intersectional group who received a bonus.

Mean v median

The **median** orders all the data by size and chooses the middle figure. This is useful as it is more robust approach, taking account of outliers, meaning that it is less likely to be swayed by high paying institutions or highly paid individuals.

The **mean** adds together all the data points and divides by the number of data points. This is useful as each data point does affect the result, rather than reporting a single middle point. It is also valuable as you can calculate grand means from the means and counts of smaller groups.

Snapshot date

The data used in this report was taken as at:

31 March 2024

Extra statistics for ethnicity & disability pay gaps

Proportion of staff from ethnic minority backgrounds / with disabilities
This can be compared in the context of external demographic data to understand whether an employer is representative of the ethnic diversity in their locality or national level statistics indicating employment rates for disabled staff.

Proportion of staff who have disclosed their ethnicity / disability status
While employers must record the gender of staff for HMRC returns, ethnicity and disability data relies on information disclosed by staff. Low levels of disclosure lead to less accuracy in calculations of pay gap figures.

[2] Gender pay gap reporting: guidance for employers - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
[3] CIPD, Ethnicity Reporting Guide, 2025, www.cipd.org/uk/knowledge/guides/ethnicity-pay-reporting-guide/

Profile of respondents

We received responses from 107 HEIs with the following profile:

Number of ethnicity groups used in survey

Two groups:
57 HEIs

Five groups:
50 HEIs

Institution type

Pre-92 institutions:
55 HEIs
Post-92 institutions:
51 HEIs
Other:
1 HEI

Region

London and the South East: 37 HEIs
Rest of England: 55 HEIs
Scotland: 10 HEIs
Wales: 3 HEIs
Northern Ireland: 2 HEIs

Mission group

Russell Group: 23 HEIs
GuildHE: 10 HEIs
MillionPlus: 14 HEIs
University Alliance: 14 HEIs
Cathedrals Group: 11 HEIs
NB: *not all HEIs are in a mission group*

Income bands

Up to £40m: 3 HEIs
£40m to £100m: 11 HEIs
£100m to £150m: 10 HEIs
£150m to £200m: 10 HEIs
£200m to £280m: 25 HEIs
£280m to £400m: 17 HEIs
Over £400m: 31 HEIs

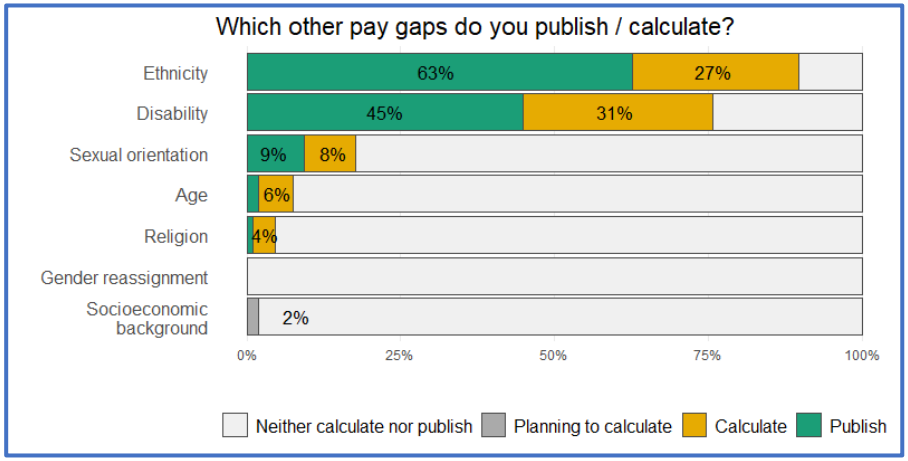
Medical schools

With medical schools:
42 HEIs

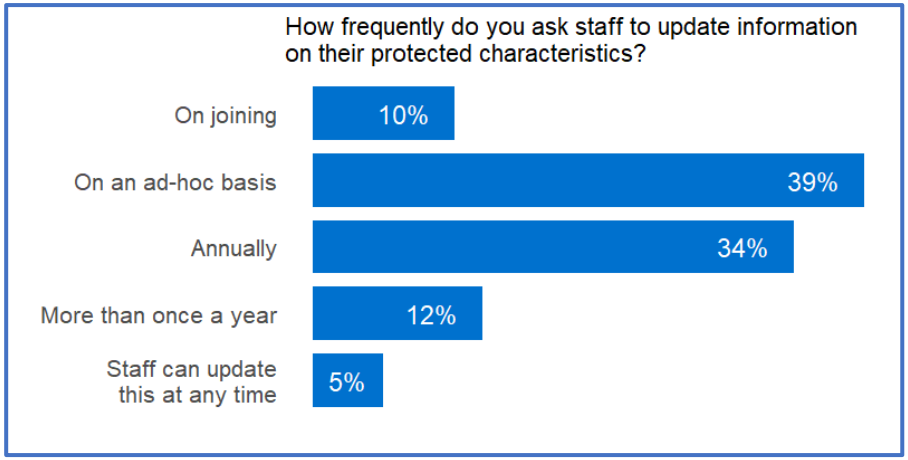
Without medical schools:
65 HEIs

Other protected characteristics

In addition to the statistics on gender and ethnicity, we asked HEIs about their practices regarding other protected characteristics.



As the accurate reporting of pay gap data depends on accurate and up-to-date data on protected characteristics, we asked HEIs to indicate how frequently they asked staff to update this information.



Gender pay gaps

Hourly pay gap



11.5%	13.6%
Median hourly pay gap	Mean hourly pay gap

Men
Women

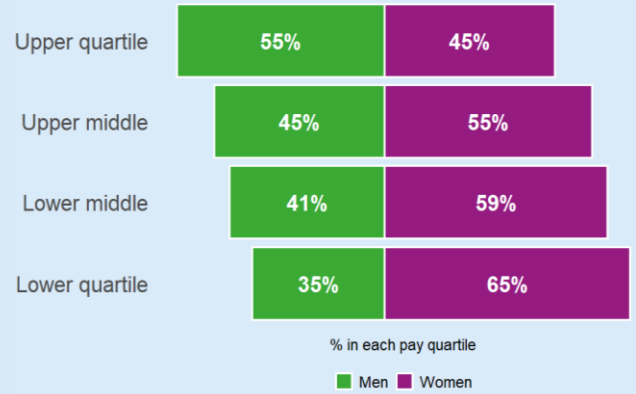
Bonus gap[4]



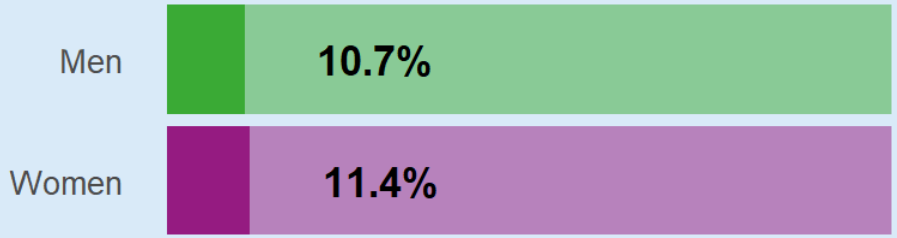
11.7%	28.0%
Median bonus gap	Mean bonus gap

Men
Women

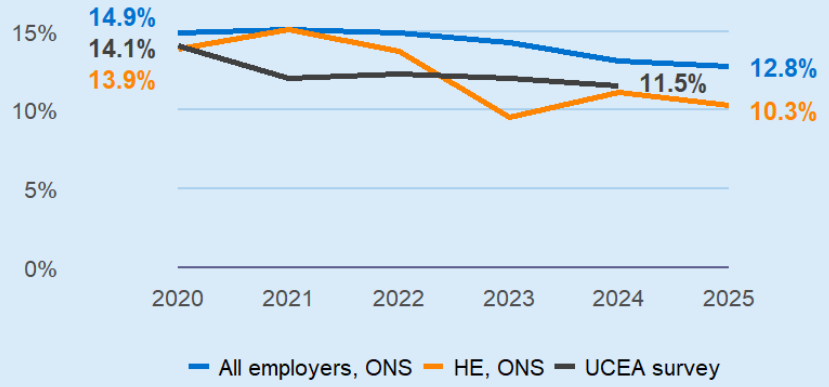
Percentage of men and women in each hourly pay quarter



Percentage of men and women receiving bonuses[4]



Median gender pay gap over time: HE compared to all other employers[5]



[4] Excludes Clinical Impact Awards
[5] Gender pay gap in the UK: 2025, Office for National Statistics

The median gender pay gap across the 107 participating institutions is 11.5% for March 2024, down half a percentage from 12% in March 2023. This sample represents two-thirds (63%) of UCEA member institutions. The mean gender pay gap at 13.6% is greater than the median gender pay gap, down from 14.2% in 2023.

Data from the ONS supports the finding that gender pay gaps continue to close in HE. The ONS estimations of the median gender pay gap consider a 1% sample of employee jobs from HMRC Pay As You Earn (PAYE) records, rather than organisational level statistics, as in the UCEA analysis. The estimate for the median gender pay gap in the sector was 11.1% for April 2024, as compared to 13.9% in 2020. In 2024, the ONS estimate for higher education (11.1%) and our sector-level figure (11.5%) are both lower than the median gender pay gap for the wider economy (13.1%).

Provisional ONS data for 2025[6] indicates that the median gender pay gap in the wider economy is 12.8% while the mean gender pay gap is 13.4%. For higher education in 2025, the ONS report that the median gender pay gap is 10.3% for 2025, while the mean gender pay gap is 13.8%.

In the March 2024 data, three HEIs reported a median gender pay gap in favour of women and two reported median gender pay gaps of zero. A further eight HEIs reported a median gender pay gap of 5% or less. The group of HEIs that reported a median gender pay gap of 5% consists of both pre- and post-92 institutions and represents institutions from all five mission groups (Russell Group, MillionPlus, University Alliance, GuildHE, and Cathedrals Group).

Multiple societal and structural factors drive pay gaps: see Appendix – of pay gaps in Higher Education for more information. The tendency for individuals of different genders to be employed at different levels of seniority is known as vertical segregation. Though the sector employs more women than men, men are overrepresented in the highest paying roles. Male staff represent 55% of the top 25% of earners, or the upper quartile, in institutions that took part in our survey. By contrast, women represent 65% of the lower quartile, or the lowest 25% of earners. This differs from equal pay and does not imply that men and women are paid differently for equal work[7].

Figures for the median gender pay gap differed across the sector, dependent on properties of institutions (such as institution type, mission group membership, and geographical region). Post-92 institutions tended to have a lower median gender pay gap (10.6%) than pre-92 institutions (at 12.0%). Surprisingly, institutions in London and the South East had a lower median gender pay gap (8.6%) than those in other regions. ONS data for the wider economy indicates that London (12.4%) and the South East (13.3%) have a higher median pay gap than other regions of the UK.

Around one in ten employees in higher education (10.7%) received bonuses in the year to April 2024. The bonus data collected in this survey follows the Government guidance for statutory gender pay gap reporting. These represent rewards related to productivity, performance and incentives, as well as long service awards. This guidance, along with a range of other resources, is provided at the end of this report.

A greater proportion of women (11.4%) received a bonus compared to men (10.1%). Despite more women receiving bonuses, the median gender bonus gap in higher education is 11.7%, up

[6] Gender pay gap, dataset, Office for National Statistics
[7] For more information on the distinction between equal pay and gender pay gaps, UCEA has produced guidance with the joint trade unions which can be accessed at this link.

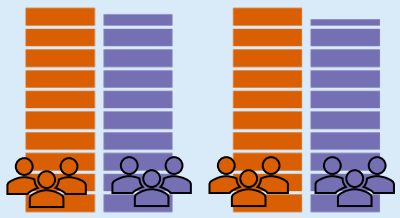
from 7.3%, The mean gender bonus gap is 28.0% in 2024, compared to 18.1% last year. The statistic based on the mean is considerably higher due to outliers. A small number of men in receipt of particularly high bonuses can substantially raise the mean value of this type of pay.

Notably, almost three fifths of HEIs (47%) that awarded bonuses had a median gender bonus gap that was either zero or in favour of women. In cases where the median bonus gap was zero, it is likely that a large proportion of male and female staff received bonuses of the same value. By contrast, only a third of HEIs (32%) had a mean gender bonus gap of either zero or in favour of women.

This analysis of bonuses specifically excludes bonuses paid under the national Clinical Impact Award (NCIA) scheme, formerly national Clinical Excellence Award Scheme, and local Clinical Excellence Awards (LCEAs). This NHS scheme celebrates exceptional medical practitioners. Local clinical excellence awards are granted by NHS trusts, not individual HEIs, whereas national Clinical Impact Awards (NCIAs) are determined at a national level by the Advisory Committee on Clinical Impact Awards (ACCIA). More information on bonus gaps in medical schools is on page 20.

Ethnicity pay gaps

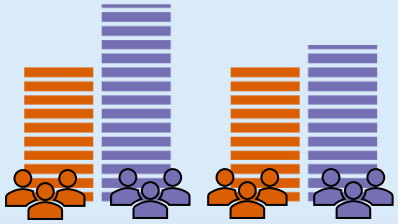
Hourly pay gap



4.7%	7.7%
Median hourly pay gap	Mean hourly pay gap

White
All ethnic minorities

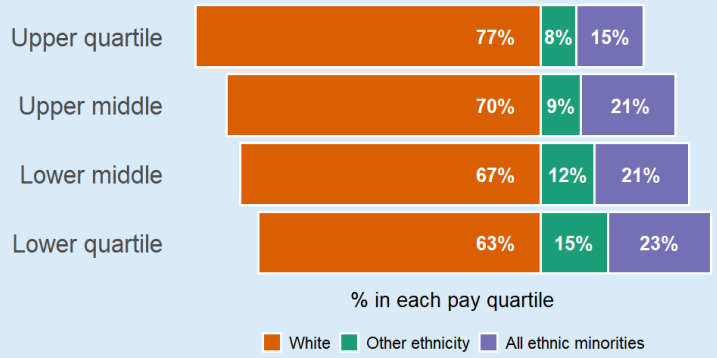
Bonus gap[8]



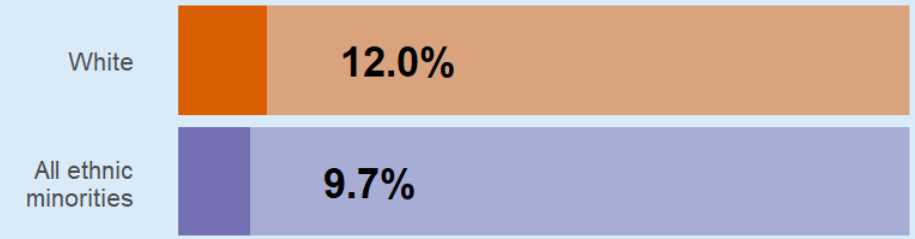
-44.2%	-14.7%
Median bonus gap	Mean bonus gap

White
All ethnic minorities

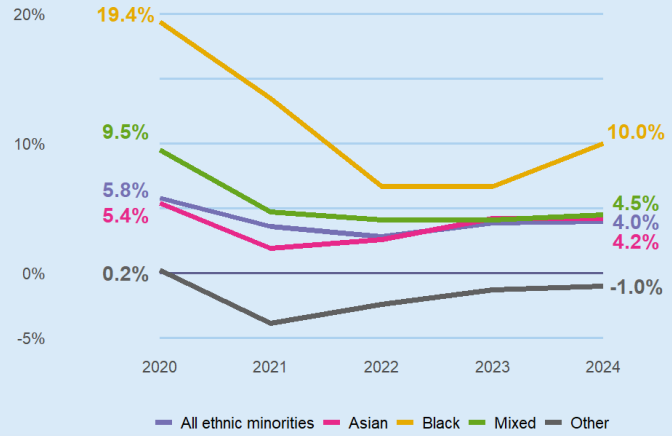
Percentage of white and ethnic minority staff in each hourly pay quarter[9]



Percentage of white and ethnic minority staff receiving bonuses[8,9]



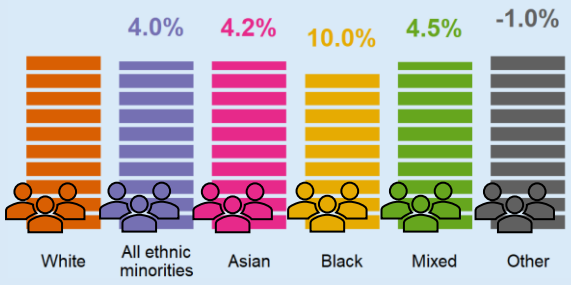
Median ethnicity pay gap over time: by detailed ethnicity group[9]



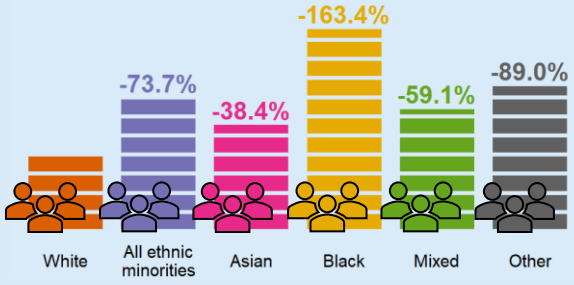
[8] Excludes Clinical Impact Awards
[9] Excludes those who did not disclose their ethnicity to their employer
[10] Only the 50 HEIs which reported data for the five detailed ethnicity categories are included in this chart

Ethnicity pay gaps (detailed)[11]

Median hourly pay gap



Median bonus gap



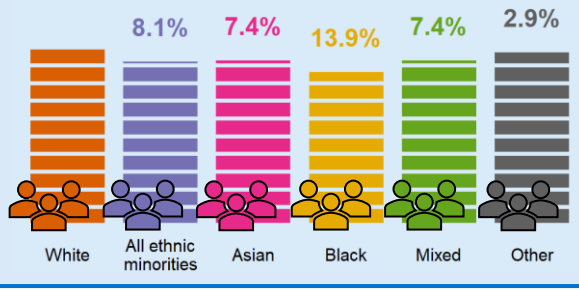
Other indicators

In addition to the indicators required for statutory gender pay gap reporting, the CIPD recommends including two additional indicators to reflect the complexity of ethnicity pay gap reporting.

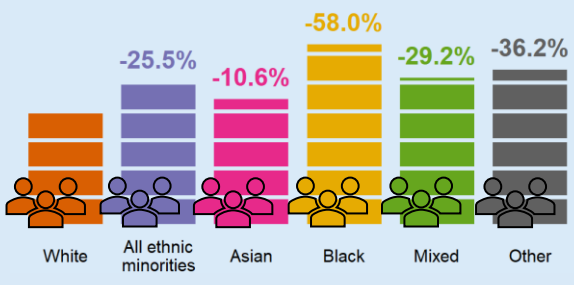
90% of the workforce disclosed their ethnicity

20% of the workforce are from ethnic minority backgrounds

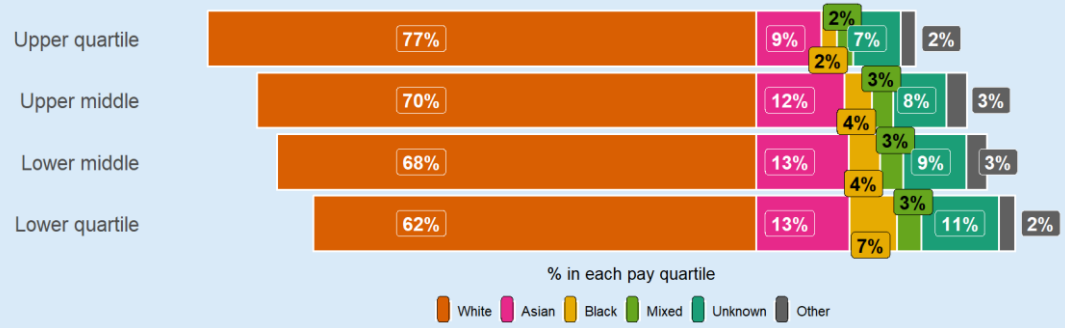
Mean hourly pay gap



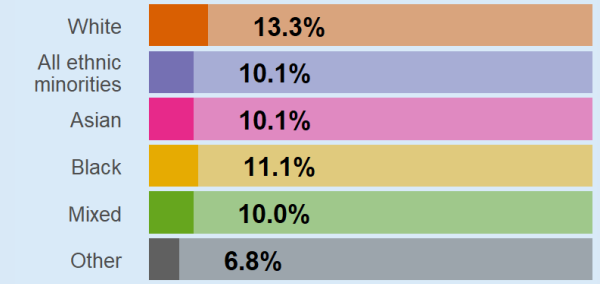
Mean bonus gap



Percentage of each ethnicity group in each hourly pay quarter



Percentage of each ethnicity group receiving bonuses[122]



[11] Only the 50 HEIs which reported data for the five detailed ethnicity categories are included
[12] Excludes Clinical Impact Awards

Between March and June 2025, the UK Government consulted employers on how to introduce mandatory ethnicity and disability pay gaps data through its draft Equality (Race and Disability) Bill. The consultation proposed introducing ethnicity pay gap reporting for large private and voluntary employers across Great Britain and for public sector bodies in England. This would make use of the same six statistics as gender pay gap reporting. Employers are asked to collect data on ethnicity and report, at the minimum, data for white employees and those from all other ethnic minority groups. The proposal encourages employers to report pay gaps for as many groups as possible, with a minimum of 10 employees in any group. The timeline and exact details of the reporting requirements have yet to be confirmed.

In line with the proposal, HEIs responding to this survey could choose either to report data for five ethnicity groups (i.e. Asian, black, mixed, white, and other) or two (white and ethnic minority). Having greater detail in equality pay gap data facilitates the identification of successes and areas for improvement, leading to targeted interventions in an employer's action planning. Issues affecting specific ethnic groups may be obscured when comparing data for white staff with aggregated data for staff from all other ethnic backgrounds.

Across all responding institutions, the median ethnicity pay gap between white staff and ethnic minority staff is 4.7% and the mean ethnicity pay gap is 7.7% in 2024. In this sample, a total of 41 HEIs reported a median ethnicity pay gap that was zero or in favour of ethnic minority staff. 25 reported that the median pay of ethnic minority staff was greater than that of white staff i.e. a pay gap in favour of ethnic minority staff. A further 16 reported that white and ethnic minority staff had the same median hourly pay i.e. a median ethnicity pay gap of zero. For comparison, 37 HEIs reported a median ethnicity pay gap of zero or less in 2023.

While the median ethnicity pay gap in 2024 (4.7%) is only slightly higher than in 2023 (3.9%), the mean ethnicity pay gap (7.7%) has increased by a greater degree compared to 2023 (6.4%). Of the 94 HEIs that reported data for both 2023 and 2024, 54 reported a higher mean ethnicity pay gap in 2024, 3 reported the same pay gap, and 37 reported a lower mean ethnicity pay gap in 2024. Of the HEIs that reported that their mean ethnicity pay gap had increased, around three quarters (74%, 40 HEIs) reported that their mean ethnicity pay gap had increased by less than three percentage points.

The sample of institutions who reported data for five ethnicity groups consisted of 50 HEIs, up from 49 HEIs last year. When compared to white staff, the median ethnicity pay gap for these institutions is 4.2% for Asian staff, 10.0% for black staff and 4.5% for staff from mixed ethnicity backgrounds. As in the previous year's reporting, there is a median ethnicity pay gap in favour of staff from other ethnic backgrounds (-1.0%). As with gender, mean ethnicity pay gaps are larger than median ethnicity pay gaps. The mean ethnicity pay gap is 7.4% for Asian staff, 13.9% for black staff, 7.4% for staff from mixed ethnicity backgrounds and 2.9% for staff from other ethnic backgrounds.

The median ethnicity pay gap for these groups is similar to the reporting for 2023. While the median pay gap for Asian (4.2% in 2023), mixed ethnicity (4.1%) and other ethnicity staff (-1.3%) are comparable, the median ethnicity pay gap for black staff has increased to 10.0% from 6.7%. Across each of these groups, the median ethnicity pay gap remains lower than the figures from the first year which UCEA asked HEIs to report this data (2020), showing evidence of a long-term narrowing of the ethnicity pay gap. Also, the median ethnicity pay gap for any ethnic group is lower than the median gender pay gap in the sector (11.5%).

The most recent ethnicity pay gap reporting for the wider economy remains a time series analysis that was reported for five ethnicity groups by the ONS between 2012 and 2022[13]. Compared to white staff, there are median ethnicity pay gaps in the wider economy in favour of Asian staff (-3.3%), mixed ethnicity staff (-7.2%), and staff from other ethnicity backgrounds (-4.5%). By contrast, black staff experience a median ethnicity pay gap of 5.7% in favour of white staff. As this data is from 2022, it does not represent a direct comparison with the current 2024 ethnicity pay gap reporting for HE.

HEIs reported that 19% of their employees were from ethnic minority backgrounds. The HE workforce is therefore representative of the UK population as 18.3% of UK residents are from ethnic minority backgrounds[14]. Since ethnic diversity varies across regions of the UK, employers should be mindful of how their workforce aligns with local demographic data. Across the 107 responding institutions, 90% of employees disclosed their ethnicity. 71% of staff in higher education disclosed being white and 19% from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Vertical segregation is apparent. Ethnic minority staff represent 15% of the upper quartile of earners in the sector (highest 25% of earners), as compared to 77% of white staff. The remaining 8% in the upper quartile did not disclose their ethnicity. By comparison, ethnic minority staff are overrepresented (23%) in the lower quartile. White staff comprise 63% of the lower quartile and 15% did not disclose their ethnicity. Indeed, all four of the ethnic minority groups (Asian, black, mixed ethnicity and other ethnicity) are underrepresented in the upper quartile of earners and overrepresented in the lower quartile.

The value of bonuses varied across HEIs, as did the proportion of staff that received them. In this year's data, median bonuses ranged between £200 and £1,000 across HEIs for all staff. HEIs awarded bonuses between 2% and 20% for all staff.

However, there are outliers in the data where either a higher proportion of staff were awarded a bonus at an HEI or where bonuses had a higher median value. These outliers increase the average value of bonuses reported at a sector level. Also due to these outliers, equality bonus gaps are harder to interpret than pay gaps associated with hourly pay.

For this year's responses, the difference can be explained, in part, by the number of staff in each ethnic group that received a bonus. Around 20,000 white staff received bonuses in 2024 and around 5,000 ethnic minority staff were awarded a bonus. Where an outlier (for instance a high pay or bonus award) appears in a smaller population (here, for ethnic minority staff) it has a greater tendency to raise the averages.

The figures below, then, do not necessarily mean that most HEIs awarded higher value bonuses to ethnic minority staff than white staff, but that outliers had a greater effect on smaller populations.

When compared to white staff, the median ethnicity bonus gap is -44.2% (that is, in favour of ethnic minority groups). The mean ethnicity bonus gap is -14.7% (that is, in favour of ethnic minority staff). While last year's data also showed median (-5.8% in 2023) and mean ethnicity bonus gaps (-4.4%) in favour of ethnic minority staff, this year's data shows larger differences in average bonus pay due to outliers, which appear periodically due to one-off bonus awards.

[13] The latest analysis is for 2022, Ethnicity pay gaps, UK: 2012 to 2022 (ons.gov.uk): the ONS no longer analyse pay gaps between white staff and staff from all ethnic minority backgrounds
[14] According to the 2021 census: Ethnic group, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk), 2022

As with hourly pay, the analysis also considered the value of bonuses awarded to staff across five ethnicity groups. This analysis also includes outliers which cause the average value of bonuses across the five ethnic groups, which are smaller populations, to increase.

When compared to white staff, there are median ethnicity bonus gaps in favour of staff from Asian (-38.4%), black (-163.4%), mixed ethnicity (-59.1%), and other ethnic backgrounds (-89.0%).

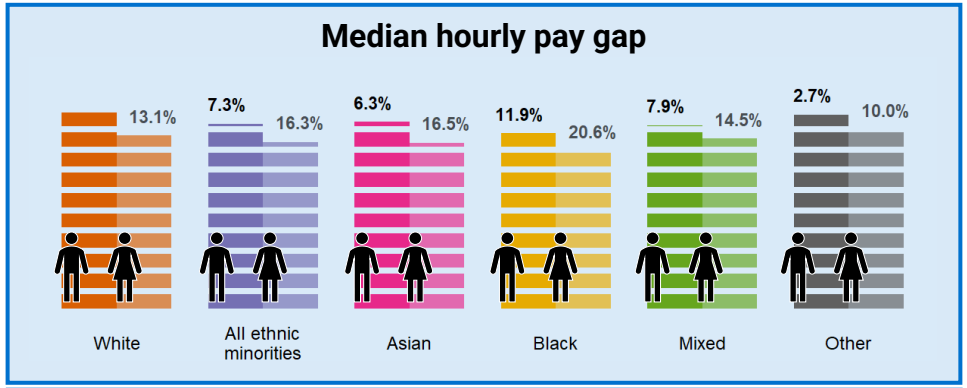
The mean ethnicity bonus gap is -10.6% for Asian staff, -58.0% for black staff, -29.2% for mixed ethnicity staff and -36.2% for staff from other ethnic backgrounds.

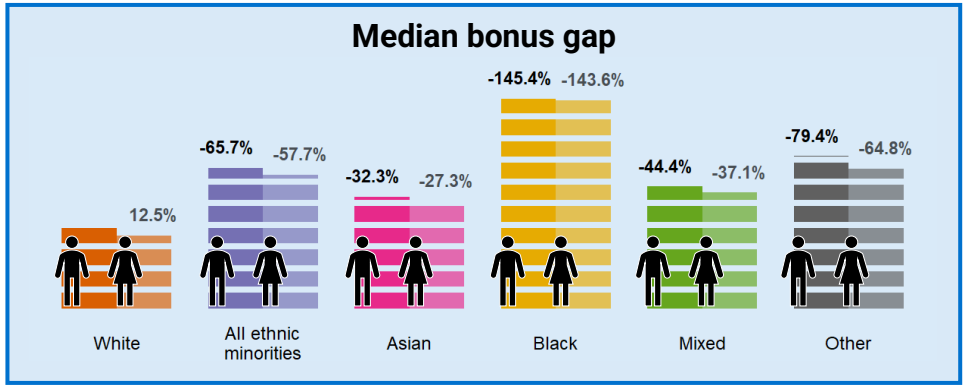
As above, this does not necessarily indicate that most HEIs awarded a higher value bonuses to staff from these ethnic groups compared to white staff but that outliers may have a disproportionate effect on smaller populations. Around 20,000 white staff received a bonus, 1,800 Asian staff and fewer than 1,000 staff who are either black, mixed ethnicity, or other ethnicities.

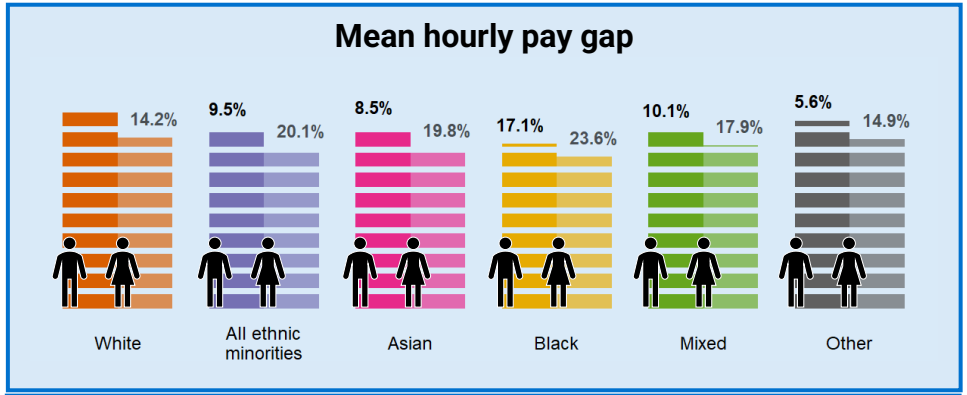
White staff were more likely to receive a bonus than staff from other ethnic groups. Across all HEIs that awarded bonuses, 12.0% of white staff received a bonus, in comparison to 9.7% of all ethnic minority staff. Across the 50 HEIs that reported data for five ethnic groups, 13.3% of white staff, 10.1% Asian, 11.1% black, 10.0% mixed ethnicity and 6.8% of other ethnicity staff received a bonus,

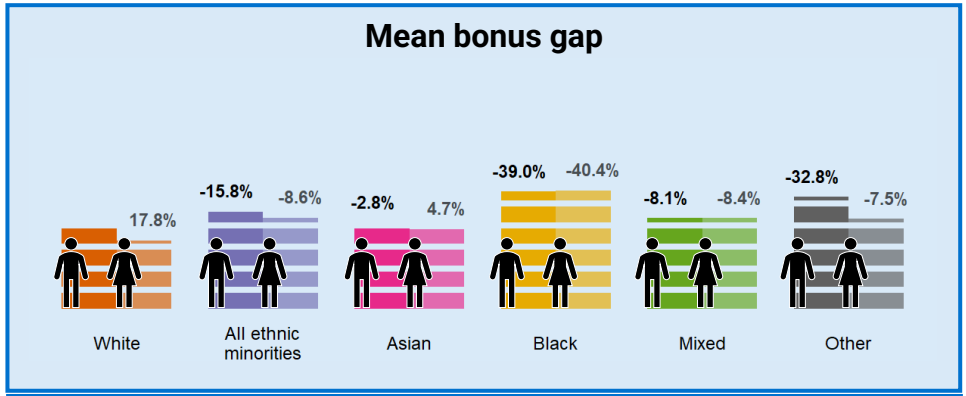
Ethnicity pay gaps vary across the sector dependent on institution type. As with the median gender pay gap, pre-92 HEIs (6.2%) had a higher median ethnicity pay gap than post-92 HEIs (0.9%). The median ethnicity pay gap was also higher in London and the South East (7.8%) than in the Rest of England (5.5%). As these HEIs reported a high proportion of staff from minority ethnic backgrounds (28%), this could be attributed to the population of lower paid staff reflecting local demographics (i.e. the higher proportion of ethnic minority staff in the lower quartile).

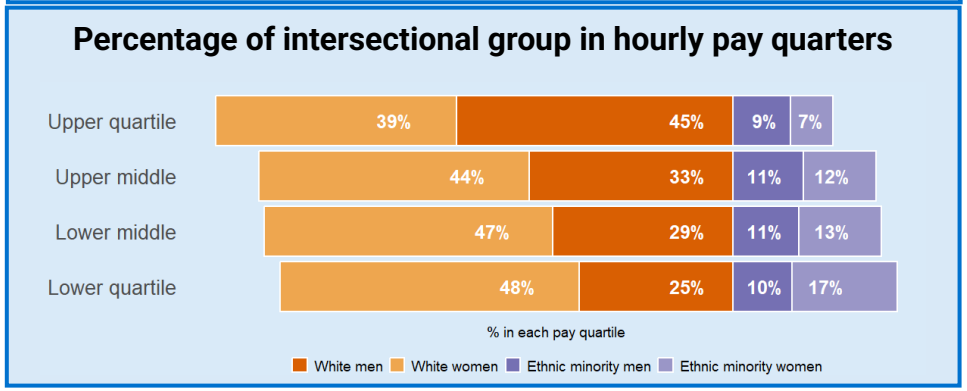
Intersectional pay gaps[15]

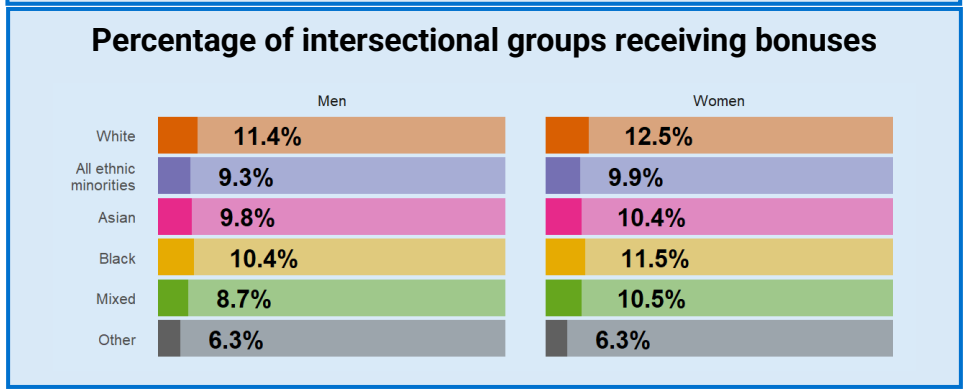












[15] 107 HEIs reported intersectional data for (at least) two ethnicity groups. 50 HEIs reported intersectional data for five groups. Bonus figures exclude CIAs.

A total of 107 HEIs submitted data on intersectional pay gaps, showing the compounding effect that gender and ethnicity have on pay gaps in higher education. The median pay gap between white men and ethnic minority women (16.3%) illustrates this through comparison with median pay gaps for ethnic minority men (7.3%) and by white women (13.1%). In comparison to white men, the mean pay gap for ethnic minority women is 20.1%, again larger than the mean pay gap for ethnic minority men (9.5%) and white women (14.5%).

When detailed ethnicity groups are considered alongside gender, black women experience the largest median intersectional pay gap, with this being 20.7% relative to white men. This intersectional group also experiences the largest mean pay gap (23.6%). Within each ethnicity group, men have higher median (and mean) hourly pay than women of the same ethnicity. This intersectional approach therefore demonstrates that gender pay gaps exist within each ethnic group. Similarly, ethnicity pay gaps exist within each gender. White staff have a higher median (and mean) hourly pay than Asian, black or mixed ethnicity staff of the same gender.

While this year's figures are broadly comparable to data from 2023, analyses of data over a five-year period show that intersectional pay gaps are closing in the sector. The median intersectional pay gap between white men and ethnic minority women now stands at 16.3%, down from 21.4% in 2020. Similarly, the median intersectional pay gap between white men and white women has decreased to 13.1%, compared to 15.3% in 2020. The median hourly pay gap for ethnic minority men is 7.2% relative to white men, compared to 8.3% in 2020. The median hourly pay gap between black and white men (11.9%) has decreased by ten percentage points (21.9% in 2020).

As with ethnicity bonus gaps, intersectional bonus gaps should be interpreted carefully. Even compared to ethnicity groups, intersectional groups represent smaller samples of individuals that received bonuses. As such, outliers substantially increase the values of bonuses for ethnic minority men and women but less substantially for white men. When compared to white men, there are considerable median bonus gaps in favour of ethnic minority men (-65.7%) and ethnic minority women (-57.7%). Mean intersectional bonus gaps show similar patterns. Though the intersectional data shows that there is a mean bonus gap in favour of both ethnicity minority men (-15.5%) and ethnic minority women (-8.8%), white women experience a mean bonus gap of 17.7%.

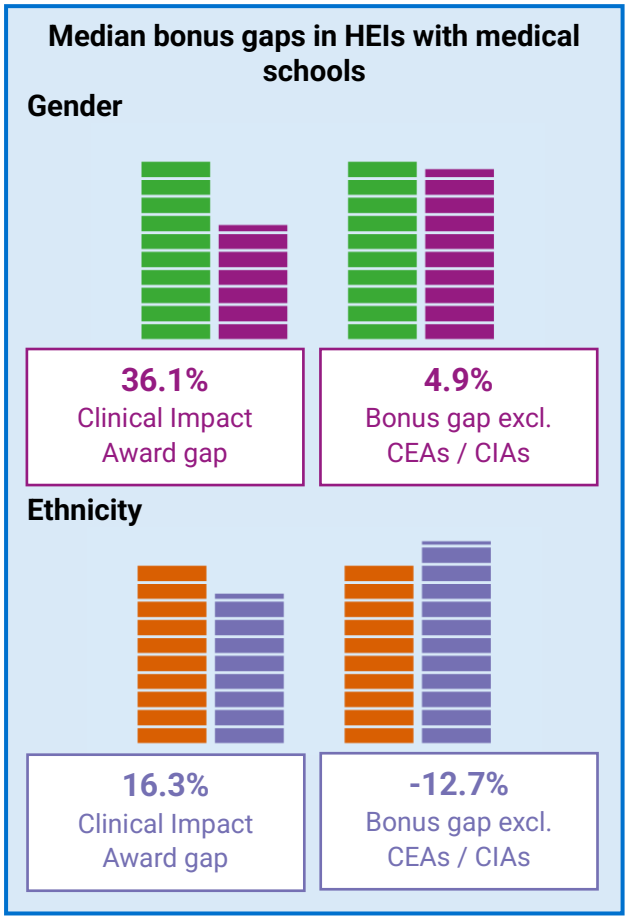
An intersectional analysis of detailed ethnicity groups reveals further insights regarding bonus gaps in the sector. This shows cases where considering ethnic minority men and women as homogenous groups can obscure successes and areas for improvement. The median bonus gap in favour of black men (-145.4%) and black women (-143.6%) is considerably larger than that positive bonus gap reported for Asian men (-32.4%) and Asian women (-27.3%), for example. While both Asian and black staff receive bonuses that are of higher value, at the median, than those received by white staff, the median values nevertheless differ across these intersectional groups. By contrast, white women experience a median bonus gap of 12.5% relative to white men.

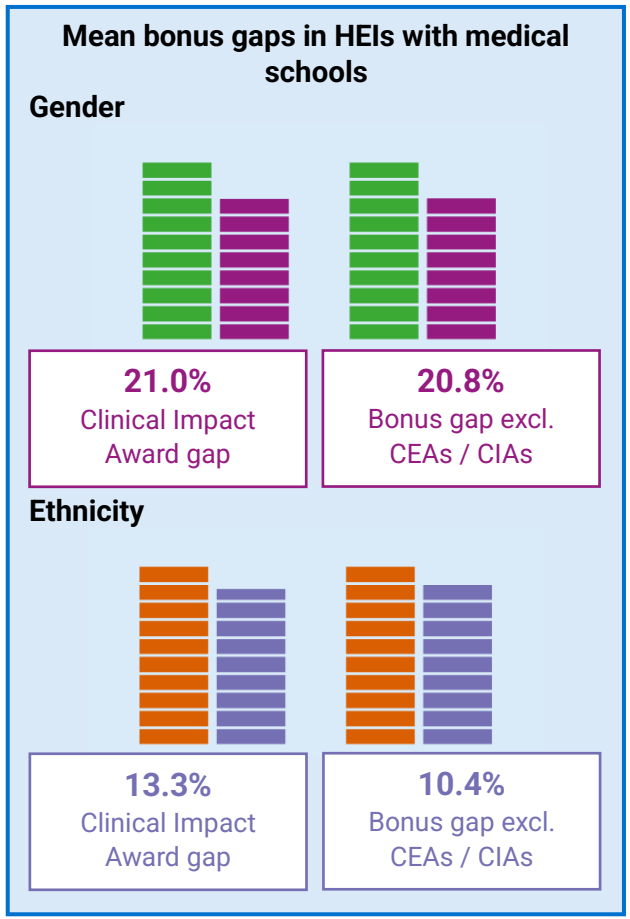
This intersectional analysis has also considered the proportion of each intersectional group that was in receipt of a bonus. Across all ethnic groups, women were more likely to receive bonuses than men. Similarly, white staff were more likely to receive bonuses than ethnic minority staff. 11.4% of white men and 12.6% of white women received bonuses. Bonuses were awarded to 9.3% of ethnic minority men and 10.0% of ethnic minority women. The intersectional group with the lowest proportion of staff in receipt of a bonus was mixed ethnicity men (8.7%). The

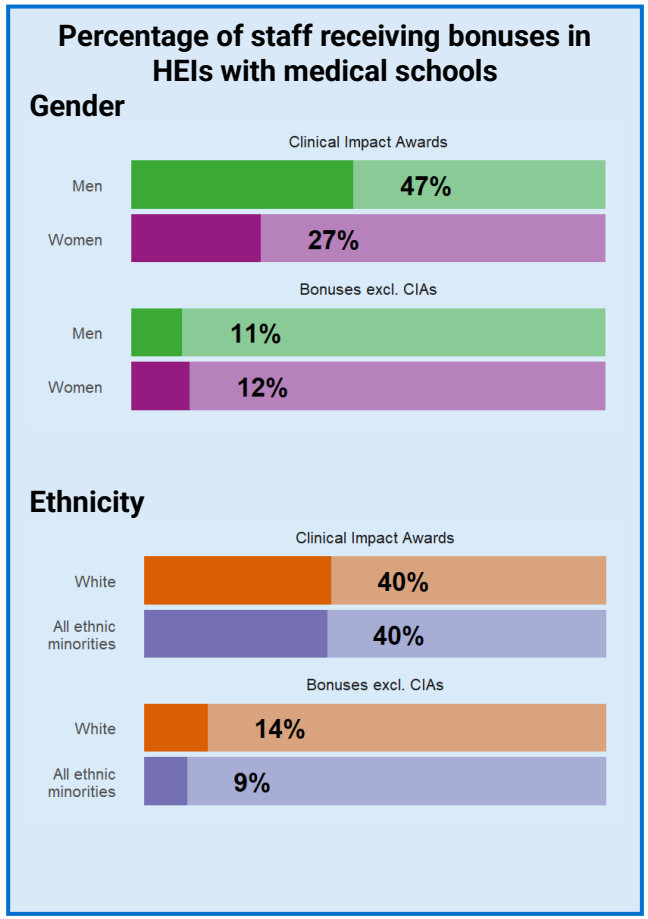
proportion of black women in receipt of a bonus (11.5%) was higher than that reported for white men.

Clinical Impact Awards and bonus pay gaps in medical schools

The National Clinical Impact Award scheme, formerly the National Clinical Excellence Award Scheme, rewards the consultants who contribute most to high-quality care and improved NHS services. This includes consultants and senior academic GPs within academic medicine[16]. As at March 2023, local clinical excellence awards were determined, not by the HEI, but by the local NHS Trust with which clinical academics hold an honorary contract or, in the case of national awards, by ACCIA. This means that they are outside the control of the HEI and may further be skewed by any occupational segregation of senior clinicians within academia.







[16] British Medical Association, 2022. Consultant award schemes and clinical excellence awards (CEA). [online] Available at: www.bma.org.uk/pay-and-contracts/pay/consultant-award-schemes/consultant-award-schemes-and-clinical-excellence-awards-cea

Because of the high value of Clinical Impact Awards (CIAs) and Clinical Excellence Awards (CEAs), gender and ethnicity bonus gaps associated with these awards are generally higher than those associated with other bonus payments in higher education. This analysis compares the value of CIAs / CEAs with other bonuses at institutions with medical schools.

This analysis reports on national Clinical Impact Awards as well as legacy Clinical Excellence Awards. As discussed in UCEA Update 24:021, the post-2018 local Clinical Excellence Awards (LCEA) scheme was withdrawn in England in 2024, under the 2024 NHS pay agreement. Calculations for gender and ethnicity bonus gaps based on CIAs consider a sample of 16 HEIs with medical schools. Specifically, this analysis considers HEIs where five or more individuals of each gender and each ethnicity group received a CIA.

While the median gender bonus gap is 4.9% when excluding CIAs, this statistic increases to 36.1% when CIAs are considered. While the median ethnicity bonus gap excluding CIAs is in favour of ethnic minority staff (-12.7%), the median ethnicity bonus gap is 16.3% for CIAs. The mean gender bonus gap is similar for both CIAs (21%) and bonuses excluding CIAs (20.8%). By contrast, the mean ethnicity bonus gap excluding CIAs (10.4%) is lower than the mean ethnicity bonus gap for CIAs (13.3%).

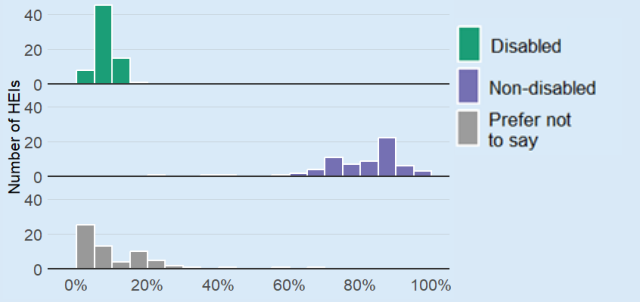
This survey also considered whether gender and ethnicity affected the proportion of staff that received bonuses and CIAs. When CIAs are excluded, a higher proportion of women at HEIs with medical schools (12%) received bonuses when compared to men at the same institutions (11%). This position changed when CIAs are factored in: men were more likely to receive CIAs than women. While 47% of men who were eligible for CIAs at HEIs received these awards, only 27% of eligible women received CIAs.

When CIAs are excluded, white staff at HEIs with medical schools were more likely to receive a bonus (14%) than staff from ethnic minority backgrounds at the same institutions (9%). Ethnicity does not appear to affect the likelihood that staff will receive a CIA, with two-fifths of eligible staff receiving these awards; the proportion of eligible staff that received a CIA was 40% for both white staff and staff from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Given the small sample sizes within the current data set, it was not possible to extend this analysis to detailed ethnicity groups: this would include comparisons for CIAs awarded to staff from Asian, black, mixed ethnicity, other and white backgrounds. The same is true for intersectional groups: this would compare white men with ethnic minority women, for example. While 23 HEIs with medical schools reported data for five ethnic groups, the majority of these did not report five or more individuals as having received a CIA within the ethnic minority groups. Similarly, very few institutions reported that five or more individuals across all intersectional groups as having received these awards.

Disability pay gaps[17]

Proportion of staff disclosing disabilities

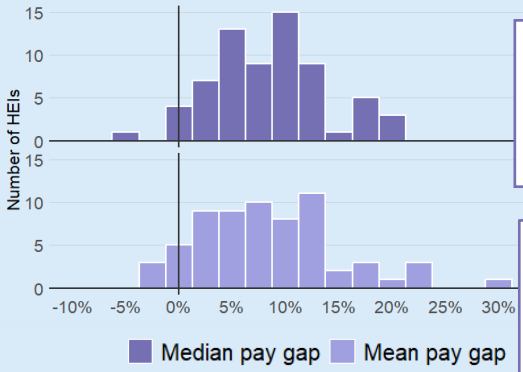


8% reported as **disabled**

76% reported as **non-disabled**

16% **preferred not to say**

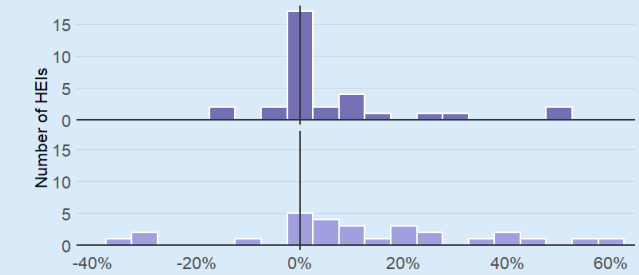
Hourly disability pay gaps



8.2% Median disability pay gap

8.3% Mean disability pay gap

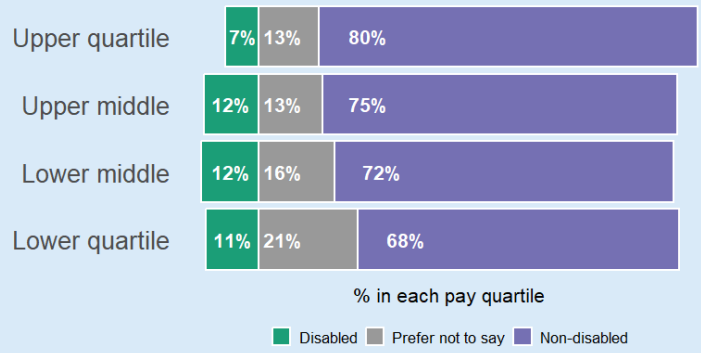
Disability bonus gaps



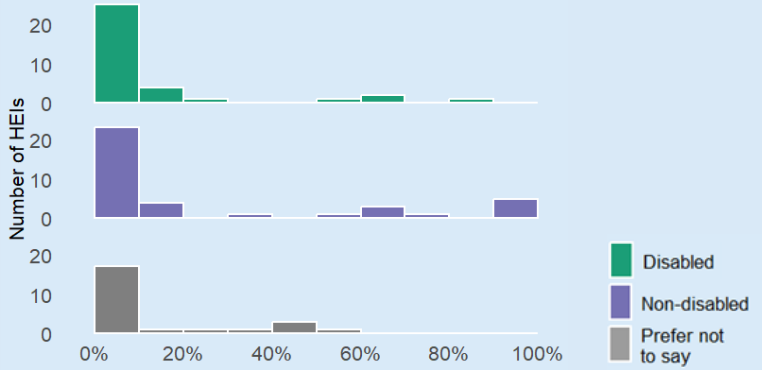
0.0% Median disability bonus gap

18.5% Mean disability bonus gap

Percentage of disabled & non-disabled staff in each hourly pay quarter



Percentage of disabled and non-disabled staff receiving bonuses



[17] Disclosure rates and pay quarters are reported at a sector level. The value for the median and mean disability pay gap represent the median HEI's reported figure. Similarly, the median and mean disability bonus gap represent the median HEI's reported figure.

The draft Equality (Race and Disability) Bill will introduce mandatory reporting for disability pay gaps, as well as ethnicity pay gaps. In its consultation, the Government proposed that large private and voluntary employers across Great Britain and public sector bodies in England would be required to report this pay gap. This would make use of the same six statistics as gender pay gap reporting. Reporting is proposed to make use of the Equality Act 2010 definition of disability, with a minimum of 10 employees required as a sample. The timeline and exact details of the reporting requirements have yet to be confirmed.

Equality Act 2010 definition of disability:

An individual is disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on their ability to do normal daily activities.

As for last year's survey, the current survey asked institutions to voluntarily report disability pay statistics in advance of these new requirements. To match the Government's proposal, the survey asked institutions to use the Equality Action 2010 definition of disability, where possible, and to otherwise depend on self-reporting of disability status. HEIs were asked to report one or more of the following statistics:

- The proportion of staff that have disclosed their disability status.
- The mean and median disability pay gap for hourly pay.
- The percentage of disabled and non-disabled staff in each hourly pay quarter.
- The percentage of disabled and non-disabled staff receiving bonus pay.
- The mean and median disability bonus gap.

Of the 83 HEIs who either report or calculate disability pay gaps, 73 (88%) reported one or more pay equality statistics for disability. The majority of HEIs reported the proportion of staff that had disclosed a disability (70 HEIs), their median and mean disability pay gaps (61 HEIs), and the proportion of staff in each pay quarter (61). It was less common for HEIs to report the proportion of disabled staff that received a bonus (42) and their disability bonus gaps (36).

Disclosure of disabilities

Aggregating disclosure rates across 70 institutions showed that 8% of the higher education workforce declared a disability, 77% declared being non-disabled and a further 15% preferred not to say. The figures in the table below show that for three quarters of respondents, disabled staff represent 10% or less of the workforce. Non-disabled staff represent 84% of the workforce at the median HEI. The median figure (7%) for individuals who preferred not to disclose their disability indicates that half of HEIs have 93% of their workforce disclose a disability. The upper quartile indicates that disclosure rates are 82% or above at a quarter of responding HEIs. Low rates of disclosure hinder the interpretation of pay equality statistics. Where disclosure is less common, the reported disabled workforce may differ considerably from the actual disabled workforce.

	LQ	Median	UQ	HEIs
Disabled	6%	8%	10%	70
Non-disabled	73%	84%	89%	70
Prefer not to say	3%	7%	18%	70

As the 2023 survey reported a disclosure rate of 81%, disclosure rates for disability have improved at responding HEIs. This data is broadly comparable to data from 2023/24 HESA staff data[18]. HESA reported that 7% of the academic staff disclosed a disability, 81% disclosed no disability and 12% preferred not to say. A 2024 ONS report on the employment of disabled people[19] indicated that approximately 5.6 million disabled people were in employment in April 2024. This means that one in six UK employees are disabled (17%), when combined with estimates for all individuals in employment (33.5 million). A 2022 workforce report from the NHS[20] shows that disabled staff represented a smaller proportion of the public health sector (4.2%) than higher education: the rate of non-disclosure (19.1%) was comparable across higher education and the NHS, however.

Mean and median disability pay gaps

A total of 68 HEIs reported their median and mean disability pay gaps for hourly pay. At the median HEI, the median disability pay gap is 8.3%. The mean disability pay gap at the median HEI is 8.2%. As shown in the table below, the quartiles indicate that the median pay gap was typically between 3.2% and 13.2% while the mean disability pay gap was typically between 4.6% and 11.7%. Notably, seven HEIs had a median pay gap that was either 0% or in favour of disabled staff while one HEI had a mean pay gap in favour of disabled staff.

	LQ	Median	Mean	UQ	HEIs
Median disability pay gap	3.2%	8.3%	9.0%	13.2%	67
Mean disability pay gap	4.6%	8.2%	8.4%	11.7%	67

A total of 45 HEIs have reported their disability pay gaps for both 2023 and 2024. Of these, 23 reported that their median disability pay gap was the same or lower in 2024 compared to 2023. For the mean disability pay gap, 26 HEIs reported a figure which was same or lower than that reported in 2023.

The latest figure reported by ONS[21] for median disability pay gap in the wider economy is for 2023 (12.7%). Over two-thirds of respondents (72%, 48 HEIs) had a median pay gap that was lower than the national average. The ONS analysis further shows that disability pay gaps vary dependent on the role and impairment type. The ONS analysis also takes an intersectional approach, showing surprisingly that men with disabilities experience a larger pay gap than women with disabilities.

Pay quarters

[18] https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/staff/table-5
[19] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/the-employment-of-disabled-people-2023/employment-of-disabled-people-2023
[20] https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/workforce-disability-equality-standard-2022-data-analysis-report-for-nhs-trusts-and-foundation-trusts/
[21] https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/disability/articles/disabilitypaygapsintheuk/2014to2023

The current analysis aggregates information on pay quarters across 61 responding institutions. This statistic provides evidence of vertical segregation by disability status in the higher education workforce. While disabled staff represent 11% of the lowest 25% of earners (the lower quartile), disabled staff only represent 7% of the upper quartile. By contrast, non-disabled staff represent 80% of the upper quartile but only 68% of staff in the lower quartile. Care needs to be taken when interpreting this data as lower paid staff were less likely than higher paid staff to disclose their disability status. While 13% of staff in the upper quartile did not disclose a disability, a fifth (21%) of the lower quartile did not disclose this information.

Proportion in receipt of a bonus

45 HEIs reported on the proportion of disabled and non-disabled individuals that received a bonus. As with gender and ethnicity, bonuses are relatively uncommon in the sector with less than 10% of both disabled and non-disabled staff receiving bonuses over half of HEIs (60%, 27 HEIs). Broadly speaking, most HEIs awarded bonuses to a similar proportion of their disabled and non-disabled staff. Four HEIs awarded bonuses to over half of both their disabled and non-disabled staff populations. For nine in the sample (1 in 5 HEIs), a greater proportion of disabled staff received bonuses compared to non-disabled staff.

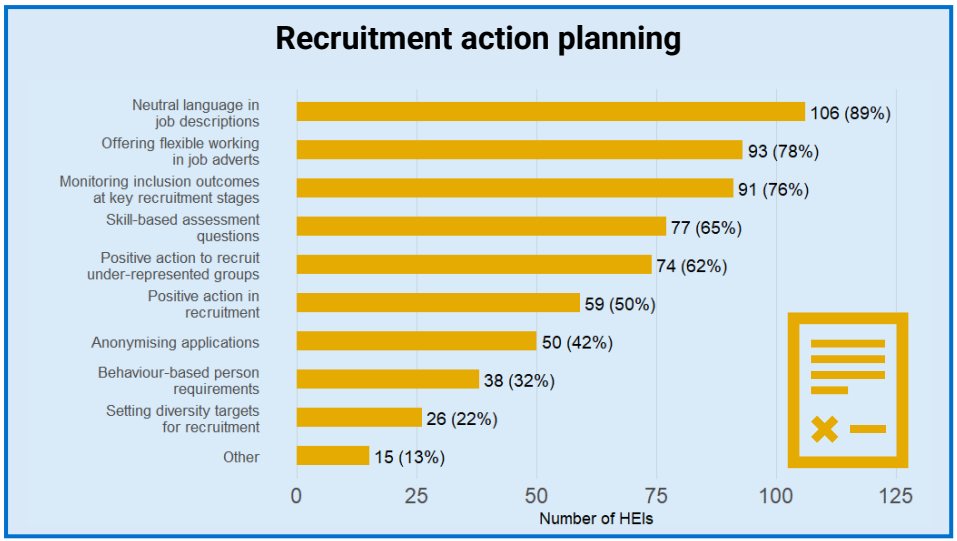
Mean and median bonus gaps

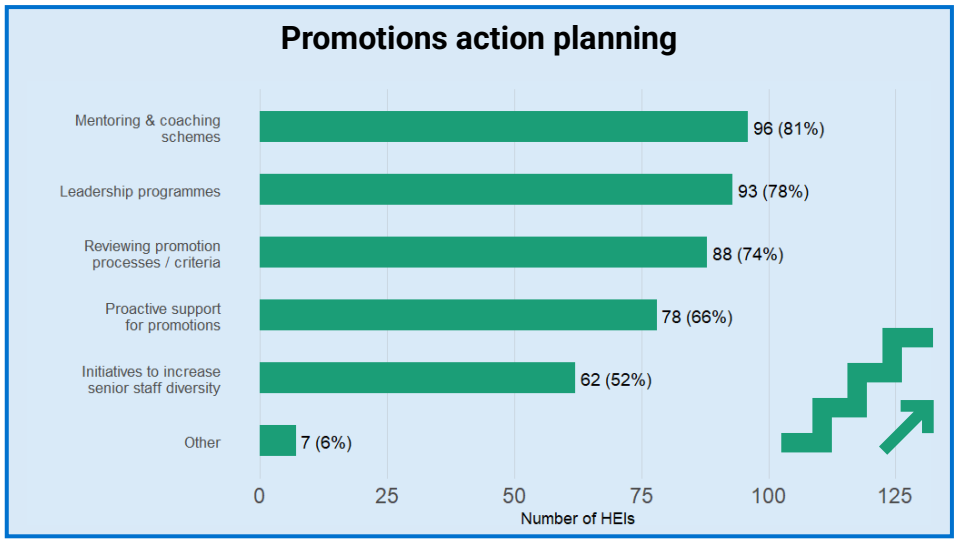
A total of 35 HEIs reported their median and mean bonus gaps, capturing differences in the average value of bonuses paid to disabled and non-disabled staff. The median disability bonus gap is 0% at the median HEI while the mean disability bonus gap at the median HEI is 18.5%. As shown in the table below, the quartiles indicate that the median disability bonus gap was typically between 0% and 8.9%. Five HEIs reported a median disability bonus gap that was in favour of disabled staff. A further sixteen HEIs had a median bonus gap of zero, indicating that the median value of bonuses awarded to disabled and non-disabled staff was the same.

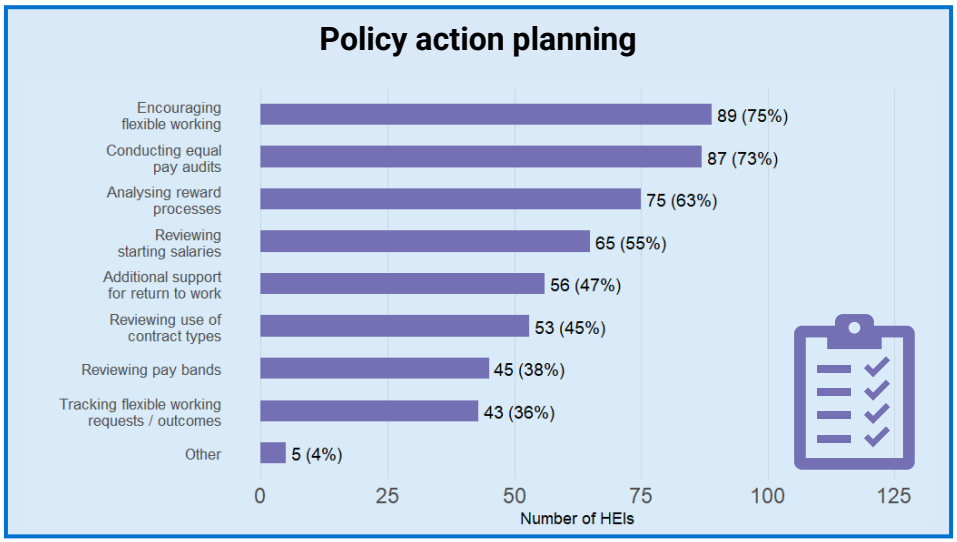
The mean disability bonus gap had a larger interquartile range, with this between 2.4% and 49.4%. The observation that the mean disability gap tended to be higher than the median disability bonus gap is consistent with the fact that the mean is influenced by outliers, or high value bonuses. Nevertheless, five HEIs reported a mean bonus gap in favour of disabled staff and two reported a mean disability bonus gap of zero.

	LQ	Median	Mean	UQ	HEIs
Median disability bonus gap	0.0%	0.0%	8.6%	8.9%	35
Mean disability bonus gap	2.4%	18.5%	26.6%	49.4%	35

Pay gaps action planning









In addition to reporting on statistics that show the progress made towards closing pay gaps across the sector, this report gives an overview of the action planning that HEIs have implemented in order to tackle equality pay gaps. This report collates data for a total of 119 HEIs by combining data from 78 HEIs who reported on action planning in last year's survey, 20 HEIs who reported action planning in this year's survey for the first time and a further 21 HEIs who have updated their action planning data.

Action planning can be considered across four thematic areas, with these being recruitment, promotions, policy, and organisational culture.

Recruitment
HEIs most commonly reported using neutral language in job adverts and role descriptions, with 89% of respondents doing so. A large majority also tackled pay gaps by advertising roles as having flexible working (78%), collecting data on inclusion outcomes throughout recruitment (76%), using skill-based assessments or tasks for candidates (65%) and taking positive action to encourage applicants from underrepresented groups (62%). Half of responding HEIs made use of positive action in recruitment and selection (50%). It was less common for HEIs to anonymise applications (42%), use behaviour-based job requirements (32%), or set diversity targets for recruitment (22%). Other actions that responding HEIs reported using included anonymised shortlisting, the use of diverse interview panels and delivering specific training for managers and recruitment panels.

Promotions
Pay gaps can also be addressed by supporting the career progression of women and ethnic minority staff. At least three quarters of institutions reported that they offer mentoring / coaching to these groups (81%), that they engage with leadership programmes such as Aurora and StellarHE (78%), and that they have conducted reviews of the processes and criteria for promotion (74%). Two-thirds (66%) of HEIs reported that they provide proactive support for promotions and half (52%) implement programmes to increase the diversity of their senior staff.

Policy
The most common policy decisions that HEIs have implemented to tackle pay gaps included encouraging flexible working (75%), identifying pay parity through equal pay audits (73%) and analysing reward processes (63%). Monitoring these processes includes assessing promotions and the allocation of bonuses against protected characteristics at all stages. In terms of reviewing policies, 55% of HEIs have done so for starting salaries with a smaller proportion reviewing their use of contract types (45%) and pay bands (38%). Around half of HEIs (48%) offered additional support for return to work and over a third of HEIs (36%) monitored data on flexible working requests and their outcomes.

Organisational culture
In terms of organisational culture, more than nine out of ten responding HEIs reported providing unconscious bias and / or EDI training (94%) as well as introducing staff networks (92%). Four-fifths (80%) ensure buy-in and accountability from senior leadership and three-quarters have implemented initiatives to tackle bullying and harassment. Around three-fifths appoint Diversity

Champions (63%) and a similar proportion (60%) have implemented initiatives to improve diversity in specific academic subjects and / or job functions.

Conclusions

UCEA has reported on gender, ethnicity and intersectional pay gaps in higher education since 2018. Following 2018's Caught at the crossroads report, UCEA has collected information across five annual surveys from the majority of its members and thus has demonstrated considerable progress toward tackling equality pay gaps in the sector. Equality pay gaps are calculated both for individual HEIs and at sector level in order to demonstrate successes and to highlight specific areas for improvement. The latest survey reports on pay data (for March 2024) for a total of 107 HEIs: the current report therefore represents two thirds of UCEA's current membership. Pay gaps reporting is important for transparency in the sector and contributes toward our strategic priority to enhance the employee experience, specifically by promoting inclusion in the sector and the steps that employers can take to reduce gender, ethnicity and disability pay gaps. This is one of the pillars of UCEA's Five Pillar Strategic Programme. Equality pay gaps typically form a central part of the joint claim made by the five sector trade unions; since over 70% of the institutions participating in national pay bargaining chose to report data to this survey, we hope that the current report forms part of local work with individual trade union branches.

The Westminster Government consulted employers in June 2025 on its draft Equality (Race and Disability) Bill, asking how this reporting should work in practice. It is expected that data requirements for ethnicity and disability will replicate current requirements for statutory gender pay gap reporting. By calculating ethnicity and disability pay gaps over the last five years, UCEA demonstrates that HEIs are well prepared for and supportive of mandatory reporting for these equality pay gaps in England and Wales. The specific details and timeline for this legislation have yet to be announced.

In March 2024, the median gender pay gap in higher education was 11.5%, down from 12.0% in March 2023. This figure is lower than that for the wider economy (13.1%) and demonstrates significant progress from the 2020 figure in higher education (14.1%). The median ethnicity pay gap is 4.7% between white and ethnic minority staff. While this is lower than both the median gender pay gap and the sector-level figure reported in 2020 (5.8%), the ethnicity pay gap reported for this year is higher than that reported in 2023 (3.9%). These headline figures provide evidence that HEIs continue to deliver inclusive policies within the sector through local action planning.

By comparing local pay gap reporting with that from elsewhere in the sector, this report aims to help institutions to assess the effectiveness of these initiatives and continue to identify areas for improvement.

As well as presenting binary analyses of gender and ethnicity pay gaps, the current data provides additional analyses for detailed ethnicity groups and intersectional groups which combine gender and ethnicity. Systematic differences exist in the hourly pay and bonuses received across these groups. Detailed data on ethnicity pay gaps should enable action plans that better support staff from these groups. These analyses also show that a binary approach to ethnicity pay gap reporting can obscure differences between individual groups. Intersectional analyses of gender and ethnicity demonstrate how these two characteristics have a

compounding effect on equality pay gaps. Compared to white men, pay gaps for ethnic minority women are wider than those experienced by either white women or ethnic minority men. UCEA's reporting has consistently shown that gender pay gaps exist within ethnicity groups and that ethnicity pay gaps also exist within genders.

This report represents the second year in which UCEA has reported on disability pay gaps in the sector. UCEA would like to thank its members for the voluntary reporting of data on this protected characteristic. In 2023 and 2024, the majority of HEIs reported a median disability pay gaps that was lower than the wider economy (12.7%; 2023). For both disability and ethnicity, disclosure rates can obscure pay equality statistics. In higher education, we estimate that one in six staff (16%) choose not to disclose their disability status. As a result, it is possible that the current pay gaps reporting diverged from those for the actual disabled workforce in higher education. As binary approaches to ethnicity pay gaps obscure differences between groups, future work on disability pay gaps should move beyond a binary approach to consider how pay differs by impairment type to gain a better understanding of disability pay gaps in higher education.

This report continues to demonstrate that occupational segregation is a causal factor behind these intersectional pay gaps. This refers to the observation that female, ethnic minority and disabled staff are under-represented in higher paying roles and overrepresented in less senior positions. Equality pay gaps in the sector should not be attributed to equal pay concerns i.e. the idea that individuals are paid differently for equal work.

UCEA will continue to monitor and report on equality pay gaps in the sector and to demonstrate best practices and effective action planning through case studies from its members. Alongside qualitative information from these case studies, the quantitative information presented in this report shows how equality pay gaps can be addressed in higher education across all protected characteristics. Transparent and informative pay gap reporting form a central part of an effective equality, diversity and inclusion strategy. It is important that action planning to tackle equality pay gaps is communicated effectively to staff, ensuring that they are consulted and included in ongoing work at a local level.

Appendix - Drivers of pay gaps in Higher Education

For gender, equal pay for equal work is protected under the Equal Pay Act 1970. The draft Equality (Race and Disability) Bill is expected to extend the right to make equal pay claims to ethnic minority and disabled people. In higher education, employers ensure that equal pay is upheld through their grading structures, salary bands and clearly defined job evaluation schemes. Intersectional pay gaps exist since staff with different protected characteristics work across different job functions, working patterns and levels of seniority. Horizontal and vertical segregation are two key terms that express these differences across the workforce. These two terms are defined below. UCEA will shortly update its infographic, Examining the gender pay gap in HE to give examples that identify how these two concepts affect the gender pay gap in the sector.

> **Vertical segregation** is the tendency for individuals with different protected characteristics (i.e. men and women) to be concentrated in different occupations, such as job functions or subject areas.
>
> **Horizontal segregation** is the tendency for individuals with different protected characteristics (e.g. men and women) to be in roles of different seniority levels.

In order to tackle pay gaps effectively, employers must gain a clear understanding of the policies and employment practices that drive them. In addition to this, it is important to be aware of policies that can artificially narrow pay gaps at an institutional level. A full understanding of the policy context will ensure that actions taken to close pay gaps are maximally effective in your HEI's specific context. Points of consideration might include, but are certainly not limited to, the following:

- Are your equality pay gaps increasing or decreasing over time?
- What steps are you taking to try to close any pay gaps? Which have been particularly effective and can these be linked to your pay gaps?
- Are outsourced staff included in your calculations? If they were to be included / excluded, how would this decision affect your pay gaps?
- How do pay gaps differ across specific pay grades / responsibility levels?
- How do pay gaps differ across different job functions? This could include comparing them across SOC (Standard Occupational Classification) codes, academic staff and professional services staff, or academic contract types (teaching only / research only / teaching and research).
- How do pay gaps differ across schools / departments / HESA cost centres?
- When reporting bonus gaps and the proportion of staff in receipt of bonuses, which types of award do you consider?
    - How do these statistics differ if you exclude Clinical Impact / Excellence Awards?

- How does the recruitment of international staff affect pay gaps, especially those relating to ethnicity? For example, are your international staff paid supplements in order to account for visa restrictions?
- If you track the protected characteristics of job applicants across stages of the recruitment and selection process (application, shortlisting and assessment, section and acceptance of a role), what have these analyses shown? What barriers exist for particular groups?
- What is your policy on starting salaries for new staff and for internal appointments? How might this affect pay gaps?
- Employee retention rates can vary across genders and ethnicity groups. Where these differences exist, how do they affect length of service, your workforce profile and pay gaps?
- The usage of contract types, especially part-time working, can also vary across genders and ethnicity. Where these differences exist, how do they affect pay gaps?
- How do your pay gaps compare to other HEIs with similar circumstances to you?
- How does the demographic profile of your employees compare with that for your local area?

Having a greater understanding of the drivers of the potential pay gaps at your HEI will help inform local action planning to tackle equality pay gaps. Each HEI should take policy decisions that are appropriate to the profile and structure of their workforce and other aspects of their local context. By closely understanding these factors, employers should be able to closely evaluate the impact of their policy decisions have on key indicators that include but are not limited to the six statistics from statutory gender pay gap reporting. Certain actions may be better tracked by considering the demographics of senior roles, figures on recruitment and retention and qualitative measures.

Additional resources

The resources below are intended to support members in calculating, benchmarking and better understanding their gender, ethnicity and intersectional pay gaps. The UCEA resources consist of reports, infographics, case studies and guidance notes.

If HEIs would be interested in providing case studies or have examples of resources that have been particularly useful, please get in touch with research@ucea.ac.uk.

Government guidance on pay gap reporting

- Gender pay gap reporting: guidance for employers in England, Wales and Scotland
- The gender pay gap: guidance for employers in Scotland, mygov.scot
- Ethnicity pay reporting: guidance for employers
- Consultation on The Gender Pay Gap Information Regulations in Northern Ireland
- Gender pay gap reporting: EHRC
- Consultation on the Equality (Race and Disability) Bill: mandatory ethnicity and disability pay gap reporting

Other guidance on pay gap reporting

- Ethnicity pay reporting: a guide for UK employers (CIPD)

Ethnicity categorisation

- List of ethnic groups
- Standards for ethnicity data
- Ethnicity data: data quality resources
- Aggregating to improve ethnicity data quality

Disability reporting

- Disability workforce reporting (CIPD)
- The employment of disabled people 2024 - DWP (gov.uk)
- Disability, England and Wales: Census 2021

UCEA pay gap resources

- Reducing pay gaps – actions taken by HEIs
- Pay Gap Journeys – Case Studies
- Gender Pay Gap Action Planning Road Map
- Taking action: Tackling the gender pay gap in higher education institutions
- Infographics: Examining the gender pay gap in HE – these will be updated in early 2026

- Caught at the crossroads: an intersectional approach to gender and ethnicity pay gaps
- Equal Pay Reviews and Gender Pay Gap Reporting – Guidance for HEIs

Benchmarking resources

- Office for National Statistics: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings
- UCEA analysis of statutory gender pay gaps data returns
- UCEA Intersectional Pay Gaps in Higher Education report (previous years)
- UCEA Intersectional Pay Gaps dashboard

Positive action resources

- Employment Statutory Code of Practice: EHRC
- Positive action in the workplace: guidance for employers (gov.uk)

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