Gender pay gap

31 March 2026



AUDIT SCOTLAND

Prepared by Audit Scotland
November 2026

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Accessibility

You can find out more and read this report using assistive technology on our website www.audit.scot/accessibility

Key messages

1 Audit Scotland has continued to build a year-on year trend since 2020 which has seen the full-time gender pay gap narrow, and now reverse, in conjunction with measures designed to promote and reinforce our commitment to gender equality.

2 For the second consecutive year, the gender pay gap at Audit Scotland favours women ahead of men. Women earn £1 for every 86 pence that men earn, when comparing hourly rates of pay.

3 If salary sacrifice-related pay elements – in which an employee typically reduces their cash pay in exchange for a non-cash benefit, such as childcare vouchers, cycle to work, and additional voluntary pension contributions – are excluded from the analysis, this results in a zero median pay differential between men and women. Therefore, we can see that the pay gap is attributed to individual's choice of salary sacrifice arrangements, and not through our organisational design or pay.

4 For the first time at Audit Scotland, women who work part-time earn more than men who work part-time. For every £1 that women earn, men earn 98 pence.

5 Audit Scotland has chosen to voluntarily disclose its action plan to address gender inequality and support employees who are experiencing menopause. Our identified actions have been selected so we can continue to build on the progress of our gender pay findings while ensuring equality of opportunity for all employees. We want to promote a culture of learning around employees who experience the menopause to proactively attract, support and retain staff through having best practice informed line managers in place.

Gender pay gap

Introduction and background

1. Audit Scotland is committed to independent audit. Our values are at the heart of everything we do, from how we plan our business and approach our audits, to how we behave and treat people.



We firmly believe in the principle of equality for all employees, regardless of sex, race, religion or belief, age, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, sexual orientation, gender reassignment or disability. We have a clear policy of paying employees equally for the same or equivalent work, regardless of their sex (or any other characteristic as set out).

2. Under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012, Audit Scotland are listed as a public body which must adhere to these regulations. Gender pay gap reporting is a requirement intended to spur organisations into addressing inequality between men and women at work.

3. We published our Diversity, equality and inclusion strategy for 2025-29 in April 2025. Our strategy sets out a shared vision for diversity, equality and inclusion in public audit – to be leaders in the Scottish public sector.

4. As a listed authority, we publish information on the percentage difference among our employees between men's average hourly pay (excluding overtime) and women's average hourly pay (excluding overtime).

5. It is important to note that salary sacrifice elements are affecting our gender pay gap figures. Subject to applicable scheme rules, the level of salary sacrifice payment an employee makes is entirely at their discretion and is out with the control of the employer.

6. The guidance on calculating hourly rates of pay requires the inclusion of salary sacrifice elements (for example, additional voluntary pension contributions, cycle to work, and childcare vouchers). Salary sacrifice deductions, however, are not seen as a true reduction in pay but rather a negative payment producing a tax benefit.

7. The gender pay gap report only accounts for **full-pay**[1] **relevant** employees and therefore would exclude anyone in receipt of reduced pay, for example, half-pay maternity or sickness pay. This year we had less than five women excluded from the analysis.

8. Audit Scotland's workforce, at the snapshot date of 31 March 2026, comprises of 344 full pay employees. Of this total, 155 are men (45.1 per cent of the workforce) and 189 women (54.9 per cent of the workforce).

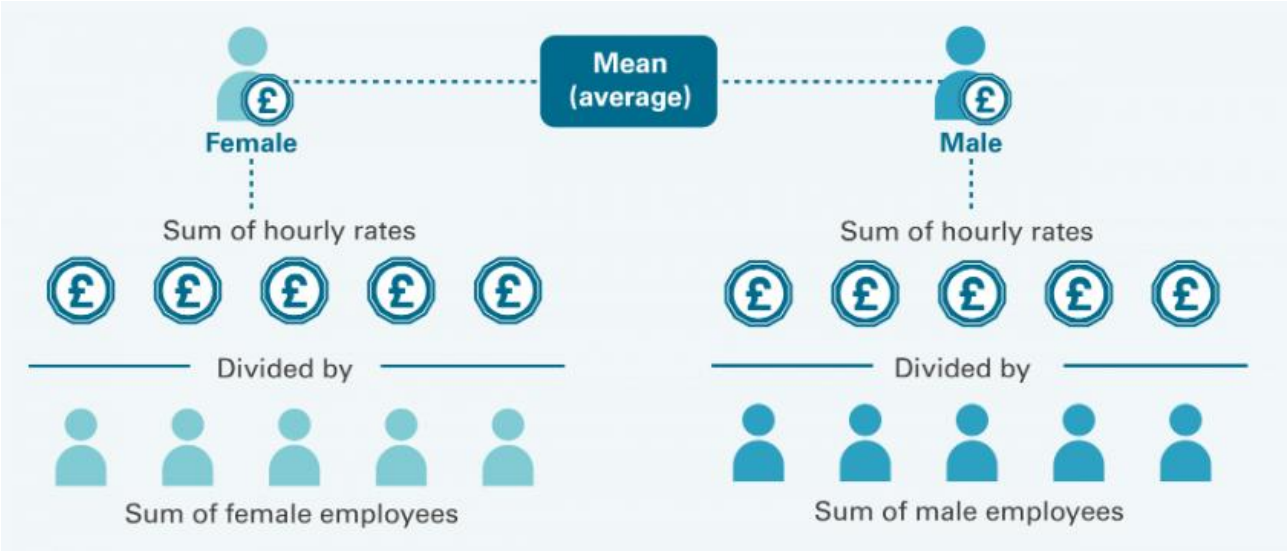
[1] This is a technical term used to define the cohort of employees used for the analysis of pay and is designed to ensure that all employer organisations calculate the gender pay gap on a consistent basis – more information can be found here.

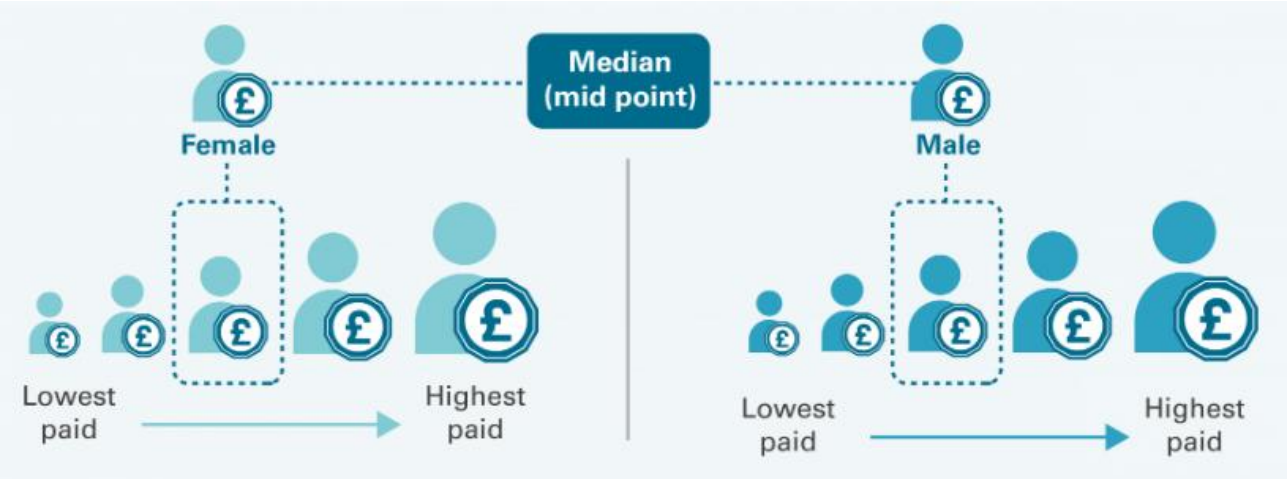
Gender pay gap data

Mean and median gender pay gap

9. Our overall gender pay gap information is based on a snapshot date of 31 March 2026 and the data is shown below for all full pay relevant employees:

- **Mean**[2] gap: -2.7 per cent
- **Median**[3] gap: -16.9 per cent.





[2] Mean: The 'mean', or average, is worked out by adding all the numbers together and then dividing the total by how many numbers there are.

[3] Median: The 'median' is the 'middle' value in the list of numbers. To find the median, we list our data in numerical order from smallest to largest, so we can identify the middle entry from the list and find the median.

10. This data shows that overall, when we examine the whole of our workforce, women are earning more than men.

11. Looking at our **median pay gap**, men earn 86 pence for every £1 that women earn when comparing median hourly wages. The median hourly wage for men is 16.9 per cent lower than that for women:

Using the UK GPG calculation as a **median pay gap** of -16.9% means that women's median pay is 16.9% higher than mean's median pay. So, the calculation is men's pay = 1/1.169 = 0.855.

12. Both the mean and median gender pay gaps have decreased for the fifth consecutive year.

13. From our analysis, salary sacrifice-related pay elements (in which an employee typically reduces their cash pay in exchange for a non-cash benefit), such as childcare vouchers, cycle to work, and additional voluntary pension contributions has resulted in a zero median pay differential between men and women, if salary sacrifice elements are excluded from the analysis.

14. The impact of salary sacrifice arrangements on the gender pay gap will depend on the number of men and women in a salary sacrifice scheme. It could have the potential to create a lower rate of pay for those who have opted into the scheme in comparison to those who have not. This is because salary sacrifices are not regarded as a proper deduction to an employee's actual pay, but rather a negative payment in exchange for a benefit. They are taken into account when calculating the gender pay gap in accordance with current government guidance.

15. We are committed to the principle of equal pay for all our employees and aim to eliminate any bias in our reward systems. We have a clear policy of paying employees equally for the same or equivalent work, underpinned by our job evaluation system.

16. The gender pay gap does not show differences in pay for comparable jobs. This analysis can be found in our most recent Equal Pay Statement published in September 2024. The gender pay gap is an equality measure that shows the difference in average earnings between women and men. Our previous Gender Pay Gap report was published in September 2025.

17. Our year-on-year trend in our mean and median gender pay gap data can be seen in the following table:

	31 March 2024	31 March 2025	31 March 2026
Mean:	3.76%	-0.44%	-2.0%
Median:	2.60%	-3.33%	-16.9%

Part-time employees only

18. Of our 344 full pay employees in this report, 51 employees work part time, with a working pattern of less than our normal working week of 35 hours, as at 31 March 2026.[4]

19. The gender split of those working part time is 40 women and 11 men. Part-time women accounted for 78.4 per cent of all part-time staff, in contrast to men who comprised 21.6 per cent:

- Mean gap: 5.1 per cent
- Median gap: -2.1 per cent.

20. This is the first time that Audit Scotland has reported a part-time median pay gap in favour of women.

21. This additional analysis of our data shows that overall, when we examine our part-time median pay gap, men earn 98 pence for every £1 that women earn when comparing median hourly wages.

Bonuses

22. The only bonuses paid at Audit Scotland are paid to members of our professional trainee auditor scheme. No other roles are eligible for bonus payments.

23. When a trainee auditor successfully completes all examinations in each syllabus at the first attempt, a bonus of £300 is paid. A final bonus of £300 is also paid to trainee auditors when they successfully gain membership to ICAS, if all examinations across the syllabus are passed first time throughout.

24. Following the gender pay gap guidance we have calculated the proportion of all men and women at Audit Scotland receiving a bonus and the proportion of trainees only, receiving a bonus.

25. Proportion of all men and women at Audit Scotland receiving a bonus:

- Men: 11.0 per cent
- Women: 5.8 per cent
- Bonus mean gender pay gap: -0.5 per cent
- Bonus median gender pay gap: 0 per cent.

[4] From 1 April 2025, we moved to a 35-hour working week for all staff except our Executive Team who remain at 36.25 hours.

26. Proportion of trainees only at Audit Scotland receiving a bonus:

- Men: 60.7 per cent
- Women: 39.3 per cent.

27. Due to the timing of examinations in the professional training scheme syllabus and the distribution of men and women across each year's intake of trainees, these figures will vary each year.

28. More men were eligible for a bonus on account of exam success compared to women. The mean bonus for men was 0.5 per cent lower compared to women, however this variation is explained by individuals who have received multiple bonuses throughout the year on account of exam success and not due to any differential in the actual amount received.

Proportion of men and women in each quartile

29. The following information gives the percentage of men and women in each pay quartile. This is based on the hourly pay rate of all our organisation's full-pay relevant employees in the pay period that covers the snapshot date.

30. This is divided into four quartiles, with an equal number of employees in each section. From the highest paid to the lowest paid, these quartiles are:

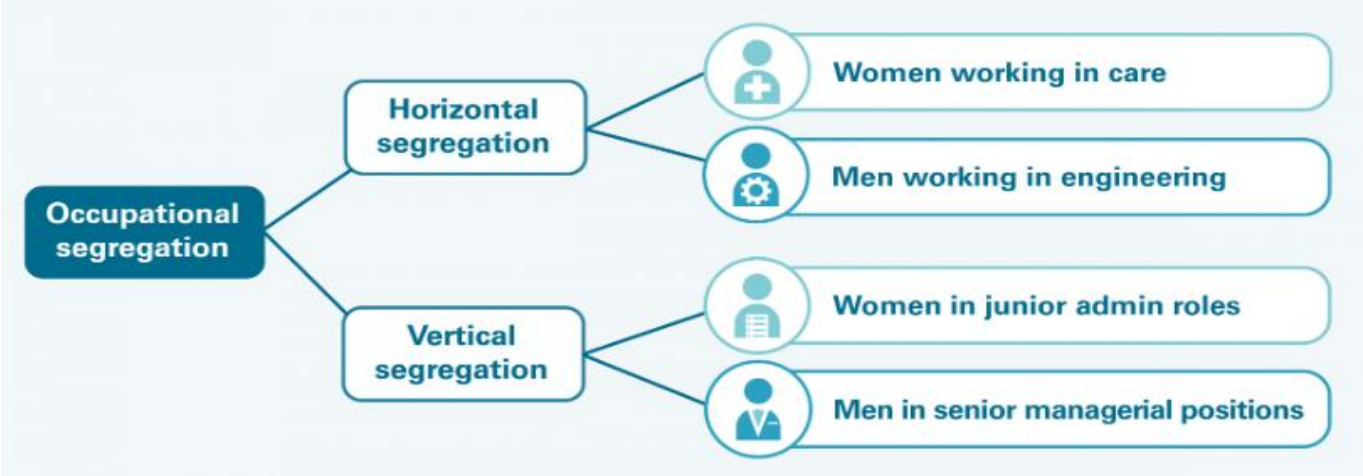
	Men	Women
Upper quartile:	44.2%	55.8%
Upper middle quartile:	39.5%	60.5%
Lower middle quartile:	45.3%	54.7%
Lower quartile:	51.2%	48.8%

31. Our year-on-year trend in the distribution of gender across the quartiles can be seen in the following table:

	March 2024		March 2025		March 2026	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Upper quartile:	50.6%	49.4%	45.5%	54.5%	44.2 %	55.8%
Upper middle quartile:	37.7%	62.3%	41.4%	58.6%	39.5%	60.5%
Lower middle quartile:	38.8%	61.2%	48.9%	51.1%	45.3%	54.7%
Lower quartile:	45.3%	54.7%	46.6%	53.4%	51.2%	48.8%

Occupational segregation

32. Occupational segregation, by which women are underrepresented in management and leadership roles, can be the result of a range of societal and employment-related causes. It can be attributed to the gender-based organisation of labour typically attracting lower rates of pay due to stereotypes about women's capabilities. For example, higher representation of women in the clerical, caring and cleaning sectors. Additionally, women taking on more of the caring responsibilities at home.



33. Audit Scotland has taken steps to combat the effects of occupational segregation. This includes providing leave for parents and carers which exceed the statutory minimum, training our line managers in diversity and equality, promoting our values in support of a positive and inclusive culture, together with promoting flexible and hybrid working options for all, across the organisation. This helps ensure that employees can continue working for us and grow their careers as they move into more senior roles over time.

34. The majority of Audit Scotland's workforce are comprised of auditors across our Audit Services and Performance Audit & Best Value teams.

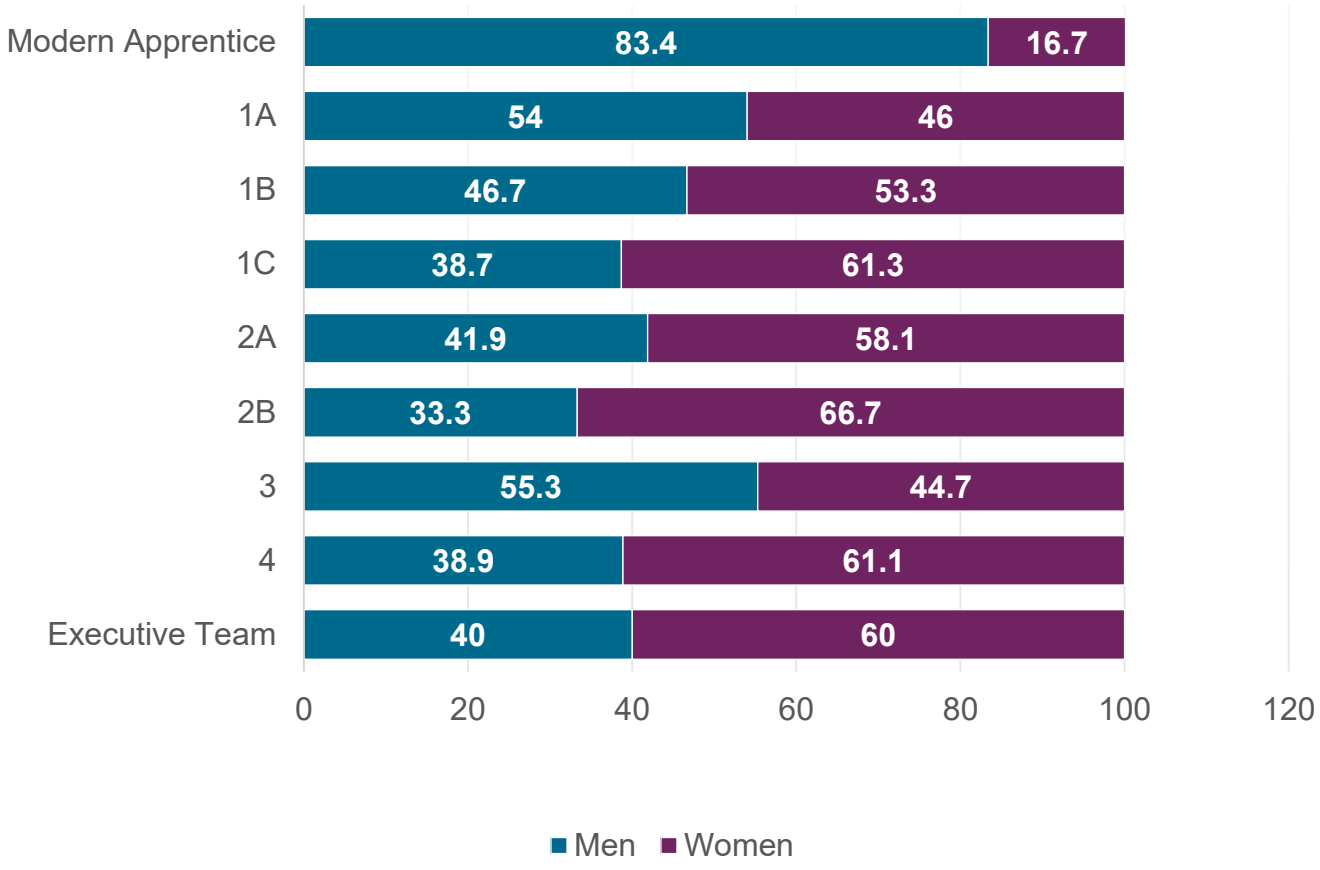
We also have colleagues working across a variety of roles within our Innovation & Quality and Corporate Services teams.

35. The importance of representation and career development is essential to the reduction of gender-based stereotypes about an individual's capability. Although the composition of staff at each grade is not equally gender balanced between men and women, the representation of women in senior level positions (members of staff in band 2A posts and above) demonstrate Audit Scotland's commitment against gender-based divisions of labour.

36. Additionally, staff represented at more junior pay grades will include modern apprentices, school and college leavers and graduates, whose early years career development is supported with the view of upward mobility through the pay bands upon qualification or through gaining the required levels of experience.

37. Audit Scotland's pay structure is based on a tiered banding system from modern apprentices up to director-level remuneration at band four. There are executive positions which fall outside the scope of this pay scale structure.

38. On 31 March 2026, employee composition by pay bands can be seen below:



Findings, our action plan and conclusion

Gender pay gap findings

39. Our mean gender pay gap of -2.7 per cent shows that while women earned slightly more, it was only a marginal difference.

40. Our mean and median gender pay gap has continued to decrease for the fifth consecutive year. Our median gap shows that males earn 16.9 per cent less when compared to their female counterparts. When salary sacrifice elements are excluded from the analysis, however, there is no median pay differential between men and women.

41. We have included analysis on occupational segregation in our workforce. Women comprised the majority within each pay band except for those at modern apprentice level, those at band 1A and those in senior management posts at band 3.

42. The majority of our part-time employees (78.4 per cent) are women, which may account for the differential rates of pay in relation to the part-time gender pay gap. Further, part-time women at all pay bands from 1A to band 3 have higher levels of representation in comparison to men.

A culture of inclusion and equality of opportunity

43. Audit Scotland has a public-sector equality duty to mitigate inequalities. There are various initiatives to support existing members of staff and attract candidates from communities as diverse as Audit Scotland represents.

44. Opportunities for flexible working are promoted at Audit Scotland to ensure staff are able to manage their own pursuits and personal lives around their work commitments. As women still assume disproportionate responsibility for caring and unpaid forms of working, flexible working can support retention rates in cases where the alternative may be a departure from the workforce, or higher levels of representation in lower paid employment.

45. We also support maternity returners through a buddy scheme where colleagues can be paired with another woman who has been through the experience of maternity leave and returning to work for additional support.

46. There are a number of equality network groups at Audit Scotland to promote a culture of inclusion on the grounds of race and ethnicity, sexual and gender diversity, disability status, neurodiversity and carer status. It is understood greater steps towards gender pay equality must be harmonised alongside tackling other forms of inequality and disadvantage.

Organisational design, recruitment and career development

47. Equal pay for work of equal value is achieved at Audit Scotland through our approach to job design. We use an analytical job evaluation system to assess the relative value of all jobs across our organisation. By contrast, our gender pay gap fluctuates with the changing composition of our workforce from year to year.

48. A key element of our resource and succession planning is the operation of our professional training scheme for auditors. A typical trainee will take four years at Audit Scotland to become qualified, at which point our newly qualified trainees progress further through our pay structure into more senior roles.

49. Where recruitment, including any promotion opportunities, for any roles takes place, we deploy recruitment and selection techniques which are designed to eliminate bias and support decisions which are based upon objective criteria. All panel members for recruitment receive training which includes an awareness of unconscious bias and protected characteristics. During 2025/26, we have continued to refresh our training content and continued the use of essential and desirable criteria on our job profiles.

50. Examining recruitment data from 2025, women made up the majority of applicants (50.1 per cent), including a majority of those shortlisted for interview (62.5 per cent) and also a majority of offers made (62.5 per cent).

51. The voluntary turnover rate is 4.3 per cent at Audit Scotland for 2025/26. While this low turnover rate helps ensure the retention of knowledge and experience within Audit Scotland, it also means that career progression into more senior roles for newer employees may take time.

52. In 2025/26, 50.0 per cent of staff who left Audit Scotland were men and 50.0 per cent were women.

53. In the year 2025/26, there were 24 permanent promotions made across Audit Scotland, of which 75.0 per cent were women and 25.0 per cent were men.

Action plan

54. The Employment Rights Act 2025 requires certain employers and public bodies to develop and publish an action plan on the steps they are

taking to address the gender pay gap and to support employees experiencing menopause.

55. Although this is not mandatory until 2027, Audit Scotland has chosen to voluntarily publish its action plan in preparation for this statutory requirement.

Action one – Address the gender pay gap

56. There is an assumption that most organisations will have a gender pay in favour of men. For two-consecutive years, Audit Scotland has reported a positive gender pay gap in favour of women. This is attributed to a number of initiatives which have been designed to support women in the workplace, alongside policies and processes to eliminate gender bias.

57. While a positive pay gap in favour of women is not a long-term sustained trend, we are committed to achieving gender equality while ensuring equality of opportunity for all employees. For example, while the promotion and career development of women has aided in narrowing the gender pay gap, over the last five years, the majority of promoted appointments have been women.

58. It is acknowledged that the gender pay gap figures will fluctuate annually due to a number of variable factors. As an ongoing action, however, we want to make sure there are no barriers to the training and development of all of our staff which may impact equality of opportunity.

Action two – Supporting employees experiencing menopause

59. Audit Scotland has a Menopause policy alongside a guidance document for line managers on supporting colleagues experiencing the menopause. As a new action, it is proposed that guidance to managers can also be delivered via our internal Learning Management System. This would allow for completion rates to be formally recorded as a measure of success.

60. There is nothing to suggest that Audit Scotland is failing to retain valued employees as a result of the menopause or due to a lack of workplace support provided. An organisational culture, however, that promotes awareness of challenges employees facing menopause may experience together with an informed and supportive line manager, is taking a pro-active approach to prevent unintended negative outcomes.

Embedded actions

61. It is considered that there are a number of embedded actions arising as a matter of existing policies and processes which are designed to promote gender equality and support employees experiencing menopause.

62. These actions will be reviewed annually and updated with any additional information.

Area	Action	Status	Evidence
Recruiting staff			
	Make job descriptions inclusive	Embedded	Our job descriptions seek to limit the essential criteria where necessary to maximise the potential applicant pool. Where possible, employment history will also be considered in the absence of a relevant formal qualification. Our job descriptions are also reviewed to ensure they meet the standards of accessibility best practice.
	Encourage applications from a range of candidates	Embedded	We use a range of standard and specialist job boards as part of our recruitment engagement strategy where required. This includes advertising channels targeting candidates who have a disability, belong to an ethnic minority background, or at women seeking a career in a STEM-based role. We monitor the diversity of our applicant population and take necessary and proportionate action where attempts to increase representation of certain groups may be required. As part of our modern apprentice recruitment strategy, we use specialist recruitment partners to assist in targeting school age leavers who are looking to transition to the workplace rather than remain in education.
	Reduce unconscious bias in CV screening	Embedded	Unconscious bias training delivered to all staff involved in recruitment activity. No sharing of candidates' personal sensitive information.

Area	Action	Status	Evidence
	Use fair and structured interview techniques	Embedded	Interview questions follow the SMART approach: specific, measurable, action taken, result, and timeframe. This allows candidates' answers to be objectively scored on whether they have fully answered the question and provided sufficient evidence of the required competence being assessed. Candidates invited to interview are provided with an agenda in advance with an outline of topics that will be covered and the format of the interview. Assessments may be used to objectively assess candidates' performance.
	Advertise flexible working arrangements in job adverts	Embedded	Our role profiles highlight the various forms of flexible working afforded to staff. The majority of roles are advertised as full-time but with part-time or other flexible working arrangements fully considered.
Developing and promoting staff			
	Offer mentoring, sponsorship and other development programmes	Embedded	Reverse mentoring scheme in place which allows junior members of staff, particularly from an under-represented group, to increase awareness of any barriers or challenges certain groups may experience. Aspiring Leadership and management development programmes which aim to develop senior managers of the future. Staff are able to request an Individual Learning Agreement if there is an area of study or qualification which may facilitate their career development and add value back into the organisation. Where appropriate, career coaches are also considered on a case-by-case basis.

Area	Action	Status	Evidence
Increasing transparency			
	Increase transparency for pay, promotions and rewards	Embedded	Pay structure that pays staff at the same band and scale point the same amount. Job evaluations are objectively assessed by trained in-house HR staff and Union representatives, and where appropriate, external consultants. Annual gender pay gap report published annually, alongside the annual Diversity report which acknowledges if there are any identified issues of representation or concern in our workforce, and the actions we are taking to address them. We also have an Equal Pay policy and publish an Equal Pay Statement every four years.
	Enhance and promote flexible working and leave policies	Embedded	Employees are eligible for five days of paid carer's leave a year, which exceeds the statutory unpaid entitlement. The ordinary maternity pay period (full pay period) is 27 weeks, an increase of one week. The period of parental pay is five weeks' full pay, more than the statutory two-week period from 1 April 2026. Staff may be entitled to five days of paid compassionate leave (a non-statutory right), which may be extended subject to circumstance. Staff can request a career break (a non-statutory right) to recommence their employment at an agreed future date. Hybrid working arrangements available for most roles.
Supporting employees experiencing menopause			
	Offer occupational health advice for employees experiencing menopause	Embedded	We have an Occupational Health provider where staff experiencing menopause can be referred to for advice.

Area	Action	Status	Evidence
	Set up menopause support groups and network	Embedded	We have a menopause network group where employees experiencing menopause can share their experiences and make contributions to any menopause-related initiatives and other consultations, eg Equality Impact Assessments.
	Offer workplace adjustments for employees experiencing menopause	Embedded	All reasonable workplace adjustments for employees experiencing menopause will be accommodated, including flexibility and time off when required. We have an employee passport scheme which can be used when temporary adjustments are required.
	Review policies and procedures to meet the needs of employees experiencing menopause	Embedded	We have a Menopause policy as well as Menopause Guidance for Managers. Equality impact assessments are conducted when required with the Menopause support group invited to provide insight to these.

Conclusion

63. We will continue to monitor our equalities duties and seek feedback from our employees within Audit Scotland, along with our Equalities and Human Rights Strategic Group, our People Development and Wellbeing Group, our internal diversity employee network groups, the Public and Commercial Services (PCS) union and our employee pulse surveys so that we can continue to improve. We will also continue to benchmark and share good practice with other similar organisations, including the other UK audit agencies.

64. Audit Scotland has continued to make positive advancements towards gender pay parity in 2025/26, however, it is recognised there is still ongoing effort required to ensure progress is maintained and to play our part in ensuring the root causes of gender pay imbalance are not attributed to our policies, practices and processes.

65. This year Audit Scotland has reported a positive pay gap in favour of women for the second time. We recognise it is not yet known if this is a sustainable trend and annual fluctuations are likely to occur. In the meantime, Audit Scotland will continue to report each year about our commitment to reduce the gender pay gap and the progress that we are making.

66. We have also published a report with further information and guidance for other employers which can be found on our website here.

Written statement

I can confirm the gender pay gap calculations are accurate and have been carried out in line with the guidance provided by the UK Government.

Signed:



Stephen Boyle
Accountable Officer

Gender pay gap

31 March 2026

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