



# Employment group Pankhurst-Fawcett Report

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# EMPLOYMENT GROUP

## Scorecard - 2025

The scorecard data again shows a mixed picture suggesting a narrowing of the employment gap but a relatively stable pay gap.

### Indicator 1: Employment Rate Gap

**5.6%**

The gap between the employment rate for men and women in Greater Manchester fell to **5.9 percentage points in 2025**. While the employment rate for men was relatively stable, the data suggest that the employment rate for women increased by 2.4 percentage points from 66.4% to 68.8% in 2025.

### Indicator 2: Gender Pay Gap

**9.9%**

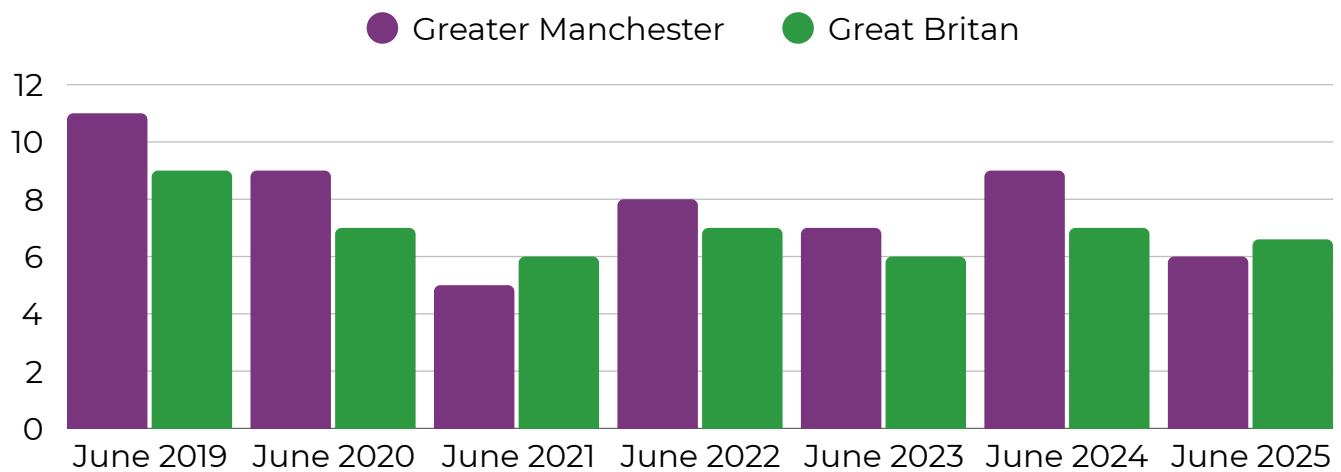
The gender pay gap increased modestly from 9.6 to 9.9 percent for median hourly earnings in Greater Manchester compared to 2024.

This briefing note produced by the GM4Women's Employment Action Group starts by reviewing the trends in our scorecard indicators in more detail. This is followed by a summary of a recent workshop that examined ways that the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter could be strengthened to support women in employment. We also reflect on the implementation of different parts of the Employment Rights Act, many of which could have positive impacts on gender equality.

# Women’s employment in Greater Manchester: some positive developments but a mixed picture remains in 2024/25

The gender employment gap appears to have narrowed in the last year in Greater Manchester and the employment rate for women is currently **5.9 percentage points below that for men**. This contrasts with a 8.1 percentage point gap in 2024, which represented one of the largest gaps in employment rates between men and women in Greater Manchester since the scorecard started. The 2025 gender employment rate gap in Greater Manchester is again smaller than for Great Britain as a whole (at 5.9 percentage points compared to 6.4).

**Figure 1. Gender Employment rate Gap**



In the last year, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority has published the refreshed Greater Manchester Strategy for 2025-35, which includes a commitment to ‘narrow the gap between the Greater Manchester employment rate and the national rate, with good, sustainable jobs that pay well and provide equal opportunities for all residents’. This is an ambitious goal which aligns with a national Labour ambition to reach an 80 percent employment rate, and will have implications for the gender employment and pay gaps.

On one level the current narrowing in the employment rate gap between men and women in Greater Manchester can be attributed to a larger increase in the employment rate for women over the last year than for men (see Table 1 on the next page). The share of women in employment increased by 2.4 percentage points to 68.8 percent while the employment rate for men was relatively stable at 74.7 percent in 2025, up by only 0.2 percentage points on 2024 and having fallen from 77.8% percent in 2018/19.

**Table 1. Employment rates by gender in Greater Manchester**

July to June	Men	Women	Gender gap
2024/2025	74.7	68.8	5.9
2023/2024	75.0	66.4	8.6
2022/2023	76.8	69.6	7.2
2021/2022	75.8	67.8	8.0
2020/2021	74.1	69.3	4.8
2019/2020	77.5	68.2	9.3
2018/2019	77.8	66.8	11.0

It is not clear whether or not there has been a real improvement in the relative position of women in employment over the last year. As we discussed last year, there are **concerns over the reliability of the survey data** that underpin these employment estimates due to a fall in survey response rates in recent years.



Survey responses are also still weighted to population projections that pre-date the pandemic. Changes are being introduced to address response rates and sample sizes, but working with the available data it is important to be aware that the reliability of estimates is a particular concern when looking at specific population groups and sub-regions (like Greater Manchester and its constituent local authorities), or combinations of these. The breakdown of employment rates for women by ethnic group and disability status below should therefore also be approached with a degree of caution.

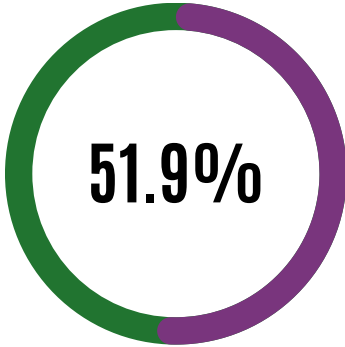
We now turn to variations in employment rates by ethnicity and disability. Despite concerns about the reliability of the underlying data (see table on the next page) and the potential for wide confidence intervals around each estimate, it is important that disparities in employment rates are not forgotten.

The employment rates for women from different ethnic groups are reported in Table 2. Rather than focusing on year-to-year changes, the overall pattern is probably more instructive. Averaging over the three years to 2025, the employment rate among white women (71.7%) and those with mixed ethnicity (68.8%) was higher than average for women in Greater Manchester. The lowest employment rates were recorded for women of Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnicity (45.6%) and those from 'other' ethnic groups (55.6%).

**Table 2. Employment rates for women in GM by ethnic group, 2019 to 2025**

	All	White	Mixed	Indian	Pakistani/B angladeshi	Black	Other
2019	66.8	72.6	64.1	58.4	33.9	54.4	32.9
2020	68.2	72.4	53.0	66.1	39.2	64.1	54.4
2021	69.6	73.8	68.3	63.1	40.7	62.7	50.4
2022	67.8	73.1	65.2	72.1	31.9	51.8	38.0
2023	69.6	73.1	72.2	63.8	43.8	65.0	47.2
2024	66.4	69.1	69.9	72.3	47.7	59.6	57.0
2025	68.8	72.1	64.2	63.0	45.3	65.7	62.6
3-year average to 2025	68.3	71.1	68.8	66.4	45.6	63.4	55.6

More than half (51.9%) of disabled women in Greater Manchester were in employment in 2025, compared to 76.2 percent among women who were not disabled. This is lower than the rate for disabled women in Great Britain as a whole, where 56 percent are in employment.



# The Gender Pay Gap remains relatively stable overall and is still below the average for Great Britain

When it comes to pay, the gender pay gap increased slightly this year among people living in Greater Manchester. On average, women in Greater Manchester earned 9.9% less per hour than men compared to 9.6% in 2024. The gap for GB as a whole narrowed, although only slightly (by 0.5 percentage points), to reach 12.8%. The size of the gender pay gap depends on the level of pay received by women and men.

Consequently, the lower pay gap in Greater Manchester should be understood in relation to the lower earnings of residents compared to the national average: men and women earn respectively 6% and 3% less per hour than the average man and woman in GB. For full-time workers, the gender pay gap for Greater Manchester is now very close to the GB average at 7% this year against 7.1% for full-time workers in Great Britain. This indicates that the narrower overall gender pay gap in Greater Manchester is again due to fewer women working in lower paid part-time jobs than for GB as a whole, linked to the still lower overall employment rate in GM for women as well as men.

Figure 2. Gender Gap in GM and GB



There are also four of Greater Manchester’s local authority areas where the gender pay gap is higher than the national average. These were Tameside (17.8%), Stockport (15.1%), Trafford (13.9%), and Wigan (13.7%) (See Figure 2).

The picture for the level of resident earnings (see figure 2) varies widely between these places :

- People in Stockport and Trafford are relatively well-paid overall with earnings for both men and women above the national average.
- Wigan had above average pay among men but not women.
- Tameside had the second lowest pay for women in Greater Manchester (£14.61) and relatively poor pay for men (£17.77).
- Bolton had the lowest average pay for both men and women, but the local gender pay gap was below the national average (although at 10.8% it was higher than the GM average).
- Oldham meanwhile had below average pay for men but above average pay among women; this led to a negative gender pay gap with the average hourly pay for women representing 101% of average hourly pay for men in 2025.

## Women face a higher risk of low pay than men

When it comes to low pay, the overall risk for women was higher than for men with 13.1% of male and 15.5% of female employees paid less than the real living wage. In contrast to the gender pay gap measure, this low pay analysis relates to the pay received by employees working in each area (which includes people commuting in as well as residents who work locally).

**Table 3 Gender Pay Gap and risk of low pay in GM**

April 2025	Gender pay gap for residents	Share of employee jobs that pay below the real living wage – men	Share of employee jobs that pay below the real living wage - women
<b>Great Britain</b>	12.8	12.2	16.7
<b>Greater Manchester</b>	9.9	13.1	15.5
<b>Bolton</b>	10.8	23.4	24.7
<b>Bury</b>	8.4	19.6	24.0
<b>Manchester</b>	6.1	8.4	9.7
<b>Oldham</b>	-1.0	17.6	18.7
<b>Rochdale</b>	3.3	17.4	19.4
<b>Salford</b>	12.6	9.2	10.4
<b>Stockport</b>	15.1	13.8	16.3
<b>Tameside</b>	17.8	16.6	25.9
<b>Trafford</b>	13.9	10.7	18.3
<b>Wigan</b>	13.7	20.5	19.1

Compared to women across GB, female employees had a somewhat lower risk of low pay in Greater Manchester in 2025 (16.7% in GB) while the risk of being paid below the living wage for male employees (13.1%) was slightly higher than the national average (12.2%). Table 3 (on the previous page) provides an overview of the gender pay gap for residents across Greater Manchester and also summarises the share of jobs in these areas that were paid less than the real living wage. The real living wage, which was £12.60 in 2024/2025, is set by the Living Wage Foundation with reference to the cost of living.

Looking across Greater Manchester, the areas with the lowest risk of low pay for both men and women were Manchester and Salford. In contrast, in Tameside, Bolton and Bury, the risk of low pay for women was at least 7 percentage points higher than the national rate. In Bolton and Bury, nearly 1 in 4 jobs done by women were paid below the living wage (24.7% and 24% respectively) while Tameside registered the highest risk of low pay for women at 25.9% of jobs. The area with the highest share of low paid jobs done by men was Bolton (23.4%) followed by Wigan (20.5%) and Bury (19.6%).

Comparing rates of low pay between male and female employees in each area, the gap was widest in Tameside where there was more than a 9.3 percentage point gender gap. The risk of low pay was higher for women in all areas except Wigan where a slightly higher share of jobs done by men than women were low paid (20.5% vs 19.1%).

## Positive national developments and implications for women in Greater Manchester

The new Employment Rights Act is now law and brings important changes that will benefit women in Greater Manchester. While not all aspects have been finalised and the law will be implemented in a staggered manner between now and 2027, there are some key features that will be particularly beneficial for women across GM (last year's briefing provided a detailed analysis on these provisions).



The changes include **but** are not limited to:

- **Sick Pay from Day One (April 2026):** Everyone will get sick pay from their first day at work, with no minimum earnings requirement. This is especially helpful for women who were often excluded before.
- **Better Leave for Parents and Carers:** From April 2026, paternity and parental leave will start from day one. By 2027, maternity protections will be stronger, making it harder for employers to dismiss women during pregnancy or after maternity leave.
- **Increased support for women in workplaces:** From October 2026, employers must take steps to prevent harassment. By 2027, they will also need to create action plans to support employees through menopause and tackle gender pay gaps.
- **Support for some female-dominated occupations:** New negotiating bodies for school support staff and adult social care will start in October 2026 to improve pay and conditions.
- **Increased predictability for income and working time:** From 2027, people will have the right to be paid if a shift is cancelled, moved to another date or cut short and people on zero-hour contracts will get guaranteed hours based on the average of their actual hours worked. This should help women in care, retail and hospitality in particular.

Many of these rights are already offered by those employers in Greater Manchester that are engaging with the **Good Employment Charter**, which also promotes extra benefits like full sick pay. But the charter needs to go further **to make sure women get the best possible working conditions.**

## How to Make the Charter Better for Women

GM4Women2028 co-hosted a workshop in November 2025 where women from across Greater Manchester were invited to share ideas to make the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter more gender-positive.

The workshop included brief presentations by representatives from the Good Employment Charter, Gender Equality Index UK, and the Decent Work and the City project.



Participants were clear that the Charter should show clearer leadership on gender equality, adopting it as a guiding principle. There was a suggestion that the success of the Charter should be based on how well it is promoting gender equality, alongside more traditional metrics such as growing the number of engaged employers. Some examples that emerged of appropriate measures to achieve this ambition included:

<p><b>Making Family-Friendly Policies a priority</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced maternity leave and paid parental leave for non-birthing parents;</li> <li>• Flexible working arrangements across life stages with minimal pay impact;</li> <li>• Meeting scheduling aligned with core non-caring hours and limits on working hours (max 48/week).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Pay Gap Reporting</b></p>	<p>Promote both gender and ethnic pay gap reporting for all employers (not just those with 100+ employees).</p>
<p><b>Flexible work</b></p>	<p>Clearer remit to promote flexible work, including the provision of long-term guarantees for agreed adjustments. Workers working part time should retain the option to return to full-time employment to avoid being trapped in permanent part-time roles.</p>
<p><b>Development of a flexible employer engagement approach across sectors</b></p>	<p>Developments pay particular attention to female-dominated sectors that struggle to engage currently. The Charter should also support the creation of communities of engagement and ensure that diverse groups are involved in charter promotion and development.</p>

Other suggestions were also made to increase the effectiveness of the charter through worker-driven accountability, that is by strengthening whistleblowing and compliance monitoring of Charter members through employee feedback to ensure that employers are applying policies and procedures in line with the Charter criteria.

# Key policy priorities for 2025

1

**The Greater Manchester Combined Authority and Good Employment Charter team should take on the key recommendations put forward by our workshop participants, in particular developing a gender equality strategy and boosting employer accountability mechanisms around the charter.**

2

**Following on from our call in 2024, we continue to advocate for greater support for all workers with caring responsibilities (whether eldercare, sickness or childcare).** While the Employment Rights Act removes qualifying periods for parental leave and sick pay and requires employers to justify rejections of requests for flexible working, the GMCA Employment Charter should make care friendly policies a core dimension of the Charter and require employers to provide flexible working for people with care responsibilities as well as paid carers leave (for those having to take time off to care for others).

3

**Central government should extend sector negotiation bodies beyond adult social care and school support staff to other essential feminised sectors. The Early Childhood Education and Care sector (ECEC) in particular is key to enabling women to access work.** If central government really wants to 'make work pay', improvements in conditions of employment in the ECEC sector need to be made to stem the chronic recruitment and retention issues in the sector.