



# Employment group Pankhurst-Fawcett Report

Authors: Professor Jill Rubery, Dr Eva Herman  
and Ms Ceri Hughes



# EMPLOYMENT GROUP

## Scorecard - 2024

A mixed picture from the scorecard data on women's employment and pay.

9%

### Indicator 1: Employment Rate Gap

The gap between employment rates for men and women in Greater Manchester has risen to 8.6 percentage points, a considerable jump from 7.2 percentage points in 2023. The employment rates for both men and women have fallen but the fall for women has been greater.

9%

### Indicator 2: Gender Pay Gap

The gender pay gap narrowed in 2024 from 11.3 percentage points to 9.4. This fall of 1.9 percentage points is welcome but likely to be linked to women's lower employment rate in GM.

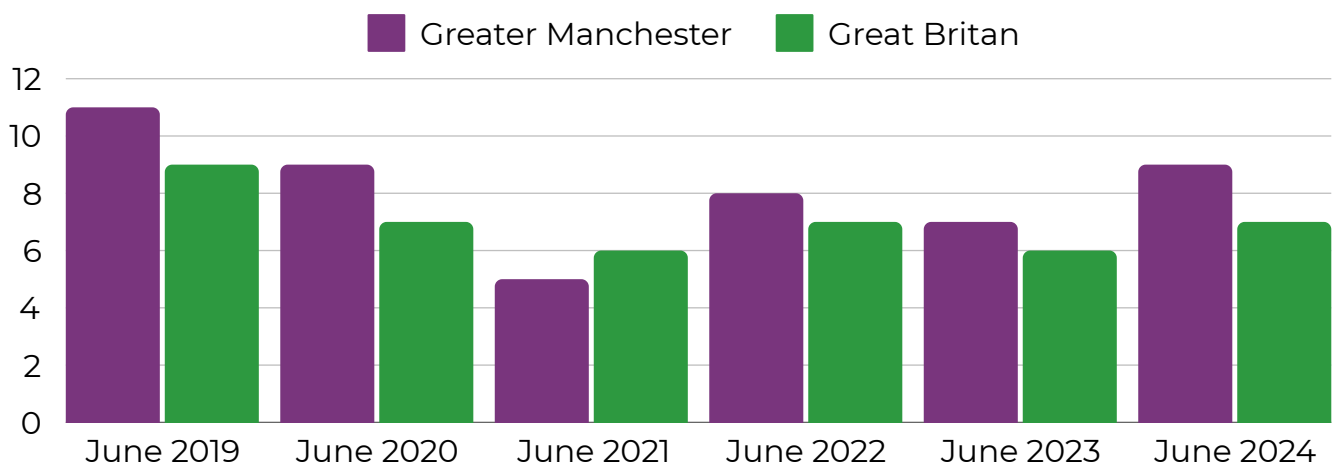
The scorecard data on women's employment and pay in Greater Manchester (GM) shows a mixed picture indicating a reduction in the employment rate (Annual Population Survey) but a narrowing of the gender pay gap compared to last year (Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings).

## Women’s employment in GM has fallen in 2023/2024

Both the employment rate of women has dropped, and the employment rate gap by gender in GM has widened.

- Women’s employment has dropped from 69.6% in 2022/23 to 66.4%. This 3.2 percentage point fall brings women’s employment below the rate at which the scorecard started in 2018/19, which was 66.8%.
- Men’s employment in GM dropped by a smaller amount, 1.4 percentage points, to 75%.
- The 8.6 percentage point gap between genders is markedly above the 6.7 percentage point gender employment rate gap for Great Britain as a whole, narrowed by 0.1 percentage points this year.

**Figure 1. Gender Employment rate Gap**



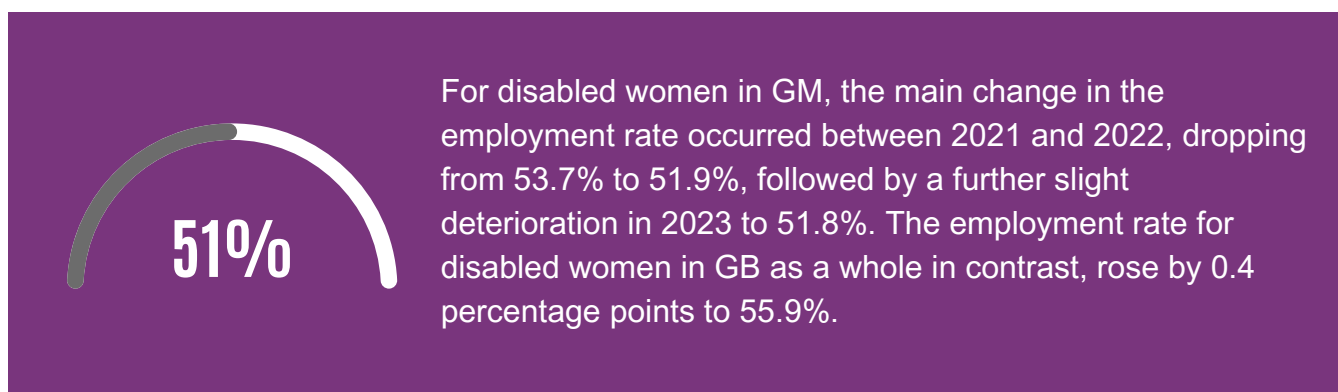
**Table 1. Employment rates by gender in Greater Manchester**

| July to June | Men  | Women | Gender gap |
|--------------|------|-------|------------|
| 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       |

Due to problems with the Annual Population Survey, we are not able to update the employment rates of ethnic minority women or disabled women in GM. Instead, we are sharing the same data as last year so that the variations by ethnicity and between disabled and able-bodied women are not forgotten. The employment rates by ethnic group in GM are shown in Table 2 for both 2022 and 2023.

**Table 2. Employment rates for women in GM by ethnic group June 2022 and June 2023**

|      | All  | White | Mixed | Indian | Pakistani/B<br>angladeshi | Black | Other |
|------|------|-------|-------|--------|---------------------------|-------|-------|
| 2023 | 69.6 | 73.8  | 72.2  | 63.8   | 43.8                      | 65.0  | 47.2  |
| 2022 | 67.8 | 73.1  | 65.2  | 72.0   | 32.0                      | 51.9  | 37.9  |



## The Gender Pay Gap in GM has narrowed and is well below the average for Great Britain but this may hide the bad news

When it comes to pay, the gender pay gap narrowed this year in GM by 1.9 percentage points, from 11.3% to 9.4%. The gender pay gap for GB narrowed by 1.4 percentage points to 13.3%. However, the gender pay gap for full-time workers in GM is closer to the GB average (6.9% compared to 7.5%) suggesting that the somewhat smaller gap in GM is also due to the lower proportion of women in part-time work (at 33.3% compared to 36.9% for GB as a whole in 2023) as wages are lower in part-time than full-time jobs.

This sounds like good news until we remember that the female employment rate in GM is now 5.7 percentage points below that for GB and that therefore a shortage of part-time jobs may be leading to higher unemployment or economic inactivity among women in GM.

This apparently strong performance for GM is rather misleading as both men’s and women’s earnings still fall below the GB average but by a larger amount for men who earn around 6% less than the GB median wage compared to women earning around 2% less, taking full and part-time workers combined. Full-time men and women both earn around 4% less at the median than the median wage for GB as a whole.

Thus the overall explanation for the better GM gender pay gap performance seems to be a lower share of part-time workers, also associated with the lower female employment rate.

**Figure 2. Gender Gap in GM and GB**



Women’s risk of low pay in GM still exceeds that of men, but the risks vary by local authority area.

What happens at the aggregate level in GM may hide quite wide variations across the ten local authorities. Here we take a look at women’s risk of low pay compared to that of men’s across the constituent local authorities. Table 3 shows the share earnings below the real living wage (the rates set by the Living Wage Foundation); however these data refer to those working in the area, not those residing in the area.

As we will see, this may have a strong impact on the risks of low pay by local authority, with those covering the centre of the city, where most commuting into GM to work takes place, having much lower risks of low pay than in the outer local authorities.

The overall risk of being low paid for women is significantly higher than for men in GM with 13.5% of men and 18.8% of women found to be paid below the real living wage. However, compared to the overall risk of low pay for GB as a whole, men have a 1.1 percentage point overall higher risk in GM while women only have a 0.3 percentage point higher risk.

When we look at the ten council areas we find that the councils with the lowest risk for both women and men are Manchester and Salford, where many commute in to work from other GM councils or from further afield. Therefore, this does not give a good indication of risks of low pay for Manchester or Salford residents.

These data also show much higher risks than the GM or GB average in some councils, with rates of low pay 5 percentage points higher than the GB average in Bolton, Rochdale and Wigan for men and Bury, Oldham, Stockport and Tameside for women.

Women's risks of low pay are always higher than that of men, though it is almost equal in Manchester) but are more than 10 percentage points higher than men's in Bury, Stockport and Trafford.

**Table 3 Women's and men's risks of low pay in GM.**

| April 2024                | Men earning below the real living wage | Women earning below the real living wage |
|---------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Great Britain</b>      | 12.4%                                  | 18.5%                                    |
| <b>Greater Manchester</b> | 13.5%                                  | 18.8%                                    |
| <b>Bolton</b>             | 18.1%                                  | 19.7%                                    |
| <b>Bury</b>               | 15.3%                                  | 26.1%                                    |
| <b>Manchester</b>         | 11.5%                                  | 11.9%                                    |
| <b>Oldham</b>             | 17.3%                                  | 24.7%                                    |
| <b>Rochdale</b>           | 19.9%                                  | 22.2%                                    |
| <b>Salford</b>            | 9.0%                                   | 17.7%                                    |
| <b>Stockport</b>          | 14.4%                                  | 25.5%                                    |
| <b>Tameside</b>           | N.A.                                   | 28.9%                                    |
| <b>Trafford</b>           | 12.0%                                  | 22.7%                                    |
| <b>Wigan</b>              | 18.2%                                  | 22.7%                                    |

# New employment rights bill: what could be the impact for gender equality?

There are 28 measures proposed in the government's new employment rights bill and more promised in the future. Here we pick out four areas where there are important proposals that could have a positive impact on gender equality. These proposals are subject to consultation as well as needing to pass through parliament, so it is important to be aware of them and to engage in the consultation process to ensure they reach the statute book.

## **Measures to improve security over working hours:**

There are many sectors where women form the majority of the workforce - notably social care, hospitality and retail – all sectors where the use of zero hours and minimum hours contracts are common. These create insecurity over income and work schedules, creating problems for all workers but particularly those with caring responsibilities. By requiring employers to offer a contract with guaranteed hours reflecting hours regularly worked and by introducing a right to reasonable notice of shifts these problems of managing work and life should be reduced. Rights to request flexible working are now available from the first day of employment but this bill is proposing that employers need to do more to justify refusals of flexible working requests.

## **Measures to improve pay and conditions:**

During the COVID pandemic trade unions drew attention to the 2 million workers, mainly women, who had no access to statutory sick pay as their earnings fell below the eligibility threshold. This threshold is now planned to be abolished along with the three-day waiting period (so employees are eligible from the first day of illness or injury). In many female-dominated occupations and sectors especially social care and school support, pay is not only low but there is also limited recognition of skills and opportunities for progression. Proposals for both a School Support Staff Negotiating Body and an Adult Social Care Negotiating Body, could provide recognition for these occupations and improve both basic pay and progression in these sectors.

## **Measures to improve rights to family leave:**

The proposal is to remove the qualifying period for paternity leave and ordinary parental leave so that employees have the right from the first day of employment. This means that women who are pregnant are able to change jobs more readily and ensure that partners are eligible for paternity leave. These measures could have positive impacts on gender equality in work and households, as women are less likely to become trapped in jobs that are low paid or low quality, and childcare can be shared more easily.

## **Measures to protect employees from harassment:**

Employers' duties to prevent harassment of staff are to be reinforced by requiring them to take all reasonable measures (currently just reasonable measures) to prevent harassment, including from third parties such as clients.

All these are positive developments but there are many arguments that they do not go far enough. For example, there is still no right to flexible working even for parents of small children; access to sick pay is to be improved but nothing is yet being said about GB raising its level from the lowest across Europe (except for Malta).

Sectors other than social care and school support need more social dialogue and collective bargaining and the problems with family leave in the UK are not just about access but also about the low level of payment. The GM employment charter goes some way towards addressing this, for example by including the requirement to pay sick pay at 100% of earnings for as long as possible. This initiative is, however, voluntary.

Central government is promising more measures including for example a more fundamental review of family leave arrangements so there are still improvements to be fought for. Meanwhile let's hope that female voices are listened to during the consultation period and that these positive measures can be implemented in law and enforced.





# Employment group call to actions 2024

1

**Central government should be asked to follow the example of the GM employment charter requirements, in particular to pay full wage sick pay from day one.**

As following the GMCA Employment Charter is voluntary, campaigning for these GM Charter measures to be included in national legislation would ensure a positive effect for all those living across GMCA.

2

**Support for all workers with caring responsibilities (whether eldercare, sickness or childcare) should be at the centre of GM's strategy.** While the employment rights bill aims to remove qualifying periods for parental leave and sick pay and requires employers to justify rejections of requests for flexible working, the GMCA Employment Charter should go further and require employers to provide flexible working for people with caring responsibilities and paid carers leave for those having to take time off to care for others.

3

**Central government should be asked to extend proposed negotiation bodies to other essential feminised sectors, particular the early education and childcare sector (ECEC).** While the new employment rights bill has the potential to be transformative, 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, as this sector is key to enabling women to access work.