



GM4Women 2028

Pankhurst-Fawcett Report

February 2026

GM4WOMEN
2028

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Introduction

In the eighth year of the ten-year-long campaign, our 2025 results show that inequality remains entrenched for women and girls, with no indicator showing the gender gap has been closed and progress continuing to be slow, uneven and non-linear.

This is the eighth year of the GM4Women2028 Pankhurst-Fawcett Scorecard data reveal. The initiative began on 6th February 2019, marking the centenary of the Representation of the People Act 1928, which gave some women the vote. It runs through to 2028, the centenary of Equal Franchise, providing a ten-year framework. With two years remaining, the focus is increasingly urgent.

The report comprises the Pankhurst-Fawcett Scorecard, which includes ten indicators, alongside five thematic briefs covering Employment, Safety, Participation, Education, and Culture & Active Lives.



“

The overall message is unchanged: **we must do better.**

”

Key points

Scorecards 2018-2025

The key points to take away from the eighth scorecard and accompanying briefs are:



Overall Picture

Inequality remains the reality for women and girls right across the board. In not one of the indicators in the 2025 scorecard do we see that the gender gap has disappeared or the problem been resolved. In addition, we find that progress is not linear in eight of the ten indicators.

Overall, from the start of the scorecard, the figures are better in six of the indicators, worse in two and we cannot say in two. Even where they are better, the highest jump in percentage figures is 10%, the judicial appointments indicator. Note that this 10% is in 8 years! Most of the other indicators see much smaller changes.

Compared to last year, three indicators show improvements, in four things getting worse, one is at the same level and we don't have the data for two indicators.

Note that beyond the ten indicators of the Scorecard, the briefs try to capture issues of intersectionality and regional differences within Greater Manchester.

“Data, deeds and determination are critical if we are to make significant inroads into entrenched and persisting gender inequality.”

Looking at each thematic area in turn

Scorecard 2025

The **Employment** rate gap for GM was estimated at 9% in 2018. It is now 6%, an improvement from the start and from last year (9%) and is now the same as it was at the beginning. The lowest figure was 5% in 2021. So overall the employment rate is better by 3% over the eight years. The gender pay gap for GM, our second employment indicator, was 14% in 2018 and is now estimated at 10%, an improvement of 4 percentage points on the beginning but 1% point worse than last year. Again, not a straight line and not a massive change.

The **Safety** data was and continues to be problematic with both our indicators. The research behind the data used for our first indicator, the percentage of sexual violence survivors who cannot access support (56% in 2018), has not been replicated. Access to the data for the second indicator, those denied support due to their immigration status, has been difficult. Safety4Sisters provided this data initially and since it has been The Lotus Hub. The figure provided was 84% last year not being supported. This has gone up to 92%. The Hub is not being supported next year.

The first of our **Participation** indicators, the judicial appointment indicator which is for the North West rather than just Greater Manchester, has improved overall by 10% from 29% in 2018 to 39% in 2028. The improvements have been consistent year to year. The voting women in the GMCA cabinet, our second participation indicator was 18% in 2018 and has improved by 9 points to 27% this year, which is the same as last year. The highest figure was 36% in 2021.

In 2018, the figure for our first **Education** indicator, undergraduate 1st year women in engineering and technology, was 18%. This dipped to 17% for a few years and then rose to 19% but we no longer have free access to the data so have not been able to report on it. Our estimate from the broader data is that it won't have changed significantly. The second indicator, construction and built environment apprentices, has improved consistently from 1% in 2018 to 7% at present (4% last year).

Our **Culture** indicator, the percentage of women in senior positions in Arts Council funded National Portfolio Organisations within Greater Manchester was 40% in 2018 and is now 47%, having dipped by one percent from last year. For our **Active Lives** indicator, inactivity (less than 30 minutes of exercise per week) levels have increased from 28% in 2018 to 30% this year (29% last year). This means overall the situation has got worse, having fluctuated in between, but 2018 and 2019 were the best years.

Pankhurst-Fawcett scorecards 2018-2025

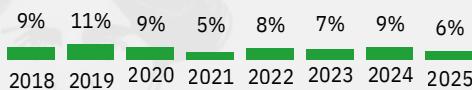


Power BI Desktop

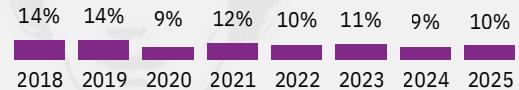
EMPLOYMENT



#1. Employment Rate Gap¹



#2. Gender Pay Gap²



SAFETY



#3. No Support for Sexual Violence Survivors³



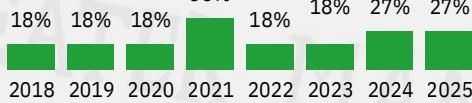
#4. Denied Support Due to Immig. Status⁴



PARTICIPATION



#5. Voting women in the GMCA⁵



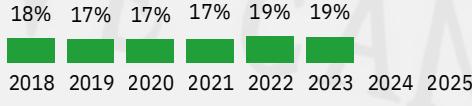
#6. Judicial appointment⁶



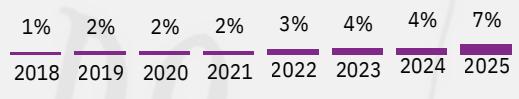
EDUCATION



#7. Women in Eng. & Tech Undergrad.⁷



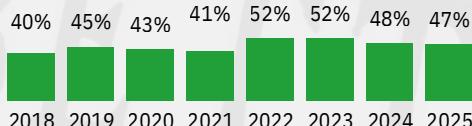
#8. Construction & Built Environ. Apprentices⁸



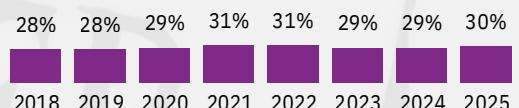
CULTURE & ACTIVE LIVES



#9. Senior Position in Nat. Arts Council⁹



#10. Not Physically Active 30+ a week¹⁰



1. Source: Annual Population Survey.

2. Source: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings.

3. Source: Voices of Survivors Greater Manchester, 2018. No new data.

4. Source: Safety 4 Sister; The Lotus Hub.

5. Source: Data compiled by reference to the websites of the councils.

6. Source: Primary appointment of Judges and Non-Legal Members in Courts and Tribunals, Judicial Diversity Statistics Ministry of Justice, table 3.2.

7. Source: Higher Education Statistics Authority Returns.

8. Source: Department of Education, Apprenticeships and Traineeships Data.

9. Source: Arts Council Annual Survey.

10. Source: Sport England Adult Active Lives.



Employment group

Pankhurst-Fawcett Report

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



EMPLOYMENT GROUP

Scorecard - 2025

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

5.6%

Indicator 1: Employment Rate Gap

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.

9.9%

Indicator 2: Gender Pay Gap

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.

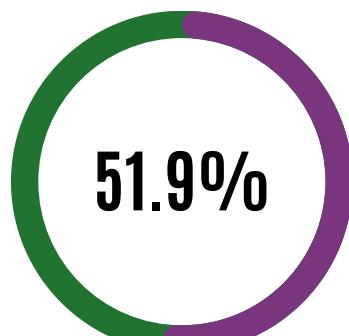
We now turn to variations in employment rates by ethnicity and disability. Despite concerns about the reliability of the underlying data (see table on the next page) and the potential for wide confidence intervals around each estimate, it is important that disparities in employment rates are not forgotten.

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.



51.9%

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,
- and 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 in Oldham.

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
Great Britain	12.8	12.2	16.7
Greater Manchester	9.9	13.1	15.5
Bolton	10.8	23.4	24.7
Bury	8.4	19.6	24.0
Manchester	6.1	8.4	9.7
Oldham	-1.0	17.6	18.7
Rochdale	3.3	17.4	19.4
Salford	12.6	9.2	10.4
Stockport	15.1	13.8	16.3
Tameside	17.8	16.6	25.9
Trafford	13.9	10.7	18.3
Wigan	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

GM4WOMEN 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:

Making Family-Friendly Policies a priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enhanced maternity leave and paid parental leave for non-birthing parents;• Flexible working arrangements across life stages with minimal pay impact;• Meeting scheduling aligned with core non-caring hours and limits on working hours (max 48/week).
Pay Gap Reporting	Promote both gender and ethnic pay gap reporting for all employers (not just those with 100+ employees)
Flexible work	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.
Development of a flexible employer engagement approach across sectors	With 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

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 bill 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.



Safety group

Pankhurst-Fawcett Report

Author: Dee Sheehan



SAFETY GROUP

Scorecard - 2025

This year we have a question mark over the data for both indicators.



Indicator 1: no support for sexual violence survivors

There are question marks over the data for our first indicator. The very important indicator was based on research that has never been replicated. It is impossible to generate the data from the aggregation of existing data sets.



Indicator 2: denied support due to immigration status

For the second indicator, The Lotus Hub has provided us with data on the refuge provision for women with no recourse to public funds for 2024 and 2025. Prior to this data was provided by Safety 4 Sisters.

The Safety group aims to draw on and extend the power of women's voices to shape action and improvements in responses to women who face and survive violence and harm in public and in their own homes.

First Indicator

There are question marks over the data for our first indicator. The very important indicator was based on research that has never been replicated. It is impossible to generate the data from the aggregation of existing data sets.

The ONS released data on sexual offences reported to police in the year ending July 2025 in mid January 2026. This was based on a revised definition, now including sexual assault, rape and grooming, and showing an overall increase. Greater Manchester had the fourth highest rate at 4 per 1000 people. That is equivalent to approximately 8 per 1000 women. That is 1 in 125 women in Greater Manchester have reported a sexual offence. Most still go unreported.

If we look just at reporting to the police, according to the Crime survey, nationally only 16% of rape victims reported to the police. Of those only 2.1% ended in convictions. We know that ten rapes were reported in a single Tameside ward between 22 September 2025 and 20 October 2025. There are 215 wards in Greater Manchester. A report dated June 2025 on the Gender Based Violence GMP Performance Update noted that in the year to March 2025, 9.1% of reported rape investigations resulted in charges being made. The target for 2025-26 is 11%. There is no data on convictions, and many cases may be waiting to be heard.

Those who choose not to report to the police may seek help from the many local grass roots organisations which offer support after rape and/or domestic abuse, and who can offer culturally specific services on a by and for basis.

The picture around Greater Manchester 2024-2025:

In Greater Manchester, 71,818 domestic abuse-related crimes were recorded in the year ending March 2025

- This number is equivalent to 24 crimes for every 1,000 people in the population and represents 16% of all crime recorded in Greater Manchester.
- For March 2024-25, 4,135 prosecutions for domestic abuse related crimes were made (16% of all prosecutions in Greater Manchester) with 2,946 convictions (defendant found or pleaded guilty)
- 956 Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs) were applied for and 804 were issued
- 1,313 Right to Know or 'Clare's Law' applications were granted and 520 were given disclosure
- 98 cases per 1,000 adult females in the population of Greater Manchester were discussed at MARACs (Multi Agency Risk Assessment), the highest in the UK; of these 39 per cent involved repeat offenders / victims.

Source: [Domestic abuse in England and Wales – Data tool - Office for National Statistics](#)

How does this compare with previous years?

Total numbers of domestic abuse-related recorded crimes have fallen significantly between 2021-2022 and 2024-2025 with a drop of 16 per cent. The number of domestic-abuse related stalking and harassment crimes has fallen as a total number but still represents approximately a third of all offences. While the number of prosecutions brought for domestic abuse related offences has increased, the conviction rate has dropped.

Data in more details:

Year	2021-22	2022-2023	2023-24	2024-25	Nat average / total 2024-25
No. Domestic abuse related recorded crimes	85,459 30 incidents/ crimes per 1000 population	87,066 30 incidents/ crimes per 1000 population	79,532 27 incidents / crimes per 100 population	71,818 24 incidents / crimes per 100 population	
Proportion of all crime in GM	18%	18%	18%	16%	15%
No. DA related stalking & harassment Crimes & percentage of total	16,057 32% of all stalking & harassment crimes	18,604 33% of all stalking & harassment crimes	15,468 29% of all stalking & harassment crimes	13,700 32% of all stalking & harassment crimes	
Prosecutions for DA-related crimes	3,223 19% of all prosecutions	3,479 19% of all prosecutions	4,012 17% of all prosecutions	4,143 16% of all prosecutions	54,960 across England & Wales
Convictions for DA-related crimes	2,496 Conviction rate of 77%	2,647 Conviction rate of 76%	2,942 Conviction rate of 79%	2,946 Conviction rate of 71%	

The effects of domestic abuse:

Domestic abuse remains a key factor in worsening long term health, wellbeing and economic outcomes for women, and is strongly represented in women's routes into the criminal justice system.

Data gathered by three women's centres in Greater Manchester taking part in the Effective Women's Centres Partnership [Salford Foundation, The Women's Centre Stockport and POPs Oldham] using the Women's Risk Needs Assessment (WRNA) tool to assess and support more than 240 women following conviction or police contact shows:

61% of women had experienced abuse as a child and 56% abuse as an adult - showing the majority of women entering the criminal justice system are already victims of crime **before** they offend.

Only a fifth (22%) of women said they had a stable and loving relationship with somebody in their lives - showing high levels of social isolation and lack of positive relationships

One in four women said a partner or family member had coerced them into committing an offence - showing the ongoing need to support women to identify and leave abusive relationships

In Stockport, for the year March 2024 – March 2025, 950 women accessed support from The Women's Centre Stockport and of these, 70 per cent had or were experiencing domestic violence.

For women accessing the Together Women Project at Salford Foundation during 2025, more than half (56%) had experienced physical abuse as an adult and a quarter (27%) had experienced sexual abuse in adulthood.

Second indicator

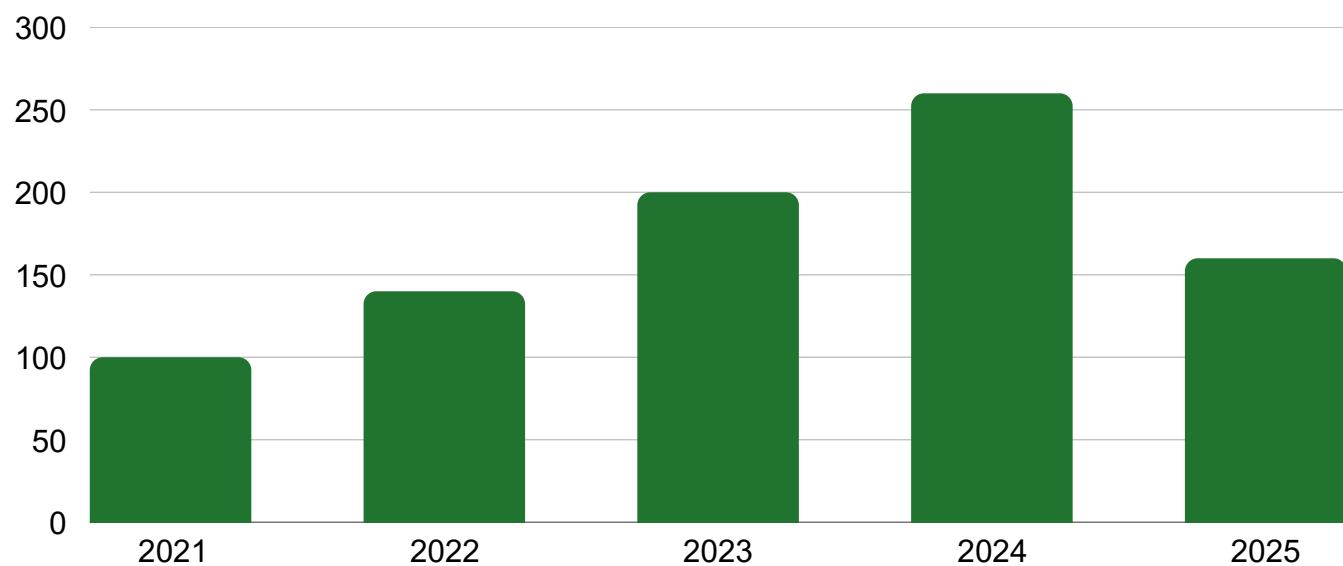
The Lotus Hub was established in 2023 as a coalition of five local front line, specialist by and for organisations, and funded by the Home Office for an initial two years. Despite the overall success of the Hub, no ongoing funding was awarded. The Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit has since taken over some of the work of the Lotus Hub. The Lotus Hub has provided us with data on the refuge provision for women with no recourse to public funds for 2024 and 2025. Prior to this data was provided by Safety 4 Sisters.

Two factors impacted the capacity of the Lotus Hub to provide the expected level of emergency accommodation. Firstly, the hike in the cost of living, which made the provision more expensive. Secondly, it was anticipated that the maximum stay would be 14 days. However, delays in accessing advice on immigration and again in the application process extended the length of stay to up to 60 days. Therefore, fewer women could be provided emergency accommodation within the budget set. In the latter stages of the project, the budget had been spent, and any accommodation was provided by the partner organisations from their own funding.

Trafford Domestic Abuse Services (TDAS)

TDAS have provided an indicative data set for the past five years showing trends in reported sexual abuse and their service use by those with insecure immigration status. TDAS offer support and services to individuals and families living or working in Trafford. They also work in partnership with other domestic abuse organisations across Greater Manchester, work in schools and offer training to professionals and employers.

Figure 1. % Women reporting sexual violence to TDAS



TDAS experienced a slightly reduced level of demand in 2025 compared to 2024, and there were 5% fewer women reporting sexual violence over the past year.

Figure 2. Survivors with NRPF supported by TDAS

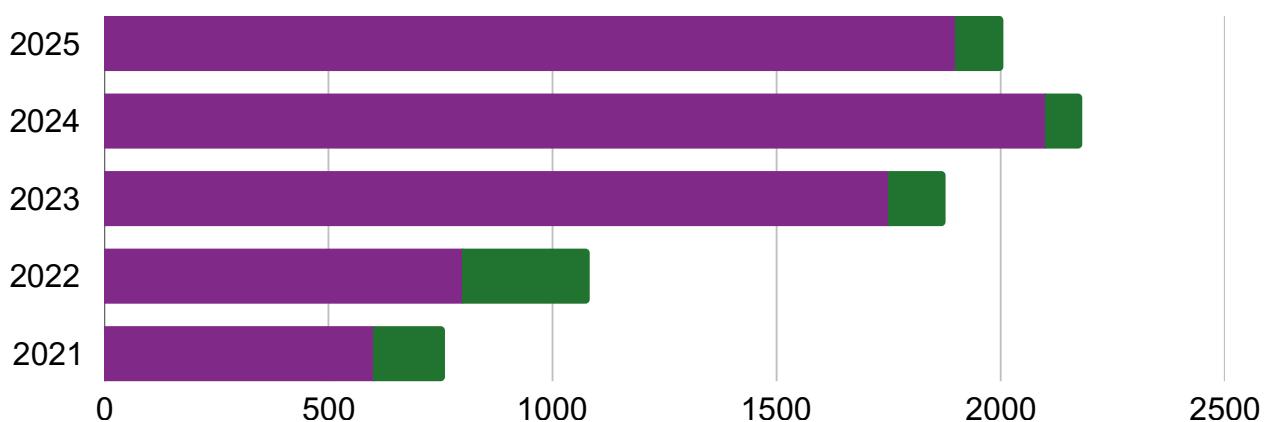


Figure 2 illustrates that the TDAS data relating to survivors with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) shows an increase in numbers (shown in green) compared to last year, when demand had fallen. This may reflect an impact of the funding for the Lotus Hub ending.

Criminal justice and combined authority responses to VAWG:

Funding for GMP to continue with Operation Soteria has been agreed until October 2026. This is a more perpetrator focussed approach, with more efficient examination of digital data. This scheme has seen an increase in number of rapes reported, and an increase from **7% to 9.1%** of resolved rape crimes resulting in charges, and a target of 11% in 2026.

Last year we pushed to resolve the need to harmonise data collection and analysis across Greater Manchester. Through the **Women & Girls Equality Panel Violence Against Women and Girls subgroup** there is now an initiative to hold a census week for all front line domestic abuse service providers in Greater Manchester, planned to start in 2026. As well as providing data by all the protected characteristics, this census will help identify the gap between incidents of domestic abuse known to the services, and those reported to the police. We would hope to see a decline in this gap over time as police practice improves and confidence in the police increases.

One data point that we can report on is the Home Office Pilot of Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DAPOs) by GMP. During the first six months of the pilot from November 2024, over 200 DAPOs were secured in Bury, Wigan and Manchester boroughs. Tameside has been added to the pilot and over 500 DAPOs have now been secured, including the first police-led indefinite order. The pilot will be rolled out to all boroughs during 2026.

Plans between GMCA and GMP to introduce a local firewall - protecting against referral to the Home Office when women with insecure immigration status report their abuse to police - are coming to fruition. A formal meeting about implementation has taken place, and the policy should be finalised and implemented early in 2026.

Additional indicators to evaluate and monitor direction of progress, in terms of events, commitments, and outputs.

In March 2025, GM4Women2028 hosted an engagement event between the Deputy Mayor, Kate Green, GMP's Domestic Abuse lead, Jen Tattersall, GMCA policy lead for the VAWG Strategy, Kate Smith, and 55 workers and survivors from grassroots, front line domestic abuse organisations. There was a useful and frank exchange about how policing and policy impacts in practice, and what might be done to improve this. It is important that we work to embed this level of dialogue into the policy development in GMCA to counter violence against women and girls.

The GMCA Gender Based Violence and Abuse Strategy delivery plan for 2024-2026 is being implemented, with the input of the Lived Experience Panel ensuring a victim/survivor-led approach. A hard hitting campaign to raise awareness of young men about coercive and controlling behaviour entitled #IsThisOK: It's Not a Game Boy, was released in August 2025. The Travel Safe Live Talk digital reporting tool was launched at the end of October 2025, allowing people to report discretely and directly to police call handlers via either the Bee Network App or QR codes on buses and trams. Early use has led to the apprehension of one man who had been sexually harassing women on several bus routes.

The government published a national VAWG Strategy in December 2025, which grants funding to the GMCA to be allocated locally. This provides an opportunity to boost funding for the various grassroots organisations in Greater Manchester. The national strategy recognises the need for firewalls such as that being implemented shortly by GMP. However greater detail on how funding will be allocated locally and the role by-and-for frontline VCSE organisations will play in reaching the target to halve VAWG in a decade have yet to be announced.

In August 2025 GMCA launched their scoping report into so-called honour-based abuse, forced marriage and female genital mutilation in Greater Manchester. The report aimed to understand the scale of these issues in the region, the support currently available and identify recommendations to make the region a leader in tackling these forms of VAWG and community-based offences.

Dr Maz Idris of Manchester Metropolitan University is working with others nationally to achieve a legal definition of so called Honour Based Abuse (HBA). He is also campaigning for legal remedy when coroners can identify the contribution of coercion to an individual's decision to take their own life. This could be related to HBA, stalking or domestic abuse. It is currently estimated by Professor Jane Monkton-Smith and other academics, that the number of female suicides may be up to triple that of femicides, which is one every three days.

The focus of the 16 Days of Activism against Violence Against Women and Girls in November and December 2025 was on digital violence. On each of the 16 days as GM4Women's safety group we posted on our social media about one aspect of digital violence per day. We also spotlighted a different front line support service each day, ensuring organisations from across the ten GMCA boroughs were represented.

On 6 December we presented an eye catching piece of performance art at the Emmeline Pankhurst statue in central Manchester. Wearing orange ponchos and carrying A-boards, we raised awareness of different types of digital violence. We linked these to the real life abuse they might supplement or lead on to, and which could culminate in death by suicide or femicide. By sounding a bell we noted the actual killing of a woman, by a man or family member, somewhere in the world every ten minutes. We handed out leaflets with additional information on digital violence and sources of support.



Safety Group calls to action 2025

- 1 GM policy makers, planners and police to recognise the essential role grassroots, by-and-for and specialist organisations play in supporting survivors of VAWG and working to rehabilitate perpetrators, and in meeting the ambitions of both regional and national strategies on reducing VAWG, and the urgent need for long term, sustainable funding faced by these organisations.
- 2 GMCA policy makers and GMP to continue engagement through direct dialogue with grassroots, front line domestic abuse support services, particularly as they look to implement the national VAWG Strategy and to develop and implement recommendations made in the region's HBV, FM & FGM scoping report, ensuring existing expertise and 'open doors' from communities across GM feeds into policy development and implementation, and that services are funded and located where need is greatest.
- 3 GMCA to prioritise and implement policy actions focused on supporting sexual violence victims and women with no recourse to public funds experiencing domestic abuse, and to expedite the implementation of a firewall, and to publicly and strongly push back on attempts by The Conservatives, Reform and others on the Right to link VAWG specifically to immigration and asylum policy. Policy and funding decisions must be made on the basis of the significant data showing women are most at risk from those in the home or known to them, rather than in response to populist narrative.
- 4 GMCA to ensure that a significant proportion of the funding allocated from the government's Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy is distributed to GM's grassroots, front line services, and continue to press government for a commitment to ring fenced, multi-year funding which recognises increased costs to the sector and provides full cost recovery to deliver services.



Participation group

Pankhurst-Fawcett Report

Author: Dr Rosie Shorrocks



PARTICIPATION GROUP

Scorecard - 2025

This year, Indicator 1 has not changed from last year, while Indicator 2 has increased by 2%.

27%

Indicator 1: voting women in the GMCA

For the first indicator, there has been **no change** in women's representation in formal politics, which remains at 27% with three of Greater Manchester's boroughs led by women.

40%

Indicator 2: judicial appointment

For our second indicator, the percentage of female judges in the North West in 2023/24 was 40%, **up two percentage points from last year** and slightly above the average for England and Wales of 39%.

Politics

There has been no change in women's representation in formal politics, measured as **the number of women with voting rights around the Mayor's cabinet table**, which remains at 27% with three of Greater Manchester's boroughs led by women.¹ If the (appointed) Deputy Mayor Kate Green is included, this figure rises to 33%. By comparison, the UK Cabinet is 44% women.

Who sits round the Mayor's cabinet table is dependent firstly upon the result of elections in the ten boroughs in Greater Manchester which determine the party that takes control. Following that, internal elections within the councillor group of the party that has won control, select their leader. It is important to note that both these elections are beyond the Mayor's control despite Andy Burnham's commitment to a gender balanced cabinet. To address this anomaly, the Greater Manchester constitution makes arrangements **to ensure diversity in cabinet discussions via an arrangement** where each cabinet member is shadowed by someone of a different gender. However, these additional members do not have voting rights and this commitment is potentially contingent on the leadership's commitment to gender parity.

More than half our Boroughs have women chief executives (60%), the same figure as 2025 and higher than the national figure of 49%¹ ([Fawcett Society](#)). The percentage of women councillors across our region is 40% (261 of 645 councillors), a small fall compared to the 42% reported last year(*). This remains higher than the national average of 35%¹, although it should be noted that the national data is increasingly out of date.

Table 1: Political Representation in Greater Manchester – by Gender and Ethnicity

	Number of women	% of all clrs	Number of women of colour	% of all clrs of colour
GM Councils 2021	255 (of 643)	40%	23	3%
GM Councils 2022	268 (of 645)	41%	32	5%
GM Councils 2023	272 (of 645)	42%	30	5%
GM Councils 2024	272 (of 645)	42%	37	6%
GM Councils 2025	270 (of 645)	42%	40	6%
GM Councils 2026	261 (of 645)	40%	49	8%

(*) Source – updated for 2025 from local authority websites accessed 16 Jan 2025 following methodology used by Operation Black Vote (OBV) and the Fawcett Society in previous audits. We echo caveats expressed by OBV and Fawcett with this method of data collection where self-identification was not possible as an imperfect method but necessary to monitor change. We urge councils to collect and share better data of representation using self-identification.

Representation of **councillors who are women of colour** is now 8%, up from 6% last year. This is lower than the proportion of people of colour in the Greater Manchester population – 28.7% according to the 2021 census. There is still significant variation between Greater Manchester councils in percentage of councillors who are women of colour.

Table 1: Political representation across Greater Manchester councils – by gender and ethnicity

Local authority	% women	% people of colour	% women of colour
Manchester	50%	31%	13%
Salford	32%	17%	7%
Trafford	43%	11%	5%
Tameside	39%	12%	7%
Oldham	32%	38%	7%
Rochdale	37%	23%	7%
Stockport	46%	3%	3%
Bolton	40%	25%	5%
Wigan	40%	2%	2%
Bury	41%	17%	7%



This indicates that **barriers to women's political representation remain** in Greater Manchester. A key ask from the Participation group, as in previous years, is for **all GM authorities to adopt carer's leave policies**. Caring responsibilities (of all kinds) impact on the ability of councillors to stay in office and build experience and expertise, and this is known to particularly affect the political careers of women.

In Greater Manchester, 8% of councillors are women of colour, but this percentage also varies significantly across the ten authorities. Additionally, data on women's representation in local authorities, including women of colour, is poor, both at the national and GM level. It remains crucial that the **authorities in Greater Manchester monitor and publish diversity data to enable improved monitoring to take place**.

The law

For our second indicator, **the percentage of female judges in the North West in 2023/24 was 40%, up two percentage points from last year** and slightly above the average for England and Wales of 39%. Ethnic minority appointments are up one percentage point from last year at 8%, compared to 11% across England and Wales as a whole. However, ethnicity data is not gender disaggregated and the data is not available specifically for Greater Manchester ([Ministry of Justice Official Statistics, Diversity of the Judiciary](#))

Although the judicial appointments figures indicate that the North West broadly aligns with national trends in respect of women's representation, **the absence of data disaggregated to Greater Manchester – and the lack of gender-disaggregated ethnicity data within this** – limits the extent to which localised conclusions can be drawn. This reflects a wider structural issue in legal diversity data, where regional aggregation can obscure significant intra-regional variation.

At a national level, the most recent Diversity of the Judiciary statistics show that, as at **1 April 2025**, women constituted **39% of court judges and 54% of tribunal judges** across England and Wales.³ This distinction is significant, as it highlights how women's representation varies markedly between judicial roles and pathways, and cautions against treating "the judiciary" as a single homogeneous category when assessing progress. This breakdown is also not available within regions.

Looking further upstream in the legal profession, [Solicitors Regulation Authority \(SRA\)](#) workforce data published in **January 2025** demonstrates that women are now a clear majority within the solicitors' profession. Women account for **62% of solicitors working in law firms** in England and Wales. However, this numerical dominance does not translate into equivalent representation at senior levels: women comprise only **32% of full-equity partners and 47% of salaried partners**. This persistent seniority gap is particularly relevant when considering the pipeline into senior judicial and leadership roles, which often draw disproportionately from the upper tiers of private practice. At the Bar, women make up **41% of practising barristers** in England and Wales ([Ministry of Justice Official Statistics, Diversity of the Judiciary](#)).

Gender representation also intersects with economic outcomes. [An SRA analysis drawing on ONS data reports](#) that the overall **gender pay gap for legal professionals stood at 8% in 2025**. This underscores that disparities in the legal profession extend beyond appointment and participation rates, encompassing progression, reward and long-term career sustainability.

Participation group call to actions 2024

1

The Greater Manchester constitution makes arrangements to ensure diversity in cabinet discussions via shadowing arrangements to allow gender balance which effectively meaning our primary scorecard ask is technically fulfilled.

This picture of a gradual positive increase in gender balance in the Greater Manchester authorities may not feed through to representation in the Mayor's cabinet to equal that of the current UK Government (and thereby meeting GM4Women's key representation demand) by 2028. However, the shadowing arrangements, built into the current GM constitution, are designed to ensure equal representation round the table so effectively fulfilling this ask. They also serve to build leadership capacity in the region.

2

A secondary key ask is for all the GM authorities to adopt carer's leave polices.

Despite improvements in some authorities, the overall number of women councillors in Greater Manchester fell slightly to 270 but the percentage of women councillors remains at 42%. This figure is higher than the national average probably reflecting the Labour Party's electoral dominance in Greater Manchester because that Party has some internal procedural rules to promote better gender balance in candidate selection. However, caring responsibilities (of all kinds) impact on the ability of councillors to stay in office and build experience and expertise.

3

It remains crucial that the authorities in Greater Manchester monitor and publish diversity data to enable improved monitoring to take place.

In Greater Manchester 6% of councillors are women of colour however this percentage varies significantly across the ten authorities. Pushing for carer's leave and better diversity data should be the campaign focus for GM4Women to make sure the small improvements reported here gain momentum and the data keeps improving.



Education group

Pankhurst-Fawcett Report

Authors: Marianthy Riga and Fernanda Tapia



EDUCATION GROUP

Scorecard - 2025

This brief focuses on two key indicators of women's education in traditionally male-dominated fields in Greater Manchester

Indicator 1: Women in Engineering & Tech Undergraduates

19%

For new enrolments across the UK for undergraduate study in Engineering & Tech, the proportion of women has hovered between 16% and 19% between 2016/17 and 2023/24 which is the last year open data is available for, reported for 2025.

Indicator 2: Women in Construction & Built Environment Apprenticeships

7%

The number of apprenticeships in the construction, planning, and built environment sectors in Greater Manchester has fluctuated between 630 and 760 from 2020/21 to 2024/25.

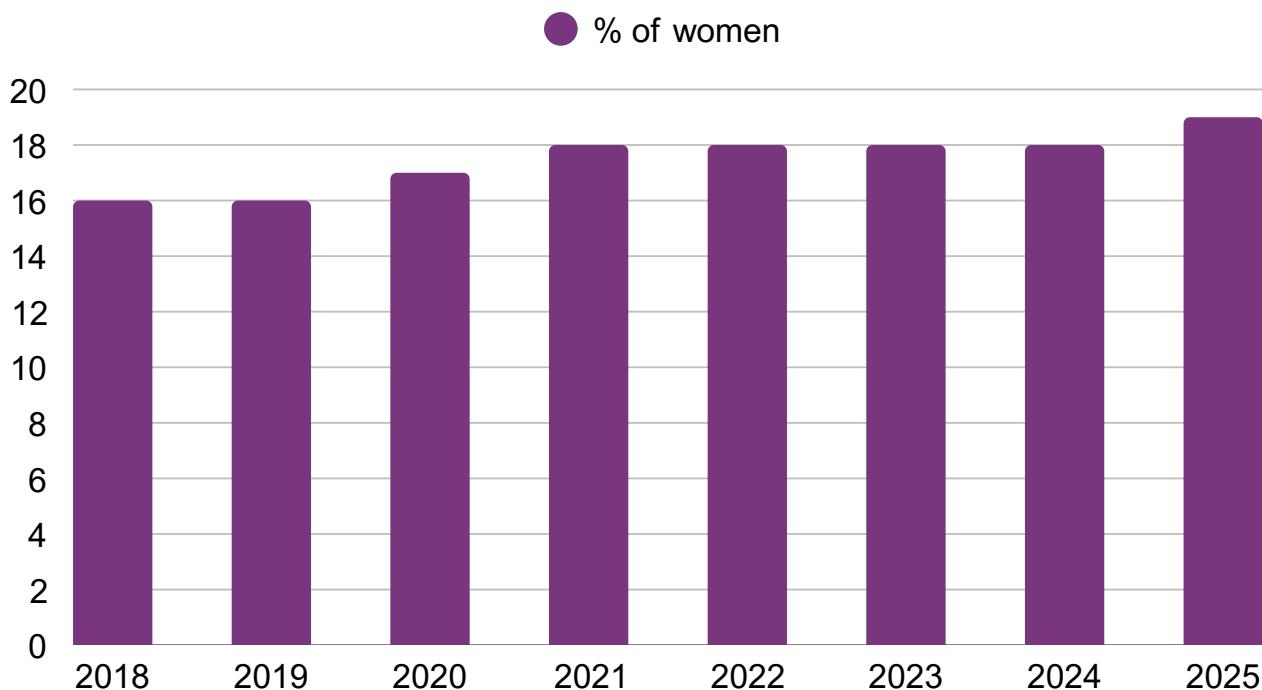
Indicator 1: Women in Engineering & Tech Undergraduates

The last release of HESA Student Data is for 2023/24, the 2024/25 return data is being collected and prepared. However, regionally disaggregated data and cross tabulation at the level needed, combining all of the variables (legal sex × domicile × subject × level) is still not available without charge at the time of publication. Since 2024, the necessary data to calculate this indicator has been put out of reach for charities like GM4Women, as HESA asks for a fee to access the data that now belongs to its proprietary disaggregated HEIDI+ dataset, licensed under fee to Higher Education institutions.

A new development in this space, called the Explore Education Statistics data portal, similarly does not allow for the necessary cross-tabulation to take place.

For new enrolments across the UK for undergraduate study in Engineering & Tech, the proportion of women has hovered between 16% and 19% between 2016/17 and 2023/24 which is the last year open data is available for, reported for 2025. The proportion of women choosing these subjects is slowly trending upwards, which is an encouraging sign.

Figure 1: Female proportion of undergraduates entering Engineering & Technology



Adapted from [Higher Education Statistics Authority returns for 2018-2025](#)

Indicator 2: Women in Construction & Built Environment Apprenticeships in Greater Manchester

The number of apprenticeships in the construction, planning, and built environment sectors in Greater Manchester has fluctuated between 630 and 760 from 2020/21 to 2024/25.

When we examine women's participation, the number of female apprentices has increased significantly, but from very low figures. Figure 2 shows that female apprentices rose from 20 in 2019/20 to 50 in 2024/25. This represents growth by 66% in the last year alone, this takes the proportion of women choosing this subject to 7%. Despite this impressive jump, in 2024/25, there were 710 male apprentices (5% more than the previous year), which highlights the continued dominance of male participation in the sector.

Figure 2: Women under 19 from Greater Manchester choosing an apprenticeship in Construction & Build Environment

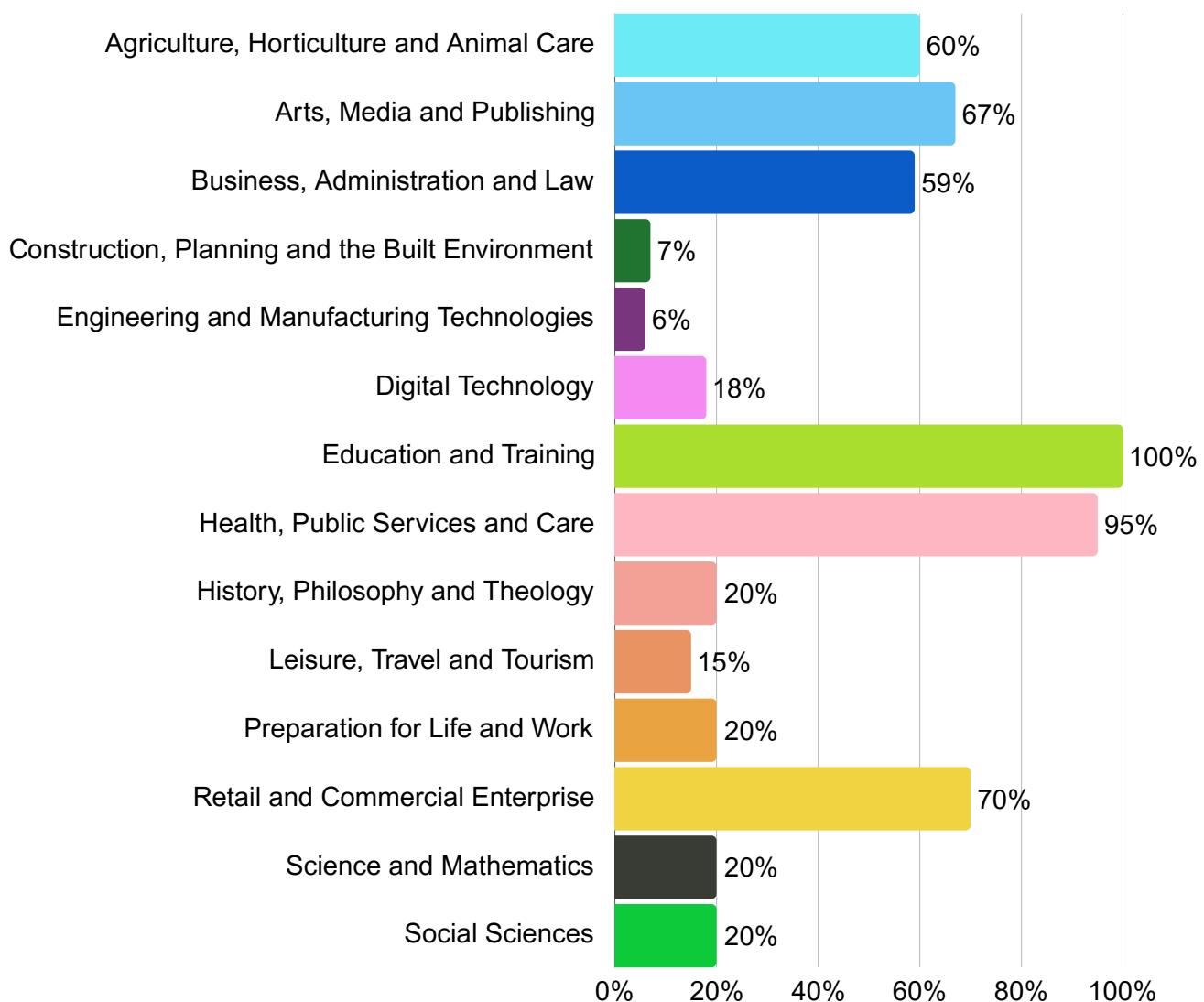


Adapted from [Starts for 'Geography LEP and EDA - Starts, Achievements by Age, Sex, Level, SSA, Ethnicity' for Construction, Planning and the Built Environment, Female, Male and Under 19 in Greater Manchester between 2019/20 and 2024/25](#)

Looking at Figure 3, the data reflects a clear trend in engineering and construction where female participation is significantly lower than in other fields like education and health where they are dominant, with many of these sectors having female apprenticeship numbers closer to or above half of the total apprenticeships. This underscores a need for more significant efforts to attract and retain women in these technical, male-dominated fields. Other notable increases this year are in the arts, agriculture and leisure sectors.

Overall, the percentage of female new apprentices in the Greater Manchester area has fluctuated from 42% to 48% for the previous five years, standing at 45% for 2024/25.

Figure 3: Apprenticeship subject choices by women under-19 by Women in Greater Manchester 2024/225



Adapted from: [Starts for 'Geography LEP and EDA - Starts, Achievements by Age, Sex, Level, SSA, Ethnicity' for all Subjects in Greater Manchester by under-19s between 2020/21 and 2024/25](#)

Bridging the Gender Gap in STEM and Construction: Research and Actions



While female participation in construction apprenticeships in Greater Manchester has gradually increased, **women still make up a small portion of the workforce in this male-dominated sector**. Bridging this gender gap requires more concerted efforts across various levels, from public sector initiatives to university and community programs. The effort is essential, as the research into factors inhibiting women from entering the Engineering and Construction sectors indicates there are still substantial obstacles.

Research Findings

At a national level, women now comprise [23.5% of UK graduates](#) in engineering, manufacturing and construction, according to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap 2024 Report.

In the Engineering & Technology sector, [women make up just 16.9% of the UK's workforce](#) as of 2025. This figure represents a small increase from 16.5% in 2022, indicating that despite decades of initiatives and awareness campaigns, the engineering sector continues to struggle with gender representation. [Just 16% of girls think engineering is suitable for them compared with 44% of boys](#), according to EngineeringUK's Science Education Tracker 2023. Young women report facing questions about their ability to handle mathematics, physical aspects of engineering work or technical complexity.

Women are also four times more likely to leave engineering positions compared to their male colleagues, pointing to systemic retention issues that extend beyond recruitment. Research indicates that [57% of female engineers leave the engineering register](#) under age 45 compared with 17% of men. The gender pay gap in UK engineering stands at [approximately 11%](#).

In the Construction & Built Environment sector, [women make up just 14.7% of the workforce](#). Women may be filling more jobs in UK construction, but ONS analysis states that most of them work in administrative or managerial positions, while only a small percentage work in on-site roles ([2% as per the CIOB](#)). The [average gender pay gap across the biggest construction firms is at 23%](#), down from 27% in 2017/18.

[Construction Futures hosted a psychology undergraduate](#) to focus a study on addressing the under-representation of women in the industry. Working closely with their Social Impact Manager, the student led a 12-week research project to identify barriers and motivators influencing female participation in construction. The study directly shaped the contractors outreach strategy, shaping messaging at major female-specific events, in the consideration of visuals and in the 'take away' information on work-life benefits and FAQs reflecting learnings and experiences of the industry by female staff.

A [report by leading HR consultants Randstad](#) highlighted where the construction industry is currently failing women:

- Lack of positive female role models: The study found that 38% of female construction workers had never had a female manager.
- No clear career path: 49% were unaware of initiatives offered by their company to move female employees into senior or leadership roles.
- Male-dominated networking: 12% of women in construction felt excluded from work social events – which often clash with caring commitments but where beneficial work relationships and decisions can be made.
- Return to work: 20% of women in construction reported it would be impossible to return to a senior position after maternity leave – with the key causes being a full-time work culture amongst other directors as well as childcare costs.
- Menopause support: 80% report a lack of support with menopause for women in construction – where symptoms can lead many to consider leaving work.

Sector Initiatives

[Bold As Brass is a support network and community](#) for women in construction, mining and quarrying. Their mission is to be the catalyst for industrial culture change through speaking up about the systemic issues that aren't spoken about. One of the first campaigns was #pperevolution, as there is still a real issue with high vis personal protective equipment (PPE). The Considerate Constructors Scheme organised a [Women's PPE Roadshow](#) in 2024 as providing properly fitting, comfortable PPE in women's sizes, is an important way in which the industry can signal inclusivity to women.

Recognition is key to retention. The [2024 WE50 awards theme, "#MakeSafetySee"](#) highlighted women working to keep people safe. From cybersecurity to structural safety, occupational health to consumer product safety, women engineers work in roles that protect the public. These roles often go unrecognised despite their importance. The [IET Young Woman Engineer of the Year Awards](#), WES awards, WISE awards and professional institution prizes celebrate women at all career stages.

The Federation of Master Builders launched the [Top 100 Most Influential Women in Construction Awards](#) four years ago, with each category celebrating outstanding contributions to the construction industry, recognising leadership, impact, and influence.

Public Sector Actions

[Greater Manchester's STEM Framework](#) is still an active action aiming to ensure that residents of all ages understand the STEM opportunities available across the region as well as wider infrastructure and construction projects. It brings together educators, employers, and communities to strengthen STEM engagement and pathways into future regional jobs. Alongside this, the [GM Good Employment Charter](#) promotes fair, inclusive, and diverse workplaces—supporting better access, progression, and representation for under-represented groups across the local workforce.

Also, [Digital Her](#), in partnership with Greater Manchester's tech and digital sector, is creating free KS3–KS5 Computer Science and career-insight resources for schools and colleges, suitable for both in-person and remote use. This initiative responds to widely research that have demonstrate many young women are still not being introduced to the opportunities available in digital and tech careers during their education ([GMCA Digital](#)).

University-Level Initiatives

Systematic research applying feminist perspective ([Msambwa et al., 2025](#)) have demonstrate the low number of women in STEM is not due to personal shortcomings. A review of 165 studies found that only a small fraction linked girls' participation to individual factors, while most pointed to environmental and behavioural barriers such as stereotypes and lack of role models. Therefore, the early expose of diverse STEM environments is crucial.

For this purpose, The University of Manchester delivers dedicated [Girls in STEM programmes](#) that connect local pupils with female scientists and engineers, raising awareness of STEM and build environment degrees and careers among girls who may not otherwise consider them. It also runs the region's largest [STEM Ambassadors programme](#), with more than 250 ambassadors contributing over 4,000 hours of outreach across Greater Manchester. Public events like [ScienceX](#) further widen access to hands-on science for communities less likely to engage with STEM, fostering early interest and long-term participation. More recently, the university launched the [Big Sisters in STEM](#) podcast to amplify marginalised voices in the sector.

Meanwhile, Manchester Metropolitan University now offers [Step UP 2026](#), a six-month tech-talent accelerator for female-identifying students. It provides mentorship, monthly skills-development masterclasses, and access to a national virtual Tech Summit. Participants also gain opportunities to apply for internships and graduate roles through the programme.

Bridging the Gender Gap in STEM and Construction

In conclusion, while some encouraging trends are revealed through the tracked measures, **it is important to rally the existing efforts to improve conditions**, so that **women and girls in Greater Manchester can be attracted to and enjoy long and productive careers in these vital sectors.**



Education group call to actions 2025

1

Accessible STEM Data for Greater Manchester: Greater Manchester urgently needs transparent, open-access data on women's participation in STEM and built-environment undergraduate routes. Without detailed, disaggregated information, the region cannot fully understand where progress is happening, or where gaps persist. A shared data infrastructure would give policymakers, educators, and industry partners real-time insight into trends and enable quicker, evidence-based action.

2

Strengthen Early-Stage Interventions that Empower Girls and Families: Research consistently shows that early exposure to role models, hands-on experience, and inclusive STEM learning environments play a decisive role in shaping girls' confidence and aspirations in STEM and construction pathways. While initiatives exist across Greater Manchester and within the relevant sectors, there is also the argument that there are not enough learners yet. The region needs sustained public investment and coordinated policy support to scale early-years STEM engagement and ensure every girl can see a future for herself in the built environment, or in the engineering domain.

3

Position Employers as Active Partners and Allies in Gender Equity: Employers across STEM, technology, and construction are essential to understanding real-world workforce needs and identifying the barriers women face in entering and progressing within these sectors. The Greater Manchester STEM Framework already stresses the importance of a diverse workforce with the right technical skills, but this requires employers to co-design solutions, share lived-experience insights and commit to inclusive practices. Stronger employer engagement will help create clearer pathways, more supportive workplaces, and better opportunities for women across the region.



CULTURE & ACTIVE LIVES GROUP

Pankhurst-Fawcett Report

Author: Sarah Galligan & Niamh Carroll



CULTURE & ACTIVE LIVES GROUP

Scorecard - 2024

Women's senior representation has improved overall since 2018, while physical inactivity levels have generally worsened over the same period.

47%

Indicator 1: Senior position in Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation (NPO)

Women comprise 47% of leadership roles in Greater Manchester's National Portfolio Organisations.

30%

Indicator 2: not physically active 30+ a week

Our **active lives** indicator, those not physically active for more than 30 minutes a week has decreased overall from 28% in 2018 to 30% this year.

Women in Cultural Leadership

In 2024/2025, women made up 47% of leadership positions of National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) in Greater Manchester, a decrease by 1% from the previous year. This figure dropped last year, likely due to a change in funded organisations but had otherwise seen significant growth over the last decade. This is 1% higher than the national figure and the economy is impacting the sector in a similar way.

It should be noted that NPOs receiving over £250K must meet diversity objectives and reporting requirements. As such, these figures do not necessarily reflect the wider arts and culture workforce, but they do demonstrate what is achievable through targeted funding conditions and accountability frameworks.

It's difficult to compare investment in culture across Greater Manchester boroughs as it is part of multiple separately reported local authority budget lines.



Access to culture as supported by the GMCA culture fund is currently being measured. This shows that residents in Manchester, Salford and Trafford have the highest access to culture; Stockport, Tameside Bolton and Bury residents have 'good' access; Oldham and Rochdale have some areas with reasonable access and Wigan residents have the least access to culture. These observations consider investment levels and geographical connectivity.

The sector

This is a critical sector for our city-region, contributing £1.4 billion each year to our economy and music alone brings around 800,000 tourists to the city each year, is worth £308million and supports 6,800 jobs.

Despite its economic and social value, the sector is under significant economic pressure. Public funding is declining, wages are low, career progression uncertain and burnout rates high.

The workforce is fragmented, dominated by SMEs and freelancers making consistent data challenging and coordinated support challenging to provide at scale.

Industry fragmentation

The Arts Council England gender representation figures for NPOs are broadly aligned with figures recently reported in the dance sector and by UK music industry boards by [AWA Dance and Women in CTRL](#) both of which indicate relatively high representation of women in leadership roles. However, it is at odds with the Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (PEC) figures, which report that women comprise only 34% of managers and directors across the wider creative industries.

This discrepancy highlights the importance of disaggregating data by sub-sector. Some cultural fields appear to be achieving gender parity at leadership level, while others continue to lag significantly behind. Aggregated creative industries data can mask both progress and persistent inequality.

Freelance workforce

Freelancers comprise around 50% of the workforce across the cultural sectors providing essential flexibility but also a precarious workforce, characterised by irregular income, lack of employment protections, limited access to training, and exclusion from leadership pipelines. Women are **overrepresented in freelance and short-term roles**, which contributes to long-term pay disparities and career attrition.

Workforce stagnation

As part of Manchester Creatives recent [report](#) into workforce diversity in Manchester's cultural sector, researcher Dr Hannah Curran interviewed representatives of Manchester NPOs. Many reported workforce stagnation, with the small organisation size meaning that recruitment was rare and progression limited.

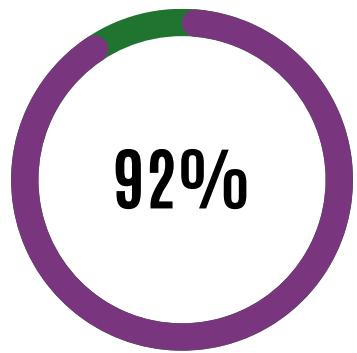
Financial pressures were cited as a factor driving safe 'look-a-like' new recruits, limiting the likelihood of recruiting more diverse applicants and reinforcing existing leadership demographics over time.

Gender pay gap

[Campaign for the Arts](#) and the University of Warwick estimate that across the sector, men are paid 28% more than women. The figures are taken from ONS data, rather than mandatory reporting, as most cultural organisations fall below the reporting threshold of having 250 employees. This suggests that the gender pay gap may be underestimated, particularly given the prevalence of low-paid freelance work and portfolio careers where women are overrepresented and pay transparency is limited. This indicates the need for sector-wide initiatives, including mentoring, coaching and transparent pay structures.

Audience engagement in the Arts

92% of adult [women engaged with the arts between May 2023 and March 2024 in the UK](#), higher than men's engagement at 89%. This gives women a strong voice to call for change and celebrate success.



More than gender

The most prominent conversation on diversity in the arts is on the lack of working-class representation. Where it exists, leadership data consistently highlights the [lack of ethnically minoritised women and disabled women in leadership positions](#). However, intersectionality remains inadequately addressed in both data collection and policy responses.

Recent analysis by the Creative Industries Policy & Evidence Centre finds that approximately 21% of the UK's arts, culture and heritage workforce identify as disabled, compared with 18% of the workforce overall.

For leadership and representation context, other research indicates that disabled people occupy a much lower share of managerial and senior roles in the cultural sector than they do in the overall workforce. For example, some industry diversity studies show disabled people make up about 7.7% of managers and directors compared with much higher overall workforce rates outside culture.

The class ceiling

[Data shows](#) that lack of working-class representation in workforce and in exhibitions leads to lack of engagement – and the gaps are widening. There has been a 9% increase in the gap between 'middle-class' and 'working-class' people attending a live music performance, and a 7% increase in the gap for 'attending an art exhibition'.

The Sutton Trust states that there are four times as many middle-class than working class younger adults working in the creative industries: lack of relatable narratives, lack of role models and the precarious and low paid nature of the sector need to be addressed to improve diversity and provide creative outputs with meaning to our broad Mancunian community.

Manchester City Council's research shows that local authorities with more people working in arts, culture and heritage have greater rates of engagement arts and culture, showing the importance of role models.

Initiatives in Greater Manchester

GM4Women's co-leads Sarah Galligan and Amina Ali launched our Seeing Us campaign in 2025 which audits representation of women, and particularly working-class women in archives, in exhibitions and in Greater Manchester's workforce. A team of volunteers conducted an audit of Lancashire Literature Archives and have since been invited to audit archives and collaborate with teams in other GM arts institutions. The campaign aims to produce a 10-borough-wide celebration of the work of female artists, using cultural visibility to start conversations and leverage change.

The initial audits were done in partnership with a creative writing group run by Amina Ali at Endeavour in Bolton, a charity working with domestic abuse survivors. The women's group received an introduction to the archives by lecturers from the University of Greater Manchester and research and audit training from Sarah Galligan. For all but two of the Endeavour audit team, it was their first time researching in a university environment and they shared that they felt utterly empowered by the activity and inspired to do more.

Manchester's recently launched Cultural strategy puts diversity at the core of its 'Everyone, Everyday, Everywhere' strategy. Rather than solely focusing its £7.5M annual investment in large institutions, it is looking to promote cultural activity throughout the city's communities.

Manchester Creates, a partnership of Manchester City Council and the University of Manchester has recommended the following initiatives, to be undertaken by their strategy team: a new support network of cultural leaders; pan-city Manchester mentorship and coaching schemes; mid-high level training schemes and placements for emerging leaders; shared EDI policies. Many of these recommendations align with those recommended in our 2025 report.

University of Manchester Chancellor Nazir Afsal is pioneering a review of working-class participation in the Greater Manchester Arts scene with the aim of providing a blueprint for action to drive structural equality.

The GMCA Women and Girls' Equality Panel facilitated by the Pankhurst Trust and GM4Women continues to highlight the need for increased representation of women and girls in leadership roles, including within the cultural sector.

Active Lives data

Movement matters to all women and girls, but they also face additional barriers to an active life. Everyone across Greater Manchester has a role to play to close the gender activity gap and address the intersectional inequalities within it.

The Active Lives data from Sport England (explored below), highlights the gender based physical activity gap that still exists. Women and girls across Greater Manchester experience complex and interconnected barriers to participating in physical activity. They include, transition into adolescence, perceptions of safety, financial insecurity and health issues.

These barriers are varied and change throughout the life course. As children transition into adolescence the way they take part in physical activity shifts and girls are less likely to move from active play to structured activity meaning they often disengage from physical activity all together. Research from Youth Sport Trust reported that heightened self-consciousness and growing body image concerns during puberty leads girls to withdraw from physical activity.

A lack of safety and perceptions around feeling safe continue to be a barrier for women taking part in physical activity. A study from Manchester University found that 68% of women involved had experienced abuse whilst out running. It is important to also note that these threats to safety are intersectional. Black women, women of colour, disabled women, trans women and women from other marginalised groups experience more and different types of harassment. As women enter the workforce, financial constraints also impact on people's ability to be active, whilst the gender pay gap in the UK is reducing it still exists. With estimates from PWC showing that it is around 11.2%.

Further barriers to physical activity as they age include the menopause which can impact on women's physical and psychological capability to be active.

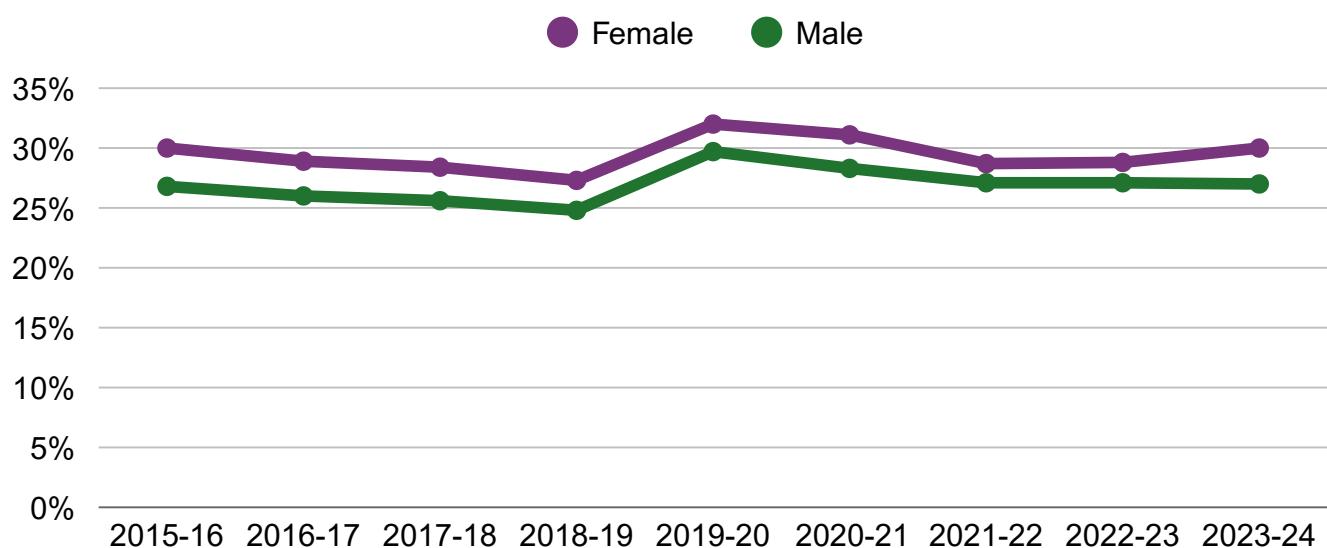


Greater scale and pace of change is possible. If we take a targeted approach, by centring experiences of the most marginalised and inactive women and girls, then we will shift the dial because we will be addressing the myriad of structural, systemic and cultural barriers that hold inactivity in place.

The gap between women's and men's inactivity (less than 30mins of activity per week) in Greater Manchester has grown due to a slight increase in inactivity amongst women. **Female inactivity has risen to 30%** whilst for males the rate stays at 27%.

With the barriers referenced in mind, the Active Lives data from Sport England highlights the extent of the gender activity gap, showing us that women in GM are more likely to be inactive than men.

Figure 1. GM Inactivity Rate by Gender



Whilst the gap has been decreasing since the pandemic, with women's activity levels reducing at a faster rate than men (3.2% to 2.1%). The gap has risen slightly due to a marginal upwards trend in **women's inactivity levels** in 2022-23 and 2023-24 whilst rates amongst males stabilised.

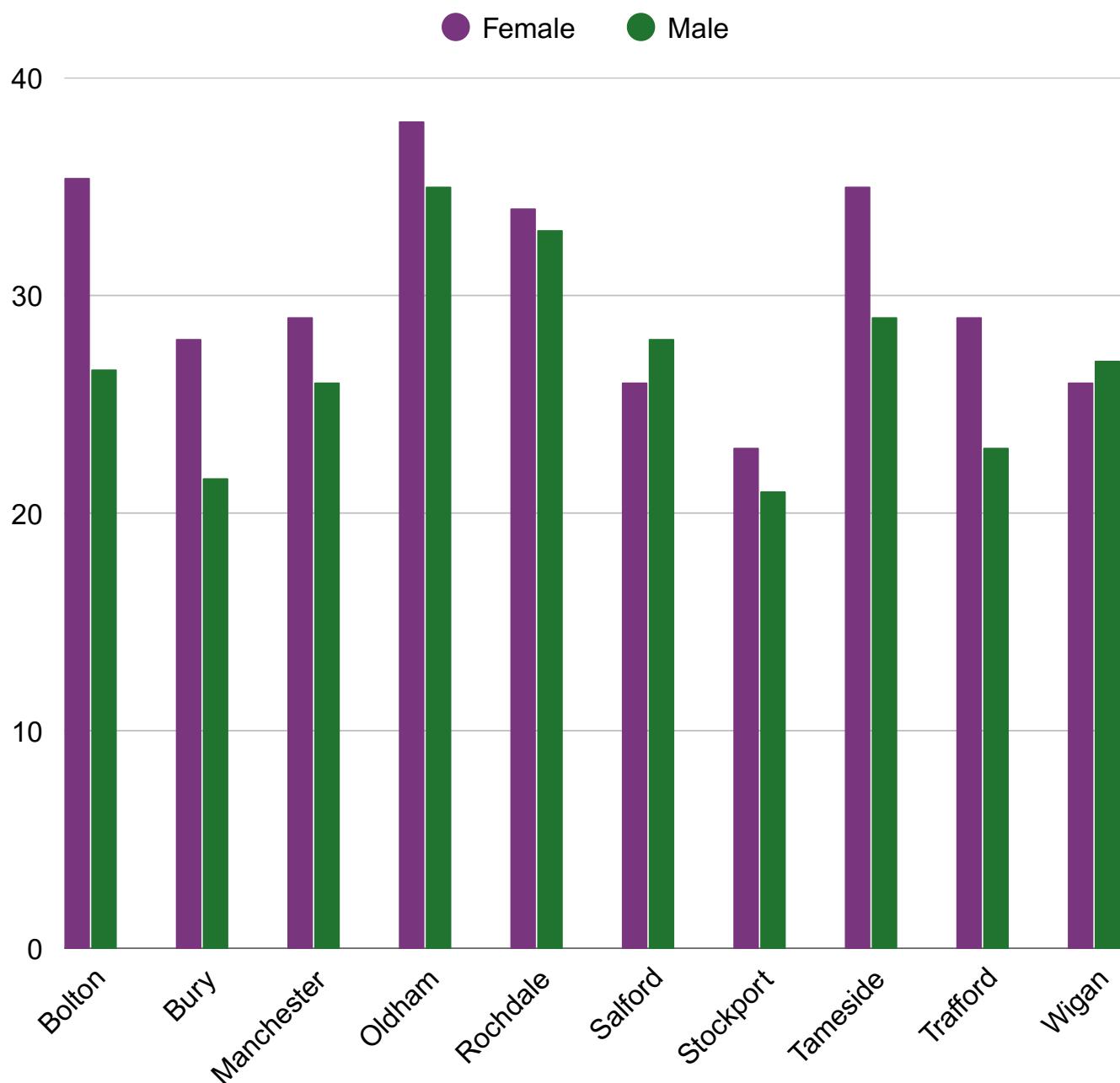
When we look at the data broken down by GM boroughs we can see that whilst in some areas the gap between male and female inactivity is closing (with women in Wigan and Salford now recording lower levels than men), in other places the gap has got wider.

In Bolton, Bury, Tameside and Trafford the gap has widened. With female inactivity levels in some areas increasing significantly.

Whilst this widening gap requires us to think more strategically about the barriers women face, in many boroughs men's inactivity levels have also increased suggesting more universal causes.

Inactivity levels are higher for disabled women, women of African, Caribbean, South Asian and East Asian heritage and women in lower socio-economic groups.

Figure 2. Inactivity Rate by GM Borough, 2023-24



By comparing female inactivity trends with the picture for the rest of England it becomes clear that whilst GM has seen a faster rate of recovery from the impact of the pandemic the gap has widened due to an increase in female inactivity levels in GM.

Despite this slight increase in inactivity, there is lots of important work happening across GM to drive change for women and girls.

People, community groups, clubs, schools, and stakeholders from a wide range of sectors from transport to planning and sport to violence reduction, are making a huge contribution to supporting women and girls' activity levels already.

Figure 3. Female Inactivity levels, GM vs England



How is Greater Manchester making a difference?

GM Moving (a partner of GM4Women) are working with a clear intention to tackle the gender inactivity gap. Teams across GM Moving have developed some clear commitments (below), and they are working closely with partners in Liverpool City Region to make a difference. To further cement the commitment to greater gender equity for women and girls in GM across sport, physical activity and movement, there is ongoing collaborative work with Liverpool City Region to sign up to the IWG Brighton and Helsinki Declaration (put in link here) [Greater Manchester Moving](#)).

Exploring barriers for women, girls and gender diverse people

There is a strong commitment to developing understandings of the barriers that restrict options for moving more within our communities, from affordability to caring responsibilities and concerns about safety. GM Moving believes that only by truly exploring these barriers can there be targeted action to unlock opportunities. See how this is put into practice: [Right to the Streets Toolkit](#).

Upskill and build capacity

GM Moving are committed to working internally and with partners to ensure that workforces have the necessary skills, data and understanding to unlock opportunities for women, girls and gender diverse people. From GM Moving's safeguarding team to place partnership team, there is work happening to strengthen knowledge, share learning, and build confidence so that everyone can play their part in creating safe, inclusive spaces for movement and activity. This has been turned this into action through work such as [our shared Menopause commitment](#).

Share data, stories and learnings

Across Greater Manchester there are growing opportunities to enable women, girls and gender diverse people to move more, and yet there is more to do and learn from each other. [GM Moving](#) is committed to playing their role to ensure that they are sharing our learnings across Greater Manchester and beyond.

Supporting engagement and co-design

Only by including the voices of women, girls and gender diverse people are we able to create tools, resources and opportunities that resonate and are effective. The [Feel Good Your Way campaign](#) was co-designed by members of Bolton Youth Council, aimed at supporting girls with their mental health through physical activity. Directing funding and support to walk more, through our Walking and Wheeling [Fund](#) and [Festival](#). GM Moving is ensuring that they are making funds and support available to support women, girls and gender diverse people to walk and wheel more in a way that feels good for them. See how funding is directly supporting this, in the [Inspirational Women video](#).

Anyone across Greater Manchester can make their own [pledge](#) to highlight what they are doing to commit to tackling the gender inactivity gap.

Culture & Active lives group calls to actions 2025

1

Women in culture

Our asks for the sector are to provide intersectional data, provide cross industry mentoring and business support initiatives and for women to use their vast strength as consumers in campaigns and in direct asks where they consume their culture.

2

Active Lives and Women - targeted approach to marginalised sector.

Let's take a targeted approach by centring the experiences of the most marginalised and inactive women and girls. We will shift the dial because we will address the myriad structural, systemic and cultural barriers that hold inactivity in place.

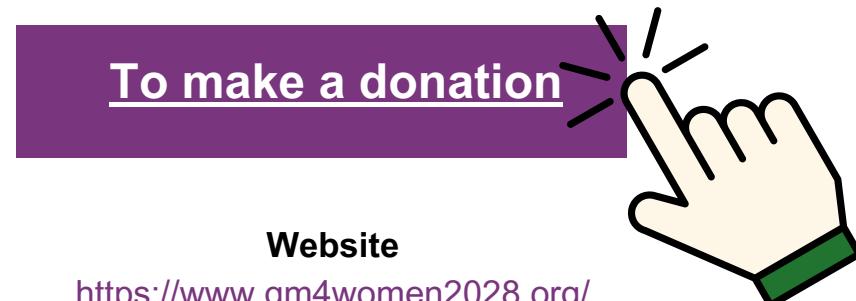
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Many thanks to the authors of the specific chapters whose names are given at the beginning of each chapter.

The overall document was compiled by Helen Pankhurst with graphic design by Fernanda Tapia Birkner and coordination by Jennet Ingram. The Pankhurst-Fawcett Scorecards made by Julianna Jacobowiski. Special thanks for planning and coordination of the Scorecard event to Claire-Marie Boggiano.

To get involved in GM4Women2028, please email info@gm4women2028.org.

We need your help! To donate to our charity, please visit
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