

**February 2026**

# **The Motherhood Penalty and the Gender Pay Gap**

**Key stats for Reference: gender, work and care**

## **UK Gender Pay Gap**

In April 2025 the UK's gender pay gap stood at **12.8%**, falling to 6.9% amongst full-time workers (ONS analysis of Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, 2025).

- ✦ Men in FT employment earned more than women in FT employment in all major occupation groups in April 2025.
- ✦ The gender pay gap is larger for employees aged 40 years and over than for those aged under 40 years.
- ✦ The gap is larger among higher-paid employees than among lower-paid employees, and women employees' share in high-paying occupations decreases with age.

## **Long-term Financial Inequality**

Analysis from the Women's Budget Group (2024) reveals how the gender pay gap compounds inequality over the long-term:

- ✦ 57% of pensioners living in poverty are women.
- ✦ The UK has the second largest gender pension gap in the OECD; on average, men hold around £155k in private pension wealth, while women have nearly £88k.
- ✦ Women are more likely to have no private pension wealth. Among those with zero private pension wealth, 58% are women.

## **Caring as a Driver of the Gender Pay Gap**

- ✦ 3 in 10 mothers work part-time vs 1 in 20 fathers (Working Families Index 2025).
- ✦ Women are twice as likely as men to reduce hours for childcare (Working Families Index 2025).
- ✦ The Census found that in England and Wales, women are more likely to provide care than men. 59% of unpaid carers are female (Carers UK).
- ✦ The biggest proportion of people caring in England and Wales are from the 55-59 age group (Carers UK).

## The Motherhood Penalty

In October the ONS released new analysis of mother’s earnings between 2014 and 2022 that showed that having children leads to a substantial and long-lasting reduction in mothers’ earnings:

- There is a 42% fall in mothers' earnings five years after the birth of the first child (-£1,051 per month).
- This amounts to a total loss of £65,618 for the first child, and losses of £26,000–£32,000 for subsequent children.
- Employment probability falls 15 points after 1st child; 10.5 points after later births.

## The UK as an International Outlier – Policy and Culture

- UK mothers report higher career harm than European counterparts 31% vs 27% EU average (Make Mothers Matter, 2026)
- 7 in 10 men feel pressure to be primary breadwinner (Working Families: Barriers to Equal Parenting 2025)
- Statutory entitlement for fathers in the UK is 2 weeks at a flat-rate (one of Europe's shortest & lowest-paid), compared to OECD average of 8-14+ weeks well-paid
- Among top UK employers (270 with the best parental leave offers) only 45% offer equal fully paid parental leave. 78% of the “non-equal” employers do not offer their enhanced maternity provisions for fathers or second parents taking shared parental leave (Personnel Today/Fatherhood Institute).

## . Working Patterns

		Female	Male	Source
<b>Employment rate</b>		<b>71.8%</b>	<b>78.2%</b>	House of Commons Library, <i>Women and the UK economy</i> , 28 Feb 2025
Full-time		64%	86%	
Part-time		36%	14%	
<b>Economically inactive (all reasons)</b>		<b>25.1%</b>	<b>18.5%</b>	Women’s Budget Group, <i>Women and the Labour Market – Briefing 1</i> , Feb 2024
Economically inactive due to looking after home/family	Aged 16–64	25.7%	7.1%	
	Aged 25–49	54.1%	11.9%	