

# Public Sector Equality Duty Report 2025-2026



## Introduction

At Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS), Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) underpin everything we do. We are committed to treating all colleagues and all members of the public with dignity and respect. Our ability to protect lives, reduce risk, and serve the people of Northamptonshire effectively depends on understanding the diverse communities we work with and tailoring our services to meet their needs.

We know that we cannot achieve this work in isolation. Strong partnerships—with local authorities, community organisations, emergency services, and other stakeholders—ensure that our decisions and actions reflect the needs and experiences of the communities we serve. These relationships help us keep people safe and deliver the highest standard of service to Northamptonshire.

## Our Legal Obligations

The Equality Act 2010 protects individuals from discrimination in both employment and wider society. As a public body, NFRS has a responsibility to demonstrate compliance with this legislation.

This means we must show due regard to the need to:

- Promote equality of opportunity
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination
- Foster good relations between those who share protected characteristics and those who do not

In addition, specific statutory duties require us to:

- Publish proportionate, relevant information annually through our Public Sector Equality Duty Report
- Set specific and measurable equality objectives

These obligations ensure transparency, accountability, and continual improvement.

NFRS also has a statutory responsibility to assess and publish our Gender Pay gap report, this report is included in this report alongside our Ethnicity Pay gap report.

## About Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service

### The Area We Serve

- *913 square miles*
- *Population of 814,000 people*
- *One-third of residents live in rural communities*

Our service area spans busy urban centres, market towns, and remote villages—each with unique challenges and community needs.

### Our People

Our dedicated workforce includes:

- 260 Wholetime Firefighters
- 186 On-Call Firefighters
- 21 Fire Control staff
- 58 Support staff
- 525 employees in total

Every role contributes to our mission to keep Northamptonshire safe.

## Our Strategic Aims

This report supports our *People and Culture Strategy* and our *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy*. Together, these frameworks guide our work and monitor our progress.

Our key aims are to:

- Become an institutionally inclusive organisation
- Develop a representative workforce that reflects Northamptonshire's communities
- Create a culture where people feel valued, engaged, and able to thrive
- Ensure equality of opportunity for all
- Build a workforce that is motivated, ethical, and accountable
- Proactively challenge prejudice and discrimination

These aims shape our decision-making, behaviours, and long-term direction.

## How We Deliver on Our Duty

To ensure that equality considerations inform our policies, services, and culture, we:

### Monitor Our Workforce

We regularly gather and review workforce data to understand who we employ and how we can support them better.

### Use Engagement Structures

Our *Culture and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group* meets frequently to discuss staff experiences and emerging issues. Membership includes representatives from across the organisation, staff networks, and trade unions.

Information and insight from this group flows into our *People and Culture Board*, ensuring senior leaders are directly informed.

### Learn and Benchmark

We collaborate with regional fire and rescue services, follow guidance from the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), and participate in inspections from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

This external scrutiny ensures that our progress is measurable and aligned to national standards.

## Progress

Our workforce has shown exceptional commitment to delivering high-quality services to our communities. Their dedication has driven meaningful improvement across the organisation. In September 2025, HMICFRS improved our rating, downgrading Equality, Diversity and Inclusion from a *Cause of Concern* to an *Area for Improvement*. This reflects tangible steps forward and recognises the significant work already undertaken.

### Key Achievements

- Clear EDI objectives have been established with short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes
- Mandatory, targeted training delivered to all staff
- Staff networks created, strengthening voice, engagement, and inclusion
- Revised Equality and Wellbeing Impact Assessments rolled out
- Improved diversity data collection, increasing trust and transparency
- Greater accountability for behaviour, supported by independent reporting and external investigation options
- Progress on positive action, supported by dedicated leads

These improvements show our commitment to long-term cultural change.

## Review of Priorities Set in 2024–2025

### Reasonable Adjustments Policy and Personal Support Passport

We have published a new Reasonable Adjustments Policy and launched the Personal Support Passport. This allows staff to document their needs and ensures adjustments are consistently understood and implemented. This supports wellbeing, retention, and productivity.

Training is underway in 2026 to deepen staff understanding, especially in relation to neurodivergence.

### Diversity Data Improvement

We have significantly increased the number of staff who feel confident in disclosing protected characteristic information. Better data leads to better decision-making—informing training, resources, equipment needs, and workforce planning.

It also helps identify under-represented groups and informs community engagement strategies.

### Staff Training

All employees received *Active Bystander* training to equip them with practical tools to challenge inappropriate behaviour. Based on the “5Ds” model, the training also signposts staff to support services.

Our 2026 mandatory training focus will be neurodiversity awareness, continuing to strengthen understanding and inclusion.

## New Priorities for 2026–2027

### Positive Action

We are expanding our positive action work across recruitment and promotion. An additional team member has joined to support this work. Our objective is clear: to build a workforce that reflects our community and ensures fair, transparent opportunities for progression.

### Menopause Action Plan

In advance of upcoming statutory requirements in 2027, we are developing a comprehensive Menopause Action Plan. This will improve support, guidance, and workplace adjustments for those experiencing menopause or perimenopause.

### White Ribbon Accreditation

We have achieved accreditation with White Ribbon, demonstrating our commitment to ending violence against women and girls. Over the coming year, we will:

- Embed White Ribbon values across the service
- Encourage staff to become Ambassadors and Champions
- Review policies and training to ensure they align with White Ribbon principles
- Strengthen our culture of respect and zero tolerance for harmful behaviour

## Looking Ahead

We are continuing to embed and evolve our EDI Strategy through a structured maturity model, ensuring progress is monitored and sustained. While annual priorities focus our immediate efforts, our long-term strategy guides our vision through to 2030.

NFRS is committed to continually improving, learning, and building a service where every member of staff—and every member of our community—is valued, protected, and able to thrive. This approach will help to shape additional priorities including our approach to EDI



within our community, ensuring our services are inclusive to the whole community of Northamptonshire.



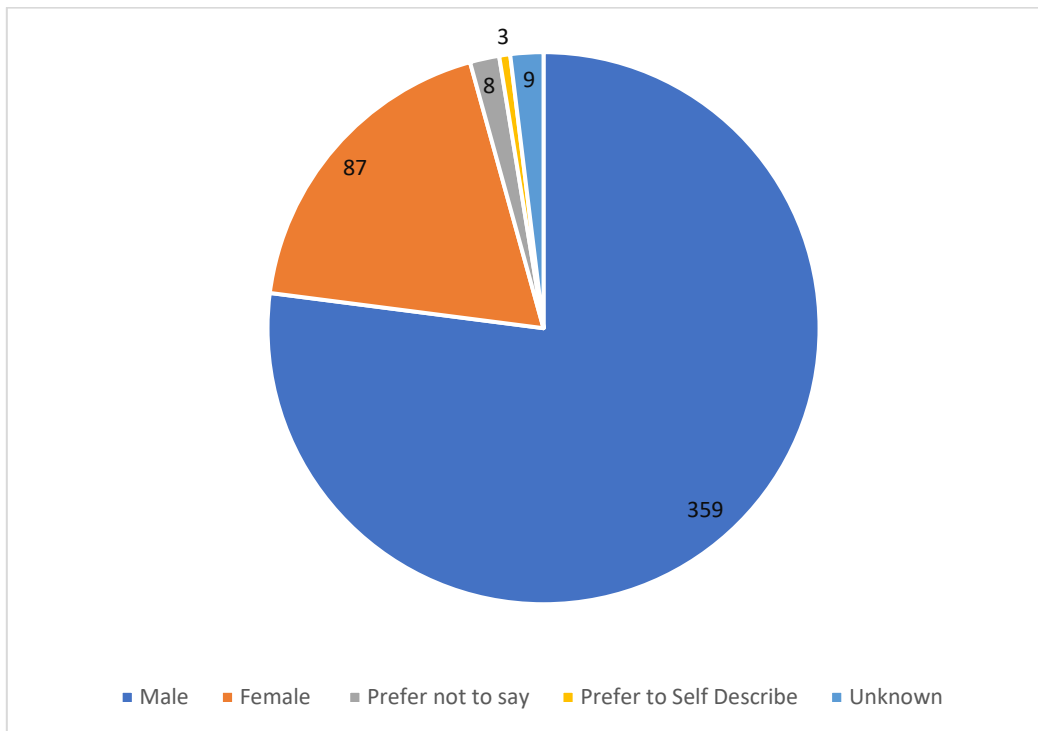
**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE  
FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE**



## Workforce Data

The workforce data below is drawn from our self-service HR system, where employees confidentially record their own equality and diversity information. The figures represent a snapshot of all staff employed by Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service at the end of December 2025.

### Gender

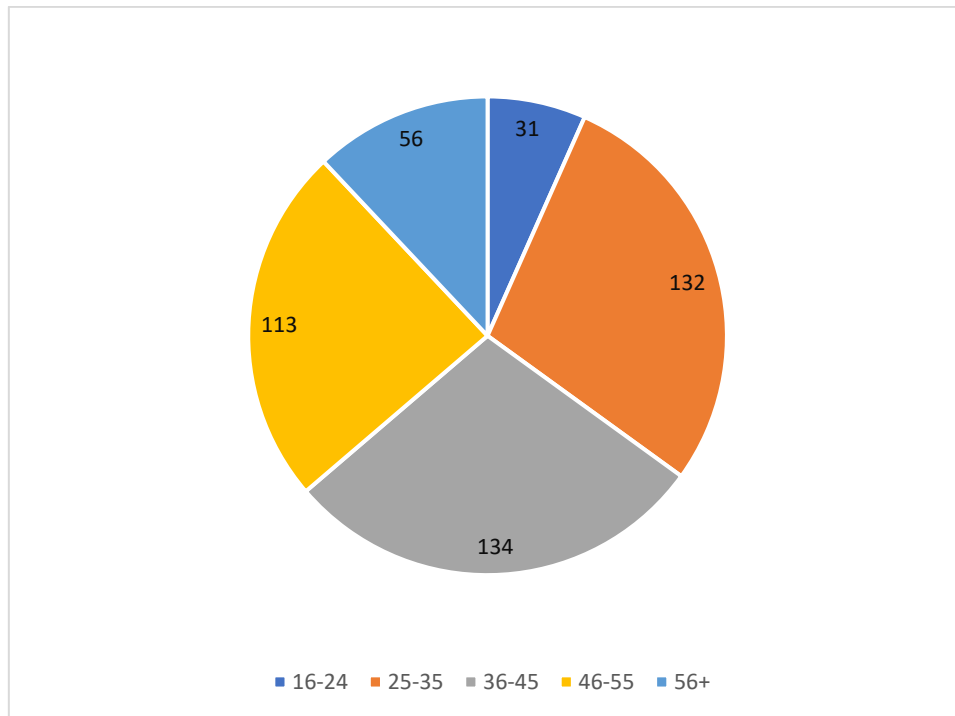


We have continued to improve the way we gather and record personal data, which has resulted in a small increase in the number of staff selecting “prefer not to say” or choosing to self-describe their gender. This reflects growing confidence in the system and greater autonomy for staff to represent themselves accurately.

Although the total number of female employees has reduced slightly compared with the previous year, this change mirrors a small overall reduction in the workforce. When viewed

proportionately, the representation of women has increased by one percentage point year on year, demonstrating steady progress in gender diversity across the organisation.

### Age



The age profile of our workforce has remained broadly consistent with last year. The distribution of age groups mirrors the working-age population of Northamptonshire, demonstrating a stable and representative age balance across the service.

## Ethnicity

Asian - Bangladeshi	0
Asian - Chinese	0
Asian - Indian	0
Asian - Pakistani	0
Asian - Any other Asian background	2
Black - African	2
Black - Caribbean	0
Black - Other	3
Mixed - Asian	2
Mixed - Caribbean	2
Mixed - African	0
Mixed - Other	2
White - English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British	345
White - Gypsy or Irish Traveller	1
White - Irish	1
White - Any other White background	19
Any other	2
Prefer not to say	21
Not disclosed	64

The proportion of staff identifying as White British or another White ethnicity is broadly in line with the demographic profile of Northamptonshire.

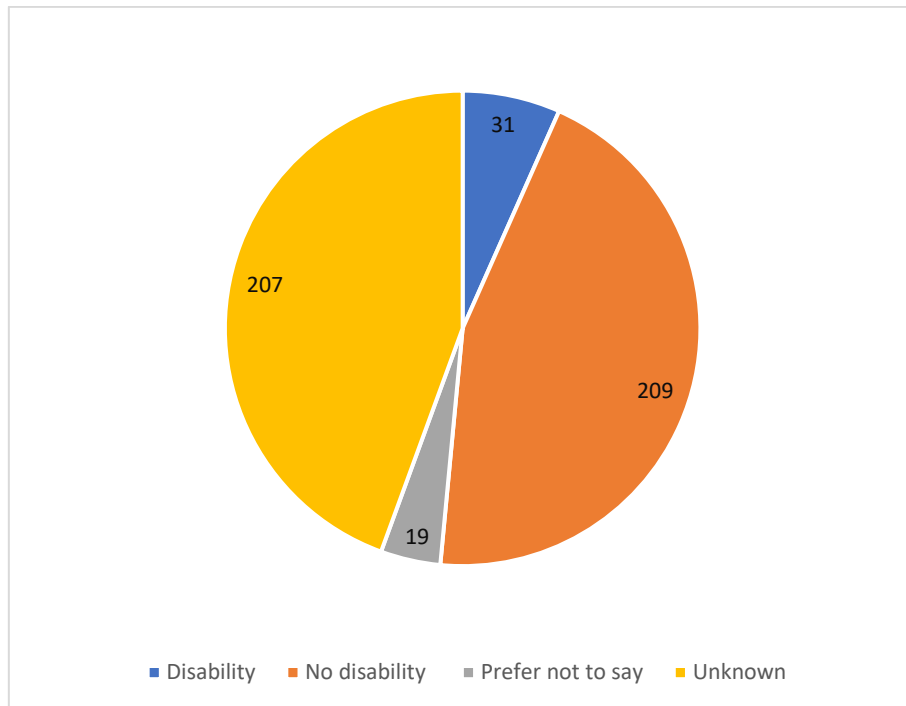
However, 85 employees either did not disclose their ethnicity or selected “prefer not to say”. This limits our ability to form a fully accurate picture of workforce representation and highlights the importance of continued work to build trust and encourage voluntary disclosure.

## Religion

Christian	120
Jewish	0
Buddhist	2
Sikh	0
Hindu	0
Muslim	2
Other	6
No religion	171
Prefer not to say	83
Unknown	82

We have seen an overall increase in declarations compared with last year. The religious makeup of our workforce aligns closely with patterns observed in the 2021 Census for Northamptonshire, indicating representative diversity in this area.

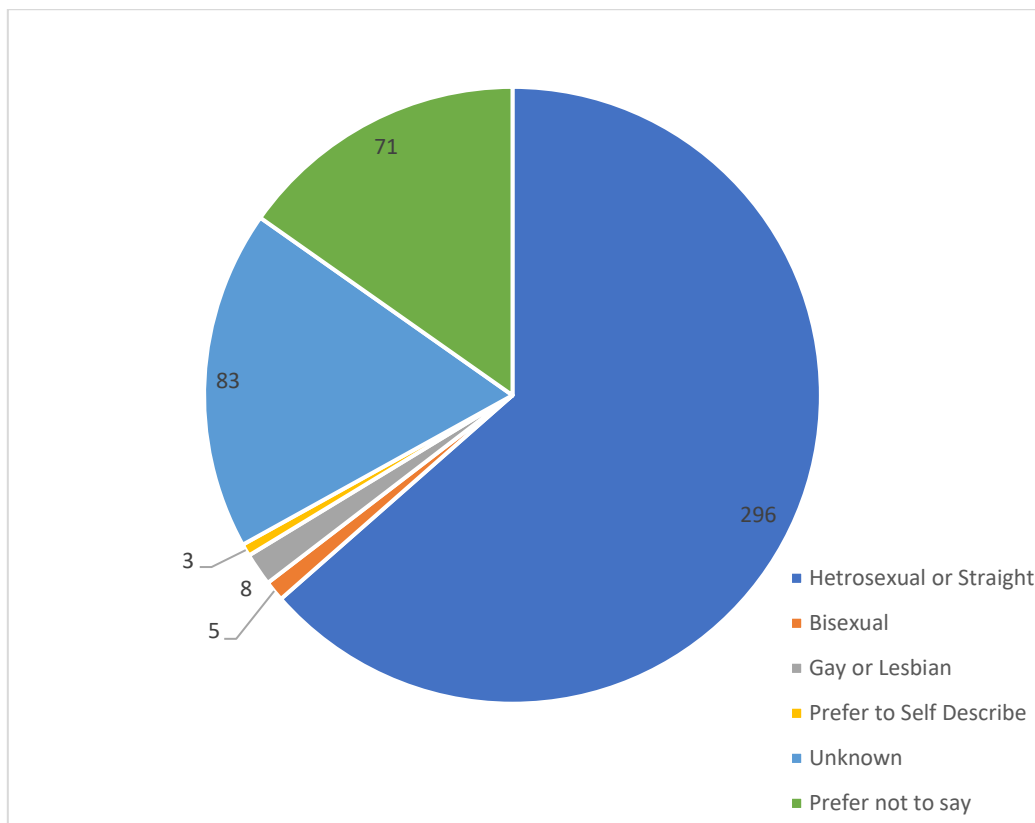
## Disability



We have made significant progress in improving disability-related data. The number of employees recorded as “unknown” has reduced from 310 to 207, reflecting improved confidence and awareness around disclosure.

Currently, **six percent** of our workforce has formally declared a disability. This information helps us better understand staff needs so we can provide appropriate support, adjustments, and workplace accessibility

## Sexual Orientation



There has been a noticeable improvement in disclosure rates for sexual orientation. While this is encouraging, around one-third of employees still either chose not to answer or selected “prefer not to say”. Increasing trust and understanding around why we collect this data will continue to be a priority.

## Ethnicity Pay Gap Report 2024 – 2025

The pay gap is a snapshot in time, reflecting organisational structure and individuals in post  
as of 31 March 2025

The Ethnicity Pay Gap (EPG) is different to equal pay, it shows the difference in the average hourly rate of pay between employee's ethnicities. This involves carrying out calculations that show the difference between the average earnings of the various ethnicities in our organisation – this covers all individuals in the organisation (both firefighters and staff); it does not involve publishing individual employees' data. The data used for the calculations is the Fire & Rescue Service's pay data as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025.

We are required to publish the results on a government ethnicity pay gap website, and in addition it is advisable to publish the high-level results on the Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Services website alongside pay and transparency data.

Ethnicity pay reporting is used to assess:

- the levels of ethnic equality in the workplace
- the balance of employees' ethnicity at different levels



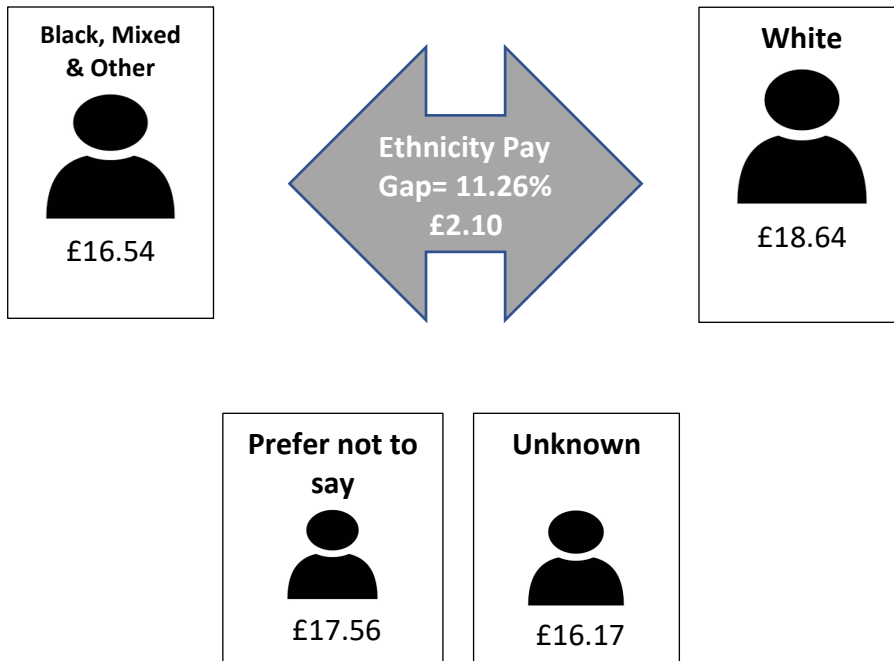
## Workforce Profile

Total headcount of full pay relevant employees as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 was 418 with 334 of these employees being White.



This shows that only **3%** of the workforce identified as Black, Mixed or Other backgrounds, and **13%** had not declared an ethnicity—limiting the ability to draw strong conclusions from the data.

### Mean Ethnicity Pay Gap in hourly pay



This shows that, on average, White employees earn more, driven largely by representation patterns in higher-paid roles.

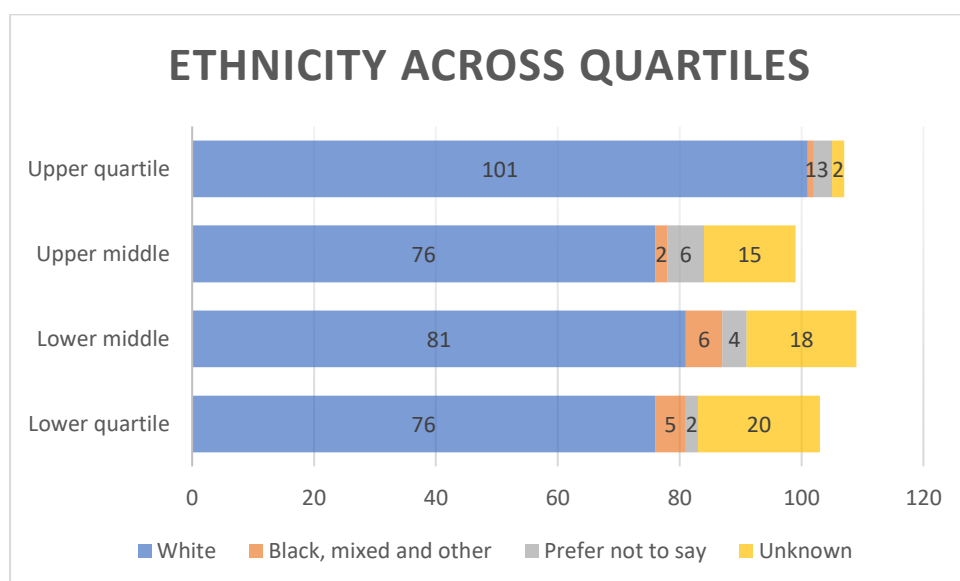
### Median Ethnicity Pay Gap in hourly pay



This indicates no difference in median pay, suggesting that the mean gap is influenced by organisational structure rather than consistent differences across the pay scale.

Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service did not operate a bonus payment scheme during this period and therefore has no bonus payment pay gap.

### Proportion of Ethnicities in Each Pay Quartile



The graph above outlines the gender split by pay quartile. The lower quartile range relates to hourly rates of up to **£16.34**. The lower middle quartile includes hourly rates of **£17.20**. The upper middle quartile is hourly rates of **£17.20 - £19.48**. The upper quartile relates to hourly rates of **£19.48** and above.

Across all four pay quartiles, representation of ethnic minority staff remains **very low**, with only 1–6 individuals per quartile identifying as Black, Mixed or Other. Most employees in each quartile are White, with a notable number of “Unknown” declarations.

This distribution demonstrates that:

- Ethnic minority staff are present throughout the organisation
- But in **very small numbers**, making the pay gap highly sensitive to changes in a few roles

## Conclusion

The findings of the 2024–2025 Ethnicity Pay Gap Report present a mixed picture of progress and ongoing challenges for Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service. While the organisation demonstrates encouraging parity in median hourly pay across all ethnic groups, the presence of a mean pay gap highlights the continued impact of workforce representation on overall outcomes. The very small number of staff identifying as Black, Mixed or Other ethnic backgrounds means the data remains highly sensitive to minor organisational changes, making year-on-year shifts difficult to interpret with confidence. Equally significant is the proportion of staff—eighty-five in total—who have either chosen not to disclose their ethnicity or left the field unanswered. This gap in data limits the reliability of the analysis and reinforces the importance of building further trust and encouraging fuller disclosure among employees.

Despite these constraints, the report demonstrates a sustained commitment to improving equality, diversity and inclusion across the Service. Through ongoing positive action initiatives, strengthened data-collection practices, and active engagement with staff networks, NFRS continues to take meaningful steps toward a more representative workforce. Continued progress in these areas will not only support more robust reporting in future years but will also help to create a fairer and more inclusive organisation for all employees.

## Gender Pay Gap Report 2024 – 2025

The pay gap is a snapshot in time, reflecting organisational structure and individuals in post as of 31 March 2025

The Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service is required by law to carry out Gender Pay Reporting under the Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations 2017. This involves carrying out calculations that show the difference between the average earnings of men and women in our organisation – this covers all individuals in the organisation (both firefighters and staff); it does not involve publishing individual employees' data. The data used for the calculations is the Fire & Rescue Service's pay data as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025.

We are required to publish the results on a government gender pay gap website, and in addition it is advisable to publish the high-level results on the Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Services website alongside pay and transparency data.

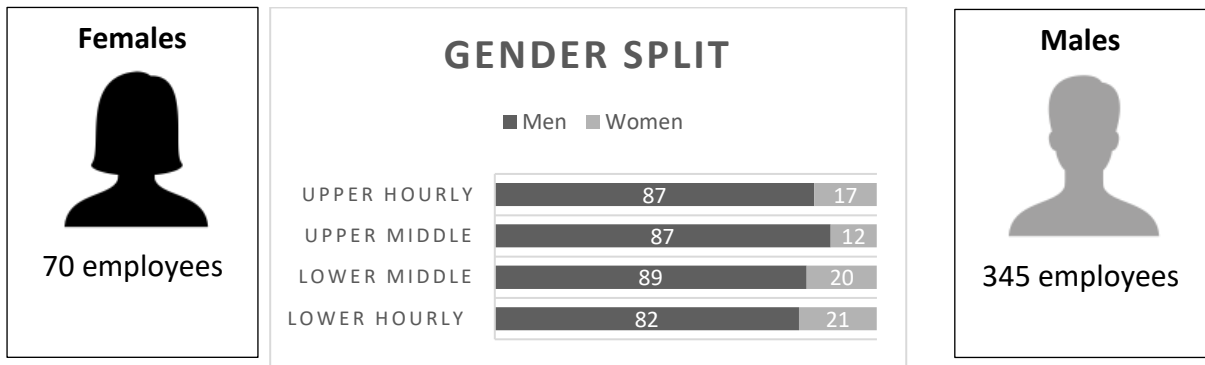
Gender pay reporting is used to assess:

- the levels of gender equality in the workplace
- the balance of male and female employees at different levels

### Workforce Profile

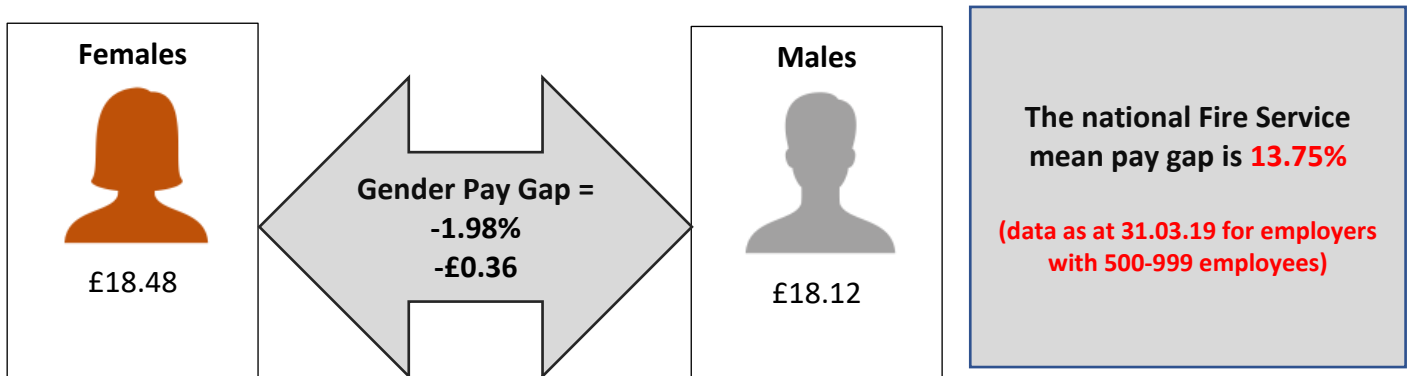
Total headcount as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 was 471 employees. Please note **2.12%** of staff have been excluded due to gender unknown, and **2.33%** have been excluded from calculations due to declaring "Prefer not to say" or "Prefer to self-describe" regarding their gender.

Total employees recorded as full-pay relevant employees (who identified as male or female) during the snapshot period was 415, and these are the numbers reported on for the purpose of this report.



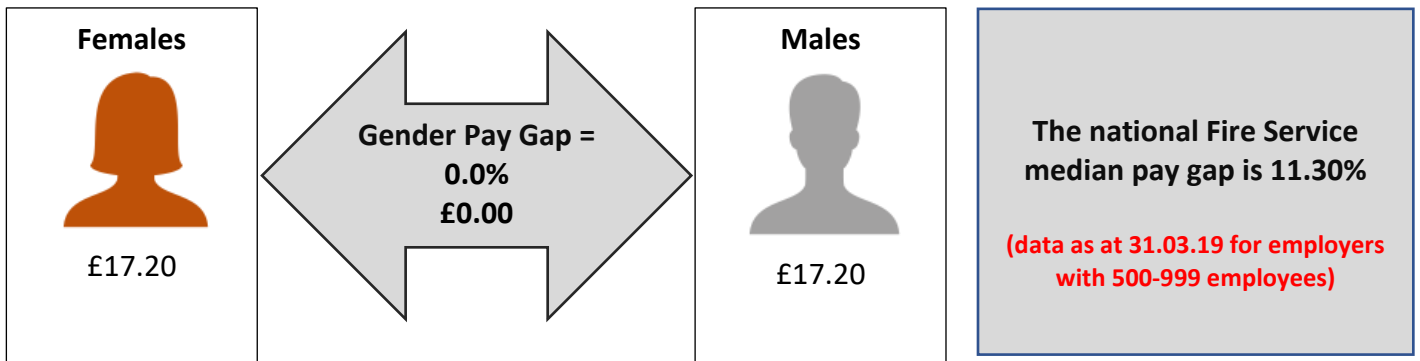
This graph shows the gender split across the organisational structure.

### Mean Gender Pay Gap in Hourly Pay



This indicates that, on average, **women earn slightly more than men** at NFRS—a reverse gender pay gap.

## Median Gender Pay Gap in Hourly Pay

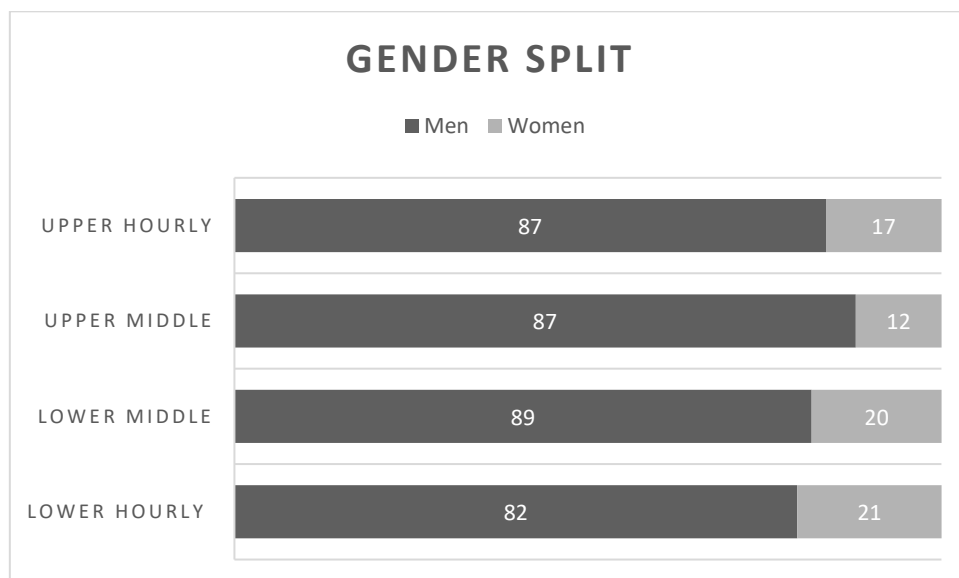


There is **no median gender pay gap**, meaning men and women earn the same midpoint hourly rate across the organisation.

### Comparison to National Fire Sector Data

- National Fire & Rescue mean gap: **13.75%** (men earning more)
- National Fire & Rescue median gap: **11.30%**

NFRS performs **significantly better** than the national averages, showing stronger gender balance within pay structures



This distribution shows fewer women in higher-paid middle-quartile roles, but some improvement in senior female representation in the upper quartile

### **Factors Influencing the Gender Pay Gap**

The report notes that:

- Organisational size means changes in a few senior roles can significantly influence results.
- Increases in senior female leadership contributed to positive shifts in the mean pay gap.
- Despite pay parity, the organisation continues to have distinct gender differences in role types and departmental representation.

Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service did not operate a bonus payment scheme during this period and therefore has no bonus payment pay gap.

### **Conclusion**

The 2024–2025 Gender Pay Gap results for Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service present a positive and encouraging picture of gender equality within the organisation. With no median gender pay gap and a reversed mean gap showing women earning slightly more on average than men, the data demonstrates that NFRS continues to maintain fair and equitable pay structures across the workforce.

These outcomes place the Service in a significantly stronger position than the national Fire and Rescue sector averages, highlighting the impact of sustained efforts to reduce inequality however, while the pay gap itself shows strong performance, the broader context reflects ongoing challenges surrounding gender representation.

The organisation remains predominantly male, particularly within operational roles, and this imbalance continues to shape the overall structure of the workforce. Increases in senior



female leadership have contributed to positive pay gap outcomes, but long-term progress will require continued focus on recruitment, progression pathways, and support mechanisms that encourage more women to join and advance within the Service.

NFRS's has a commitment to strengthening gender equality displayed in the ongoing work to remove bias from recruitment and promotion processes, enhance career development opportunities for women, and collaborate with staff networks to build an inclusive culture. These initiatives—supported by transparent reporting and a clear recognition of areas for improvement—provide a strong foundation for further progress.

Overall, the gender pay gap findings demonstrate not only pay parity, but also the early signs of cultural and structural change. Sustained effort will ensure that this progress continues and that the Service becomes increasingly representative of the communities it serves.