



Royal College  
of Nursing

# Gender Pay Gap Report

2023

CORPORATE



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# 1. Introduction

## Executive summary

As the world's largest professional body and trade union for nursing staff, the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) is committed to equality of opportunity for our members in their employment and for the people we employ. While we fight for **fair pay for nursing**, we must ensure we remunerate our own people fairly. For that reason, and in fulfilling our commitments to equity, diversity and inclusion, we are continually reviewing our employment policies and approach to ensure they are fair in their design and in practice.

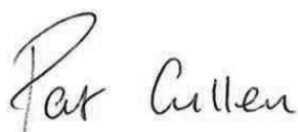
When the data was taken in April 2023 for this report, our workforce was 73% female and 27% male. We remain confident that both are paid equally for doing the same work. Our pay structure rewards length of service, so gender pay gaps within a pay grade are typically attributable to how long people have worked here.

We recognise that some of our people may not identify as male or female and some people's gender identity does not align with the sex they were assigned at birth. We acknowledge that they may not feel included due to the language used and the binary categories reported on. However, we are required by UK legislation to report in a binary way.

This report presents the RCN's gender pay gap for the April 2023 snapshot date. Our mean pay gap is 2.6%, and the median pay gap, 3.0%.

As a trade union we are determined to practise what we preach; as a professional body we are committed to setting the highest standards and so we strive to be an exemplary employer.

I confirm that the data contained within this report is accurate and meets the requirements of the gender pay gap reporting regulations.



Professor Pat Cullen  
General Secretary & Chief Executive

## 2. Summary

### a) The RCN’s gender pay gap

The RCN’s reportable gender pay gap is:

**Table 1**

	2023
Mean pay gap	2.6%
Median pay gap	3.0%

We carried out internal equal pay audits in 2010 and 2016, although the formula for calculating the hourly pay rate that underpins the 2017 to 2023 reportable figures is slightly different from the one we used for our own equal pay audits.

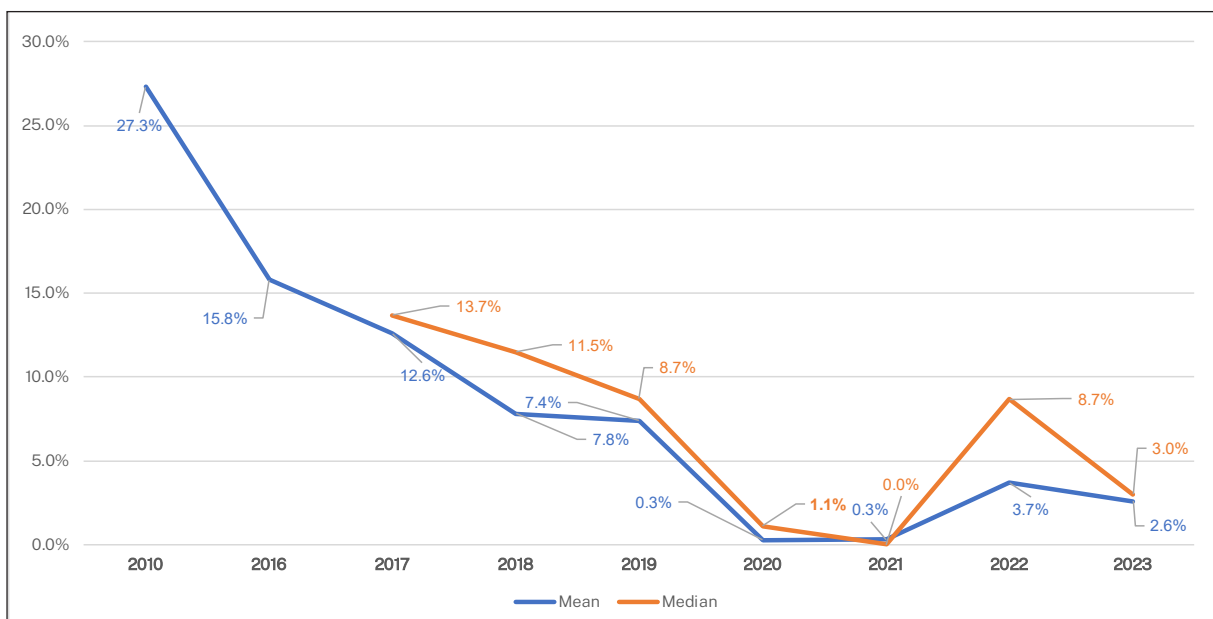
This means that comparison of our 2017-2023 figures with our past equal pay audits is imperfect, although the differences are not significant enough to make comparison invalid.

Those historical figures are presented below (Table 2 and Figure 1) for comparison (only the mean pay gap was calculated in our equal pay audits).

**Table 2**

	2010	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Mean pay gap	27.3%	15.8%	12.6%	7.8%	7.4%	0.3%	0.3%	3.7%	2.6%
Median pay gap			13.7%	11.5%	8.7%	1.1%	0.0%	8.7%	3.0%

**Figure 1: Gender pay gap 2010-2023**



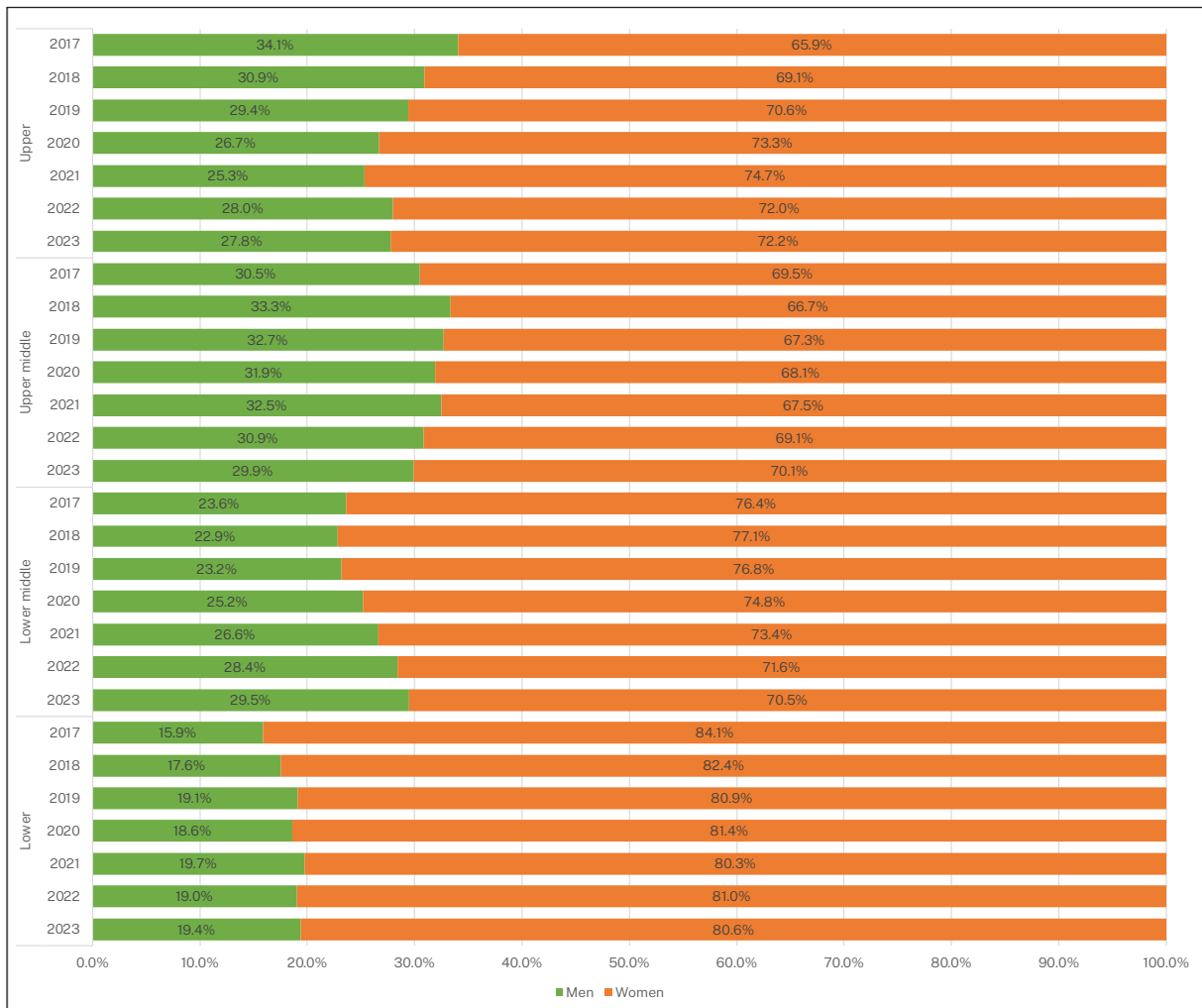
## b) Bonuses

Bonuses are not paid as part of the RCN’s reward package, so there are no reportable figures to include as part of this report.

## c) Pay quartiles

Figure 2 presents the breakdown of men and women in the RCN’s four pay quartiles over the last seven years.

**Figure 2: Quartiles trend (by quartile)**



The 2023 data reveals that there continues to be a lower proportion of men than women across all four pay quartiles. Notably however, this is lowest in the lowest quartile, and highest in the upper quartiles. All the changes we can see between 2021 and 2023 are relatively minor. The most significant of the changes is the drop in the proportion of women in the lower middle quartile (2.9%) since 2021 and the upper pay quartile (by 2.5%) compared to 2021.

### 3. Analysis

The RCN has a graded pay structure with incremental points and with pay progression linked to length of service. All roles are graded using our bespoke job evaluation scheme and each evaluation is carried out by a panel of two assessors, one from the People and Organisational Development team, and one from our recognised trade unions. When the scheme was designed, we brought in independent expertise to ensure that the criteria against which jobs are evaluated and graded are free of inherent bias and discrimination. Past equal pay audits in 2010 and 2016 have revealed that when pay comparisons are made grade-by-grade (to take account of the principle of equal pay for work of equal value), the pay gap all but disappears.

The reportable 2023 data reveals this same pattern, as it has for previous years. None of our grades that include more than 25 employees have a gender pay gap of more than 3%.

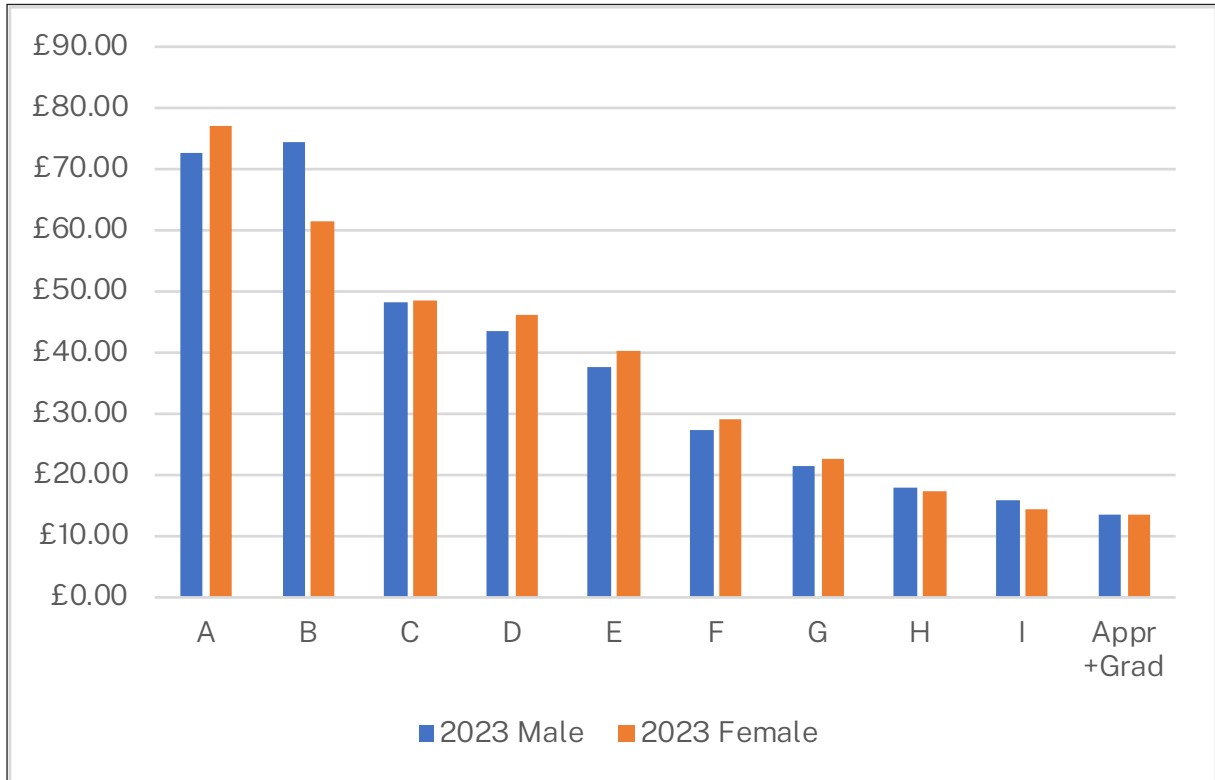
Within grades there will be natural and inevitable differences in the distribution of men and women across the various incremental points. This is because progression through the pay points in the grade is linked to service, so men and women within the same grade will be distributed across the pay points depending on their length of service at the grade.

**Table 3**

Grade	Average male salary 2023 (per hour)	Average female salary 2023 (per hour)	Gender pay gap 2022	Gender pay gap 2023	Sample size 2023
A	£72.49	£76.86	-3.38%	-5.69%	8
B	£74.30	£61.35	-4.27%	21.11%	5
C	£48.19	£48.51	7.40%	-0.66%	19
D	£43.26	£46.11	-2.86%	-6.18%	42
E	£37.64	£40.23	-6.81%	-6.44%	194
F	£27.20	£28.93	-1.01%	-5.98%	301
G	£21.48	£22.41	3.05%	-4.15%	207
H	£17.91	£17.10	-0.71%	4.74%	161
I	£15.61	£14.18	-5.62%	10.08%	22
Apprentices and graduates	£13.26	£13.26	-3.50%	0.00%	3

Figure 3 shows the average hourly pay for men and women in each of our pay grades.

**Figure 3: Average hourly pay by grade in 2023**

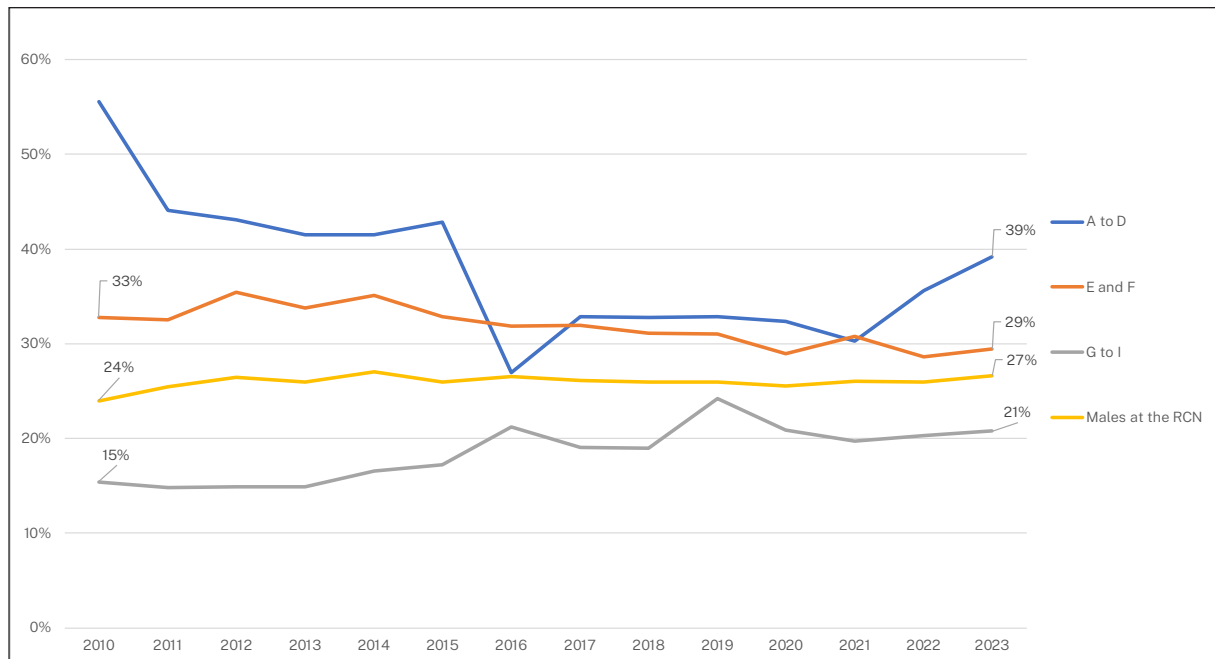


We know that the main driver behind our gender pay gap is not related to the rates of pay for men and women doing similar work; instead, it is caused by disproportionately more males in the most senior roles compared to the least senior roles.



Figure 4 shows the percentage of men in each range of grades since 2010. The gender profile in our higher-paid grades (A to D) is becoming more consistent with our overall workforce profile, where the proportion of women is increasing towards the overall workforce profile.

**Figure 4: Grade profile of male staff**



Currently, 69% of our managers are women and, although 27% of all RCN employees are male, at the most senior grades the proportion of male employees has historically been much higher. It is 33.8% this year, 1.8% lower than 2022, although it was as high as 55.6% in 2009/2010.

The number of males in senior positions decreased in 2023, and the picture remains significantly better than in 2010. The progress that has been made in addressing our gender pay gap since 2010 is primarily attributable to the improving diversity profile at our more senior grades.

# 4. What have we done already?

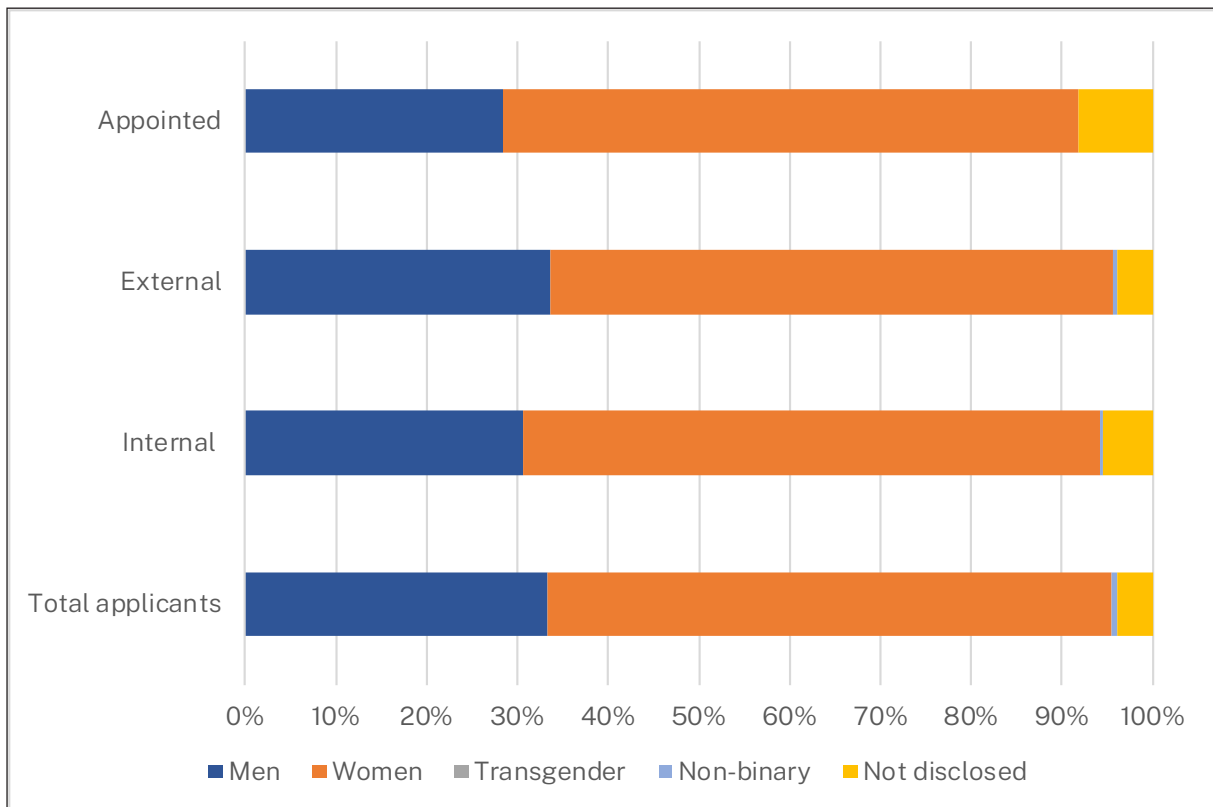
## 1. Developed our evidence base

We continue to routinely report on:

- a) the numbers of men and women, and proportion of men and women who apply for jobs and are appointed
- b) the numbers of men and women who apply externally compared to internally.

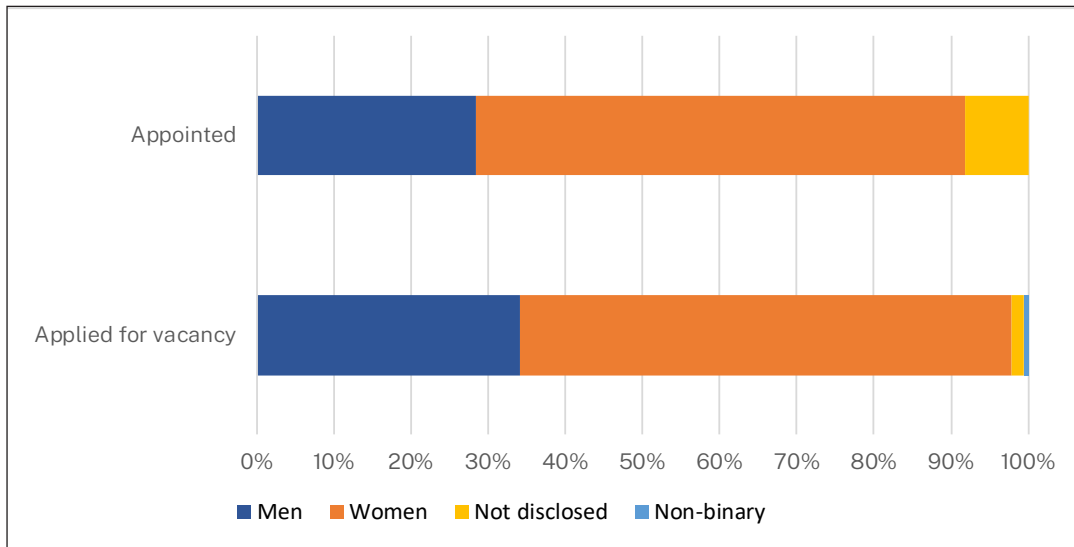
In 2023, 33% of our job applicants were men, but the proportion of appointments was 28% men and 63% women, broadly consistent with our overall workforce profile. The picture is similar for both internal and external job applicants.

**Figure 5**



We are also committed to measuring the internal movement of men and women who apply for posts and are successful (Figure 6). In 2023, 34% of employees who applied for vacancies were men. The proportion of those appointed who were men was 28%, consistent with our overall workforce profile.

**Figure 6**



We are committed to continuing to measure the following metrics:

**The proportion of women and men who return to work after maternity, paternity, adoption or shared parental leave to resume their original jobs**

In the 12 months following the April 2022 snapshot, 95% of our employees who have taken maternity, paternity, adoption or shared parental leave have returned to their original jobs.

**The proportion of women and men still in post a year after returning to work from maternity, paternity, adoption or shared parental leave**

In 2023, the data on those employees is as follows:

**Table 4**

Leave type	Number of employees	Still in post one year after return	Notes
Maternity	34	94%	Two leavers in 2023
Paternity	4	100%	All remained in their original roles
Adoption	0	-	No requests in the reporting period
Shared parental leave	0	-	No requests in the reporting period

**Separate gender pay gap figures for full-time and part-time employees**

Analysis of this year’s data shows very small gaps across all groups apart from the median for part-time employees.

**Table 5**

		Male salary (per hour)	Female salary (per hour)	Gender pay gap 2023	Sample size
<b>Mean</b>	<b>Full-time</b>	£29.41	£28.64	2.69%	<b>695</b> 223 men 472 women
	<b>Part-time</b>	£26.60	£27.53	-3.38%	<b>270</b> 34 men 236 women
<b>Median</b>	<b>Full-time</b>	£26.76	£26.21	2.10%	<b>695</b> 223 men 472 women
	<b>Part-time</b>	£21.88	£22.01	-0.59%	<b>270</b> 34 men 236 women

**The proportion of women who work part-time and flexibly compared to men, and at what level such arrangements are found**

The proportion of men and women who work part-time or flexibly is shown in Table 6.

**Table 6**

	Men	Women	All staff
<b>Part-time</b>	13%	33%	28%
<b>Working flexibly</b>	63%	76%	72%

Figure 7a

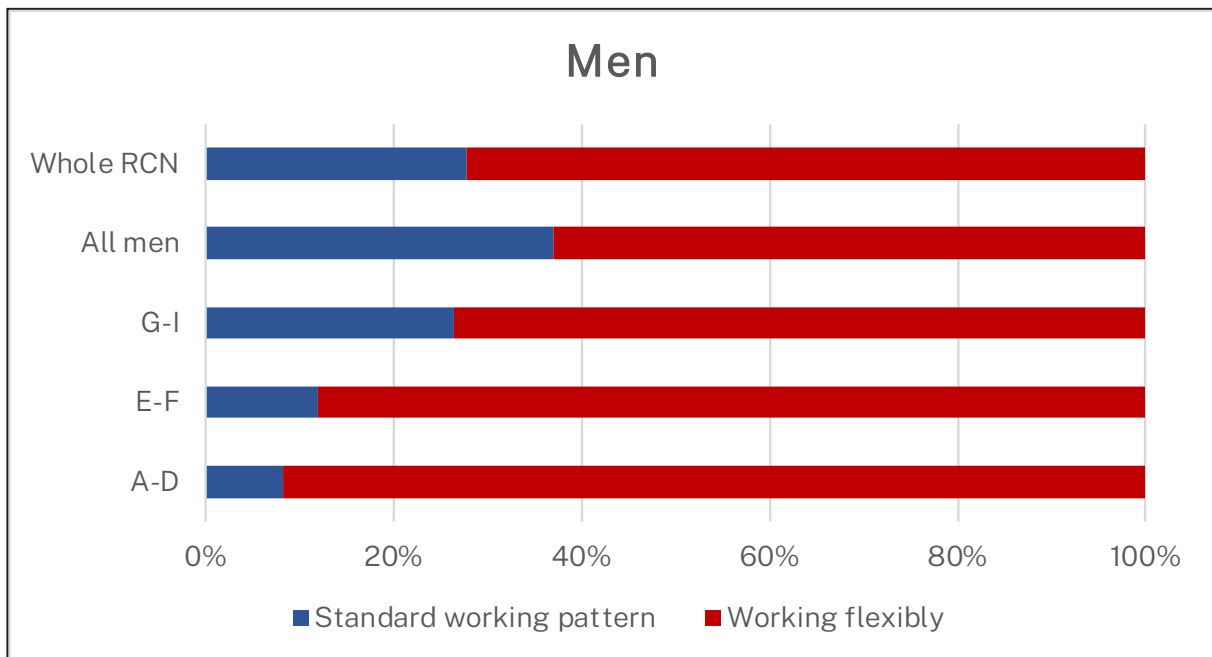
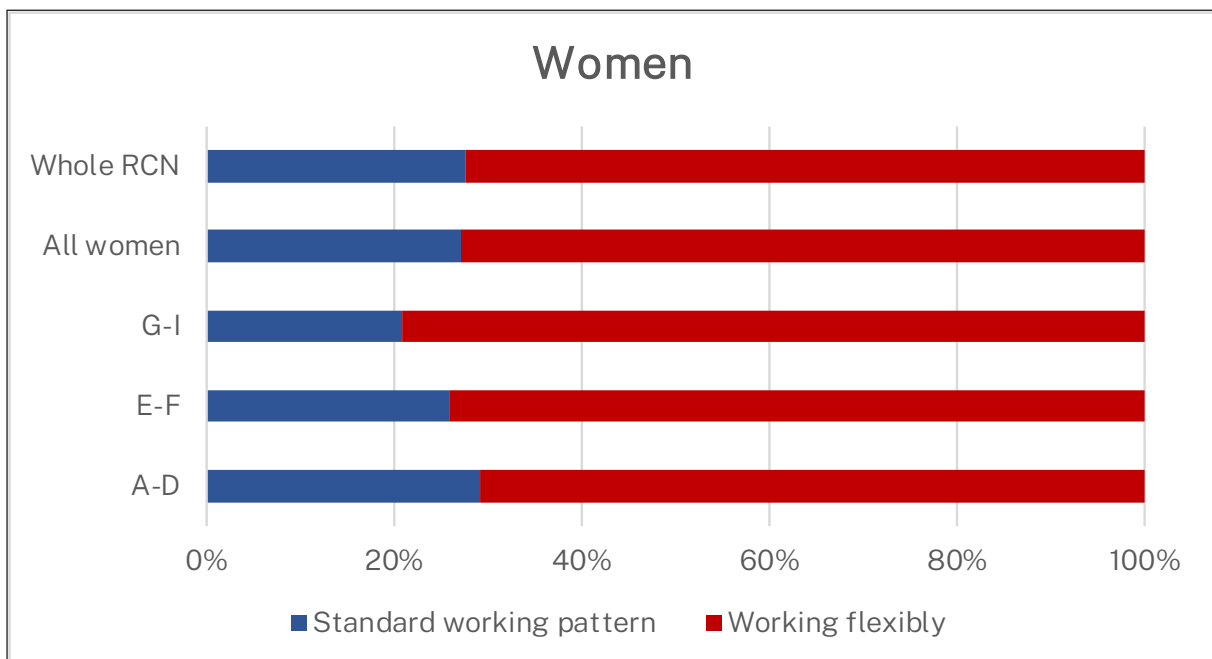


Figure 7b



Across the organisation the pattern of take-up of flexible working options is reasonably consistent for both men and women (Figures 7a and 7b). Almost all roles are advertised as flexible, although flexible working is generally less common at our more senior grades (A to D).

### **The number of successful flexible working requests by gender**

In 2023, 98% of men and 99% of women had their requests for flexible working accepted.

## **2. Ensured related policies and practices are up to date**

We operate a structured policy review schedule and work in close partnership with our recognised trade unions when reviewing our people policies and procedures.

We also consult our various staff networks (LGBTQ+, Race and Culture, Access and Inclusion, Women's network and Working Families) and involve our staff support groups (Cancer Support group, Staff who care for older people support group and the newly-formed Neurodivergent Staff Support group) when making policy changes.

We carry out comprehensive equality impact assessments on any changes or new policies to identify the impact and ensure, as far as we can, that no groups with protected characteristics are disproportionately affected.

We ensure that all policy changes are clearly and comprehensively communicated.

## **3. Trained and supported line managers**

We provide recruitment and selection training to ensure fair, non-discriminatory, consistent processes are followed. This includes undertaking an unconscious bias online learning module.

We also provide support to managers when policies change to ensure they are implemented fairly, consistently, and effectively.

And managers, like all staff, are required to regularly complete online learning in equality, diversity and inclusion. This offer is supplemented by workshops exploring the theme more broadly, as well as more targeted learning opportunities, for example, focusing on menopause, pregnancy and parenting at work.

## **4. Supported working families**

We go further than the legal family-friendly rights and actively encourage the use of these rights to all employees. We have equalised our occupational shared parental pay with our occupational maternity pay. We provide transitional support for those going on and returning from long-term family leave to help support a successful and sustained return to work.

We actively support our Working Families staff network and Staff who care for older people support group, and provide education to all staff around the challenges, and potential solutions, that working parents and carers face. Our Working Families staff network holds monthly meetings for members to come together to discuss their experiences and learn from one another. The network provides a safe space for them to discuss any worries and seek peer support, catering for family members whose children may have additional needs, for single parents and different stages of a child's life.

In February 2024, we launched a new provision for our staff – access to **Tommy's** midwives and resources. Designed to support our staff on the journey to becoming and in being a parent, we've also made an e-learning module available to everyone focused on pregnancy and parenting at work, which explores the pregnancy journey, pregnancy and fertility complications, baby loss, and the realities faced by new parents – including returning to work and breastfeeding at work.

## 5. Made the most of flexible working and supported hybrid working

We actively empower our people to do their best work, to be able to balance the demands of work and home. We are a diverse organisation and understand everyone has different needs and many of our employees (72% of them at the end of 2023) enjoy flexible working, enabling them to deliver results whilst having a good work-life balance.

Our policy on flexible working allows everyone to apply from day one of their employment, and doesn't limit how often a request can be made so that our people can ensure work works for them when life changes. Our job advertisements highlight our commitment to flexible and hybrid working, inviting applicants to speak to the recruiting manager to find out more.

Hybrid working is an important and highly valued part of our employee experience and employer value proposition. No one is expected to work solely in one of our offices unless the role requires it, with the vast majority of our staff working in a hybrid way.

## 6. Encouraged career and talent development

We hold learning and development events through webinars and/or locally across our offices to support our people with childcare and other caring arrangements to be able to take part.

Where possible, we avoid running long development events that can create problems for people with childcare and other caring responsibilities. We're also mindful of which days of the week to schedule in-person learning activities on to limit the need for our people to travel at the weekend.

We invite job-sharing proposals from employees and offer flexibility in job hours, working time and location as far as we can in all of our job roles.

Our job descriptions, person specifications and recruitment adverts are always gender neutral.

In 2023, our recruitment and selection process introduced anonymous shortlisting. Shortlisters now no longer see job applicants' names or other identifying information to reduce the impact of conscious or unconscious bias influencing a hiring manager's decision about whether to progress an application.

We use panel interviews and multiple assessments to support robust, objective, criteria-based decision-making. And we continue to enable most of our assessments and interviews to be online to help applicants balance taking part with other commitments, such as caring responsibilities.

Our recruitment and selection criteria includes a competency-based model that supports improved career development pathways for our people.

## 7. Minimised negative impact from pay systems

We operate one transparent pay system.

We undertake job evaluation to objectively assess the demands of each job, and our job evaluation criteria has been independently assessed to ensure there is no inherent discrimination in the factors against which we evaluate our roles.

We ensure that our people have clear channels to communicate any suggestions or concerns, including our anonymous staff surveys throughout the year (that we call 'pulse checks'), which include questions about reward.

For difficult-to-fill vacancies we provide a robust business case approach to requests for a starting salary above the bottom of the grade and the application of our recruitment premium.

We periodically review all aspects of pay to ensure that all parts of our organisation are operating fairly and consistently.

## **8. Supporting women in our workforce**

In March 2024, we introduced a menopause policy. Developed with staff and in consultation with representatives from our recognised trade unions, we're confident the policy will benefit many of our people in the months and years to come. The policy aims to support colleagues throughout their menopause transition and to educate, inform and raise awareness of the impact of menopause transition. Given the profile of our workforce, this was important for the RCN and is supplemented by learning opportunities for all staff and a bespoke session specifically for our line managers.

In partnership with the Women's network, regular menopause cafés have been set up since April 2023 to enable people to come together to discuss menopause in an accessible, respectful and confidential way.

Our Women's network continues to provide a space for colleagues to connect, share experiences and access peer support. The network is consulted on new and revised people policies and hosts regular organisation-wide events to raise awareness and educate others on relevant issues.

## **9. RCN Group Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Statement**

Our **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Statement** focuses on our ambition to be a world-class champion of equality, diversity, inclusion and human rights, and sets out how we aim to achieve this as an employer.



## 5. What more will we do?

We recognise our gender pay gap reduced slightly this year. However, given turnover and internal movement, it is inevitable that it will move again over time.

Whilst our gender pay gap is low compared to the national average, it's important that we do not become complacent. We need to make even greater progress in balancing the male/female workforce profile across our various grades.

To achieve this, we will continue to promote the availability of both hybrid and flexible working and we will closely monitor how the post-pandemic model of work impacts our people. We are exploring our paternity leave provision currently, recognising the opportunity we have to enhance this further.

We recognise that change takes time, and so we will allow more time for the measures taken in recent years to have greater effect.



The RCN represents nurses and nursing, promotes  
excellence in practice and shapes health policies

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