

ashfords

GENDER PAY GAP 2021



GENDER PAY GAP REPORTING

This report is given pursuant to The Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations 2017. We can confirm the accuracy of this information.

Gender pay gap reporting is always retrospective and we have previously reported our pay gap data as at 5 April 2017 and 5 April 2018. Due to the unprecedented circumstances surrounding the pandemic last year, we were not required to report our pay gap data as at 5 April 2019. This report contains our pay gap data as at 5 April 2020 but will also refer to our previously unpublished pay gap data as at 5 April 2019.

By law, the requirement is to publish data relating to employee pay and bonuses only and not to include our partners. However, we think it is vital that you are given the full picture and so, we continue to take the decision to present the figures with and without partners for complete transparency. The data shows the average difference in hourly earnings between all men and women within our firm. The mean is the average of all the data and the median is the mid-point of the data when the results are ordered by value.

COVID-19

This year we are required to provide our gender pay gap data based on a snapshot of our employee population as at 5 April 2020. As we began to make use of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme from 1 April 2020, furlough has impacted our publishable pay gap for 2020. By law, we can only include employees receiving full pay in our calculations, therefore 137 employees had to be excluded from our data set when, under normal circumstances, they would have been included.

With such a large proportion of our employees being removed, our publishable data does not accurately reflect our 2020 pay gap, therefore we have also conducted a data analysis including all furloughed employees in order to show our how our 2020 pay gap would look had the furlough scheme not been in operation. We will be including both our publishable pay gap data and our data including furloughed employees in this report but we have chosen to conduct our analysis based on the data which includes furloughed employees.

PAY GAP DATA

Having undertaken the gender pay review this year, our gender pay gap figures have disappointingly increased since the publication of our 2017 data. As you will see below, this is in part due to the way in which we are required to report the data but also serves to highlight the amount of work and the time it will take for these figures to improve. However, you will see from the report that despite the increase in our gender pay figures, there are significant indications that the overall changes we have implemented are having an impact and will improve our future figures.

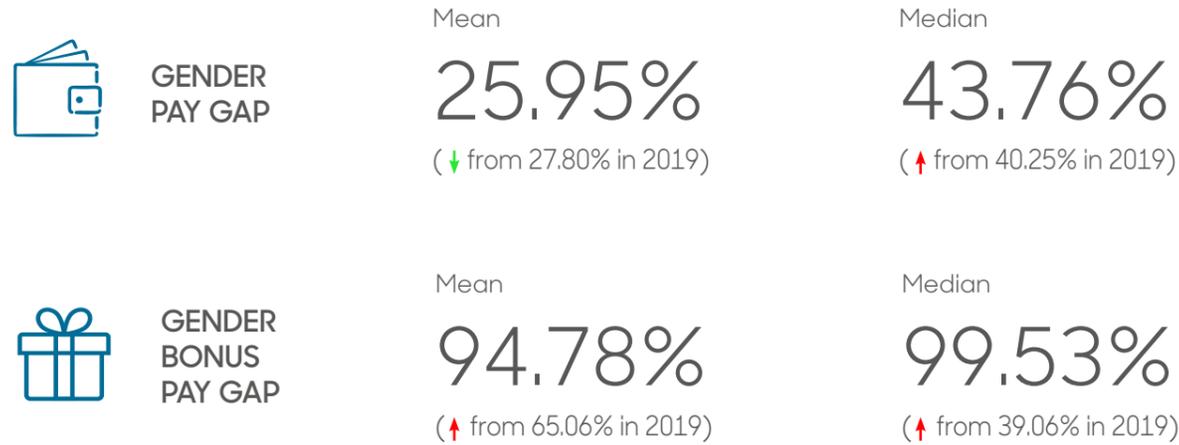
We have undertaken a detailed analysis for this report including employing an independent third party to carry out the analysis of our data. We are conscious and mindful of fair pay and in comparing pay levels across each group of partners and employees, there is no indication of any pay inequality between men and women in the same or equivalent roles.



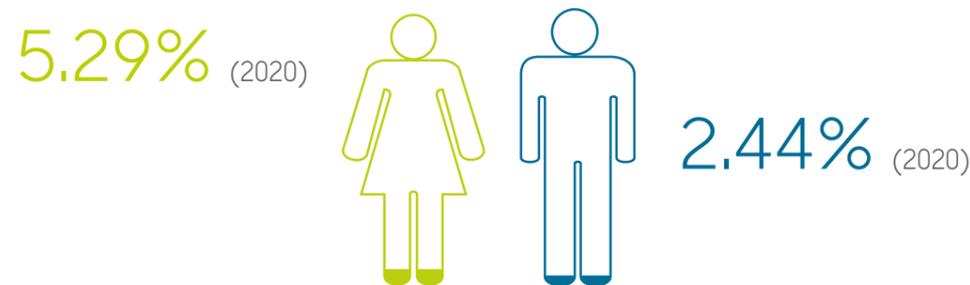
THE FIGURES IN CONTEXT

EMPLOYEE ONLY DATA

Our statutory key Gender Pay Gap reportable data (in other words, excluding partners) covering pay as of 5 April 2020, and bonuses paid in the year to 5 April 2020, is as follows:



PROPORTION OF FEMALES & MALES RECEIVING A BONUS PAYMENT



PROPORTION OF MALES AND FEMALES IN EACH PAY QUARTILE (INCLUDING FURLOUGHED EMPLOYEES)



ANALYSIS

It is important to note that we have a predominantly female workforce, with a population of 76% women and 24% men. This presents a challenge as, to completely eradicate our pay gap, these proportions would ultimately need to be mirrored across all of our pay quartiles.

In 2019, our upper middle pay quartile was contributing to our overall pay gap with a male to female proportion of 30.7% vs. 69.3%. In 2020, the male to female proportions in this quartile shifted to 22.8% vs. 77.2%. A notable increase in the number of women means that this quartile is no longer impacting the firm's pay gap, which has led to a decrease in our mean pay gap. This is a positive indication as it shows that female employees are beginning to have an increasing presence in the higher pay quartiles.

The main contributor to the 2020 pay gap, as in 2019, was our upper pay quartile, although the proportion of women in this quartile increased from 57.9% in 2019 to 59.4% in 2020. This indicates female progression to more senior levels in the business, which is beginning to reduce the contribution of this pay quartile towards our overall pay gap.

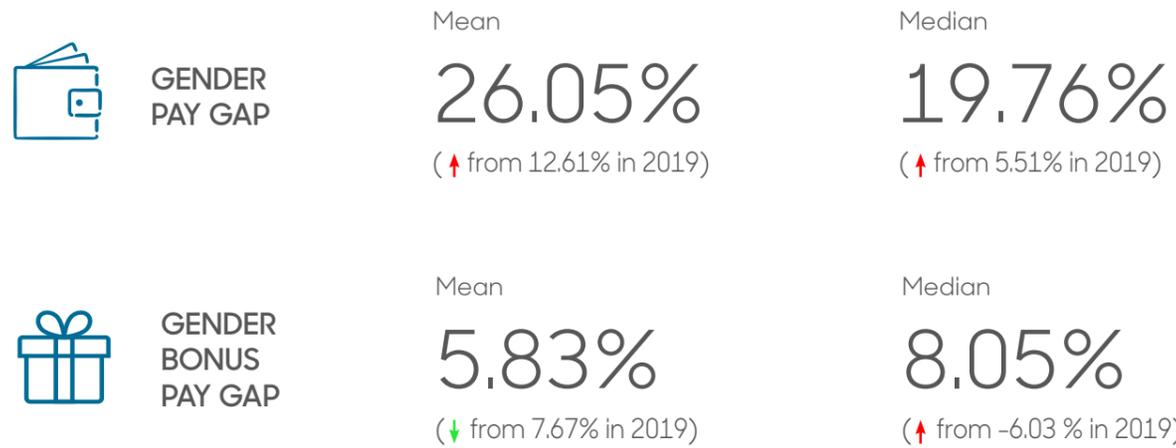
As part of our data analysis, we need to consider the extent to which employee turnover and promotions across the business influence our gender pay gap each year. As our pay gap is ultimately dictated by the numbers of men and women in each of our pay quartiles, employee movements have the ability to both reduce and increase our pay gap. In 2020, employee turnover and promotions led to a small shift in favour of female representation in our upper pay quartiles, helping to reduce our mean pay gap.

Our median pay gap saw a very small increase in 2020 compared to 2019. Whilst the median hourly rate for women increased in 2020, the median hourly rate for men in 2020 saw a similar increase, which widened the gap in median pay from 40.25% to 41.87%. With a smaller male population overall, male turnover and promotions have a greater impact on the median male hourly rate of pay than similar movements within the female population.

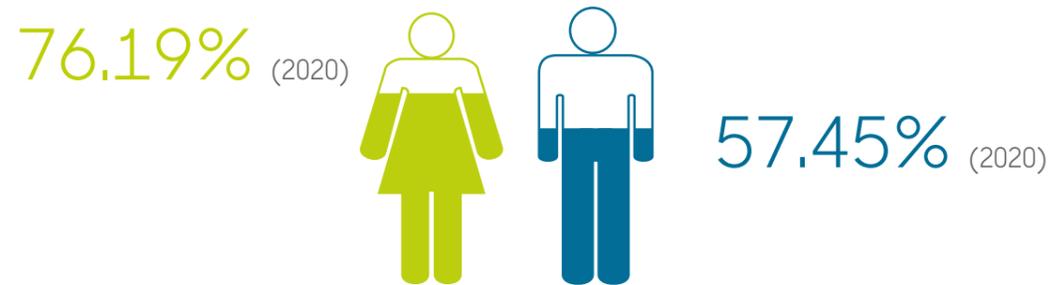
MEDIAN POINT FOR MEN AND WOMEN IN RELATION TO QUARTILES



PARTNER ONLY DATA



PROPORTION OF FEMALES & MALES RECEIVING A BONUS PAYMENT



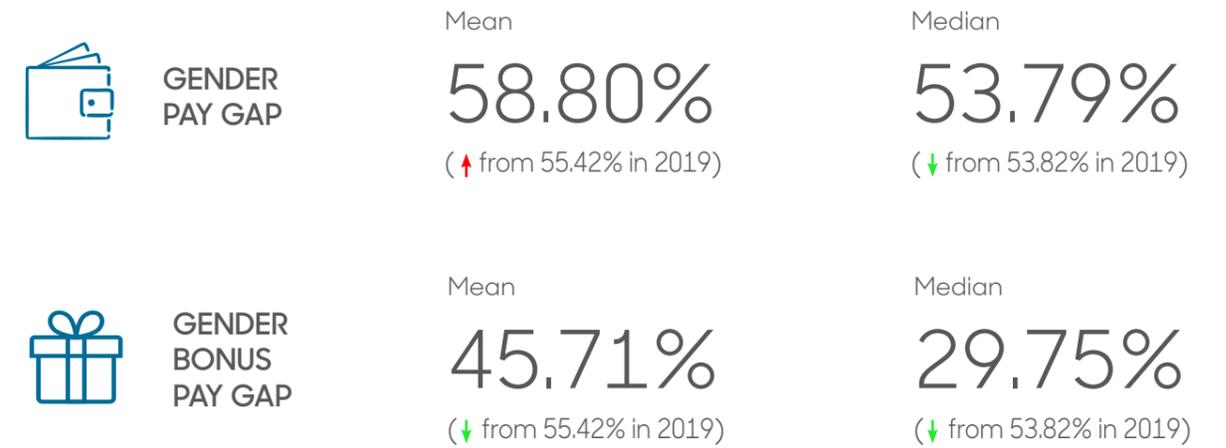
PROPORTION OF MALES AND FEMALES IN EACH PAY QUARTILE



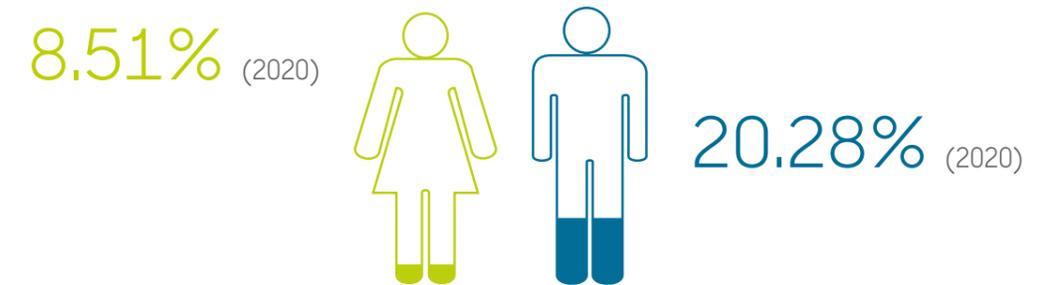
ANALYSIS

The Partner pay gap saw an increase in 2020 compared to 2019. This can be attributed to natural turnover within the Partnership meaning we had fewer women overall in the upper quartile of Partner drawings compared to men. Whilst we also saw positive signs of female promotions into the Partnership, they entered the lower quartile of Partner drawings. This had an adverse effect on the Partner pay gap data as it has reduced the average hourly rate of pay for female Partners.

COMBINED PARTNER & EMPLOYEE DATA (INCLUDING FURLOUGHED EMPLOYEES)



PROPORTION OF FEMALES & MALES RECEIVING A BONUS PAYMENT



PROPORTION OF MALES AND FEMALES IN EACH PAY QUARTILE (INCLUDING FURLOUGHED EMPLOYEES)



ANALYSIS

When combining employee and Partner data, we have used the employee data set which includes furloughed employees to provide a more accurate picture of our pay gap as at 5 April 2020. Whilst we are seeing positive signs of change across the business, overall progress in mirroring our workforce split across all pay quartiles remains slow.

OUR COMMITMENT

Our aim is to ensure that everyone at Ashfords understands that they have an equal opportunity to succeed at work and progress within the firm, recognising that everyone is different and taking account of individual circumstances.

Whilst recognising that initiatives to address the gender pay gap are not about quick wins but longer term strategic and cultural change, we are continuing to take a number of actions to positively contribute to desired change.

These have included:

- Promoting the framework that supports our more flexible Ways of Working approach, recognising and understanding the relationship between flexible working and productivity, and ensuring consistency of approach.
- Ensuring that we weave the importance of being inclusive (and avoiding unconscious bias) into all our development programmes, including recent Management Development training for all Partners, Senior Lawyers and Business Support Managers.
- Providing good career support through conference day events for all Career Levels, development centres for recently promoted individuals, access to coaching where appropriate, regular one-to-ones and performance review discussions.
- Continuing to open up alternative routes into law through apprenticeships and study support towards professional qualifications, most recently launching our Solicitor Apprenticeship route.
- Continuing to use the Rare Contextual Recruitment System in our trainee recruitment process to support us in making informed decisions about applications from people with different backgrounds.
- Continuing as a signatory to the Law Society's Charter for Diversity & Inclusion.

Over the coming months we will be:

- Encouraging the development of mentoring networks within the business, giving people access to recognised role models.
- Developing our wellbeing strategy to impact on the broadest range of people across the business, taking their physical, mental, emotional and financial needs into account.
- Improving our support to parents and those with caring responsibilities by introducing a series of parenting workshops and providing better and more consistent support to people returning from maternity, shared parental or other leave.
- Building a network of contacts at local schools and colleges to improve social mobility at the junior recruitment level and to actively promote and encourage the broad range of entry level roles and career opportunities we can offer to both men and women.
- Continuing our involvement with relevant professional female networking groups and establishing a broader range of networks for other under-represented groups.

ONGOING INITIATIVES



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