**Women work for free for two months a year, says TUC analysis**

Women work an average of 63 unpaid days because of the gender pay gap, according to figures

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[Women](https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/women) work for free for two months a year as a result of the gender pay gap, according to analysis by the TUC. The trade union federation marked Wednesday as the first day of the year that the average woman effectively begins to get paid.

“Our economy is stacked against working women. At this rate, it will take another 50 years to close the gender pay gap,” said the [TUC](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/tuc) general secretary, Frances O’Grady. “No more excuses: the government must get on and sort the gender pay gap now.”

Women work an average of 63 unpaid days as a result of the gender pay gap, which stands at 17.3% for all employees, but women in a range of sectors will have to wait significantly longer for their “women’s pay day”, according to the TUC analysis of the Office for National Statistics’ annual survey for hours and earnings.

While education roles are dominated by women, with [three-quarters](https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/workforce-and-business/workforce-diversity/school-teacher-workforce/latest" \l "main-facts-and-figures) of teachers female, the gender pay gap in that sector is 25.4%. The average woman in education works for free for more than a quarter of the year (93 days) before she starts getting paid on on Thursday 2 April, according to the TUC.

In professional, scientific and technical jobs, the average woman waits 88 days with her women’s pay day coming on 28 March 2020.

The widest gender pay gap is in finance and insurance. Female employees wait for more than a third of the year before pay kicks in on 3 May 2020.

The analysis also showed significant regional gender pay differences, linked to the concentration of industries in different regions.

The largest gender pay gap is in the south-east, where a 20.5% gap will result in women only being paid from 15 March onwards. The smallest gender pay gap was found in Northern Ireland (10.1%), Scotland (14.3%) and Wales (14.5%). The north-west had the smallest gender pay gap among English regions.

Companies with more than 250 employees have been forced to publish their [gender pay gap](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2019/feb/28/what-is-gender-pay-gap-reporting-and-what-does-it-mean) since changes to the Equality Act came into force on 6 April 2017. Previous filings have revealed that almost eight out of 10 British companies pay men more than women.

According to figures submitted by thousands of businesses and public bodies in 2019 there was negligible progress on closing the pay gap between 2017 and 2018, with the average gap among those obliged to take part narrowing 0.1 percentage point to 9.6%.

Critics have also warned that inaccurate figures and a lack of sanctions risk making a mockery of the gender pay gap reporting system. Guardian analysis of submissions revealed that mathematically impossible [gender pay gap data](https://www.theguardian.com/money/2018/apr/04/gender-pay-gap-figures-reveal-eight-in-10-uk-firms-pay-men-more) filed by companies in 2018 had remained uncorrected while the [Equality and Human Rights Commission](https://www.theguardian.com/society/equality-and-human-rights-commission-ehrc) admitted that no companies had been fined for failing to comply with legislation.

The TUC has argued that the government should force companies to carry out equal pay audits, produce action plans to close the pay gap in their workplace, and fine companies that fail to comply with the law instantly.

“Just publishing gender pay gaps isn’t enough. Companies must be required to explain what steps they’ll take to close their gender pay gaps – and bosses who don’t comply with the law should be fined,” said O’Grady.

She said employers should do more to help women balance family responsibilities and work and called for flexible working to be a right for everyone at work from day one.

Ahead of the TUC’s annual women’s conference in London, which begins today, she added: “Every year unions help thousands of women get the pay they deserve. And workplaces that recognise unions are more likely to have family-friendly policies and fair pay. That’s why every woman should be in a union.”

A Government Equalities Office spokesperson said: “We want to see everyone given the same opportunities at work. This means we want to see employers encouraging shared parental leave, flexible working and other measures which put people in the best place to succeed.”