



Gender Pay Gap Report 2024

Snapshot Date: 5th April 2024

Our Values



INNOVATION



PARTNERSHIP



EXCELLENCE



INTEGRITY

Forward

At Meridian Business Support (Meridian) we believe that everyone, whatever their role, makes a valuable contribution towards the success of our business. In turn we ensure that everyone is rewarded fairly for the work that they do and has access to the same opportunities to develop and grow. We believe in being an inclusive and diverse organisation where anyone can reach their full potential.

What is the Gender Pay Gap?

The gender pay gap measures the difference in average hourly pay between men and women across all levels of seniority in a company and is expressed as a percentage of men's pay. A positive percentage means that the average hourly pay for men is higher than that of females, whilst a negative percentage indicates that the average hourly pay for females is higher. It does not measure equal pay, which refers to how much a man or a woman is paid for doing the same or similar role.

Our Results

For the purpose of the Gender Pay Gap Regulations, we are required to report on Meridian Business Support Ltd. The results below include Meridian's permanent employees and its temporary workers who were engaged on either a Contract for Services or Employment Contract, on the snapshot date of 5th April 2024.

On the snapshot date, Meridian employed 165 permanent employees, of whom 58 were males and 107 were females. All permanent employees are paid on a monthly basis and most are eligible to participate in a relevant profit share scheme.

On the same date, 1,522 temporary workers were engaged on either a Contract for Services or an Employment Contract. Of these, 1,027 were males and 495 were females. Temporary workers are paid on a weekly basis and whilst it is the end user client who dictates the rates of pay, Meridian along with its clients, ensures that temporary workers are paid the same hourly rate irrespective of gender.

When looking at the combined total number of employees and temporary workers, males account for 64.5% of the workforce whilst females account for 35.5%. The results show that the mean gender pay gap has fallen to -2.2% which means the gap between the hourly rates for males and females has decreased and the average hourly rate of pay for females is higher than males. The median gender pay gap, which shows the difference between the mid point salaries for males and females, has also fallen to -0.5% so again the mid point salaries for females is higher than males. When compared with the ONS figures for the mean gender pay gap in 2024 which stand at 13.1%, and at 7% for the median gender pay gap, Meridian's overall results for both employees and temporary workers are lower.

This report analyses both the combined results for Meridian as a whole, including its temporary workers as well as the results for Meridian's permanent employees. This is because the results vary when looked at individually.

2023 & 2024 Gender Pay Gap Results

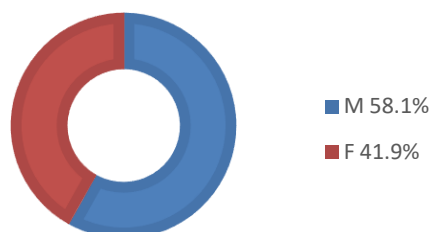
	Employees		Temps		Combined	
	2023	2024	2023	2024	2023	2024
% Male	37.4%	35.2%	60.7%	67.5 %	59.2%	64.5%
% Female	62.6%	64.8%	39.3%	32.5%	40.8%	35.5%
Mean Gender Pay Gap	16.4%	24.2%	8.8%	0.2%	6.6%	-2.2%
Median Gender Pay Gap	15.8%	20.1%	5%	0.9%	3.4%	-0.5%
Mean Gender Bonus Gap	38.6%	57.6%	n/a	n/a		
Median Gender Bonus Gap	36.5%	64.2%	n/a	n/a		
% males receiving bonus	81.4%	79.3%	n/a	n/a		
% females receiving bonus	85.5%	84.1%	n/a	n/a		

Population by Pay Quartiles

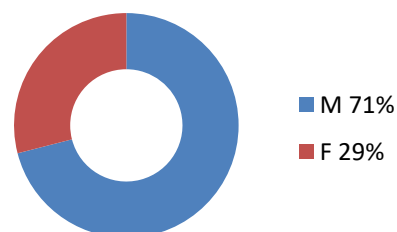
Combined results

These quartiles detail the pay rates from the highest to the lowest for all permanent employees and temporary workers, split into four equal sized groups and with the percentage of males and females in each group.

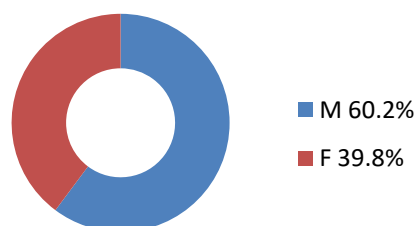
Upper Quartile



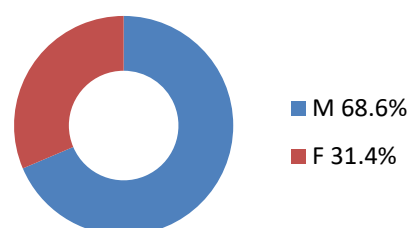
Upper Middle Quartile



Lower Middle Quartile



Lower Quartile



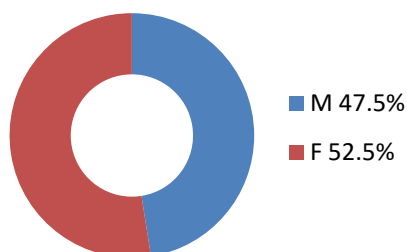
When analysing the combined results, out of a total of 1,687 employees and workers who fall under the scope of the Gender Pay Gap Reporting, 9.5% of this population are permanent Meridian employees.

When looking at the results for Meridian permanent employees on their own, the results are significantly different to those of the combined results. In light of this, the rest of the report will focus on the results for permanent employees as this is believed to be more meaningful for Meridian.

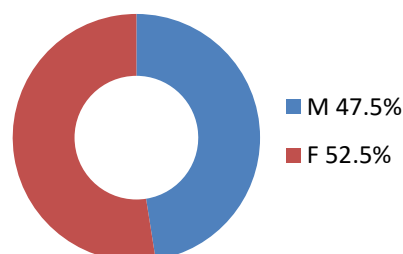
Population by Pay Quartiles Permanent employees

These quartiles detail the pay rates from the highest to the lowest for all permanent employees, again split into four equal sized groups and with the percentage of males and females in each group. Out of the total population of 165 employees, 64.8% are female.

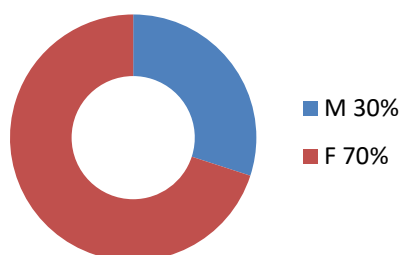
Upper Quartile



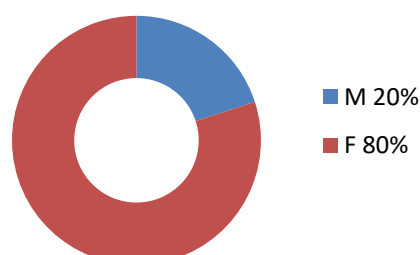
Upper Middle Quartile



Lower Middle Quartile



Lower Quartile



	2024		2023	
	M	F	M	F
Upper Quartile	47.5%	52.5%	46.8%	53.2%
Upper Middle Quartile	47.5%	52.5%	32.6%	67.4%
Lower Middle Quartile	30%	70%	34%	66%
Lower Quartile	20%	80%	36.2%	63.8%

The proportion of females in the upper quartile has marginally decreased by 1.3% since 2023, and when looking at the upper middle quartile, there has been a more significant decrease of 14.9% in females in comparison to 2023. However, despite the decrease there remains a higher proportion of females than males in both upper quartiles.

When looking at the results for the lower middle and lower quartiles, the proportion of females in both quartiles has increased. In 2023, females accounted for roughly two thirds in each quartile which reflected the overall ratio of female to male employees. The fact there are now more females in both the lower quartiles illustrates that there are more females employed in junior positions than males.

The majority of the most senior roles in the business are held by males which includes the CEO and 6 Operational Directors however females are well represented in other senior roles. The ratio of males to females on Meridian’s Board is 2:1 and on the Senior Leadership Team it is 1:3.

In other management roles, 44.8% of males are manager level or above, whilst 32.4% of females are manager level or above. When looking actual numbers rather than percentages, Meridian employs more female managers than male managers, however as Meridian employs 64.8% females, the percentage is lower. Given that a higher percentage of male employees are in management positions, this is reflected in the quartiles and will also explain in part why the mean and median pay gap has increased despite the pay for equivalent roles being the same irrespective of gender.

In conjunction with this, there is a higher percentage of females in more junior roles across the Company. When looking at the junior operational roles, 29 out of 37 of these are held by females, which in percentage terms is 78.4%. This closely mirrors the proportion of females in the lower middle and lower quartile which stands at 75%.

Meridian offers flexible working which enables our employees to achieve the right balance between work and family life; this flexibility is mainly requested by females. 29 of our people work part time, 18.1% of the working population, with 28 of these being female (27.5% of the female population). Whilst 6 of our part time female employees are in management positions, 12 are in admin or support roles which typically attract a lower hourly rate of pay than operational fee earners or management roles.

Comparison of 2023 & 2024 Results for Permanent Employees

	2024	2023
% Male	35.2%	37.4%
% Female	64.8%	62.6%
Mean Gender Pay Gap	24.2%	16.4%
Median Gender Pay Gap	20%	5.6%
Mean Gender Bonus Gap	57.6%	38.6%
Median Gender Bonus Gap	64.2%	36.6%
% males receiving bonus	79.3%	81.4%
% females receiving bonus	84.11%	85.5%

Hourly Rate of Pay

The mean gender pay gap for permanent employees is 24.2% which is above the national average of 13.1% as stated by the Office National Statistics (ONS) 2023 figures. Like many other UK companies, we recognise that this percentage is largely attributable to the fact that we have more females in administration and support type roles which typically have

a lower rate of hourly pay. In addition, almost two thirds of Meridian's employees are female so the spread of salaries from the most senior roles to the most junior is greater.

We have seen that the proportion of females has decreased in the upper and upper middle quartiles, however despite the decrease, there are still more females than males in both quartiles. Conversely, the proportion of females in both the lower middle and lower quartiles have increased reflecting the increase of both the mean and median gender pay gaps.

During the course of the reporting period, eight of our people were promoted, five of whom were female. Three of these promotions were at Manager level, two of whom were male. Decisions to promote and recruit are always based on skills and ability, irrespective of gender.

Due to Company performance over the period, promotion opportunities were lower than they have been in previous years which will have impacted the upward mobility of some of our people. Also during the period, there were limited actual pay increases however for Operational employees, the full time working week was reduced from 42 hours to 40 hours which meant that effectively the hourly rate of pay increased. However, this did not apply to employees working within Support Services who already work less than 40 hours per week and who account for 24.4% of employees, 74.4% (29) of whom are female, and therefore their hourly rate of pay did not change. This will have had some impact on the increasing mean and median gender pay gap.

In addition, the Gender Pay Regulations require any salary sacrifice payments are deducted from the hourly pay calculation. Meridian operates a Holiday Purchase scheme whereby people can opt to buy additional days leave at the equivalent of one day's pay. These payments are then deducted from gross pay over a 12 month period. In April 2024, 26 employees had opted into the scheme, 24 of whom were female. In line with the regulations, the amount paid for participation in the scheme reduces the hourly rate of pay which will have had more of an impact on the female mean and median hourly rate of pay than it did for males.

Bonus Pay

All our people make a valuable contribution to our business and it is important to us that everyone is rewarded fairly for their performance. For those in client facing operational roles, there are standard profit share schemes for each job type which everyone in that job type participates in, irrespective of gender. The quantum of the bonus earned is dependent upon individual or team performance.

For support roles, profit share is calculated on the overall performance of the business or relevant team, not on individual performance and is applied to every support role regardless of gender.

During the reporting period the proportion of males receiving profit share fell by 2.1% to 79.3% and for females, the proportion receiving bonus decreased by 1.4% to 84.1%. The explanation for why some people did not receive a bonus will be due to not meeting the criteria of their respective scheme to receive a payment. In addition, new starters are required to pass their probation (usually 6 months) before being eligible to participate in a profit share scheme. When you look at the people who were employed on the snapshot date, 26 were new starters and therefore not eligible to take part in a scheme.

There have been notable changes to the bonus pay gap in 2024. Firstly, the mean bonus pay gap has increased 19% to 57.6% and the median bonus pay gap has increased by 27.6% to 64.2% suggesting that males are receiving higher bonus payments than females.

Of the total amount of profit share paid during 2023/2024, 43.9% was paid to female employees who account for 63.8% of employees.

In 2023/2024 Company performance was not as strong as it has been in previous years which had a direct impact on the amount of profit share paid. To give some context to this, the amount of profit share paid in 2023/2024 was 37.2% less than during 2022/2023. For people who were on profit share schemes related to company or team performance rather than personal performance, these schemes saw their payments reduce which in turn may have impacted the increase in both the mean and median bonus gap. For example, members of Support Services account for 24.4% of employees, 74.4% of whom are female, and receive profit share in relation to Company performance. Participants in this scheme received lower profit share payments in 2023/2024 which will have impacted significantly more females than males.

In addition, many operational admin and support roles are on schemes which are based upon team performance will have paid out less. This will have impacted significantly more females than males as they are more likely to be on such a scheme due to the type of role that they do, as will the fact that 96.5% of our part time employees are female and will therefore receive a pro rata profit share payment which will be less than their full time counterparts.

Commitment to Bridging the Gender Pay Gap

At Meridian we recognise that being an inclusive and diverse employer is not just the right thing to do, it is also good for our business. We are committed to attracting and retaining the best talent, regardless of gender, so we can continue to provide an excellent service to our clients. Meridian is somewhere where people can fulfil their potential regardless of their gender, education or background.

This ethos is reflected in our track record of supporting our females return to work following periods of maternity leave. Over the reporting period, three of our people took maternity leave, all of whom returned to their roles after their maternity leave ended. The ability to successfully apply for flexible working upon their return allowed them to return work whilst balancing their needs as working mums.

Meridian offers a greater range of flexible working options, particularly with regards to working location. Enhancements to our Flexible Working Policy to incorporate remote working on a permanent basis has allowed us to continue to offer the benefits of this to many of our employees. This style of working is particularly helpful to people with caring responsibilities, a significant proportion of whom tend to be female. We have already seen the positive impact of this in retaining and developing our talent and we will continue to offer this going forward.

In September 2023, Meridian launched its first ever Menopause Support Policy in conjunction with running a number of workshops designed to increase awareness and understanding, and for line managers, to offer guidance on how to support members of their team who may be going through the menopause transition. The workshops for line managers were mandatory. During the period Meridian also introduced its first Menopause Champion who offers confidential support and guidance to all employees. Not only is this the right thing to do as a good employer, but from a business perspective, 34% of our employees are females aged 40 or over so it is imperative that there is support in place to prevent the loss of highly experienced talent. Statistics show that a significant proportion of women experiencing peri menopause or menopause consider leaving their jobs due to their symptoms and we do not want this to be the case for any of our employees.

Meridian offers a wide range of training from online courses, day long courses to longer term development programmes all of which allow our people develop themselves by acquiring new knowledge and skills improving their performance and progression opportunities. The Meridian Recruitment Consultant Development Programme, which leads to both an NVQ Level 3 and CertRP qualification, offers all Operational employees the opportunity to develop recruitment sector specific skills to support their progression.

In addition, the Meridian Management Development Programme is available for aspiring and existing managers, both in Operations and in Support Services, to develop their management skill set.

Both programmes have a positive impact in the development of our people and have led to progression opportunities for both female and male employees. As such we will continue to invest in these and other similar programmes.

We will also continue to invest in external training such AAT, CIPD, Prince Two and Six Sigma. These programmes are open to everyone irrespective gender where it will support them in their role and aid their career progression.

Meridian will continue to support the strategic objective to promote from within wherever possible to retain our talent within the business. There have been fewer opportunities during the reporting period however once Company performance improves, there should be an increase in opportunities which can be offered to our people. In the same vein, the Company will continue to explore internal secondment opportunities where possible to give more of our people valuable development opportunities.

When opportunities arise, the advent of remote working has improved flexibility enabling our employees to take up secondment opportunities or permanent moves more easily as location is no longer a barrier in many cases. This has a positive impact on talent retention and development as well as allowing the business to utilise talent more effectively.

Over the next twelve months we will continue to develop the areas above and will also focus on the development of progressive employment practises to promote further diversity across our business.

Finally, we will undertake an analysis of the data sitting behind the gender pay gap calculations in order to try and better understand, and thereby reduce, our gender pay gap further.

I can confirm that this report has been written in line with the Gender Pay Gap legislation and the figures contained within it are correct.

Jeanette Barrowcliffe
Finance Director