

Gender pay gap report

April 2021





About Sovereign

Sovereign is one of the largest housing associations in the country and we've been providing homes and services for over 30 years. With more than 140,000 customers across the south of England, our focus is on providing our customers good affordable homes in thriving and sustainable communities.

To deliver the customer experience we believe all our customers deserve, we employ around 2,000 people with a wide range of skills and experience.

As we've grown and changed, we've never forgotten that we're a social business and remain committed to this fundamental purpose. Customers will always come first at Sovereign, and we're re-thinking how we meet their ever-changing and growing expectations.

We're committed to having a workforce that's diverse, gender balanced and fairly paid, which reflects the communities in which we work. We know this will enhance our business and make us more effective.

As we've grown and changed, we've never forgotten that we're a social business and we remain committed to this fundamental purpose.



Why we have a gender pay gap?

Our small gender pay gap is due to the distribution of men and women in our workforce and we continue to have more women in the lower pay quartile and in part-time roles - which again tend to be in the lower pay quartile.

What do the figures mean?

The gender pay gap is the difference between the average pay of men and women – it isn't the same as equal pay, which deals with pay differences between men and women who do the same or similar jobs.

The median pay gap is the difference between the midpoints in the ranges of hourly earnings of men and women across our organisation. The mean gender pay gap is the difference between the average hourly earnings of the men and women who work for us.

Our gender pay gap

The difference in pay between men and women.

Year to	Mean (average)	Median (middle)
5 April 2021	5.0%	3.5%
5 April 2020	1.7%	0.6%
5 April 2019	4.0%	1.8%
National gender pay gap (ONS figures)	14.9%	15.4%

In April 2021, our mean gender pay gap was 5.0% and the median gap 3.5%. These results continue to be significantly better than the average of 14.9%, a figure produced by the Office of National Statistics (ONS).

The increase compared to our figures last year is due in part to recruitment at our senior leadership level where we recruited more men which has had an impact on the average hourly rate for men. At Executive level there is an even gender balance and we also saw an increase in women in our lower and lower middle quartiles and in our Trades compared to the previous year.

Our gender bonus pay gap

A negative percentage figure means that women have a higher bonus than men.

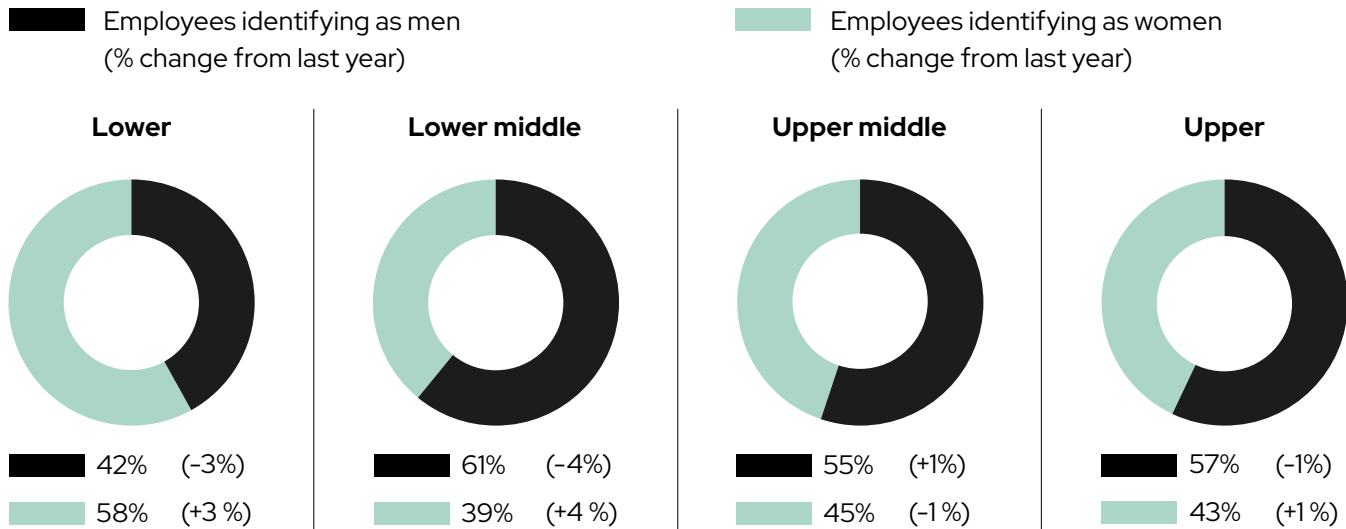
Year to	Mean (average)	Median (middle)
5 April 2021	-23.4%	0%
5 April 2020	-40.6%	0%
5 April 2019	-4.3%	0%

Our gender pay gap on bonuses continues to see a significant gap in favour of women. As last year, this is mainly due to a higher number of women in our contact centre receiving retention bonuses related to the move to our new head office in Basingstoke.

Due to the move, we asked our employees to make a significant change to their main place of work and awarded retention bonuses to those who chose to remain with us. This has resulted in a 23.4% mean bonus gap in favour of women.

The median, which is still 0%, reflects the fact that most of our employees received a £100 recognition award as a thank you for their contribution during the pandemic. In the year ending 5 April 2021, 68% of men and 80% of women received a bonus.

Proportion of men and women in each pay quartile* as at 5 April 2021



What we are doing about our gender pay gap

Although our gender pay gap is small, we are not complacent. As part of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and three-year action plan, we've been committed to fairness and reducing our gender pay gap.

In the past year we've made good progress including:

- Setting ourselves targets to achieve a gender balance and increased Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic representation in our senior leadership population.
- Working with other housing associations to develop and implement a Future Leaders Programme to support mid-level managers from ethnic minority backgrounds to progress their careers into senior roles. Our three female applicants all secured a place on the 9-month programme which includes masterclasses, mentoring and possible secondments to other participating organisations.

- Continuing to work with Women into Construction to make sure that roles in our trade's teams are promoted to women and that our leaders and employees receive the training they need to match our commitment to an equal and diverse workforce.
- Establishing a new employee Gender Network, a group set up to empower employees at Sovereign by promoting, supporting, and celebrating gender equality and changing attitudes.
- Continuing to advertise all roles at Sovereign as supportive of flexible working; and remaining committed to offering our people flexible ways of working as widely as possible.
- Continuing to promote our mentoring scheme widely across the business and improving transparency in our promotion, pay and reward processes.

We know there is still more to do, and we'll continue to focus on improvement through our EDI action plans.

Sovereign has set up an Employee Gender Network Group to empower employees to support, promote and celebrate gender equality.



*A quartile is when an organisation is split into four equally sized 'chunks', with employees placed in a section based on their hourly earnings, including bonuses.

Women in trades

Continuing to grow the number of women in our trades teams remains a priority and we're actively recruiting so that we have more women in roles like carpenters, gas engineers, plumbers, and electricians.

This drive is important in improving diversity and reducing our gender pay gap, but we also want to contribute to increasing awareness of careers in construction for women everywhere. One route into a career in a trade role is through our apprenticeship programme. Here's Kaylee's story



Kaylee: plumbing apprentice

"Sovereign is really striving to bring more women into trades roles. I first had the thought that I might want to work in trades when I was about 16, but I was put off by the fact that the courses didn't even seem to recognise that girls might want to take part. I didn't know any women in trades, so I started studying a qualification in Public and Emergency Services with a view to joining the police.

But it kept niggling at me that I wanted a job where I would see results – to be able to fix something or fit something and know "I did that". My dad works as a kitchen-fitter for Sovereign and eventually he suggested that I might want to have a chat with some of the trades teams.

I talked to some of the female members of the team and decided I could do it.

I've felt very welcome at Sovereign – they want everyone to have a go and I think the size of the organisation absorbs any awkwardness. I've had nothing but positives both from residents and colleagues.

I can now confidently fit a bathroom myself along with other plumbing tasks, I'm two years into my four-year apprenticeship and I am very happy with where I am.

I look forward to the day I can officially say that I am a fully qualified plumber!"

Future Leaders Programme

Sovereign is one of the founders of the Future Leaders Programme which is cultivating leaders in housing.

It's designed specifically for individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds, because evidence shows only a small proportion of these managers move into director roles.

We want to create leaders that reflect the communities they serve. By nurturing diversity of thought, lived experience and professional acumen, Sovereign believes the sector will be more resilient, adaptable, innovative, and better able to tackle future challenges.

The Programme is a springboard for three women in our organisation to build their careers and take up more senior roles, which in turn will have a positive impact in closing the gender pay gap.

Housing Services Manager, Claudette Mhuri is one of the three female managers from Sovereign on the programme.



"I'm proud that Sovereign has recognised there's a disparity and is taking positive action by investing in this programme and in its future leaders. It's helping me in so many ways – providing the opportunity for me to truly reflect on who I am as a person, as a manager and what I will be like as a leader. It's enabling me to think differently about my skills and capabilities and to challenge some of the limiting thoughts I may have had about where I can go in my career.

It's come at a great time for me as having developed my career at Sovereign over the past eight years, I'm ready to make that next step. I feel more confident and have benefitted from being mentored by some inspiring female leaders because of this programme."

Claudette Mhuri
Housing Services Manager



“It’s a privilege for me to mentor women both inside and outside Sovereign. I’m passionate about offering the support, challenge and encouragement that can provide the catalyst for someone to excel in their career. Closing the gap on gender pay means being relentless in our efforts to support women and mentoring is an effective approach that we’ll continue to prioritise.”

Sally Hyndman
Chief People and Transformation Officer

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The information contained within this Gender Pay Gap report is true and accurate and meets the requirements of The Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations 2017.



Sally Hyndman
Chief People and Transformation Officer