

**GMB**

LONDON  
REGION

GMBLONDON.ORG.UK // @GMBLONDON

# Inequality at the Heart of British Democracy:

Pay Progression and Inequality in Parliament





**AND STILL FIGHT**

# Contents

|    |                                |
|----|--------------------------------|
| 2  | Foreword                       |
| 4  | Executive Summary              |
| 6  | Recommendations                |
| 8  | Introduction                   |
| 9  | Methodology                    |
| 10 | Gender                         |
| 12 | Ethnicity                      |
| 14 | Disability                     |
| 15 | Sexuality                      |
| 16 | Location                       |
| 18 | Age                            |
| 19 | Intersectional Inequality      |
| 21 | Retention Risks                |
| 23 | Appendix – Methodology Details |

## Foreword

As the Equalities and Race team for the GMB MPs' and Peers' Staff Branch, we have the privilege of working closely with Parliamentary staff from every corner of our democracy. Through our roles in the branch, we see first-hand both the dedication, resilience, and passion that staff bring to public service, and the subtle but persistent barriers that stop too many from progressing on merit alone.

The GMB has long campaigned for mandatory ethnicity pay gap reporting, recognising it as essential to drive transparency and fairness in every workplace. In Parliament, an institution that should be setting the gold standard, the case for such measures are especially urgent. The inequalities uncovered in this report reinforce why our branch's campaign matters: without robust, mandatory reporting, structural disparities remain hidden, unchallenged, and unaddressed.

The figures are stark, but numbers alone cannot capture the human cost. Behind each statistic is a colleague whose career has been slowed or derailed, not for lack of skill or effort, but because of systemic inequalities that Parliament has yet to dismantle. It's:

| A young Black woman discovering she earns thousands less than her white male counterpart.

| A disabled caseworker still waiting for agreed reasonable adjustments.

| A non-white staff member excluded from informal networks where career-shaping opportunities are shared.

These are not isolated cases; they are recurring patterns embedded in workplace culture. Parliament should lead the way in workplace equality. Instead, it mirrors, and at times magnifies, the inequalities seen elsewhere. This report is not simply a call for change; it is a challenge to live up to the values we legislate for others. It is an invitation to MPs, Peers, and all decision-makers to confront uncomfortable truths and act decisively to make Parliament a workplace where everyone can thrive.

**Holly Williamson, Branch Equalities Officer**  
**Kartik Sawhney, Branch Race Officer**  
**Phil Hutchinson, Branch Youth Officer**  
**GMB MPs' and Peers' Staff Branch**

## Executive Summary

This year marks 50 years since the Equal Pay Act first came into force and 60 years since racial discrimination was outlawed in the UK. However, this report identifies stark inequalities that remain at the heart of our democracy.

This report publishes data that the GMB MPs' and Lords' Staff Branch collected through an Equality Survey of staff who work in Parliament. Data was also acquired through a Freedom of Information Request (FOI) on the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA). This information was collected to examine pay progression in Parliament and reveals entrenched disparities linked to gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality and location, with non-white women and disabled staff facing the most severe inequalities. This report also provides testimony from staff who work for MPs and Lords and highlights the detrimental impact such inequalities continue to have on those who work in Parliament. This report should act as an important wake-up call for Parliament. Parliament cannot credibly legislate for equality while not addressing inequality in its own workforce.

# Key Findings

## 1. Gender:

- **Women earn £1,128 less** than men (age-adjusted).
- Gender pay gap grows over time with women earning £1289 less than men for each year of additional MP experience.
- Women's pre-Parliament political experience is undervalued, with women earning £257 less for each year of previous political experience.
- Trans and non-binary staff earn £1,456 less than cis staff.

## 2. Ethnicity:

- **Non-white staff earn £2,027 less** than white staff.
- This gap grows over time with white staff earning £1135 more for each year of MP experience.

## 3. Disability:

- **Disabled staff earn £646 less** than non-disabled staff
- Disability pay gap increases over time with non-disabled staff earning £1134 more per year of MP experience.
- Disabled staff are more likely to be denied training and expected to work unpaid overtime.

## 4. Sexuality:

- **Non-straight staff earn £1,657 less** than straight colleagues.
- The gap between straight and non-straight staff widens by £436 for every year of Parliamentary experience.

## 5. Intersectionality:

- Individuals with **multiple protected characteristics have the most severe pay disadvantages.**
- **Non-white women earn £5931 less** than white men.



# Recommendations

## 1. End Fixed-Term Rolling Contracts

Goal: Improve job security and career development.

- Make open-ended contracts the default for MPs' and Peers' staff.
- Limit short-term contracts to genuine, time-bound roles with justification, such as hiring an intern.
- IPSA should publish annual statistics on the proportion of staff employed on fixed term versus open-ended contracts, to ensure transparency and accountability.
- Equality Impact: Insecure contracts disproportionately affect ethnic minority and working-class staff—ending them will help close retention and pay gaps.

## 2. Ban Restructures That Force Staff Out

Goal: Prevent misuse of restructuring to unfairly dismiss staff.

- IPSA must monitor and regulate restructuring practices.
- Require staff consultation and a clear appeals process.
- Equality Impact: Marginalised groups are more at risk—oversight is essential to prevent bias. They will help close retention and pay gaps.

## 3. Encourage Pass-Through of Inflationary Pay Rises

Goal: Promote fair and consistent pay increases across all offices.

- IPSA should strongly encourage MPs to pass on approved inflationary pay rises to their staff.
- Many MPs currently opt out, leading to inconsistent pay and growing disparities.
- Introduce transparency measures to track whether increases are applied and publish office-level compliance data.

## 4. Standardised Pay Bands + London Weighting

Goal: Promote fair progression and reduce regional/racial pay gaps.

- Implement national pay bands and annual reviews.
- Introduce mandatory London Weighting for all staff based in Greater London. Explore regional weighting for other high-cost areas outside London (such as Manchester, Bristol, and Edinburgh) to ensure staff in these areas are not disadvantaged compared to colleagues in lower-cost regions.
- Standardise appraisals and salary progression at 2- and 5-year points.
- Use anonymised benchmarking to track disparities.
- Equality Impact: The absence of London Weighting disproportionately affects ethnic minority staff, who are more likely to be based in London and therefore face higher living costs without adequate compensation. Close retention and pay gaps.



---

## 5. Mandatory Pay Gap Reporting

Goal: Address systemic pay disparities.

- Collect and publish pay gap data annually on ethnicity, gender, disability, sexuality and age.
- New staff should be asked if they need reasonable adjustments, to ensure the onus to seek reasonable adjustments is on IPSA rather than the staff member.
- Track salary bands, starting pay, promotions, and progression.
- Require action plans from all offices.

---

## 6. Equalise Pay Bands Between Caseworkers and Parliamentary Researchers

Goal: Reduce Pay Gaps Between Men and Women

- Pay bands should be equalised to ensure Caseworkers earn the same rates as Parliamentary Researchers.
- Equality Impact: The majority of Caseworkers are women, and therefore the lower rates paid to Caseworkers disproportionately affects female staff.

---

## 7. Introduce a Formal Incremental Pay Scale

Goal: Ensure Staff Can Receive Increased Pay for Longer Parliamentary Service

- Formal incremental pay scale should be introduced to incentivise staff to remain in Parliament, provide greater career stability and encourage long-term development.
- Increases in the incremental pay scale should not be funded from existing MP staffing budget so money is spent rewarding long-term staff rather than on hiring new staff.
- Equality Impact: Predictable progression would reduce the entrenched penalties faced by staff with multiple protected characteristics, particularly women, non-white staff, and disabled staff. These groups tend to work in Parliament longer, meaning the lack of pay progression disadvantages them compared to men who go to find higher-paying jobs after a few years working in Parliament.compliance data.

---

## 8. One Parliament, One Employer

The time has come for MPs' and Peers' staff to be employed by a single body rather than 650 individual employers.

- MPs should continue to choose who works in their offices, yet the current ad hoc system has created deep inconsistencies. Staff performing the same roles are often employed on vastly different pay, terms and conditions.
- The concerns of staff have been undermined by a structure that silences their collective voice. By dividing employment across 650 offices, it has become far too easy for everyone to blame the system instead of addressing the problem.

# Introduction

Little information exists about the breakdown of those who work in Parliament. IPSA claims it does not have a responsibility to publish relevant data because MPs' staff remain technically employed by individual MPs rather than by IPSA. However, this position has become increasingly difficult to justify in recent years as IPSA now creates standardised contracts, sets pay bands, determines entitlement to leave and ensures staff declare relevant interests.

These measures have been taken to ensure that there is greater oversight in Parliament and to stop many of the abuses and expense scandals that have come to light in recent decades. However, the current status quo has left minority and protected groups underrepresented and underpaid, as only employers with 250 or more staff have a legal responsibility to publish data on gender and ethnicity.

Moreover, staff with protected characteristics are left vulnerable, as MPs, who often lack managerial experience, must run quasi-businesses without the necessary knowledge of employment law, equality legislation, or an appropriate understanding of how to effectively hire and manage staff. This lack of knowledge and the intense atmosphere of Parliament tends to exacerbate existing inequalities and discrimination.

This report uncovers the existing inequalities that exist in Parliament and examines differences that exist based on gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, age and location. The absence of official data from IPSA makes independent research essential.

The results from this report are stark. They reveal that being a woman, trans, non-white, disabled or not straight all result in reduced pay. Staff who have multiple protected characteristics are paid even worse. Not only are such staff underpaid, but they are often underrepresented compared to the general population, with only 11% of staff being from a non-white background. It is difficult to see how Parliament can legislate in the interests of all when it is itself not representative of the broader population.

It is our hope that this report will stimulate a call for change.

# Methodology

Data for this report was primarily collected through an Equality Survey of staff who work in Parliament. The survey collected information about staff's initial salaries, current salaries, pay progression, experience working in Parliament and politics more broadly, as well as information about protected characteristics. The survey also provided an open space for staff to share any experiences they had of discrimination in the workplace. All responses to the survey were collected anonymously.

Alongside this, we conducted an FOI request on IPSA, asking for data they had around pay and protected characteristics. IPSA provided data based on sex and age but confirmed that they do not hold data on disability, ethnicity, or gender. Rather than proactively asking staff if they have any existing disabilities, the FOI also confirmed that IPSA are only made aware of an existing disability when a claim for reasonable adjustments is made by the staff member.

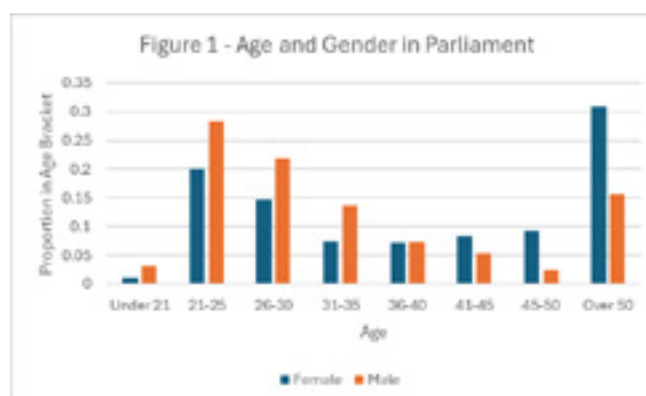
Regressions were conducted to find the overall pay gaps for each group, and where appropriate, relevant controls were included to ensure the robustness of the data. The findings in this report were also highlighted using graphical summaries and first-hand testimony.

More information about the data collected and the analysis conducted can be found in the appendix.

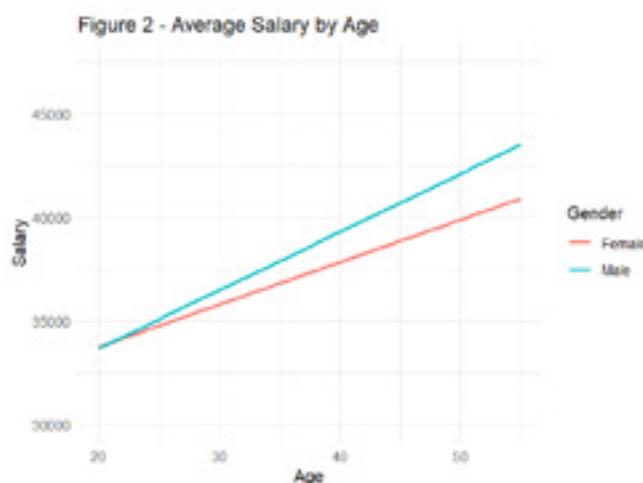
## Gender

The numbers paint a clear picture; Parliament still has a long way to go in achieving gender pay equality. Once you strip out the age differences, women earn £1,128 less than men.

The profile of who works in Parliament is heavily skewed. As shown by Figure 1, only 16% of men who work in Parliament are above the age of 50, compared to 31% of women. At the same time, more than two-thirds of those working in Parliament under the age of 21 are men. Men tend to work in Parliament while they are young, to build career experience, but often move on from Parliament after a few years to work in more lucrative and better-paying jobs.



Given that salaries tend to increase as people age and gain experience, it is necessary to control for age in the context of Parliament to give an accurate reflection of the gender pay gap. Using data from the FOI and controlling for age, we found that the average woman is paid £1,128 less than the average man. Figure 2 shows average pay by age and gender in Parliament.



The issue becomes even worse when you look at progression. Using data from the Equality Survey we found that for every year of MP experience, men's pay jumps by £1,593, while women's creeps up by just £303. This means that women earn £1,289 less for each extra year in the job.

Both the overall difference in pay (controlling for age) and the interaction between gender and experience in Parliament were found to be statistically significant.

It's not just time spent in Parliament that's undervalued, women's political experience before they arrive is worth less in pay terms than men's. For each extra year of political experience before starting in Parliament, women's starting salaries are on average £257 lower than men's. As a result, the experience women bring to Parliament is therefore discounted and unrecognised.

Trans and non-binary colleagues face an even bigger hit, earning on average £1,456 less than their cis counterparts. Compared to cis-men, trans and non-binary staff on average earn £5497 less. This makes it even more imperative that IPSA collect data on gender and not just sex.

The survey comments provide context for these figures. Women repeatedly talked about being overlooked for promotion, doing more admin work because male colleagues refused, and seeing men with less experience leapfrog them into better-paid roles. One woman told us her male, constituency-based colleague, with less political experience, earns around £6,000 more than she does, despite having the same job title. Another summed it up bluntly: "We have a terrible gender pay gap in our office."

Women are also more than twice as likely as men to say they're thinking about leaving Parliament altogether because they can't see fair progression ahead. A lack of fair pay is therefore not only unjust but also means that Parliament loses out on retaining its talented staff.

# Ethnicity

The headline pay gap between white and non-white Parliamentary staff — £2,027 — is only the visible tip of a much deeper problem.

Figure 3 (below) shows the current salary distribution by ethnicity. White staff have a higher median salary than their non-white colleagues, with a visibly wider upper range. This confirms that non-white staff are less represented in the higher-earning brackets. The more alarming finding lies in progression over time. Figure 4 plots salary against years of MP experience, revealing a clear divergence.

For every additional year of MP experience:

- White staff see an average salary increase of £545.
- Non-white staff experience an average decrease of £590.

This means that over a 10-year career, the pay gap can widen to over £11,000 — not because of qualifications or performance, but because of structural disparities in progression.

The downward trend for non-white staff is especially concerning, indicating that the longer they work in Parliament, the more their earnings fall behind their white peers. Although these findings were not statistically significant, this was only likely because of another key issue in Parliament; there is a clear lack of ethnic minority staff. Only 11% of those who completed the survey were from a non-white background, compared to 18% of the UK general population who are non-white. Put another way, even if the number of non-white staff were to rise by 50%, non-white staff would still be underrepresented.



## The Culture Behind the Numbers

Qualitative responses reveal how this inequality takes root. Multiple respondents described Westminster as a “very white middle-class” environment.

“It’s striking how few colleagues in Westminster are from an ethnic minority background.” – Black female staff member

“Where are the minoritised women?” – anonymous respondent

Even in offices that defy the trend — with diverse teams and women in leadership — staff acknowledged that these are exceptions. As one Black woman noted:

“My current office is majority women and ethnically diverse, but I know that we’re not the norm. Parliament overall needs structural change.”

The lack of ethnic diversity has a ripple effect: it reduces access to mentors, sponsors, and informal networks that are critical to career advancement. White staff are more likely to have personal connections with senior colleagues and decision-makers and are more frequently offered high-profile assignments. Non-white staff report being overlooked, excluded from influential conversations, and denied visibility in spaces where careers are shaped.

When slower pay progression meets fewer opportunities for advancement, inequality compounds. Over time, the result is not just a pay gap — it is a gap in influence, representation, and leadership.

The issue becomes even worse when you look at progression. Using data from the Equality Survey we found that for every year of MP experience, men’s pay jumps by £1,593, while women’s creeps up by just £303. This means that women earn £1,289 less



# Disability

Disabled staff face both a pay gap and slower progression in Parliament. On average, they earn £646 less per year than non-disabled colleagues. The gap widens over time: for every year of Parliamentary experience, non-disabled staff see their pay rise by £1,134 more than disabled staff, a finding that is statistically significant.

The survey responses reveal that these gaps are rooted in systemic failures. Staff described struggling to implement agreed-upon adjustments or having to fight for basic support. One respondent told us: “Being open about my mental ill health was a mistake... IPSA has been atrocious at implementing agreed reasonable adjustments.” Another said: “As a disabled person, I’ve never been offered an occupational health assessment.”

This was also reflected in the FOI, which stated that IPSA only know of a disability when a claim for a reasonable adjustment has been made. However, staff report that asking for a reasonable adjustment can be frightening, as staff, especially when new, don’t want to feel like they are being disruptive or burdensome. This issue is made worse by the fact that even though such adjustments tend to be delivered by IPSA, they must be requested through the MP. Instead, IPSA should ask staff when they join whether adjustments need to be made, ensuring all staff can receive the support they need. Given that it is IPSA, rather than the MP, who implements adjustments, it would also better protect staff privacy if requests for adjustments are made directly to IPSA, with the MP brought in when appropriate.

Some respondents also said their managers downplayed or ignored how their disability affected their workload and stress levels. The data backs this up, disabled staff were three times more likely to say they’re always expected to work beyond their contracted hours (30% of disabled staff compared to 10% of non-disabled staff) and were less likely to have access to training, with 30% of disabled staff saying they had no access to training, compared to 18% of non-disabled staff. These results were also statistically significant, with disabled staff being statistically significantly more likely to report being expected to work longer hours and being statistically significantly less likely to report having an opportunity to receive training.

The result is both lower pay and fewer opportunities for advancement, which perpetuates inequality and drives talented staff out of Parliament.

# Sexuality

Non-straight staff earn £1,657 less per year than straight colleagues. The gap doesn't just stay fixed; it grows over time. For every year of Parliamentary experience, the gap widens by £436.

Non-straight staff also face a range of other barriers in the workplace. For example, non-straight staff reported that they were more likely to feel pressure to work outside of contracted hours, with 25% of non-straight staff stating that they were always expected to work outside of contracted hours compared to 16% for non-straight staff. Furthermore, non-straight staff were also more likely to report having worse mental health, with the percentage of non-straight staff strongly disagreeing that they had been content with their overall sense of mental wellbeing being almost twice as high as the percentage of straight staff (11% of non-straight staff compared to 6% of straight staff).

Added together, these results mean that non-straight staff more likely to be considering leaving the workplace. Indeed, the survey found that while 15% of straight staff were considering leaving their role due to a lack of fair pay progression, 25% of non-straight staff were considering leaving their role due to a lack of fair pay progression.

These results are consistent with what staff told us in the survey. Some spoke of feeling excluded from informal social spaces where opportunities are shared or being cautious about being open about their identity at work. Others described the constant low-level stress of having to judge whether it's safe to be themselves in certain professional settings.

These barriers, both in pay and in workplace culture, make it harder for non-straight staff to progress on an equal footing, and risks pushing talented people out of Parliament before they reach senior roles.

## Location

Constituency staff are the frontline of parliamentary work. They are the first point of contact for residents in crisis, handling cases that involve housing problems, benefits delays, and sometimes traumatic personal experiences. Survey respondents spoke about the heavy toll this takes, with many describing constant exposure to stress, rudeness, and even abuse from constituents. One caseworker summed it up:

“Work stress is massive as more constituents need help and are more demanding and often rude. Caseworkers have to deal with difficult constituents daily and it takes its toll, yet they are paid worse than researchers who don’t have this to deal with.”

Despite this, constituency staff earn on average £2,598 less per year than colleagues based in Westminster. Several respondents highlighted the perversity of this imbalance. Offices with minimal casework can afford to pay staff more, while busier offices are compelled to spread their budgets thinner, leaving frontline staff underpaid despite carrying the heaviest emotional burden.

Younger workers tend to work in Parliament, which means that as with gender, it is necessary to control for age to determine the real pay difference between constituency staff and colleagues based in Westminster. When doing so, we find that constituency staff earn £5352 less than staff in Westminster, a finding that is statistically significant.

This difference between pay in the constituency and in Westminster also worsens the gender pay gap, as men are more likely to work in Westminster than in the constituency. When controlling for location, we found the gender pay gap more than halved. The survey also found that trans and non-binary staff were more likely to be based in the constituency, and the pay gap between cis and non-cis colleagues fell by two-thirds once controlling for location. These findings demonstrate that equalising pay between Caseworkers and Parliamentary Researchers is necessary, and would play a major role in reducing the pay gaps found in this report. The difference in

pay bands between caseworkers and researchers has historically been justified by claims that IPSA benchmarks pay bands against other comparative jobs. However, such benchmarking fails to account for the immense diversity of topics Caseworkers working for an MP must deal with. While Caseworkers in other fields of work can specialise, Caseworkers in Parliament must deal with a range of complex cases such as domestic violence, mental health, SEND provision, planning, immigration, benefits, and local transport. This means that Caseworkers in Parliament are expected to have knowledge about a far wider range of issues than Caseworkers outside of Parliament, making such benchmarking inherently unfair.

## Age

Young workers in Parliament tend to face increased levels of bullying and exploitation and often work for lower pay. A large number of the cases GMB handles in Parliament involve young workers, and the power differential between MPs and staff leaves young workers particularly vulnerable. The Equality Survey also found that 83% of those employed on fixed-term contracts or as interns were 30 or under. This increased job insecurity for young workers makes it easier for MPs to remove and replace them and means that young workers often lack secure and stable employment in Parliament.

Another key issue in Parliament is the continued use of unpaid interns. The large demands placed on MPs' offices mean that unpaid interns are often used to complete additional work once budgets are exhausted. However, the use of unpaid interns exacerbates existing inequalities, as individuals are only able to complete unpaid internships if a university covers expenses or if families provide support. As such, unpaid internships that are not part of an established university course benefit those from wealthier backgrounds and often place those from a minority background at a particular disadvantage. It should be noted that the use of unpaid internships has continued in Parliament despite Labour's 2024 manifesto commitment to ban the use of unpaid internships.

While younger workers tend to face increased job insecurity, older workers in Parliament tend to face stagnant pay. According to data from the FOI, on average, staff earn an additional £1359 for each year older they are up to the age of 30 (a finding that is statistically significant). However, the FOI also shows that average pay does not increase with age above the age of 30, as there is often limited scope for further pay increases and promotions. As has been noted elsewhere, this exacerbates other inequalities as older workers are overwhelmingly female, while young workers are more likely to be men. But it also means that salaries in Parliament peak much earlier than in comparative fields, with the Office for National Statistics noting that salaries on average tend to be highest when individuals are in their late 40's.

This lack of pay progression results in a high turnover of staff in Parliament and means that staff who choose to stay in Parliament will often struggle to support growing families compared to those who move on to work in other sectors.

# Intersectional Inequality

The clearest message from both the data and the testimony is that inequality in Parliament does not operate along a single line of identity. Instead, it compounds. Staff who hold multiple protected characteristics face the steepest pay penalties, the slowest career progression, and the greatest barriers to advancement.

The most striking statistic is that non-white women earn £5,931 less than white men, a gap that is both large and statistically significant. This is not simply a reflection of individual cases, but a structural pattern that speaks to how race and gender intersect to disadvantage women of colour in Parliament.

The dynamics that drive this outcome are visible across the other strands of inequality. Women earn less over time, with men's salaries rising by £1,593 for every year of MP experience compared to just £303 for women. Non-white staff fall further behind each year they remain in Parliament, seeing their pay decrease on average by £590 for every year of experience, while white staff gain £545. Disabled staff are similarly disadvantaged, earning £1,134 less for every additional year of experience than their non-disabled colleagues. Taken together, these penalties stack, leaving non-white disabled women particularly exposed to long-term pay stagnation.

Beyond salary figures, structural barriers reinforce these disparities. Disabled staff are significantly more likely to be denied training (30% compared to 18% of non-disabled staff) and to be expected to work outside of contracted hours without pay (30% compared to 10%). Women are more than twice as likely as men to report that they are considering leaving Parliament altogether due to lack of fair pay progression (24% compared to 10%). For women of colour and disabled women, these intersecting disadvantages, lower pay, slower progression, fewer opportunities, heavier workloads, create a working environment that is unsustainable and unequal.

The testimonies collected in the survey bring these numbers to life. Women of colour spoke about being overlooked for promotion, excluded from informal networks where opportunities are shared, and finding their contributions undervalued in pay negotiations. As one Black woman put it: "It's striking how few colleagues

in Westminster are from an ethnic minority background.” Another respondent asked bluntly: “Where are the minoritised women?” These accounts underline that intersectional inequality is not an abstract concept, but a daily reality for those who face it.

Parliament cannot credibly legislate for equality while it reproduces inequality in its own workforce. Intersectionality must be at the heart of any reform. Tackling pay gaps in isolation will not be enough; without addressing the compounding impact of race, gender, disability and sexuality together, the most marginalised staff will continue to be left behind.

## Retention Risks

The results shown in this report mean that Parliament often misses out on the best talent available. Furthermore, the lack of pay equality means that talented individuals leave Parliament to receive better pay and progression elsewhere.

For example, women are more than twice as likely as men to consider leaving Parliament due to the lack of fair progression, with 24% of women compared to 10% of men reporting they are thinking about leaving their roles. This isn't only about pay, it exposes how the wider culture and progression structures in Parliament make long-term careers unsustainable, particularly for women and those with multiple protected characteristics. As one respondent put it: "I love my work, but without fair pay progression, it feels unsustainable."

Moreover, our survey found evidence that many MPs and Line Managers have not even taken minimal action to address issues around pay inequality. According to the Equality Survey, 38% of those working in Parliament stated they were unaware of any policies their MP had taken to support diversity and inclusion, and 38% also stated that their MP or Line Manager had not taken any steps to address pay gaps and inequality.

Even when issues around pay inequality and discrimination are raised in the workplace, evidence suggests that MPs still fail to take action, with results from the Equality Survey showing that just 17% of those who had raised concerns about pay disparity or discrimination felt as though their concerns had been satisfactorily addressed after raising the issue. It will be impossible for Parliament to address the long-standing issues identified in this report if action is not taken when pay inequality and discrimination are highlighted.

Parliament needs to recruit and retain the best talent to ensure that it can best deliver for the country. As has been said previously, Parliament can also only legislate in the interests of everyone if it does indeed represent the entire country. It is, therefore, necessary for Parliament to change its policies to end existing pay inequalities and ensure that its workforce is indeed representative of the country as a whole.





## Appendix – Methodology Details

Section 40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 provides protection from the release of data that could result in individuals being identified. Therefore, we asked IPSA to provide the number of MPs' staff in different income bands, broken down by sex and age. Each income band was £2,500, with the first income band being £20,000–£22,499 and the penultimate income band being £47,500 to £49,999. The final income band included anyone with a salary of more than £50,000. The data provided is based on full time equivalent salary, with casual staff not included as they are paid at an hourly rate.

Data on age was also provided in age bands, with the first age band being those under-21, the second being those 21–25, the third being those 26–30, with each subsequent age band being 5 years. The final age band included anyone over the age of 50. In the FOI, IPSA confirmed that they do not collect data on ethnicity, gender, and disability, meaning only data on age and sex was provided. The data from the FOI provided information on 3,857 members of staff who were employed by MPs as of June 2025.

The Equality Survey conducted by the GMB MPs' and Lords' Staff Branch used the same categories for income and age as those used in the FOI request to ensure consistency. However, unlike the FOI, it collected data on gender rather than sex, as well as collecting data on ethnicity, disability, sexuality, location and whether individuals had a trans or non-binary identity. This data allowed us to examine inequalities across a much broader range of protected characteristics than would have been possible from the FOI alone. As well as collecting data on current salaries, the survey collected data on starting salaries, how long individuals have worked for their current MP, worked in Parliament, and worked in politics more broadly. This data allowed us to examine how pay changes with different levels of experience.

The survey was made open to all, including those who were not GMB members, and was open between April and June 2025. In total, 174 staff members completed the survey.

To make it possible to conduct regressions on the data available, it was necessary to transform the data provided in categories into precise numerical figures. The age and incomes of individuals was therefore estimated as the midpoint for each relevant category, with those over 50 age group given an estimated age of 55, those under 21

given an estimated age of 20 and having an income over £50,000 given an estimated income of £55,000.

The use of midpoint substitution in regressions introduces limitations, as it assumes all individuals within a category have the same income/age. This ignores within-category variation, may lead to measurement error, and can bias estimates if data within categories is skewed. As a result, the figures in this report should not be interpreted as exact average pay differences. Instead, they are approximate estimates of the likely magnitude and direction of the overall patterns observed.

These limitations are why it is necessary for IPSA to collect, publish and analyse the data itself to prevent such limitations. However, in the absence of such data and analysis, the findings from this report nonetheless still clearly demonstrate the existence and magnitude of broad inequalities between those with protected characteristics and those without. Additionally, variance between estimated and exact figures should be relatively limited by the narrow bands used for age and income.

Controls and interactions were added to the regression when survey responses and preliminary analysis of the data suggested that such additions would provide more informative results. For example, age was added as a control to the regression between gender and income because initial findings showed that women were twice as likely as men to be over 50, meaning that unless age was included, it could distort results. Throughout the report, the difference that each year working for an MP had on pay differentials was calculated by interacting the relevant protected characteristic with years working for an MP.

Whenever results were statistically significant this is noted in the report, otherwise it should be assumed that results were not statistically significant but demonstrate an overall trend.





