

[The Gender Pay Gap is Shrinking, Hurrah!](#) [1]

Written by [Tim Worstall](#) [2] | Sunday 26 February 2012

In fact, the gender pay gap has more than halved in just the past couple of years which is really pretty fast work for a societal change of that sort of type, isn't it? This wondrous information is contained in the latest release on the subject [from ONS](#) [3].

For full-time employees, hourly earnings excluding overtime were £11.91 for women (up 1.9 per cent) and £13.11 for men (up 0.8 per cent). This has resulted in the gender pay gap narrowing in 2011 to 9.1 per cent, down from 10.1 per cent in 2010 (see Figure 5).

My word, that is impressive, isn't it? For only a couple of years ago we were being told that the pay gap was 20% or more. No, really, Polly, The Guardian, the Fawcett Society, all were shouting this aloud and Something Must Be Done! In fact, it was worse than that. We were being told by the Equal Opportunities Commission that the female part time pay gap was as high as 37%!

Median hourly earnings for women working part-time are higher than those of part-time men. Men's hourly earnings were £7.67, up 0.1 per cent since 2009, compared with women's hourly earnings of £8.10, an increase of 1.3 per cent. The negative gender pay difference for part-time employees has therefore widened to minus 5.6 per cent from minus 4.3 per cent in 2010.

Goodness Gracious Me. Something needed to be done and Something Was Done! So, what was it that was actually done?

In 2009 ONS reviewed the way it presents gender pay statistics. The review concluded that there was no single measure which adequately dealt with the complex issue of the differences in men's and women's pay. ONS now highlights the following measures: ? female full-time employees? median pay compared with male full-time employees? median pay ? female part-time employees? median pay compared with male part-time employees? median pay ? all female employees? median pay compared with all male employees? median pay ONS prefers to use hourly earnings, excluding overtime, and focuses on estimates of the median.

I was one of those people, here on this very blog, that revealed what was happening. Fawcett, Polly, the EOC and all, were using mean wages (means will always overstate gaps because of the rightwards skew of the earnings distribution), were comparing all female employees to all male (and not accounting for the greater number of female part time workers, part timers getting less per hour than full timers) and incredibly, were comparing part time female hourly wages to full time male to give their female part time pay gap.

So what actually happened in 2009 was, well, ONS call it a review. Actually what it was was a snarl at those so willfully misusing statistics and an admonition telling them not to be so stupid and not to do it again.

Which is why you haven't been reading turgid editorials about how appalling the gender pay gap is recently.

No, I do not claim any credit at all for this happening. I do take immense satisfaction in it having happened though.

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