



Gender Pay Equality at South Western Railway

Introduction

South Western Railway is committed to building a more diverse, inclusive, and representative workforce, reflecting both the communities we serve and the future of the rail industry.



As part of this commitment, we publish our Gender Pay Gap Report each year to provide transparency around pay, representation, and progression across our organisation.

For the year 2025 our pay gap has been published by our former parent company First Group. However, this supporting document lays out the actions we are taking to address the challenges that contribute to gender imbalance within the rail sector and what we are doing to support women through all stages of the employee lifecycle.

With women continuing to be significantly under represented in key operational roles across the industry, SWR remains focused on long term, sustainable change through targeted recruitment, development initiatives, and inclusive workplace practices.

What is the Gender Pay Gap?

To understand the context of our actions, it is important to outline what the gender pay gap represents and how it is measured.

The gender pay gap shows the difference in average hourly pay between men and women across South Western Railway. It gives us a clear picture of how men and women are represented in different roles and levels within the business. It's important to note that this is not the same as equal pay, which is about paying men and women the same amount for the same job – something we are fully committed to.

Like much of the rail industry, our gender pay gap is shaped by the types of roles people work in. Many of our higher paid operational and technical jobs, such as drivers and engineers, have historically attracted more men. At the same time, women are more likely to work part time or take career breaks, which can affect progression into senior positions.

By reporting on our gender pay gap each year, we can track how things are changing and identify where we need to focus our efforts. This helps us create more opportunities for women across the business and build a workplace where everyone can thrive.

Mean Pay Gap

The **mean gender pay gap** compares the average hourly pay of all men and all women in an organisation.

- To calculate it, you add up all hourly pay for men and divide by the number of male employees, then do the same for women.
- The difference between these two averages is the mean pay gap.

Because it uses all pay data, the mean can be influenced by very high or very low salaries. For example, if an organisation has more men in the highest paid roles, the mean gap will be larger.

Median Gender Pay Gap

The **median gender pay gap** compares the middle hourly pay value for men and women.

- If you lined up all male employees by their hourly pay, the median is the pay of the person in the middle.
- You do the same for women, then compare the two middle values.

The median is less affected by extreme salaries and often gives a clearer picture of typical earnings. It's widely considered the most representative measure of pay differences across a workforce.



Our commitment

We are committed to creating a more inclusive and balanced workforce by actively recruiting, developing, and retaining women across all areas of the business. We recognise that improving gender representation – particularly in traditionally male-dominated roles – is key to building a stronger, more diverse organisation.

Our Inclusion and Diversity Strategy 2025 – 2027 reaffirms our commitment to driving inclusion throughout SWR, so that all our colleagues feel a sense of belonging and valued for the unique contribution they bring. We want our diverse workforce to help us drive innovation, productivity and inform decision making. SWR has already been awarded a Silver Award in the Inclusive Employers Standard and a Gold in Investors in People which demonstrates an exceptional commitment to employee development, engagement, and workplace culture.

Over the last year the number of women in SWR has increased by 5% and we continue to see a steady increase year on year. Women joining as Guards has increased by 10%, and whilst our number of drivers has stayed relatively static, we have seen a 66% increase in female trainee drivers and an increase of 13% in the Driver function overall.

The initiatives below show how we continue to work hard to create a supportive working environment, where women have equal access to opportunities and can thrive at every stage of their career. Our goal is to make rail a more attractive and accessible industry for women, now and in the future.



Apprenticeships and Recruitment

The opportunity to offer apprenticeships allows us to reshape the future of our organisation. Over the past year, we have taken meaningful steps to attract more women into our apprenticeship pathways. We are proud to have increased representation across several apprenticeship routes, with notable progress in operational and technical programmes for women, a rolling average of 18.11% of apprentice starts this year have been women.

We have continued our targeted outreach, inclusive marketing and strengthened partnerships with schools and colleges which has helped us reach young women who may never have previously considered a career in rail. As a result, we have seen year on year increase in women joining higher paid pathways such as Train Driver, alongside continued strong representation in customer facing and business support apprenticeships.

Our programmes are designed to be inclusive, accessible and responsive to the barriers women often face in male dominated sectors. Through mentoring, peer networks and targeted development, we aim to build confidence, capability and long term career pathways that support women well beyond the end of their apprenticeship.

We remain committed to building an apprenticeship pipeline that reflects the communities we serve. By continuing to attract women, including those from ethnically diverse communities, we are shaping a workforce that is fairer, more inclusive and better equipped for the future.



Female Train Driver Campaign and Have a Go Driver Days



SWR launched a dedicated Women's Driver Campaign to highlight that the driver role is open to everyone. With the support of four of our female drivers, we showcased the opportunities the role offers and demonstrated that it is accessible to people from all backgrounds. Following the campaign, the proportion of women applying for driver positions doubled from 10% to 21%, marking a significant step forward in improving representation.

We also introduced our Have a Go Driver Day to support women already working within SWR who may be considering a move into driving. The event is designed to demystify the role, explain the application and training process, and provide a realistic insight into what the job involves. Attendees took part in interactive activities, met current female drivers, and experienced our simulators – giving them a genuine feel for what it's like to be in the driver's seat.



Creating an inclusive and supportive workplace

We pride ourselves on having a number of policy and guidance documents to support women at work including menopause, adoption, fertility, domestic abuse, pregnancy loss, sexual harassment and carers leave.

Over the past year SWRs Inspire (gender equality) network has played a central role in designing, delivering, and championing a wide range of development and inclusion initiatives for those in the network. Their networking conferences have opened doors for colleagues by raising awareness of alternative roles within SWR and showcasing development and apprenticeship opportunities. The network has also curated sessions on imposter syndrome, growth mindset, and communicating your worth topics that resonated deeply with our female colleagues and were aimed at building confidence. The inclusion of mock interviews and networking opportunities ensured that colleagues left not only inspired but equipped with practical tools to progress.



The network has championed conversations around period normalisation, menopause, domestic abuse, baby loss, endometriosis, and ovarian cancer. By bringing these topics into the open, they are helping to create a culture where all colleagues feel seen, supported, and able to speak honestly about their experiences.

The inspire network also runs its own mentoring programme, alongside the SWRs Reverse Mentoring Programme, which have supported women at all levels, fostering cross departmental relationships and enabling individuals to grow in confidence, capability, and ambition. Also, allowing our male colleagues to understand lived experience and help champion gender equality.

Support for Menopause

SWR has a dedicated Menopause Policy and also supports women through 'Right Steps' which is a confidential, 5 week course developed by clinical experts.

The programme can be particularly helpful for managing hot flushes, night sweats, anxiety and sleep difficulties

We also have a number of trained Menopause Advocates to give support to colleagues and Managers.

At South Western Railway, we recognise that meaningful change takes time, but we remain committed to building a workplace where women can thrive at every stage of their career. Through continued investment, collaboration, and transparency, we will keep driving progress toward a more inclusive and representative SWR.



