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Paychecks don't tell all: working towards gender pay equality through recruitment practices

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There are no conflicts of interest to declare for this study.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

DEI Diversity, Equity and Inclusion



Working towards diversity: Pay is part of it

As an organization with presence across Africa, Latin America and South Asia, we face unique challenges when it comes to exploring the meaning and manifestations of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). But we are determined to tackle this important issue head-on. This also means that we are taking the maybe unusual (for our context)–but, in our minds, necessary–step towards publishing our internal statistics on gender pay equality.

To get us started, we sought to understand [what diversity means to the people who work at Busara](#) and discovered that it encompasses many aspects and infinite standpoints, including nationality, age, gender, ethnicity (religion, tribe and castes), parenthood, location of education and mental health. Now, a few years after that first exploration, we are focusing on strengthening our contextualized DEI strategic framework. For us, this means that we need to articulate the unique inequities Busara faces internally. We also need to contend with our “Global South” identity and what it means to us as an international organization. This requires us to consistently record, reflect on and refine the initiatives that are supporting our DEI commitment. That means that as we continue to tackle gender inequality-related questions in our research work, we are also taking a hard look at our own organization. We are excited to continue our journey toward a more equitable future within the organization and the ecosystem in which we work.

With this Busara Groundwork Think Piece, we are taking a step forward towards the transparency in which we believe by publishing Busara's gender representation and pay gap statistics. As behavioral scientists, we are committed to measuring what matters. We also know that commitment devices work and transparency and public accountability are crucial to meaningful change. We should not have waited so long.

The following figures and tables give an insight into how gender is represented in different positions across Busara, the gender pay gap, and the pay distribution. Further below, we will elaborate on how to interpret these numbers and what actions we will take.

The data: Insights on representation, pay gaps, and pay distribution

We have used only two terms to describe gender: "men" and "women." These are the terms as reported by our employees at the point of joining the organization, and this does not encompass the rich tapestry of gender experience and identities. The figures below relate to full-time staff at Busara, across our offices and geographies. All data is regardless of role in the organization, length of service, or any other differentiating factor.¹

¹ Best practice suggests calculating gaps in bonus pay. At Busara, bonuses are rolled out at an organizational level using a regressive tax model - these bonuses are discretionary and rolled out in years of positive financial performance and declared at the end of the year. Thus, we have left these calculations out of this year's report.





	All Staff²	Managers	Leadership Team	Board
Total	121	48	27	8
	69 (57%)	27 (56%)	14 (52%)	4 (50%)
	52 (43%)	21 (44%)	13 (48%)	4 (50%)

Figure 1: Gender representation across positions at Busara

Representation is a measure of the number of women and men at our staff, managerial, leadership and board levels. Broadly speaking, gender is represented equally across the different positions, with women the (sometimes slim) majority in all positions.

² At Busara, managers are responsible for distinct workstreams and end-to-end delivery of projects and systems. Leadership refers to our Director and C-Suite roles. These two levels are responsible for setting and executing strategic organizational priorities.

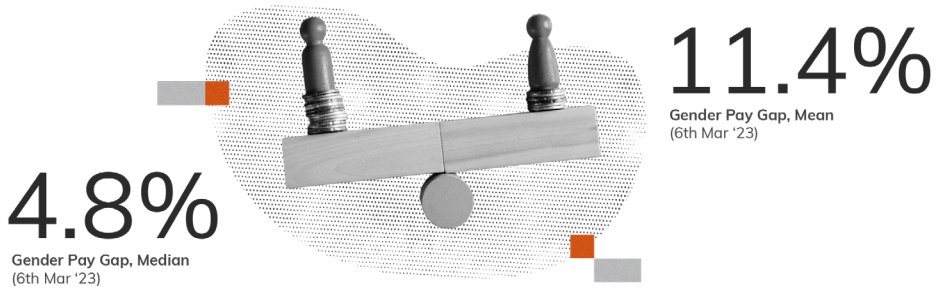


Figure 2: Pay gap: Do women earn less at Busara?

The gender pay gap is a measure of the percentage difference in the average hourly pay of women and men working full-time with Busara. We do find a pay gap between men and women: across the organization, women earn 11.4% less in the mean; their median pay is 4.8% less than that of men. We found the reasons for this in hiring and recruitment processes, which are outlined below.



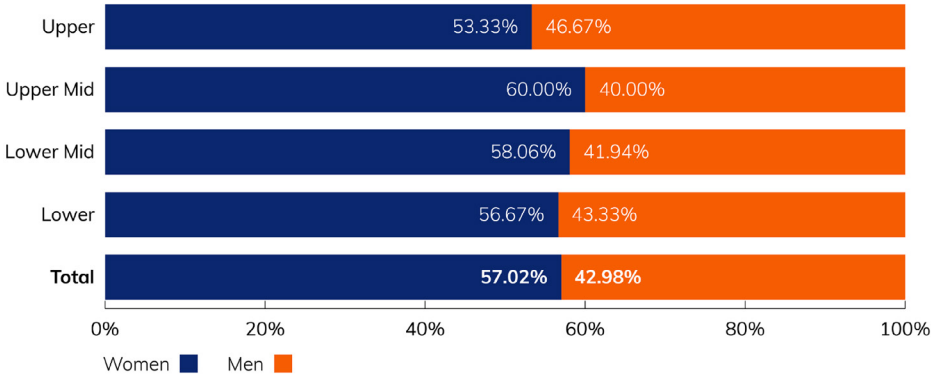


Figure 3: Pay distribution (Quartiles)

Pay distribution is the proportion of women and men full-pay employees in the lower, lower middle, upper middle, and upper quartile pay bands. Compared across quartiles, women consistently occupy a greater proportion of jobs at Busara.

Next steps: Bridging the pay gap

We are pleased that we have equal representation across all key positions at Busara. Achieving this much has been a long and rewarding journey, and having come this far gives us the energy and dedication to tackle the next challenge ahead. Our focus must now shift towards bridging the pay gap.

Fig.2 reveals that in Busara, women's median pay is 4.8% lower than men's. How does this come about? We have just concluded a rigorous job grading process that ensures equal pay for the same competencies within each role. Therefore, we are confident that the gender pay gap does not reflect unequal pay practices across Busara—in short, people get equal pay for equal work, regardless of gender.

And yet, this gap exists. Why? Our analysis suggests that gender differences in director level pay drive the pay gap. If one looks at the data only from director level, it shows that women's median pay is 12.5% lower than men's and mean pay is 9.5% lower than men's. Ironically, we believe these differences are driven by our deliberate efforts in recent years to diversify our workforce.

Our 19-strong director team has a near equal number of men and women. Since 2022, 64% of our new directors have been women. Thus, the pay gap reflects those at starting job grade bands within their pay-band compared with more senior staff within the same role. Upon deeper analysis, we have determined that the pay gap is not a result of men being promoted quicker out of the director role or greater attrition of women at the director level. Instead it reflects a concerted effort at rectifying a once male-heavy leadership team through instituting a transparent promotion process, as well as fairer recruiting practices. These have helped shed light on the brilliant performers who are typically less visible, and level the playing field of opportunity.



We believe that the pay gap is a short-term finding, and are committed to balancing it out as women continue to grow within our organization. Through forecasting exercises and year-by-year comparisons, we will be able to determine whether we are on track to achieving our goals.

Conclusion

Busara has four core values: curiosity, respect, togetherness, and purpose. Part of putting these values into practice means to measure what matters, as this knowledge is crucial for creating a workplace that embodies our core values. Here are various ways in which we will continue to do this:

- *We are committed to not only measuring the gender pay gap once a year with data from our snapshot date of March 6th, but also to conducting further analysis to ensure that we are inclusive of all culturally-relevant identities, such as ethnicity and location of education (such as whether someone was educated in the Global South or the Global North). We also recognize the importance of analyzing and reporting on turnover and attrition to refine our understanding of whether our environment fosters retention for women and men equally.*
- *We are committed to acting upon our findings by heavily investing in providing our employees with the right tools to succeed. While our efforts so far have focused on building the formative structures for growth, we understand that avenues for growth are not enough. By the end of 2023, we will evaluate the tools and mechanisms that we need to support success in each role. This might include targeted technical training and mentoring for leadership development programs. Our commitment to continuous improvement is unwavering, and we will be here next year to share our progress.*



Working in and on a diverse, equitable and inclusive organization is a journey. We still have a long way to go, but we are excited to take this important step and to continue learning, growing, and improving. Knowing how difficult it can be to collect and publish this data, we call on other organizations in our field to share similar reports. In addition, we invite organizations to share how they are working on gender pay gaps and other concerns so we can approach DEI as a collaborative force.

About Busara

Busara is a research and advisory organization, working with researchers and organizations to advance and apply behavioral science in pursuit of poverty alleviation. Busara pursues a future where global human development activities respond to people's lived experience; value knowledge generated in the context it is applied; and promote culturally appropriate and inclusive practices. To accomplish this, we practice and promote behavioral science in ways that center and value the perspectives of respondents; expand the practice of research where it is applied; and build networks, processes, and tools that increase the competence of practitioners and researchers.

About Busara Groundwork

Busara Groundwork lays the groundwork for future research and program design. As think pieces, they examine the current state of knowledge and what is needed to advance it, frame important issues with a behavioral perspective, or put forward background information on a specific context.

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