

Public-private pay gap widest in 10 years

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As [no doubt every paper will note](#), the gap between pay in the public and private sectors is now the widest in ten years according to the Office for National Statistics.

No doubt the right wing media will use the statistic to suggest profligacy by the state. I won't.

The reality is that the state is paying its best qualified staff 5.7% less than their private sector equivalents, having adjusted for gender, where the job is, and so on.

So, if the differential is not at the top then it has to be somewhere else - and it is, at the bottom. As Richard Exell at the TUC points out, the lower paid are better treated by the state than they are by the private sector. And that's good news. It means those in greatest need are paid better. It means fewer benefits are paid. It means, and lets not overstate the largesse because low pay is still low pay, that the beneficiaries of a more enlightened pay policy are the right people.

So when the right wing start shouting about higher pay in the public sector remember what they're calling for. They want:

- more people on minimum wage
- a bigger pay gap between top and bottom in society
- a bigger part of the overall pot of cash earned in society to be profit, going to the already well off
- children living in poverty
- a society where more benefits have to be paid because employers don't pay enough
- increased subsidies for the business models of so many major employers who don't pay enough in wages for their staff to live and rely week in week out on the state to subsidise their business by paying their staff for them.

The state does not get this entirely right - but the average pay differential ratio - bottom 5% to top 5% in the public sector is 4.6 and it's 5.6 in the private sector, a sector where minimum pay is much more likely because unions are under-represented.

And that's nothing to shout about. In fact, it's exactly the wrong direction of travel.

But what the right wing media will be saying again is that it's time to dumb down to the worst level that the private sector delivers and there's only one answer to that, which is 'no way'.