

BLACK SHAMROCK
A VIRTUOS STUDIO

# Gender Pay Gap Report 2026

# Introduction

Black Shamrock - a Virtuos Studio is proud to be a leading company in the games industry in Ireland, known not only for our creative excellence and innovative spirit but also for our commitment to building a diverse, inclusive, and equitable workplace. We know our greatest achievements come from the unique perspectives of our team. That is why we are dedicated to creating a space where every individual, regardless of gender, background, or identity, is fully supported, respected, and primed for success.

Our commitment to inclusion is embedded in our company values and operational practices. We strive to create career opportunities and a working culture that reflects the richness and diversity of our society. We actively promote gender equality as a cornerstone of our vision.

As part of this commitment, we continuously review and refine our policies related to recruitment, career development, compensation, and employee wellbeing by ensuring transparency and fairness at every stage. We support this with ongoing training, mentorship programmes, and initiatives aimed at encouraging gender balance and preventing unconscious bias within our teams.

This Gender Pay Gap Report for the period of 1st July 2025 to 30th June 2026 represents one component of our broader diversity, equality, and inclusion strategy. This report provides a transparent assessment of the gender pay disparity within Black Shamrock, and captures clear data, allowing us to track key trends by comparing this year's results against our inaugural metrics. While last year's report fell favourably with our operational timelines, this year's snapshot caught key milestones at an unfavourable time causing a temporary peak in the gap. However, we anticipate that these timing dynamics will even out in next year's report to provide accurate, normalised results that fairly represent our organisation. A comprehensive breakdown of the underlying factors behind these numbers is detailed in each explanation section.

Measuring our progress year-over-year is essential to long-term accountability. These findings give us a clear, transparent benchmark to refine our strategy, double down on high-impact initiatives, and drive sustained progress toward eliminating the pay gap at Black Shamrock. We recognise that while we take steps toward progress, meaningful and impactful change takes time to deliver results.



# Thoughts from our General Manager



# – Elaine Reynolds

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Black Shamrock and Virtuos are committed to improving diversity in our workforce. We want to see more women enter the games industry across all disciplines and to establish long-term careers. Currently, 20% of our employees are women, which is on par with other game dev studios in Ireland. Although this is still too low, I am happy to see some promising signs. For example, over 30% of the new hires during the reporting period were women, mainly in junior roles. Although we have no pay gap within each level, with a higher proportion of junior staff, average salaries for women will be lower during this transition period in the industry. As more women rise through the ranks, the overall pay gap will close. This is something we look forward to and that we are actively working towards. Black Shamrock welcomes applications from women and everyone from diverse backgrounds. We firmly believe having a diverse workforce is something to celebrate - it leads to a richer studio culture and better games.

# Progress on Our Gender Pay Gap Initiatives

At Black Shamrock, we remain dedicated to building an inclusive workplace and taking proactive steps to close our Gender Pay Gap. While we have implemented several meaningful actions over the past year to drive equity and representation across all levels, we recognise that systemic change is not immediate and it will take time to see the full results of our actions and achieve lasting progress. In last year's report, we outlined key next steps to guide our efforts; the points below provide an update on how those initiatives have progressed over the past year:



## Diversity & Inclusion Frameworks

Following our 'Investors in Diversity Bronze' accreditation from the Irish Centre for Diversity, we further deepened our institutional commitment this year by officially joining the Investors in Diversity Charter and signing the Safe to Create Code of Conduct to ensure a safe, inclusive environment for all staff.



## Performance Reviews & Transparency

We maintain four formal review cycles each year to foster transparent, measurable growth. To further support fairness, we completed specialised manager training for performance evaluations, are developing structured competency framework assessments, and are enhancing the overall process transparency for all.



## Enhanced Women's Health & Wellbeing Policies

To support employees through key life stages, Black Shamrock fully funds comprehensive women's health coverage through our company health insurance plan. Building on our existing generous fully paid maternity leave, we have recently expanded this coverage to ensure company-funded health insurance continues throughout optional unpaid maternity leave. We have also launched a dedicated internal Women's Health and Wellness hub to easily connect staff with key supports and resources. This hub introduces two new policies; paid leave for fertility treatments and structured menopause support.



## Mandatory Training Roll-out

To foster a safe and unbiased workplace culture, this year we have expanded our mandatory training suite for all employees. Beyond our foundational Unconscious Bias training, all staff must now complete mandatory comprehensive modules on Bullying and Harassment in the Workplace and Sexual Harassment in the Workplace.



## Pay Grid Review

To ensure fair and competitive compensation, we spent the past year conducting an extensive review of our pay structures against comprehensive industry data. With this substantial groundwork now complete, we are on track to roll out our newly updated pay grids in 2027. By reinforcing a structured approach to pay across all levels and functions, these grids support our ongoing commitment to closing our gender pay gap and provide a concrete mechanism to ensure pay parity is consistently upheld.



## Encouraging Women in Games & Community Outreach

We continued our active outreach to tackle entry barriers for women in tech and games, through the following activities:

- We hosted another successful Crack the Code event for International Women's Day, achieving record attendance across the studio. Featuring an all-female panel of speakers from Black Shamrock, the event spotlights women as industry experts, focusing on their craft, sharing insights from their careers, and inspiring the next generation of game developers.

- We partnered with educational institutions for scholarships in game development focused courses. As part of this we spoke about the importance of female representation and encouraged as many applications as possible. After a multi-stage impartial review process, we were delighted to see that both of this year's winning recipients are female. We hope the scholarships will be a key step on their journeys to flourishing careers in the games industry.

- We maintained active partnerships and financial support for women's charities, including Women's Aid.



# 2026
# Black Shamrock - A Virtuos Studio Gender Pay Gap Results

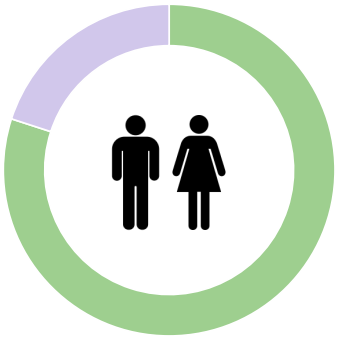
As per the Gender Pay Gap Information Act 2021, the following data is based on a 12-month snapshot from 1st July 2025 to 30th June 2026. Below are our Gender Pay Gap results.

Company gender make-up:

- **Total** employees: 127

- Male employees: 102 (80%)

- Female employees: 25 (20%)



## Gender Breakdown

For the period of 1st July 2025 to 30th June 2026, the Studio's total workforce stands at 80% male and 20% female, marking year-over-year progress with a 1% increase in female representation from our previous report. We actively expanded our team by recruiting 6 female professionals over the last year. However, ongoing volatility across the broader games industry required structural adjustments within the company, which slightly impacted overall team size and overall female headcount.

Despite our ongoing expansion of female representation, we are aware of the large gender imbalance in the company. Unfortunately, this distribution reflects the gender makeup common within the video game industry in Ireland and globally, where historically, male employees have been more predominant, especially in technical and development roles.

The underrepresentation of women in video game development is a recognised industry challenge influenced by various factors including societal norms, education trends, and career interests.

Despite this, we are committed to cultivating a diverse and inclusive workplace. Our hiring and employment practices strictly adhere to Irish equality legislation, including the Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015, which safeguard employees and job applicants from discrimination on the grounds of gender, among other protected characteristics.

All our employees who conduct interviews on behalf of Black Shamrock receive in-depth training by the Talent Acquisition Team to ensure a fair and thorough recruitment process. We also host annual events as well as work with education institutions with the aim of attracting more females to our Studio and the games industry as a whole. While we are proud of how the games industry is changing, there is still a long way to go. We want to play an active role in driving this much needed change. At Black Shamrock, we've grown from 14% female representation five years ago to 20% today. We're proud of this progress, but we know it's just the beginning.

# Spotlight:
# Women in Black Shamrock

In this section, we spotlight two inspiring employees who have built their careers here, tracing their journeys from entry roles to senior impact. Their paths highlight the real-world results of internal mobility, mentorship, and continuous growth within our Studio. We would like to take this opportunity to publicly commend these two individuals on their outstanding work and key contributions they have made to Black Shamrock.

## Milena Sljukic
## Senior HR Generalist



I began my career with the company as a Junior Recruiter, where I was responsible for all things Talent Acquisition. With continued success, I advanced to Senior Recruiter.

Upon further reflection and a lot of support from the company I was offered an opportunity to join the Human Resources department as a Senior HR Generalist. I am truly grateful to the company for believing in my potential and giving me the opportunity to grow my career over the last 6 years. Their trust and support have been invaluable in helping me develop my skills, take on new challenges, and advance to higher levels of responsibility.

## Catherine Koshkina
## Senior Game Designer



I joined the industry in 2021 as a Loc QA Specialist, but soon realised my passion was Design. In April 2022, I joined Black Shamrock as a Junior Game Designer, the only female designer in the department at the time.

Thanks to welcoming mentors, hands-on work, and experience across multiple projects, I established my own working style and progressed quickly. Four years later, I'm a Senior Game Designer across level and gameplay design, heading up a small project team and mentoring others. My managers have always encouraged my development, and I feel very lucky for the path I've had at Black Shamrock.

# Gross Pay Difference of Male to Female Employees

| Measure | All Employees | Part-Time Employees | Temporary Contracts |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mean Gross Pay | 13.7% | N/A | 28.4% |
| Median Gross Pay | 16.3% | N/A | 23.7% |

It is important to note that the data for part-time employees is marked as 'N/A,' as there were no part-time employees at Black Shamrock during the reporting period.

# Gross Pay Gap Explanation

The data from 1st July 2025 to 30th June 2026 shows that Black Shamrock experiences a mean gross pay of 13.7% and a median gross pay of 16.3% for all employees. While these figures reflect higher average earnings for male employees, our overall gap remains significantly lower than the broader market; for context, the average gender pay gap across other games companies in Ireland sat at approximately 31% in 2025, placing Black Shamrock well below the industry average.

The underlying gap is primarily driven by structural factors that reflect broader demographic trends across both the Irish technology sector and the global video game development industry.

### Workforce Composition & Junior Talent Pipeline

While industry-wide efforts are actively encouraging more women to pursue STEM and game development degrees, the influx of female talent into the workforce is a relatively recent dynamic. As a result, female hires are predominantly entering at junior or early-career levels. Naturally, lower average length of service and initial experience levels correlate with lower starting pay bands when compared to long-standing senior personnel. As these employees advance, we anticipate seeing stronger female representation in senior leadership roles.

### Departmental & Role Distribution

Pay scales vary across departments based on technical specialisation, market demand, and skill requirements. High-demand technical disciplines such as Software Engineering carry higher base salary bands; currently, female representation in this department stands at only 8%, reflecting wider educational pipeline trends. Conversely, departments such as HR and Administration, which currently has 80% female representation, operate on different market-aligned pay structures which tend to be lower compared to the aforementioned engineering scales. This distribution across roles significantly influences our overall pay metrics.

### Temporary Contracts

For the purposes of this report, "Temporary Employees" refer to staff on fixed-term contracts (FTC). Within this group, we recorded a mean gross pay gap of 28.4% and a median gap of 23.7%. While these gaps remain substantial, they represent a significant reduction of up to 35% compared to our previous report. It is also important to highlight that because our overall headcount of FTC employees is relatively small, minor shifts in team composition create pronounced statistical variations in these percentages.



# Our Commitment to Equal Pay

It is important to distinguish between the gender pay gap (which measures average pay across an entire organisation regardless of role) and equal pay (paying men and women equally for equal work).

Our compensation framework is aligned with industry benchmarks and governed by strict fair pay policies that establish minimum and maximum salary ranges for every grade, regardless of gender. Where a female and male employee hold the same position with equivalent experience and performance, they are compensated equally.

To ensure our structures remain robust and transparent, we are currently undertaking a comprehensive review of our company-wide pay scales, with an upgraded pay grid framework scheduled for rollout in 2027.

We remain fully dedicated to maintaining a workplace free from barriers to progression across all levels at Black Shamrock.

## Proportion of Employees Receiving Bonus Pay and Benefits

| Benefit Type | Male % | Female % |
|---|---|---|
| Bonus Pay | 94% | 88% |
| Benefits in Kind (BIK) | 81% | 76% |

## Difference in Bonus and BIK amounts between Male and Female Employees

| Measure | Mean | Median |
|---|---|---|
| Bonus | 24.8% | 39.9% |

## Bonus Explanation

At Black Shamrock, bonus eligibility is grounded in objective performance metrics, company success, and clear project outcomes. All eligible employees receive an annual bonus, whereas interns, including our female intern this year and employees hired less than three months prior to the bonus period are ineligible. For this reporting period, 94% of male employees and 88% of female employees received a bonus. All female employees that did not receive bonuses during the reporting period simply did not meet the requirements outlined.

The overall bonus pay gap stands at a mean of 24.8% and a median of 39.9%. These figures are significantly influenced by specific operational and structural factors across the business:



**Prorated Bonuses for New Starters:** Annual bonuses are prorated based on length of service during the performance period. Because a higher proportion of female staff were onboarded mid-year, their bonuses were prorated accordingly, directly impacting the average monetary amounts received.



**Game Project Bonuses & Tenure:** Outstanding project achievements resulted in significant game project bonuses this period to Game Division staff. These rewards are distributed based on long-term project contribution and seniority. Consequently, recent joiners were not eligible, and our Game Division currently has lower female representation (17%), most of which hold more junior positions.

**Departmental Distribution:** Women represent 42% of our General Admin (GA) division. While GA team members remain fully eligible for standard annual performance bonuses, their roles fall outside the scope of project-specific game bonuses due to the nature of these functions. All bonus frameworks continue to be reviewed by a balanced panel to maintain transparency, fairness, and objective application across all departments.

## Benefit in Kind

Black Shamrock continues to invest in employee wellbeing by providing day-one access to key health perks, including fully paid private healthcare and a newly launched, subsidised gym membership. These benefits are open to everyone without entry requirements, with uptake reflecting personal choice. Female Benefit in Kind participation rose from 71% to 76% this year, while male participation grew from 78% to 81%

## Quartile Breakdown of Employee Salaries

| Measure | Men | Women |
|---|---|---|
| Lower Quartile | 65% | 35% |
| Middle Quartile | 84% | 16% |
| Upper Middle Quartile | 81% | 19% |
| Upper Quartile | 91% | 9% |

## Quartile Pay Differences Analysis

The strong female concentration in the Lower Quartile (35%) reflects our successful recruitment strategy, highlighted by the fact that over half of these women, 6 out of 11, were brought on board in the last year. As wider educational shifts encourage more women to complete games and STEM qualifications, we are seeing higher numbers of female graduates apply for roles. Because these individuals naturally start in junior positions, their presence is initially concentrated in lower pay bands.

Elevating female representation in the Upper Quartile will naturally require time as these junior team members gain experience and progress internally. We are committed to supporting their long-term professional development, fostering an environment where women at the beginning of their careers can successfully transition into senior leadership positions across the company over time.



# Our Next Steps

**Diversity Charter Ireland Partnership:** This year, Black Shamrock proudly became the first video game company in Ireland to sign the Diversity Charter. By leading the charge as an industry first, we aim to inspire progressive change and help shape a more inclusive future for Irish game development. Moving forward, we are excited to work closely with the organisation on impactful new initiatives designed to further enhance our workplace, foster equal opportunity, and actively contribute our voice to driving diversity across the broader Irish tech and games landscape.

**Continuing our Women's Focus Group:** Next year, we will host our Women's Focus Group again to maintain an open, transparent dialogue with our female employees. This dedicated forum allows us to hear firsthand experiences and gather actionable ideas to directly improve our workplace environment.




**Women's Events:** We plan to repeat and grow on the success of our International Women's Day "Crack the Code" event. Additionally, we will continue providing platforms for our female team members to speak at college outreach events, helping them inspire and recruit the next generation of women in the games industry.

**Female Health:** Having recently expanded our wellness and sick leave policies to explicitly cover severe period symptoms and endometriosis, we will continue championing this vital area of support. Our ongoing goal is to completely eradicate the workplace stigma surrounding these topics, ensuring our staff feel understood and accommodated.

**Reviewing Family Leave Policies:** Recognising the disproportionate impact that career breaks have on the broader gender pay gap, we are undertaking a review of our maternity and family leave offerings. We are dedicated to creating highly supportive structures that not only appeal to female talent but provide genuine financial and professional stability during these critical life stages.

**Expanding Talent Outreach:** Through our partnerships with organisations such as 'Women in Games' we plan to advertise our open positions directly to female talent. Through this outreach and stronger industry partnerships, we aim to break down barriers to entry, encourage more female applications, and build a more balanced workforce across all functions.

**Targeted Wellness Seminars:** Through our partnership with Laya Healthcare and our internal wellness programmes, we plan to offer more talks focused specifically on women's health issues. These sessions are designed to educate, empower, and provide dedicated resources to keep our female employees thriving both in and out of the office.

Diversity Charter Ireland

SAFE TO CREATE

Investors in Diversity BRONZE