



The *EG* salary survey revealed the lingering gap between the genders in terms of pay and status, but the average figures can be misleading, says Joanna Embling

## Signs of progress amid the male-centric statistics

On the face of it, *EG*'s 14th annual salary and benefits survey (26 February, p76) is bad news for women in the property industry – a gap of nearly £28,000 in the average pay of men and women, and we women still represent only 25% of respondents. Is it really that bad?

“Women earn £28,000 less than men” is certainly a good headline. And the outgoing chairman of Women in Property, Kathy Toon, a property lawyer, feels that women are not given equal pay for the same jobs. But I suspect that the situation is not that clearcut. As ever, the devil is in the detail.

Comparing apples with apples is difficult in an industry where very few of the senior players are women. At Cushman & Wakefield Healey & Baker in the UK, for example, 40% of the graduate intake in 2004 – an exceptional year – was female, as were 8% of partners and 27% of associate partners. These ratios cannot help but lower any average salary figure, however well paid the individuals may be – the *EG* survey notes that Mr Average is 39, whereas Ms Average is 34.

The property industry was simply not on the radar screen in the career departments of most schools 10 years ago. People came into the industry largely because of family connections, and very few girls considered surveying their top career choice. My route in was via a temporary job typing letters, extremely badly, for Howard Ronson, who helpfully suggested that I might make a better

surveyor as I was certainly no typist. Our own statistics show what a positive change has taken place, with more women entering the profession, but it will be some time before that change has any real impact upon *EG*'s salary survey.

### Welcome signs of change

Even so, there are some welcome signs of change in the survey: the increase in women's pay from 2003 to 2004 was 7.6%, against a rather more modest 5.9% for the men.

Other factors are at work. It is true that women leave the industry, as do men. Some women take a career break when they have children, some choose to work flexible hours to balance family responsibilities and so on. From our own experience at CWHB, it is plain that this trend is set to continue, and there is a growing realisation in our sector that the advancement of family-friendly policies and flexible benefits is good news for all.

Of greater interest is the widely held view in the industry that women cannot readily succeed in senior positions within the high-earning agency departments. Certainly there have been few role models in the UK to date, but this does not mean that women cannot succeed in these roles, and that if they did they would not reap the rewards – including high bonus payments – that their male colleagues do. In 2004 Audrey Cramer and Tara Stacom were CWHB's two most successful brokers across the whole of the US and the firm's

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highest producers. Attaining that level of success requires commitment and dedication.

It is easy to forget where the industry has come from, and to moan that progress is painfully slow. Who would have thought that *The Sunday Times* 100 best companies to work for would include five firms of surveyors, and that we would all be competing to demonstrate the excellence of our employment packages, our innovative ways of working and our socially aware policies.

More financial transparency across the industry, with bonus payments becoming more closely related to fees earned, has to be good news for all employees. It is surely in no one's interest to pay women, or anyone else, less than their peers, or

to reward them less for their success. A shortage of good staff and increased mobility means that surveyors who feel they have been poorly treated will vote with their feet, whatever their gender.

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