



# A GENDER WAGE SURVEY

The Västra Götaland County  
Administrative Board

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## Introduction

Men hold senior positions to a greater extent than women and also have a higher and more individualised wage. Women work as administrative staff, are paid less and are less likely to have an individualised wage. This, in essence, was what a wage survey revealed at the Västra Götaland County Administrative Board in Sweden.

As part of its work for greater pay equality, the Board carried out a gender wage survey embracing all parts of its operation. By December 2002, all of the Board's fifteen sections except one had been surveyed. An overall analysis of the pay differentials has yet to be completed, but certain patterns have emerged: most of the administrative staff are women and most of the managerial staff are men. Average pay for women is less than men's average pay in the majority of equal jobs as well as in job categories of equal value. More women have exactly the same wage, while more men have an individually assessed wage – and it is men who have the highest wages.

On the whole, the gender wage survey has been viewed favourably by those involved. The unions feel that such surveys are a necessary instrument for achieving equal pay and are prepared to take part both in the analysis and in the effort to remedy unjustifiable pay gaps. The staff manager feels that the survey helps develop wage formation and provides an important basis for personal pay talks. The staff manager also feels that the job evaluations performed as part of the process have helped identify previously neglected requirements in certain jobs or have enabled the organisation to dispel myths concerning the level of difficulty involved in other jobs.

## A gender wage survey – how we did it

## Read the The Västra Götaland County Administrative Board story

### Organisation and tasks

The Västra Götaland County Administrative Board has 650 employees and is thereby the largest county administrative board in Sweden. As the representative of central government, the Board is required to ensure that the decisions of the Government and the Riksdag (Swedish parliament) are properly implemented at regional level. The Board is also required to monitor developments in the county and keep the Government informed about regional needs.

The county executive comprises two persons – the county governor and the deputy county governor. Below them are the governor's staff office and 15 sections dealing with a range of external and internal policy matters. Each section is headed by a section manager. The sections vary in size from 5 to 135 members of staff. Each section employs administrators and administrative staff. The administrators are largely university-trained and work with supervision and follow-up, reports, licensing, coordination, information and education/training. The administrative staff performs office duties and also do a certain amount of case processing work. The County Administrative Board has offices in seven parts of the county.

### Wage system

Up until 1990, the County Administrative Board had a central tariff system that involved giving each job a specific place on the pay scale and placing each individual in a specific pay category depending on his or her term of employment. Today, wage setting involves differentiated wages determined at local level. It is part of the duties of each section manager to assess individual performance and results, and to justify pay awards in personal talks with the employees.

Old values live on to a certain extent, however, and in a number of sections wage setting is causing dissatisfaction and being disputed. Some women feel they are being underpaid in relation to the men in the same section, while some sections feel their pay is too low in comparison with other sections.

### Survey of pay gaps

The Equal Opportunities Act requires employers to survey pay differentials between women and men performing the same jobs or jobs of equal value. In order to carry out such gender surveys and be in a position to analyse pay gaps, employers must first decide which persons perform equal jobs or jobs of equal value and what are justifiable grounds for differences in pay. The survey and the analysis enable managers to detect whether or not women are being unfairly treated in the wage setting process. Comparisons can also be made between different employment categories across section boundaries.

In consultation with the staff manager, it was decided to conduct a wage survey for each section in the organisation and then to collate the results for the County Administrative Board as a whole. Following an initial pilot project, a procedure was drawn up for the task and work is currently proceeding with all 15 sections.

### Procedure

Each section sets up a working group of 2-4 persons. The section itself decides which members of staff are to work with the survey. A member of the staff department also takes part and acts as a liaison officer for the group.

The working group meets two or three times, partly to be trained in the requirements of the Equal Opportunities Act and in the methods used for surveying wages and evaluating job requirements, and partly to perform the actual surveying work. The group begins by assembling a description of all the jobs performed in the section concerned and then deciding which persons perform equal work. Then some or all of

the jobs are evaluated, using a method entitled “Analysis of Job Requirements for Wage Surveys”. This is a version of *Steps to Pay Equity* developed by the Swedish Equal Opportunities Ombudsman, adapted to the needs of the County Administrative Board. This evaluation enables jobs to be classed in equal work categories, i.e. grouping tasks that may be very different in type but are equally demanding and equally difficult to perform. All the relevant wage statistics are then produced and the average rates of pay, wage spread and wage patterns that emerge are discussed, documented and enclosed with the wage survey.

The final analysis of an employees’ wage always has to be carried out by the section manager, who is familiar with the individual qualifications and performance of the person concerned. A questionnaire is available [here](#) to assist the manager in this endeavour. The ‘Analysis of Job Requirements for Wage Surveys’ and the forms we used for the wage surveys are available [here](#). These aids help each section to continue its wage survey on its own or to update it simply and easily ahead of the next round of pay talks.

## Results

To date – December 2002 – we have completed wage surveys for 14 of the County Administrative Board’s 15 sections. We have not yet reached the stage of compiling the various sectional surveys, nor have we had time to carry out an overall analysis of pay differentials in the organisation. But we have identified certain patterns that are present in all of the sections surveyed:

- almost all the administrative staff are women
- managerial positions are dominated by men
- among administrators, gender representation is fairly equal
- women’s average pay is lower than that of men in most equal jobs as well as in job categories of equal value
- wage spread is considerably more restricted for women
- more women have exactly the same wage, while men have been subjected to a more individual assessment and therefore have more varied wages
- it is the men who have the highest wages.

## Role and views of the union

The union representatives feel that the Equal Opportunities Act and its wage survey requirement are essential for ensuring gender equality in pay structures and wage formation and for focusing greater attention on wage policy. Otherwise, there is a risk that gender equality will not be given priority in wage negotiations. The union is prepared to take part in the analysis and in the efforts to remedy unjustifiable pay gaps. One union has stated that an all-stakeholder group is needed that can monitor and pursue the work in hand, discuss the outcome, and ensure that wage surveys are kept up to date and that the outcome impacts on pay.

## Views of the employer

The staff manager takes the view that the wage surveys work to the benefit of wage formation and wage negotiations in the organisation. Individual differentiated wages necessitate new methods and tools. A clear-cut wage policy is essential, both in connection with pay audits and when wage levels are being set for new employees. Wage surveys also provide a good basis for the manager's pay talks with the individual employee.

The staff manager points to a number of benefits resulting from the job evaluations. These help identify previously neglected requirements in certain jobs, while at the same time dispelling myths concerning the difficulties involved in other jobs. The amount of time invested in job evaluations and wage surveys is reasonable and defensible.

One section manager stated that he found the wage survey most valuable at the last round of pay talks. He had not imagined that the situation was as it was. It had never crossed his mind that he himself might have assessed women and men differently in setting their wages. When the time came to distribute the negotiated pay rise, he was able to show with the help of the survey that his section needed an extra allocation, which it was duly granted.

## Pay talks

Carefully considered wage policies make pay talks easier for both managers and employees. The wage survey process has established which jobs are equal and comparable, and if the factors to be rewarded in wage setting are properly documented wages can be more clearly justified and all staff can understand their respective pay levels and what they need to do to boost their pay. Thus wages act as an incentive both to good performance and to extra efforts that employers value.

## Reflections on the selected approach

A wage survey can be conducted in a number of different ways. Probably the most common method is for the employer to appoint a single working group that surveys all the jobs performed at the workplace. The County Administrative Board has chosen to appoint one working group per organisational section. This means that the time required for survey training is greater than would otherwise have been the case. The advantage, however, is that people throughout the organisation acquire an understanding of the task in hand, which means both that the method gains wider acceptance and that there is little risk the work will founder in future when individual employees leave the organisation. Another advantage is widespread awareness about the work performed by one's colleagues in the section concerned, which means that the working group does not have to spend as much time gathering information about the various jobs to be evaluated. For the evaluations to be comparable between sections, a liaison officer with a close understanding of the method and an overall picture of the entire organisation needs to take part in all of the working groups.

### Time required

The working groups meet 2-3 times for a total of 1½ – 2½ days to conduct their wage surveys. Between meetings, the participants need to contribute a couple of hours' work of their own. The completed survey is presented to the section manager by the whole or parts of the working group at a session lasting 1-2 hours. The entire section is then given information at a regular workplace meeting. The liaison officer's contribution is 3-4 days per section.

### The composition of working groups

It is a good idea if working groups comprise experienced individuals with a solid grasp of the operation. The task is made easier if the persons concerned are accustomed to working systematically and methodically. It is also made easier if the persons involved possess a basic understanding of how wage setting works.

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