



Status of Women in New Zealand Media in 2004

During 2004 an informal survey of journalists, mainly in the newspaper media, was conducted in order to ascertain how the position of women in the media has changed (if at all) over the past ten years. The main points that emerged were:

Equality & Pay:

Overall there are many more women working as journalists than previously (the change from twenty years ago is immense).

There seems to be around 50/50 ratio of men to women working as journalists although there is still a gender gap at senior management level. Generally it appears to be around 80% male. One respondent stated that there are fewer women at senior level than ten years ago.

Whether a newspaper has a Pay Equity policy depends on the management. One paper (female editor) has and another does not.

Flexible Working Hours:

None of the papers have a policy for flexi-time working hours for mothers or fathers, and none provide a crèche. In one instance children of employees were banned from the building.

Assignments - Gender Bias:

There is generally no difference in the assignments that women and men are given but one paper sent women reporters to cover the 'emotional' stories. There appears to be an equal balance of articles on a gender basis as papers try to capture the female market. General opinion is that nowadays there are more stories of a lifestyle nature and the writing is less factual and more emotional.

Sexual Harassment:

No respondent had seen any sexual harassment in recent years and they had never had personal experience of it in the workplace, although one reported that males in her office were not tolerant of gays.

Changes in the Profession:

The major changes for women in the profession have been that women are now able to get into once male dominated areas, generally women are offered more management opportunities than in the past (although this is a very recent development).

Areas of Concern:

They felt that the main issues of concern were to do with parenting, lack of crèches and flexible working hours and that although the situation had improved, there was not full pay equity.

The issue of discrimination against employment of older workers was a concern for older working women.

One respondent reported that at a newspaper she had worked for, there had been a lot of bullying and that 13 staff had left over a short period. The manager concerned had made jokes of a sexual nature to and about women reporters that constituted harassment but he wouldn't acknowledge this. She had been badly assaulted by this manager, to the extent that the police were called in. It resulted in her losing her job as Deputy Chief Reporter.

Stereotypes in Advertising:

There is less stereotyping of women as 'homemakers and housewives' and men are appearing in adverts for cleaning agents but there is concern that advertising is becoming more sexually oriented.

In Summary:

Over the past few years there has been much improvement in the numbers of women being employed in the media. However, women appointed to senior management positions is slower, but as the younger ones gain experience, this should lead to a better balance of women in senior management in the future.

It appears that conditions for women vary with the particular employer and in some cases can be very good, but there is still some bullying and sexual harassment, and childcare needs of parents are not being catered for.

Prepared December 2004 by Anita Devcich, for BPW International Public Relations Committee.

I would appreciate further comments from women working in the media to enable me to keep this report updated.

Please email your comments under the above headings to: athena@enternet.co.nz