



# **The Career Progression of Men in Architecture**



**September 2007**



Published by  
**The Royal Australian Institute of Architects**

**c/- National Office Melbourne**  
Level 2  
41 Exhibition Street  
Melbourne Vic 3000

T 61 3 8620 3877  
F 61 3 8620 3864  
E [research@raia.com.au](mailto:research@raia.com.au)

September 2007

# Table of Contents

1.	Introduction.....	<b>1</b>
2.	Summary of Key Findings.....	<b>2</b>
	Career Expectations	
	Career Goals	
	Career Patterns	
	Career Progression	
	Job Satisfaction	
3.	The Sample .....	<b>4</b>
4.	Career Progression .....	<b>6</b>
5.	Career Goals .....	<b>9</b>
6.	Barriers to Career Progression .....	<b>12</b>
7.	Career Structure.....	<b>15</b>
8.	Career Progression: What does it take?.....	<b>16</b>
9.	Indicators of Progression: Different Measures of Success? .....	<b>17</b>
10.	Current Job Satisfaction .....	<b>19</b>
11.	Conclusion.....	<b>21</b>



## 1. Introduction

In 2005, the late Dr Paula Whitman of Queensland University of Technology, with the support of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA), conducted a study into the career progression of women architects. The impetus for the study was the fact that although nearly half of architecture students in 2002 were women, women tended to be under-represented within the population of directors of architectural companies. It remains the case that despite the fact that nearly half of architecture students and graduates are female, only 16% of registered architects in Australia are women.<sup>1</sup> The aim of the research was to explore women architects' attitudes to and experiences of a career in architecture. The survey found women experienced fairly high levels of satisfaction with their current jobs when it came to factors such as control over their work, intellectual stimulation and ability to achieve a balance between work and family. The study also found that women architects seemed, on the whole, to be more interested in achieving a balance between their personal and professional lives than in pursuing career progression in the traditional way. Around a quarter of women had turned down an opportunity to take up a more senior position; nearly 70% agreed that they were prepared to sacrifice career success if it threatened personal happiness; and a large majority had taken a career break of at least three months in the previous five years.

The report concluded with the question 'what about the boys?' in recognition of the fact that what was missing from the analysis was the capacity to compare the responses of the women surveyed with those of a comparable group of male architects. This led the RAIA to undertake a similar survey of male architects and this report presents the findings of that study. In 2005, 4000 male architects who were members of the RAIA were sent a questionnaire form. A total of 278 men returned a completed form.

This report takes a comparative approach, where possible, presenting the findings of the men's survey in the context of those of the women's survey. This was not possible in all cases due to some differences in the framing of questions between the surveys and because the raw data from the women's survey was not available.

---

<sup>1</sup> Architecture Schools of Australasia, [<http://architecture.com.au/i-cms?page+2476>, accessed 19 July, 2007]; <http://gradsonline.com.au/GraDSOnline/gender/gender.asp?YR=2006=1&FS=3&SS=>, accessed 19 July, 2007]; Statistics collected from the various state and territory Architects Registration Boards by the RAIA, July 2007

## 2. Summary of Key Findings

### Career Expectations

- The findings from the survey of male architects are remarkably similar in many areas to those of the earlier study of women in architecture.
- Very similar proportions of men and women architects were prepared to sacrifice career success if it threatened personal happiness (61.2% of males and 69.1% of females).
- For the majority of architects (60.8% of men and 68% of women), the desire to do interesting work and receive an appropriate salary is their career focus. Only a small proportion sees work as a necessary evil.
- However, around a third of men and women are very driven by career success and seek such success even if it comes at the expense of happiness in their personal lives (30.9% of males and 40.1% of females).

### Career Goals

- Common career goals in the short term for both men and women included growing their own practice and taking on new projects and challenges.
- When it came to goals for retirement, male and female architects aimed to be able to look back on a body of work of which they were proud. For men in particular a common trilogy was to be able to have achieved an outstanding body of work, peer recognition and a comfortable financial position.

### Career Patterns

- A striking difference between the men and women surveyed emerges in relation to the impact of parental responsibilities on their careers. Only a very small proportion of men (4.3%) perceived family commitments to be a barrier to career success compared with a much larger proportion of women (24.5%).
- The survey of women revealed that a substantial proportion of women (26%) had declined an offer of a more senior role at some stage in their career. What emerges from the study of men is that a very similar proportion of men (23%) had also declined an offer of a more senior role.
- This study also reveals that a career break is not just symptomatic of the careers of women architects, 63% of whom had taken a career break during the last five years. A smaller, but still substantial proportion of the men surveyed (46%) had similarly taken a break. Over half the women had taken a break to fulfil family commitments while very few men did so for this reason.

## **Career Progression**

- Men and women architects have very similar understandings about the basis of career progression for architects. Good performance on previous projects, compatibility with senior management and the ability to lead and manage staff were considered the most important factors.
- There is an element of discord between architects' personal measures of success and their sense of what the profession values. This discord was evident in the survey of women and was assumed to reflect women's disconnection from elements of the profession. However, the survey of men reveals that men too feel a sense of being a little out of step with the profession when it comes to the value placed on awards, project size and budget and the publication of work.

## **Job Satisfaction**

- The surveys show that architects exhibit very high levels of job satisfaction in the areas of control over their work, flexibility and control over working hours, intellectual challenge and variety of tasks.
- Remuneration, however, remains a source of dissatisfaction with only about 40% of men and women architects being satisfied with their current remuneration package.

### 3. The Sample

The male architects responding to the survey were older on average than those represented in the survey of women architects. Close to 75% of the females responding were younger than 50 compared to 56.1% of the males. Around 70% of the males responding were between the ages of 40 and 70. Just over half the sample of men were partners or directors compared with 40% of the women. A similar proportion of each sample were sole practitioners or self-employed. The average hours of paid work per week for men was about 39 with 47.5 being the actual average number of hours worked. For women the average number of hours was 30.9. Nearly all the men responding were registered architects (92.8%) compared with 74.2% of the women.

**Table 1: Age of respondents**

<b>Age Cohort</b>	<b>% of Females N=550</b>	<b>% of Males N=278</b>
not stated		2.2
30 and under	22.4	7.9
31 to 40	38.5	16.2
41 to 50	24.0	32.0
51 to 60	11.1	30.2
61 to 70	3.0	10.1
70 or older	1.0	1.4
<b>Total</b>	100.0	100.0

**Table 2: Current work title**

<b>Job Title</b>	<b>% of Females N=550</b>	<b>% of Males N=278</b>
Sole practitioner	19.8	19.8
Salaried architect – private		20.1
Salaried architect – public		1.8
Partner/ Director	40.1	54.7
Academic		1.1
Other		2.2
Not answered		.4
<b>Total</b>		100.0

\* Differences in the question format between the surveys of males and females limits the comparability of these responses.

**Table 3: Hours of work – men**

	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Mean</b>
Hours worked per week – paid	257	2	60	38.78
Hours worked per week – done	272	0	80	47.58
Valid N	255			

78.4% of the responding male architects had children compared with a smaller, but still substantial proportion of the women architects (48%). However, while 84.2% of the mothers responding felt they had over 50% of the parental responsibilities, 67.6% of fathers indicated that they fulfil less than 50% of the parental responsibilities. This is consistent with the balance between men and women in the workforce generally and certainly not peculiar to architects. Overall, Australian women tend to do double the amount of caring and domestic work than men do.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, while women surveyed who were mothers believed that parental responsibilities had had a significant (42.7%) or very significant impact (24.8%) on their careers, the men who were fathers were more inclined to indicate that their parental responsibilities had had a small (25.5%) or moderate (23.7%) impact on their careers.

---

<sup>2</sup> B. Pocock, 'Nation, work and family: The work-life squeeze in Australia' ACOSS Information Paper, Number 334, February 2003.

## 4. Career Progression

We can explore the differences between male and female architects' attitudes to their careers by comparing the responses of each group to the questions about career progression. The following table shows the different responses of male and female architects to a series of statements about their attitude to this. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statement.

**Table 4: Attitudes to career progression**

Statement	% of Males N=278		% of Females N=550	
	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree
My major priority for personal happiness is to advance my career	37.1	27.7	36.4	34.7
I wish to balance my career and personal life, but I am willing to compromise personal priorities if necessary to obtain career development	38.8	30.9	43.5	40.1
I am willing to forego career success if it threatens personal happiness and balance in my life	18.7	61.2	11.1	69.1
All I want is to be able to do interesting work and receive an appropriate salary	19.4	60.8	14.4	68
I have to work. It is a necessary evil	57.2	21.6	60	22.6
I routinely and regularly review my career and plan for my future. I set goals and I know what I have to do to achieve them	32.4	38.8	26.9	45.1
I look out for opportunities to advance my career, but I don't regularly make plans or set goals	27.7	39.9	27.6	41.4
I do not consciously look for opportunities for career advancement but if they present themselves I make the most of them	28.4	47.5	30	46.4

The survey of women architects showed that a majority of women (69.1%) were willing to forego career progression if it meant that their personal happiness would be threatened. Similarly a substantial proportion (68%) was motivated primarily by the desire to do interesting work for appropriate reward.

While these priorities were initially assumed to be characteristic of female architects, this survey demonstrates that male architects have remarkably similar attitudes to career progression. The desire for balance and interesting work emerge as the main priorities for men as well. As one respondent said, 'an architectural career is more like a vocation than employment'. Perhaps it is the nature of architecture as a vocation or calling that determines this attitude; it certainly appears that the gender of the architect is not a determinative factor in attitudes to career progression.

It can be seen that a very similar proportion of men (60.8% of men compared with 68% of women) agreed that all they wanted to do was interesting work for an appropriate reward. It is also the case that a majority of men (61.2%) were prepared to forego career progression if it threatened personal happiness. Work is not viewed as a necessary evil by the majority of either male or female architects surveyed. Only 21.6% of males and 22.6% of females surveyed indicated that they were working because they had to, rather than because they wanted to.

Clearly, the majority of architects enjoy their work and strive to do interesting work while maintaining a balance between their work and personal lives. Although the survey revealed that a proportion of male architects were very focussed on pursuing their careers and were prepared to sacrifice other priorities if necessary, the proportion of men who exhibited this attitude was fairly similar to the proportion of women who had done so. About a third of male and female architects indicated that career was their main priority. Some 27.7% of males and 34.7% of females agreed that their major priority for personal happiness was to advance their career. Similarly 30.9% of males and 40.1% of females agreed that they wished to balance their career with their personal life but would compromise personal priorities if necessary to obtain career development. Interestingly, a slightly higher proportion of women architects than male architects agreed with those statements.

One of the notable findings of the study of women was that 26% had at some stage in their career declined an offer to take on a more senior role. What emerges from this study is that a fairly similar proportion of men had also declined an offer of a more senior role. A total of 23% of men surveyed indicated that they had turned down such an offer at some point in their career. The reasons for declining such an offer, however, appear to be different for men than they were for women. The table below shows the different responses.

**Table 5: Reason for declining more senior role**

<b>Reason for Declining Senior Role</b>	<b>% of Males N=278</b>	<b>% of Females N=550</b>
I had different career aspirations	11.9	64.1
I felt that I would not gain any increase in satisfaction in my work	11.9	55.2
I did not see the more senior role as offering a viable career path into the future	6.8	49.7
I felt that it would take me away from the sort of work that I enjoy	11.5	46.2
I felt that it would interfere with my family commitments	10.1	42.8
I felt that it would interfere with my lifestyle and outside activities	8.3	37.1
I felt that the expectations placed on me would be too demanding	4.3	35.4
I felt that there was inadequate remuneration offered	8.3	32.2

Respondents were given a list of factors and asked to indicate which of them had played a role in their decision to decline the role.<sup>3</sup> They were able to choose more than one factor. Clearly the reasons the survey suggested for turning down a more senior role had less resonance with men than they did with women.

While it is possible to get a fairly clear picture of the reasons why women had turned down a more senior role, it is not so clear regarding men. The four factors selected by the largest proportion of men were 'different career aspirations', 'would not gain increase in job satisfaction', 'would take me away from work I enjoy' and 'would interfere with family commitments'. However, these factors were only indicated by quite small proportions of men (around 10%), whereas they were rated by a substantial proportion of women as important in their decision to decline a role. So while a large group of women (64.1%) indicated that the fact that they had different career aspirations was a factor in their decision, only 11.9% of men did. Similarly, while a little over half of the women surveyed who had declined a more senior position indicated that they thought that they would not gain increased job satisfaction, only 11.9% of men in that position indicated that this was a factor in their decision.

Unfortunately then, the results do not provide us with much of an indication of men's reasons for declining a more senior role. A small proportion indicated that 'other' factors were important (5.8%). The 'other' reasons indicated were quite diverse, including 'first child on the way and concerned that future may be best served by maintaining current employment' to 'too high risk involved (being offered a directorship)'. All we can conclude is that while there is some overlap between men and women's decision making when it comes to career progression, there may well be significant differences that were not captured by the survey responses.

---

<sup>3</sup> There was a minor difference in the format of the question asked of men. Women were provided with the list of factors and given a tick 'yes' or 'no' option. Men were provided with the same list of factors but only given a tick 'yes' option.

## 5. Career Goals

The survey of women architects revealed that the most nominated career goal for the next five years was to 'grow my own practice'; 26.9% of women respondents indicated that this was their goal. This was followed by 'take on new project types / professional challenges', nominated by 22.7% of women. Other goals included 'get registered' (12%), 'balance between personal and professional demands' (11.8%) and 'get promoted' (11.5%).

When we look at the responses of male architects to the same question, we again see strong similarities between their responses and those of their female counterparts.<sup>4</sup> The men responding were also focussed on building their own practice as the most common career goal. Taking on new projects and challenges was the goal for the next five years for 14.9% of men. Responses within this category often reflected a desire for better quality or larger scale projects.

**Table 6: Short term career goals**

<b>Career Goals of Architects</b>	<b>% of Males*</b>	<b>% of Females*</b>
Grow own practice	26.2	26.9
Take on new projects/ challenges	14.7	22.7
Leave architecture	11.8	4.7
Maintain, appreciate or consolidate	11.8	0
Be more profitable	8.6	9
Advance within the profession/ or current organisation	7.5	11.5
Further education/ skills/ knowledge	4.6	10.5
Reduce workload/ size of projects/ scope of current role	4.3	0
Get registered	3.9	12.7
Finish/ attain benchmark leading projects	3.9	11.2
Publications/ recognition	3.5	4.3
International experience	2.8	6.7
Balance in my life between personal and professional demands	1.7	11.8
Teach/ pass on skills	1.4	
Learn CAD/ develop skills	1.0	5.0
Network and develop contacts	0.7	5.4

\* Multiple response

<sup>4</sup> The survey questions were identical for both surveys. However, as the question was an open ended question, there may be differences in the way individual responses were coded into generic categories. The responses of the male architects were coded into the coding frame already developed for the survey of women. Multiple responses were allowed for and were relatively common among the male architects. Additional codes were added where the existing codes were insufficient, such as for 'maintain, appreciate and consolidate' and 'reduce workload'.

The difference between the age cohorts of the samples probably explains the larger proportion of men who indicated that they were considering leaving architecture or retiring in the next few years. Many of the male respondents were focussed on developing a succession plan for their practice. A typical response in this vein was along the lines of 'consolidate the last 10 years growth and facilitate some kind of succession / retirement strategy'. Others were already focussed on a life away from architecture: 'retirement – go sailing, travel and run a farm'. A number within this category were seeking a halfway point between full retirement and the demands of full time work.

The male architects surveyed were similarly asked what they hoped to achieve by the time they retired.

**Table 7: Career goals at retirement**

<b>Career Goal at Retirement</b>	<b>% of Males*</b>	<b>% of Females*</b>
Body of work of which I am proud/ complete benchmark projects	34.1	43.6
Be more profitable/ achieve financial security	21.9	17.2
Happy clients/ high satisfaction with my projects from clients/ public	17.2	11.4
Grow my own practice/increase my autonomy/ build successful and continuing practice	16.1	11.8
Publication/ public recognition/ professional image and respect/ contribution to profession	12.9	14.5
No plans to ever retire	6.4	5.4
Have made the world a better place/ made a difference	5.7	18.1
Looking after my family and my career well – finding a balance	3.9	7.2
Depart from industry	1.4	0.9
Heighten public respect for the role of the architect in the community	1.0	1.8
Achieve higher qualifications	1.0	
Become an RAIA fellow	0.3	

\* Multiple response

It is interesting to compare the goals that male architects have for the next five years with those for retirement. Financial matters had been mentioned by relatively few men as a priority for the next five years (8.6%) whereas achieving financial security by retirement was a goal by retirement for 21.9% of responding male architects. Establishing and 'growing' a practice was the career goal for the next five years for the largest proportion of men (26.2%). This goal remained important as one to be achieved by retirement (16.1%). Many of the men were particularly oriented toward the retirement goal of having built a practice that can continue on after their retirement. As one respondent put it, his goal was, 'to ensure a platform for transition to enable the practice to survive and continue to flourish'.

For the largest proportion of men, however, their goal for retirement was to be able to look back on a body of work of which they are proud. To have achieved 'some wonderful pieces of architecture' was an important goal for 34.1% of the responding males. A number of men also believed that they would be happy, if at retirement, they had happy clients and a high level of satisfaction with their work from clients and the public (17.2%). A closely related goal was that of achieving public recognition or the respect of their peers and the community. This was nominated as a career goal to be achieved by retirement by 12.9% of men. Many of the men had multiple goals; a common trilogy was 'an outstanding body of work, peer recognition and a comfortable financial position.'

When we compare men's retirement career goals with those identified by the women surveyed in 2005, we see that the career goals for women architects at retirement were very similar to those identified by the men surveyed for the current survey. Women, too, had sought to be able to look back on their career with satisfaction and to have completed a body of work of which they were proud.

## 6. Barriers to Career Progression

One area where very stark differences emerged between the male and the female survey respondents was in response to the question ‘what are the barriers to achieving your goals?’ Whereas women architects perceived ‘family commitments’ to be a considerable barrier to their progress within architecture, this view was shared by very few of the men surveyed. Of the male architects, this barrier was mentioned by only 4.3% of respondents, but nearly a quarter of the women (24.5%). This is despite the fact that a larger proportion of men sampled had children (78.4%) than did women (48%). The difference may be partly explained by the age differentials between the samples; the male respondent sample being on average older (and therefore probably beyond the early, intense years of parenting) than the female sample. However, it is more likely to be explained by the differential impact that family responsibilities are perceived to have on the careers of men and women architects than the fact of having children or not. This is shown in the Table below.

**Table 8: Impact of parental responsibility on career**

<b>Impact of Parental Responsibility on Career</b>	<b>% of Males</b>	<b>% of Females</b>
No impact	7.9	3.0
Small impact	25.5	8.0
Moderate impact	23.7	21.5
Significant impact	16.9	42.7
Very significant impact	5.0	24.8

**Table 9: Barriers to career progression**

<b>Perceived Barriers to Progress within Architecture</b>	<b>% of Males</b>	<b>% of Females</b>
Industry factors (lack of contacts, quality/ quantity of clients/ work, ‘corporate mentality’, old boys networks, need for reputation)	20.8	16.1
Financial barriers	15.8	12.7
Lack of time	14.7	18.7
Negative personality characteristics (lack of discipline, risk aversion, procrastination, lack of confidence)	12.2	16.8
Recession/ economic conditions/ regulation/ planning controls	11.8	0
Getting the right staff/ skills/ structures for practice	9.7	
Lack of professional support (lack of mentoring, problems with managers, difficulty finding like minded colleagues/ partners)	5.7	15.8
Family commitments	4.3	24.5
Age	2.8	4.0
Death/ health issues	2.8	0
Lack of business skills	1.0	0
Structural issues in industry (i.e. procurement, lack of competitions)	1.0	0
Lack of respect for the role of architects in the community	0.7	5.0
Gender		9.0

\* multiple response

For male architects, the main barriers to achieving career goals were identified as factors relating to the industry, such as the quality or quantity of available clients. The 'quality of clients' was the code used to categorise responses that indicated a difficulty related to clients' understanding of the value and costs associated with architectural design. A typical response in this vein was, 'clients' lack of understanding of what architects do and their perception of architecture as an expense rather than an investment'. Other barriers in this category included difficulties with establishing networks or contacts and the constraints imposed by factors such as perceived 'old boys networks' and 'corporate mentality'. These factors were considered to be a barrier to career progression by 20.8% of the men surveyed.

Financial barriers were nominated by 15.8% of men. This included the difficulty of establishing cash flow in small practices, inadequate salaries and fee competition, particularly by other less well qualified building designers. Another 14.7% indicated that time was the problem and many noted the 'time and money' combination as their major barrier to achieving their career goals.

Just as was the case in the survey of women architects, some men identified 'negative personal characteristics' as a barrier to their career progress. The sorts of personal characteristics that were perceived to stand in the way of career were those such as 'risk aversion', lack of confidence, and lack of self-discipline. Twelve percent of men surveyed believed that aspects of their own personality stood in the way of their career in some way.

There were differences between the responses of the responding men and women and the men identified a number of barriers that the women had not.<sup>5</sup> Some 11.8% of men identified external factors such as economic conditions (particularly the threat of recession or a 'property bust'), government regulation and planning controls as potential barriers to achieving their career goals. Another potential barrier identified by men but not the women surveyed was the difficulty of getting the right staff or the right skill mix for their practice. This was identified by just fewer than ten percent of those men responding (9.7%). Other perceived barriers were lack of professional support or a difficulty finding like minded colleagues, or age and health issues.

Thus, we see very similar goals and aspirations emerge as between the men and women respondents. Growing their own practice and the opportunity to undertake interesting, challenging and varied projects were the career goals nominated most often for male architects thinking about the next five years. The men then hoped, on retirement, to be able to look back with pride on a substantial body of work and to have attained financial security. The potential barriers to the achievement of their career goals identified by the men were factors related to the industry such as lack of clients with an appreciation of the value of design or simply just a lack of clients. Other barriers were lack of time, financial constraints and perceived negative personality traits such as risk aversion.

---

<sup>5</sup> These are indicated by a 0 in Table 9

For the women, growing their own practice and the opportunity to work on challenging projects were also the most commonly identified career goals for the next five years. Women architects also had similar goals on retirement to the men. They sought to be able to look back on substantial projects and to feel a sense of pride in their achievements. The major difference to emerge between the groups was in relation to the potential barriers to the achievement of their goals. The most commonly identified barrier for women architects was family commitments, followed by lack of time. Only a very small proportion of men had identified family commitments as a barrier. This was despite the fact that a larger proportion of the sample of male architects had children than did women.

## 7. Career Structure

Another of the striking findings of the survey of women was that nearly two thirds of the women surveyed (63%) had taken a career break, away from architecture, during their last five years of employment. The breaks ranged from three months to two years. The main reasons for the breaks were to raise children or fulfil family commitments (53%) or to travel overseas or interstate (51.9%). A further 32.5% of women had taken a break to study full time.

The survey of male architects provides us with comparative data and reveals that 46% of men had similarly taken a break of three months or longer from architecture. That a smaller, but still substantial proportion of men appear also to have a 'discontinuous' pattern of employment suggests that the pattern is not necessarily gender related.

However, the reasons for which men take career breaks vary from those of women. Only 4.7% of men indicated that they had taken a break to raise children or fulfil family responsibilities. A smaller proportion of men (32.4%) than women (51.9%) had taken a break to travel, although this was the most common reason for men to take a break. A much smaller proportion of men had taken a break to study full time as well (11.2% of men compared with 32.5% of women).

**Table 10: Reason for taking a career break**

<b>Reason for Taking break from Architecture</b>	<b>% of Males#</b>	<b>% of Females^</b>
Travel	32.4	51.9
Study	11.2	32.5
Work outside architecture	5.4	16.2
Raise children/ fulfil family commitments	4.7	53.0
Break owing to inability to find employment	4.3	13.3
Rest	3.2	7.8
Personal Illness	1.8	7.5
Illness of others	1.1	4.9
Other reasons	2.2	

# Due to the way this question was framed, the percentages are of the total number of respondents rather than of the men who answered 'yes' to the question about a career break. For this reason, the figures don't total to 100%.

^ For the women's survey, the question was framed as a multiple response.

## 8. Career Progression: What does it take?

The survey of women sought to test women architects' perception of 'what it takes' to progress in a career in architecture. Similarly, the survey of men asked respondents to indicate the extent to which they believed that career progression for an architect within practice was based on a number of listed factors. We see that men and women architects have very similar perceptions of what it takes to get ahead or to progress one's career in architecture. The majority of both men and women agreed that good performance on previous projects, compatibility with the office culture and senior management, the ability to lead and manage staff and the ability to bring in clients and work, were the most important factors influencing career progression. As was the case with women architects, men were fairly evenly divided over the extent to which factors such as the ability to do overtime, the number of hours worked, the length of work experience and appearance played a part in career progression. Interestingly gender was considered to be a factor by only a very small proportion of men (17.6%) whereas nearly half (44.1%) of the women surveyed had believed that it was important.

**Table 11: The bases of career progression**

<b>Career Progression is Based on ...</b>	<b>Males % Agree*</b>	<b>Females % Agree*</b>
Good performance on previous projects	85.3	92.5
Compatibility with senior management	79.9	87.8
Ability to lead and manage staff	84.5	83.5
Compatibility with office culture	72.3	82.0
Ability to bring in clients and work	74.8	80.0
Technical competence	69.1	78.7
Business income generated	62.9	71.5
Ability to do overtime	47.8	62.7
Number of hours worked	48.9	51.2
Length of work experience	44.6	49.3
Appearance	37.1	46.0
Gender	17.6	44.1
Age	26.3	35.4
Academic qualifications	13.3	30.6
Academic achievement	13.0	20.2

\* includes responses 'agree' and 'strongly agree'

## 9. Indicators of Progression: Different Measures of Success?

The central question posed for the research into the career progression of women architects was 'why is it that approximately 40% of the architecture students are female but less than one percent of directors of architectural companies are female'.

One of the possible answers the survey analysis put forward to this question was that women architects simply have different career aspirations and don't aspire to be directors of architectural companies. That survey found that there was a certain degree of discord between what women see as indicators of career progress and what they believe the profession as a whole sees as indicators of such progress. This discord was most evident in relation to indicators such as 'recognition from peers in the form of awards' which only 48.4% of women personally believed to be an important indicator of career progress, but which 88.5% of women believed to be considered an important indicator of progress by the rest of the profession. There was a similar gap between the respondents own view and their perception of the view of the broader profession on the indicator 'coverage of work within journals'. The indicator 'size and budget of completed project' similarly revealed that women felt somewhat 'out of step' with their profession. While 79.1% of women believed that this was considered by the profession to be an important indicator of career progress, only 31.6% felt that this was an important personal indicator of progress.

There were indicators, however, on which women's own views about what was important were in accord with their sense of what the profession views as important. These were the 'quality of projects completed' and 'income generated'. There were just over ten percentage points between women's perception of the profession's view, and their own perception of the importance of these indicators.

What is particularly revealing about the analysis of the men's responses to the same question is that male architects seem to feel a similar sense of being out of step with the rest of the profession. The question arises then, 'who is the profession' if it is not the men and women of whom it is comprised?

**Table 12: Indicators of career success**

<b>Indicator of Career Progression/ Success</b>	<b>Men's view (% important or very important)</b>	<b>The views of others (% of men who believe important or very important to others)</b>
Recognition from peers in the form of awards	39.2	78.7
Size/ budget of projects completed	35.3	73.0
Number of projects completed	28.4	43.8
Quality of projects completed	91.7	82.8
Income generated	55.3	54.3
Number of people employed within a practice	15.5	43.5
Coverage of work within professional journals	32.0	71.6
Invitations to speak at professional events	25.9	48.5
Positions held within professional organisation	21.5	43.5
Seniority within a practice – management level	55.0	73.4

As with the women architects surveyed, the smallest gap between perceptions of their own and the profession's view was in relation to the indicators 'quality of projects completed' and 'income generated'. There was less than a ten percent gap between the two measures. The indicators on which the men responding felt they were most out of step with the rest of their profession were 'size / budget of projects completed', 'recognition from peers in the form of awards' and 'coverage of work within professional journals'.

## 10. Current Job Satisfaction

The expectation of the researchers prior to commencing the survey of women was that women architects would tend to be dissatisfied with their current jobs. However, contrary to expectations, the majority of women surveyed were satisfied with their current positions on most of the indicators used. These indicators included 'control over won work', flexibility and control over working hours', 'variety of tasks', 'intellectual challenges' and 'personal autonomy'.<sup>6</sup> The highest level of dissatisfaction was in regard to the level of remuneration with 31.6% of women responding being either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied, and less than half being satisfied, with the level of remuneration they receive.

**Table 13: Satisfaction with current job**

<b>Satisfaction with current job</b>	<b>% of Males</b>	<b>% of Females</b>
Skill development opportunities	57.2	64.9
Control over won work	77.3	77.2
Opportunity for high profile work	50.3	47.6
Remuneration package	42.1	40.9
Organisational culture	50.0	48.9
Flexibility and control over working hours	70.9	75.8
Support to develop professionally	48.5	50.6
Support to develop personally	43.5	46.5
Support of work/life balance	51.8	62.2
Long term career opportunities	52.5	48.6
Short term career opportunities	53.2	56.3
Present rate of career opportunities	51.4	49.8
Variety of tasks	76.6	73.4
Intellectual challenge	75.9	71.1
Personal autonomy	84.2	77.1

Looking at Table 13, we can see that the responding male architects have similarly high levels of satisfaction with their current job. Factors to do with control and autonomy at work such as 'personal autonomy', 'control over won work', and 'flexibility and control over working hours' were those that male architects were most satisfied with. The degree of intellectual challenge and the variety of tasks were also rated very highly. It is therefore fairly safe to say that it is in these areas that architects in general are most satisfied with their current jobs.

<sup>6</sup> Studies of female lawyers have described the 'paradox of the contented female lawyer'. Studies show that job satisfaction is the same or higher for women lawyers than their male counterparts but first year women lawyers are more likely to contemplate leaving jobs as well as being more likely to actually leave their jobs than male lawyers. See J. Hagan, F. Kay, 'Even Lawyers Get the Blues: Gender, Depression and Job Satisfaction in Legal Practice', 2007, *Law and Society Review*, 41(1), p. 51 at p. 55.

Overall there were more indicators on which a majority of architects, male or female, were satisfied than there were on which they were dissatisfied.<sup>7</sup> The areas of lowest satisfaction or highest dissatisfaction were very similar between males and females. Only 42.1% of men were satisfied or very satisfied with their remuneration package, compared with 40.9% of women. On factors such as the opportunities for career progression (either with the present rate of progression, or short/ long term opportunities), and the support available to develop personally or professionally, the balance of satisfaction to dissatisfaction was roughly even, with about half of the male and female samples being satisfied and half dissatisfied.

---

<sup>7</sup> The relatively high level of job satisfaction in architects of both sexes is consistent with existing research on job satisfaction. Research suggests that job satisfaction increases with education to the extent that the individual feels that they can use their skills in their job. The survey shows that architects feel that they gain a high level of intellectual stimulation. Job satisfaction for individuals also tends to increase with level of education. See A. Long, 'Happily Ever After? A Study of Job Satisfaction in Australia' 2005, *The Economic Record*, 81(255), p. 303 at p.313.

## 11. Conclusion

The survey presents us with a picture of male architects as, in the main, happy with the level of autonomy and intellectual stimulation offered by their work. They strive to do interesting and challenging projects but also seek to maintain personal happiness and balance in their lives. Major career goals for the short term include building their own practices and taking on new projects and challenges. On retirement, many aim to be able to look back on a body of work of which they are proud, to have attained financial security and to have satisfied clients.

The responding men were less satisfied with their level of remuneration and opportunities for personal and professional development in their current jobs. Barriers to career progression were perceived to be lack of time, financial constraints (particularly cash flow in less well established practices) and factors relating to the demand for architectural services. Other challenges noted included the vulnerability of the industry to economic downturn and personal characteristics such as lack of discipline or risk aversion.

The main impetus for the survey of male architects was the earlier survey of women architects. The RAIA sought to shed light on the findings of that survey by surveying a comparable group of male architects. This survey of men's career progression has revealed a high degree of similarity in the attitudes of male and female architects. Architects, both male and female, enjoy their work but seek balance in their working lives. A majority were willing to forego career success if happiness and balance were to be threatened. The desire for interesting work was a motivator for a majority of both sexes and only a very small proportion perceived work to be a necessary evil.

Similarly, the career goals of men and women, both in the short term and the long term were alike. Growing one's own practice and taking on challenging projects were the most commonly identified short term goals. Having an established practice and being able to look back on an excellent body of work were the long term goals of many architects, male or female.

Yet, the similarities make aspects of the women's survey more, rather than less, perplexing. The revelation that around a quarter of the women surveyed had turned down a more senior position was mooted as a possible answer to the central research question; what is the reason for lack of women in senior positions in architectural firms? However, this loses some of its explanatory power in the face of the finding that a comparable proportion of men had also turned down more senior positions. The fact that a number of women felt that they were out of step with the rest of the profession on the importance of particular measures of success (such as the value of awards or size and budget of completed projects) was also seen as a possible answer. Yet again, however, this possible explanation is undermined by the fact that the men's survey revealed a similar level of discord.

The surveys revealed major differences between the career experiences of men and women architects regarding the impact of family responsibilities on career progression. Despite the fact that a larger proportion of the men than the women had children, women were more likely to report that family responsibilities had had a significant or very significant impact on their careers; that having family responsibilities was a major barrier to their career progression; and were more likely to have taken leave of three months or more because of family commitments. This is not to say that family responsibilities did not emerge as issues for male architects, rather that it was not perceived to be a significant barrier to progression.

The two surveys constitute a valuable comparative study of the career expectations and experiences of male and female architects. As a result, we have a fairly good understanding of the hopes and dreams of architects and of their concerns and frustrations. We can conclude that, apart from the differential experience of having family responsibilities, male and female architects are probably more alike than different.

We are left, however, with the following question. Is this different experience of family responsibilities a sufficient explanation for the large gap between the number of women starting and graduating from architecture courses in Australia and the number of registered women architects?

