

*It's one of society's "most blatant prejudices": taller men land better jobs, make more money and get more votes. And short women have their problems, too*

Condensed from "THE HEIGHT OF YOUR LIFE"  
RALPH KEYES

# The Height Report

SOME YEARS AGO, Leonard P. Deck, then the director of personnel at the University of Pittsburgh, was waiting in front of the city's exclusive Duquesne Club. He amused himself by watching members of Pittsburgh's establishment enter the building. One thing about them was striking: their height. "They were," recalls Deck, "uniformly tall."

This observation intrigued Deck so much that he decided to survey a sample of Pitt's graduates and compare height with starting salary. His results were revealing: Among 91 graduates of one class, those under 6'



averaged \$701 a month in starting salary, followed by 6-footers who were paid \$719; 6'1"-ers, \$723; and 6'2"-ers, \$788.

The overall salary bonus for being 6'2" rather than 5'11" was 12 percent. (The bonus for being academically above average was only 4 percent.) Deck's findings, compiled in 1967, were the first real confirmation of something suspected for a

long time: The rewards for being tall in this society include money.

Adam J. Boxer, an investment banker, has since provided our most thorough documentation of how

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height influences income. In conjunction with labor economist Lee Benham, Boxer correlated income with height in a sample of 17,000 Army Air Corps cadets who were measured in 1943. Of this group, 10,000 reported their salaries after 12 years, and 5000 after 26 years. Even allowing for such factors as I.Q., educational level and marital status, Boxer and Benham concluded that those 6' and over could still count on making around 8 percent more money annually than those below 5'6" simply as a reward for size. Boxer's terse summary: "We found a very definite income differential attributable solely to height."

Tall is ahead in other areas as well. Tallness stands head and shoulders above any other size in the competition for rewards social, sexual, athletic, political and practical. The tall man is not only able to earn the highest income, he is more likely to be welcomed into clubs, to win the best woman, and to achieve high office. Studies of Presidential races found voters not only expressing their preference for a taller candidate but sometimes misperceiving their choice as taller. The noted economist John Kenneth Galbraith (6'8½") calls the bias in favor of size one of society's "most blatant and forgiven prejudices."

To find out how people feel about their height, I distributed questionnaires. Among 200 responses, it was rare for anyone of *any* height to say he liked his stature.

Tall men complained of problems

finding clothes, friends and a comfortable seat on a plane. Although those in the middle range tended to accept their height, most admitted that at times they wanted to be taller. And those below the average (5'9" for men in America, 5'3.6" for women) invariably wished they were taller.

Since so few of us are happy with the feet and inches we've been granted, the height we report to the world tends to be a hodgepodge of fact, fantasy, and whatever we think we can get away with. Among a group of new employees who were measured *after* they had recorded their heights on an application, 30 out of 30 were found to have rounded their heights upward by at least an inch.

Subjects repeatedly tell me heights that my eye knows aren't accurate—men especially. Because for men, height is quite simply a measure of manhood. "*Men* are 6 feet tall and above," says a 5'11" psychologist, who regularly awards himself the extra inch. We assume that bigger people are stronger and more capable.

This leads to a preference for such employees. Marketing professor David Kurtz of Eastern Michigan University asked 140 sales recruiters whom they would choose between two equally qualified candidates—one who was 6'1" or one who was 5'5". Seventy-two percent said they'd take the taller candidate, 27 percent expressed no preference and only one said he'd take the smaller guy. After his results appeared in print, Kurtz

got a large response from corporate personnel officers, with "most acknowledging it was true."

Robert Half, president of the country's largest employment agency specializing in accountants and financial executives, says that tall people have an easier time being hired because "they fulfill an image." One executive recruiter on Wall Street has found that tallness is nearly a prerequisite for high-visibility jobs. "You send over two people who are equally qualified for a \$50,000-a-year-and-up job," he explains, "and they'll pick the taller guy every time."

Tom Mechling (6'2"), IBM's former director of Corporate Information Activities, says that for visible representatives of that company—salesmen, public-relations people, corporate officers—an unwritten rule has historically given preference to talls. "This was never spelled out," says Mechling. "You just knew what 'image' was expected. IBM salesmen look domineering, aggressive, and tallness is part of that." Mechling adds that this hiring bias used to imbue the whole company.

Height in business is not just a man's issue. Women are increasingly judged on male terms. Until recently, smaller women had every assurance of being the cultural ideal: petite, diminutive, demure. But it's no longer fashionable to be a small

woman: lack of size implies lack of clout.

Being that much shorter than a short man, a small woman in the job market has double trouble. Shirley Chisholm, the Congresswoman who is a petite figure of average height and weighing about 90 pounds, couldn't find work after college even as a teacher's aide until, with indignation, she exploded, "Don't judge me by my size," and was given a successful tryout.

Taller women are given preference in jobs involving public contact. "It gives me the upper hand, in some ways," says a 6' employe of a Wall Street investment firm. Among men especially, she feels no problem being taken seriously, due in part to the credibility imparted by her size. She doesn't doubt that intimidation might also be involved—especially with smaller male colleagues.

The bias against short people is, of course, extremely hard to document. Although discrimination in hiring against racial minorities, ethnic groups and women has been studied to a fare-thee-well, discrimination by height is virtually untouched as a subject of serious inquiry. Perhaps it's time to document that, by consuming fewer resources, taking up less space and fitting comfortably into any size car, smaller people are a sounder people for the '80s. Our goal is simple: we shall overcome!



THE ATTENTION span of a typical human is ten praises, six promises or one preachment.

—Jocco Grand