



Separate and

Unequal

BY DAVID FRABOTTA, SENIOR EDITOR

Are public and private courses really that different? Of course, they have certain distinctions when it comes to service and amenities, but the job remains largely the same for superintendents. Sure, there might be a few extra dollars floating around a private facility, but the expectation for quality turf persists regardless of ownership structures.

But salary, job satisfaction, financial stability and other quality-of-life concerns appear to be contingent on the type of facility where a superintendent works.

It's no secret that exclusive clubs are willing to pay extra for the superintendents who host PGA Tour events or ones who maintain possible U.S. Open venues. And it appears that many of the thousands of other private clubs are cut from the same cloth.

The main disparity between public and private

Superintendents at private clubs are three times more likely to be satisfied with salaries than those at public courses

superintendents revolves around compensation. Superintendents at private 18-hole courses are almost three times as likely to say they make great money versus those who manage 18-hole public facilities, according to *Golfdom's* recent reader survey on the state of the profession and the industry (about the survey, page 20A). About 30 percent of all private club superintendents say they make "great money" compared to just 11 percent at public courses.

Conversely, just about 3 percent of all private club superintendents say "the pay stinks" versus 13 percent of all public golf course superintendents. Of the 9 percent of respondents who say "the pay stinks," the majority (56 percent) work for public 18-hole layouts, and only 9 percent work at private 18-hole clubs.

Interestingly, job tenure had no statistical corre-

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lation to salary satisfaction, indicating perhaps that entry-level jobs, mid-level jobs and initial salaries are in line with expectations.

Furthermore, we asked respondents about their biggest personal concern (chart, page 22). Although the ability to retire and lack of free time were the biggest concerns for all superintendents, those who manage public courses again were almost twice as likely as their private counterparts to say that “not enough pay” was their biggest concern.

But money can't buy you love. Our survey found that private club superintendents are slightly more likely (4 percent) to worry about their jobs than those at public courses. In addition, a few more private club superintendents say they have less free time and are more worried about their ability to retire than public course superintendents.

Superintendents also listed these two recurring concerns: “ability to leave the property for two or more days,” and “raises not keeping up with health-care and living expenses.” Several superintendents reported that college tuition for their families is an increasingly stressful financial challenge, and, of course, balancing work with family is a tightrope for all superintendents.

But despite the disparities of some jobs, superintendents at 18-hole public courses were just as likely to say they would be superintendents again as their higher-paid, stressed-out counterparts. Fully 82 percent of all respondents said they would become superintendents again. The anomalies are turf managers at public nine-hole courses: 32 percent of them say they would choose a different profession the next time around. ■

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About the Survey

Golfdom conducts its survey on the state of the profession and the industry annually to gauge superintendents' sentiments about their jobs and the golf industry.

The survey was conducted online in October and November, and a drawing to win either an iPod or home theater system was established to encourage participation. A small number of other golf employees, including general managers and architects, also participated in the survey.

A total of 642 responses were recorded during a 38-day period, which produced a 6.1 percent response rate. Respondents were 97 percent men and 3 percent women. The majority of respondents (68 percent) work for either a public 18-hole course or a private 18-hole course (chart below). Just 14 percent of respondents have held their current position for more than 20 years; 26 percent have 10 to 20 years tenure; 26 percent have worked in their position for five to 10 years; 21 percent have three to five years tenure, and 12 percent have less than two years in their current position.

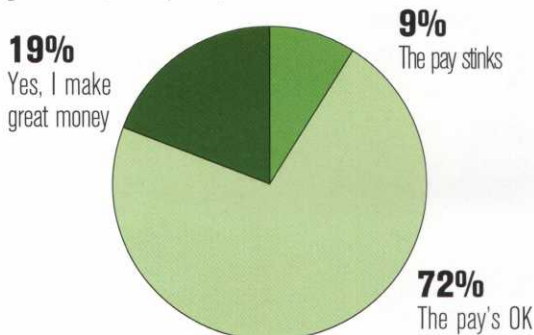
Not all questions were answered by all respondents; the number of respondents is indicated for each question. The margin of error is plus or minus 3.75. ■

Facility Type (640 responses)

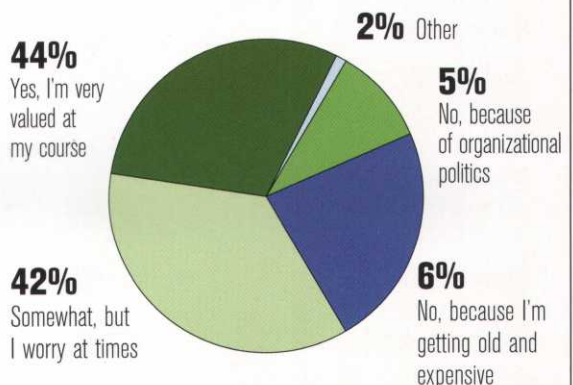
Public 9	4%
Private 9	1%
Public 18	39%
Private 18	29%
Private 36	2%
Other *	24%

* Includes 50 27- to 36-hole public courses; 27 27- to 36-hole resorts or semi-private courses; 31 18-hole resort or semi-private courses; 24 courses with more than 36 holes; five military courses; and three semi-private nine-hole courses.

Do you think you are adequately paid for what you do? (635 responses)



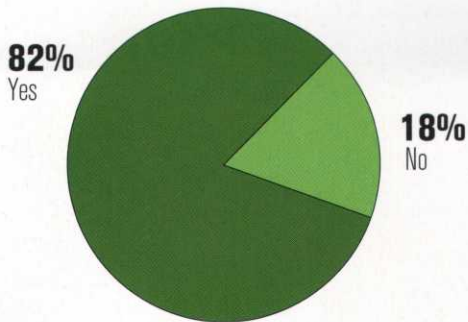
Do you feel secure in your job? (638 responses)



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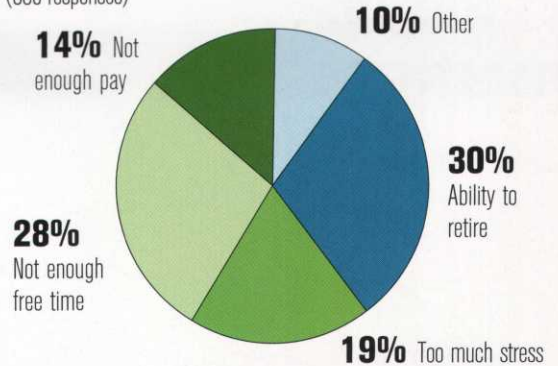
Would you become a superintendent again?

(628 responses)

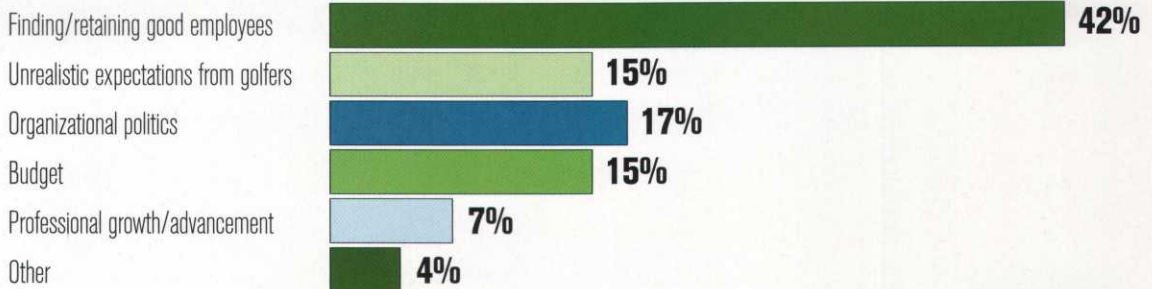


What is your biggest personal concern?

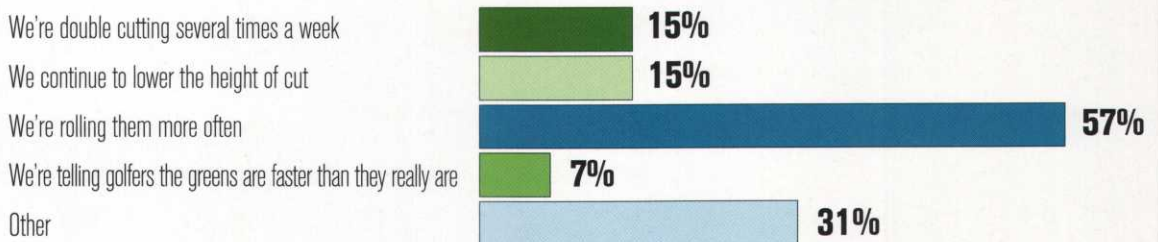
(635 responses)



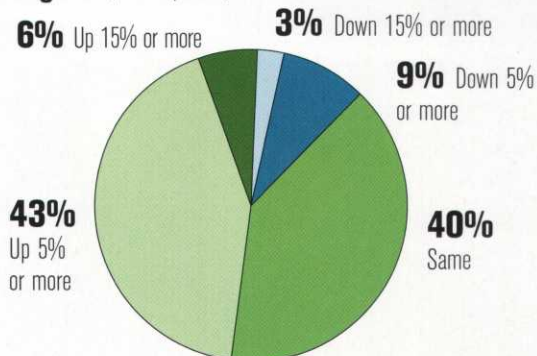
What is your biggest professional concern? (635 responses)



How are you managing the demand for faster putting greens? (Respondents could choose multiple answers)



What's the status of your 2008 maintenance budget ... (637 responses)



What is the area of your budget you're most likely to cut if asked to do so? (635 responses)

