

CHAPTER

2

METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this research involved a telephone survey of 1,202 federal public servants and 701 clients of government service, as well as 12 focus group discussions with public servants and clients. The methodological approach for the surveys and focus groups is described in this chapter of the report. A more detailed account of the survey methodology can be found in Appendix A.

2.1 Surveys

Two (2) survey instruments were designed (although considerable overlap exists between them): one (1) for the three levels of the public service examined in this study (i.e., senior and middle managers and front line staff), and one (1) for the general public/clients of government service. These questionnaires are presented with annotated results in Appendix B. The instruments were designed on the basis of the issues outlined by the Task Force. In addition selected items from our 1990 PS 2000 Service to the Public (STP) survey instruments were reproduced in the present research to track changes in perceptions and expectations regarding government service. An initial meeting with the client helped us refine the study issues and led to the development of the draft survey instruments. The survey

instruments were designed to last an average of approximately 20 minutes. Each questionnaire was thoroughly tested prior to commencement of the survey. Both surveys were conducted during February and early March 1996.

Eight federal government departments considered to be heavily involved in service delivery were targeted for inclusion in the study. These are also departments which were prominently featured in the sampling for the 1990 study. These departments are:

- Revenue Canada;
- Human Resources Development Canada;
- Industry Canada;
- Health Canada;
- Transport Canada;
- Environment Canada;
- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada; and
- Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

The Deputy Minister in each respective department was sent a letter from the consultant, providing information about the objectives of the study and the proposed methodology, and asking for departmental support for the exercise. Once approval was received by each department, Ekos worked closely with departmental representatives throughout the design and data collection phases.

(a) Survey of Public Servants

For the purposes of sampling federal government employees, the Official Languages Information System (OLIS), maintained by Treasury Board was accessed. Although this data base had been recently discontinued (March 1995), it was still a fairly current source of information related to employees in a position of serving the public. All employee classifications were sampled, in both the National Capital Region (NCR) and all other regions of the country.

Senior managers were defined primarily as those holding EX positions. Middle managers were defined according to Treasury Board's management or mid-level classifications (Appendix A presents a full listing of middle management classifications included in the initial sample). Front line staff were defined according to Treasury Board's classification of junior positions (see Appendix A). These are also the group definitions used in the 1990 study.

Public servants with classifications defined as either senior and middle management were oversampled to ensure a sufficient number of cases in the analysis. Of the 1,202 interviews conducted, 241 were with senior managers, 388 with middle managers and 573 with front line staff.

The survey also stratified cases by department, again to ensure sufficient cases from each for the analysis. Since telephone numbers were unavailable on the OLIS data base, the consultant relied on federal government directory listings, as well as internal listings from each department. In some departments, employees were more difficult to locate than in other departments, which affected the final sampling distribution. In addition, there were communications difficulties within Revenue Canada which resulted in a comparatively small number of cases from this department. The final distribution of public servants in the survey, by department is:

<input type="checkbox"/> Industry Canada	236
<input type="checkbox"/> Human Resources Development Canada	201
<input type="checkbox"/> Health Canada	163
<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada	162
<input type="checkbox"/> Transport Canada	151
<input type="checkbox"/> Environment Canada	126
<input type="checkbox"/> Citizenship and Immigration Canada	93
<input type="checkbox"/> Revenue Canada	70
<input type="checkbox"/> TOTAL	1,202

(b) Survey of Clients/General Public

Clients were defined in the broadest sense as anyone outside of the federal public service. This included (1) members of the general public, and (2) organizations from the private sector, non-profit sector, or local or provincial government. In the case of members of the general public, considerable difficulties were encountered in trying to access client listings from departments because of privacy issues. In order to circumvent these difficulties and avoid asking departments to release personal information about individuals, a random selection of clients was interviewed through a process of screening the general public. Members of the general public were included in the client survey only if they had had dealings with a federal government department — either in-person, by telephone, by mail, through the INTERNET or kiosks — in the last two years. Most general public respondents were clients of Revenue Canada, Human Resources Development or Citizenship and Immigration. While most client organizations were contacted through targeted lists provided by Transport Canada, Health Canada, Environment Canada and Industry Canada¹, all organizations selected were exposed to the same screening criteria (i.e., contact with a federal government department within the last two years). A total of 701 clients were interviewed, including 348 client organizations and 353 members of the general public.

2.2 Focus Groups

We conducted 12 focus group sessions, including groups with middle and senior managers in the public service, front line staff, and the general public/clients. Typically, the group discussions involved 10 participants and lasted for two hours. Discussions were held in Ottawa, Toronto, Montreal, Halifax and Vancouver.

1. Clients of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada were screened from general listings of businesses within the farming, food manufacturing and food processing industries.

Three moderator's guides were designed based on the study issues, one for each of the three types of participants (see Appendix C). All guides had a prominent forward looking component designed to encourage participants to delineate their future vision of government service delivery. The guides were also designed to probe for more detail and explanation underlying the survey results, as well as to allow a comparison of views on key study issues across the three participant types.

Potential participants were sought during the telephone survey interviews, during which respondents were asked if they would be interested in attending a group discussion on the topic of government service delivery. Outside the NCR, the survey sample was supplemented with additional names of employees drawn from the government directory.

All focus group sessions were audio tape recorded and summary notes prepared. The analysis of the findings was qualitative. The notes were reviewed and synthesized to present the major themes in participants' responses to questions. Quotations illustrative of major points of view were noted. The overall findings from the focus groups are presented where appropriate in the next two chapters to supplement and help explain the survey results.

CHAPTER

3

PUBLIC SERVANT PERCEPTIONS

This chapter details the findings from the survey of public servants. Findings from the focus groups with public servants are also presented to help illustrate and explain the survey results. A variety of issues are examined in this chapter (e.g., understanding of service, the influence of technology on service delivery, morale in the public service, innovations in government service). The findings are broken down across a number of demographic and attitudinal characteristics (i.e., different levels of government, level of education, personal and departmental morale, etc.). For purposes of comparison, selected findings from the survey and focus groups with clients/the general public are also presented in this chapter (the remainder are discussed in the following chapter). In addition, selected findings from the 1990 Service to the Public (STP) study² are highlighted to allow a comparison of perceptions and practices in 1990 with those in 1996.

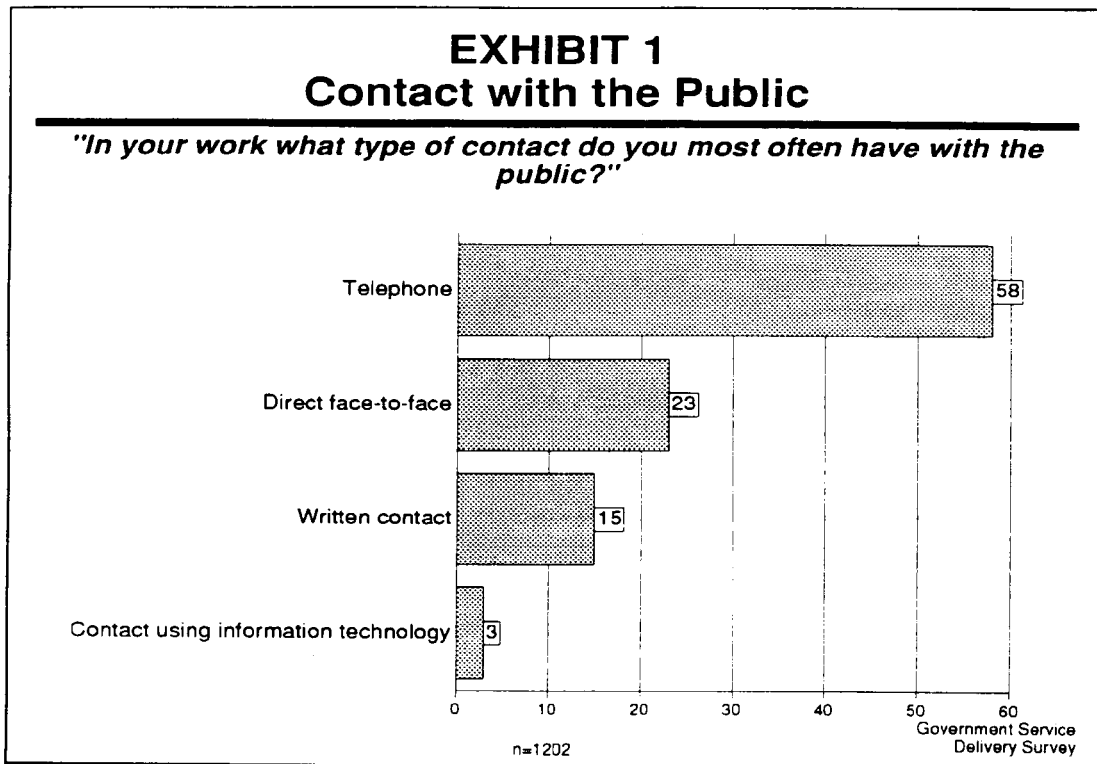
2. *Survey of Public Service Perceptions of Service to the Public — Final Report*. Ekos Research Associates, 1990.

3.1 Behavioural Profile

Respondents were first asked what percentage of their work time is devoted to dealing with the public. In interpreting these findings, it must be noted that the survey sample of public servants was designed to *over-represent* staff involved in service delivery. Overall, respondents reported spending 49 per cent of their time serving the public (compared to 33 per cent in the 1990 STP study). Average time spent providing service to the public is greatest for front line staff (57 per cent), followed by middle management (50 per cent) and senior management (26 per cent). Involvement in service delivery, as reported in the 1990 STP research, was similar to the present findings for front line staff and senior managers (50 per cent and 22 per cent, respectively) but substantially lower among middle managers (28 per cent in 1990 compared to 50 per cent in 1996). Respondents from outside the National Capital Region, those with less education, and those with a written plan for service delivery devote the greatest amount of time to dealing with the public.

Similar to the results of the 1990 STP study, the most frequent type of contact with the public is over the telephone (58 per cent), followed by direct face-to-face contact (23 per cent), and written contact (15 per cent). These findings are displayed in Exhibit 1. Front line staff, those with less education, and those who do not have a written plan for service delivery are the most likely to interact with the public through the telephone.

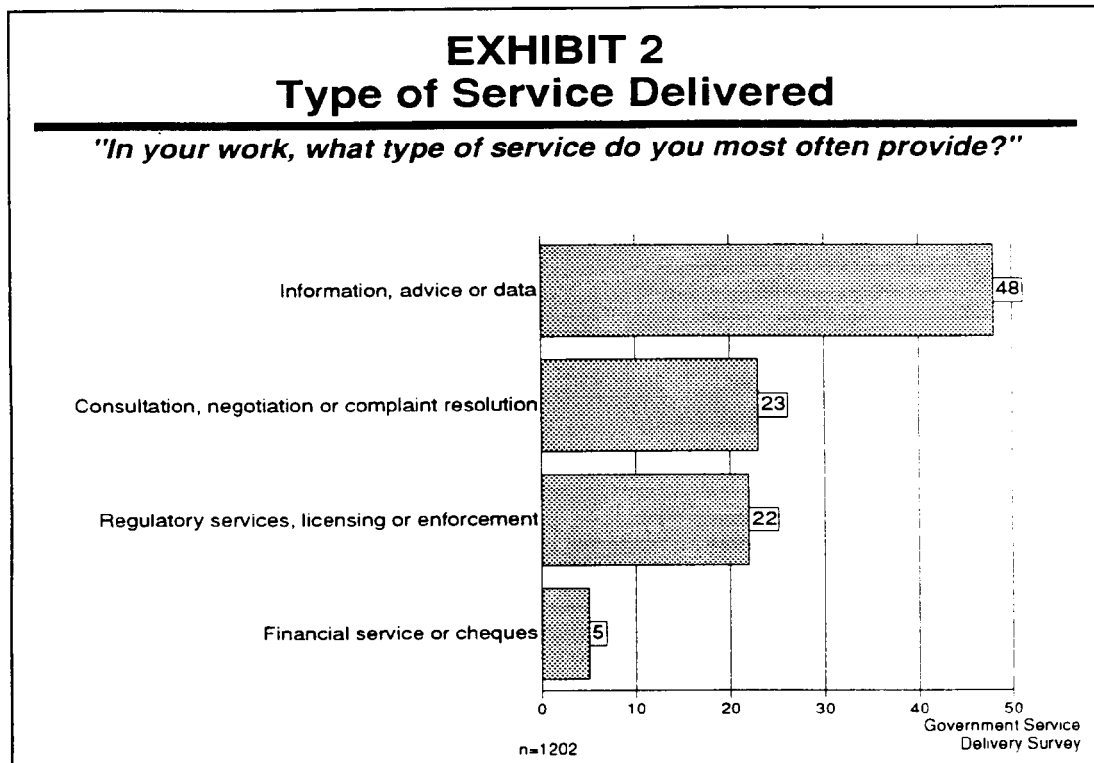
Public servants who participated in the focus groups identified a major trend away from personalized service towards the use of the telephone and other electronic media in dealing with the public. Many agreed that one of the challenges they face in managing this change is in making the most of the few remaining opportunities for face-to-face contact. For some, meeting this challenge means isolating those points in the service delivery transaction in which face-to-face contact is most desirable to the client and most effective for both parties: "We use to always meet our



clients each time they wanted to discuss something with us, but this was expensive because we had to fly. We now use tele-conferencing a lot. We see them less, but when we do see them the meetings are more important and productive". (Middle manager — Montreal)

Participants were also asked what type of service they most often provide to the public. Information, advice or data services are provided most often to the general public (Exhibit 2). Few sub-group differences were observed with respect to those most likely to offer information, advice or data support; however, senior managers are much more likely than their counterparts to provide consultation, negotiation or complaint resolution services (34 per cent).

Sixty per cent of respondents indicated that their unit has a written plan for service delivery. Front line staff, respondents with less education and those with higher morale, both on a personal basis (e.g., more likely to disagree that if faced with

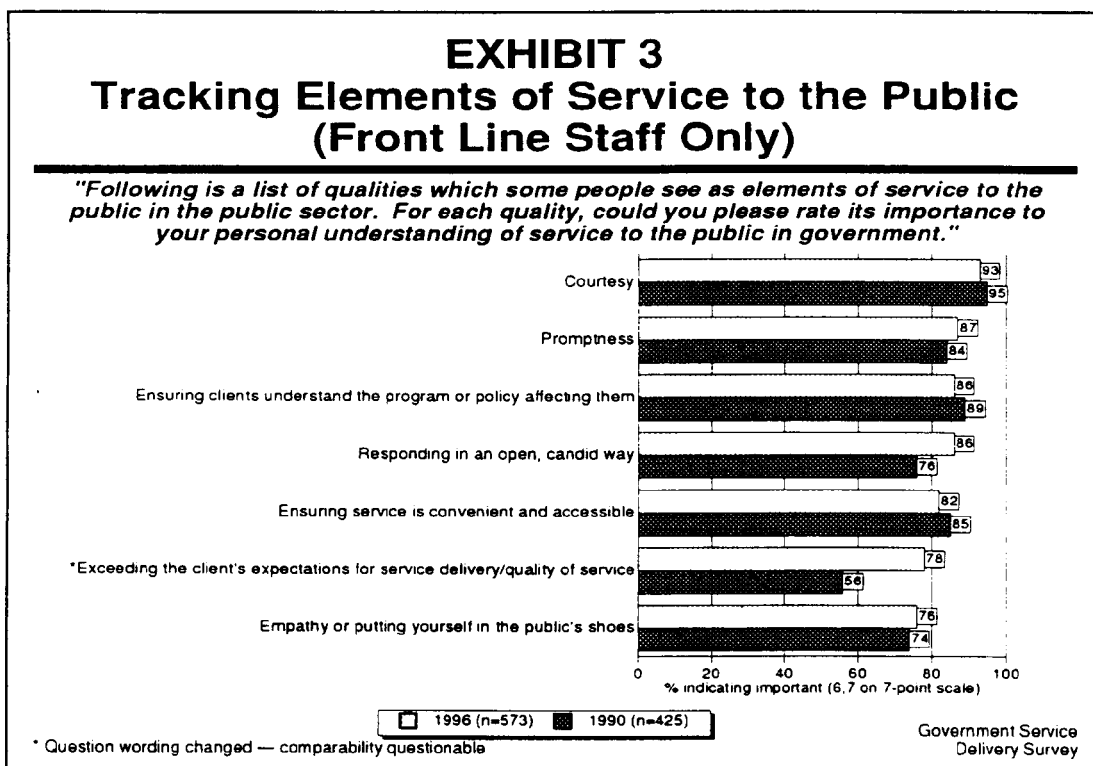


the same career decision they would not choose to become a public servant) and on a departmental basis (e.g., more likely to agree that morale in their department is good) are the most likely to indicate their department has a written service delivery plan. As will be demonstrated throughout this report, the presence of a written plan for service delivery, and an innovative service delivery mechanism (described in detail in Section 1.5) are strong predictors of service ethic, beliefs about support from management and higher morale in the public service.

The existence of a written plan varies greatly across the eight departments included in this study. (The departments are labelled A, B, C, D, E, F, G and H in order to preserve the confidentiality of the findings.) Fully 74 per cent of respondents from department B indicated that their unit has a written plan for service delivery; in department D only 48 per cent reported having such a plan. All other departments fall in between these two extremes. Further departmental variations are presented throughout the chapter.

3.2 Understanding of Service to the Public

Front line staff were asked to rate the importance of a variety of elements (i.e., reliability, courtesy, etc.) to their understanding of service to the public in government (Exhibit 3).



Most of the items presented were rated as very important by the majority of respondents, suggesting that front line staff share a common understanding of what comprises good service. Moreover, these results are similar to client/general public views on elements of service (presented in the next chapter), indicating that public servants and clients have a shared model of good service. These findings on public servants' understanding of service are fairly consistent with those found in the 1990 STP study, with the exception of exceeding client expectations for service delivery/

quality of service, which has increased greatly in importance since 1990 — from 56 per cent to 78 per cent (although it should be noted that the term "service delivery" was used in the 1996 survey rather than "quality of service" which was used in 1990).

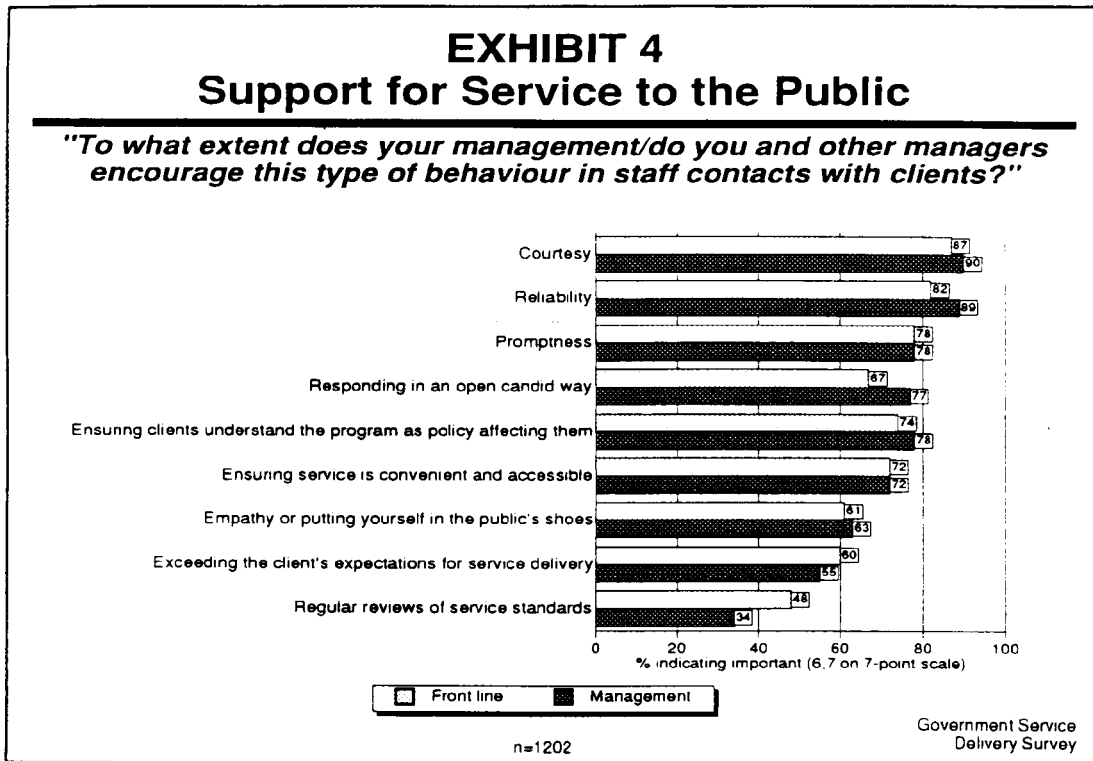
Few differences were exhibited with respect to sub-group breakdowns across these elements, except that less educated respondents were more likely than their counterparts to indicate that each of the elements is important to their understanding of service.

In the focus groups, public servants reflected different perspectives when defining their understanding of service to the public. In most cases, this was a function of the type of activity they were involved in (e.g., enforcement vs. information provision). Whatever their perspective, however, a number of key common points emerged across the focus groups. They included the following:

- ❑ Public servants are confident that they know what quality service consists of.
- ❑ Over the past decade or so, a service ethic has taken hold in their group.
- ❑ Public servants in general, and front line staff in particular, are more likely to approach a transaction from a client perspective than before: "As auditors, we use to enforce the rules and regulations and that was it. Our job was to catch people. Now we see our job as helping business comply with the rules. Seeing these people as clients now is different and some people still are not use to it, but it's worked out pretty well." (Middle manager — Halifax)

3.3 Support for Service to the Public

In order to get a sense of any gaps between management and front line staff with respect to support for the various elements of service to the public, both front line staff and managers were asked to rate the extent to which management encourages each of the elements of service (Exhibit 4).



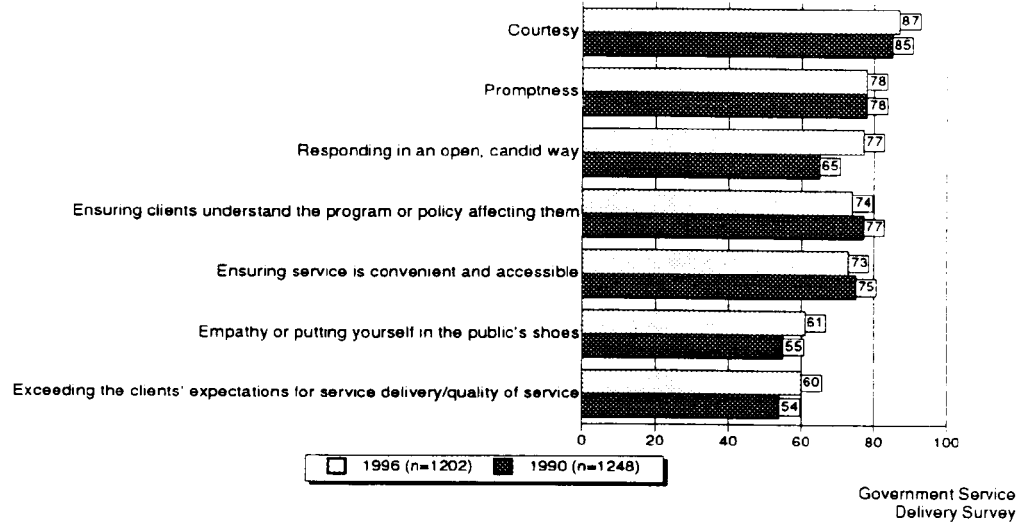
As can be seen, for the most part front line staff strongly believed that these elements are encouraged by management. However, only a minority felt that regular reviews of service standards are encouraged by management.

Few changes have occurred over the past several years with respect to management's support for the elements of service to the public (Exhibit 5); however, encouragement for responding in an open, candid way has increased modestly over the past five years — from 65 per cent to 77 per cent. (Exhibit 5)

In the focus groups, discussion around the issue of responding in an open and candid way produced interesting results. A consensus emerged on two facets of this question. First, participants at all levels agreed that service delivery today is conducted in a significantly more open and transparent manner than before. Participants gave numerous examples to illustrate how employees do not limit themselves to responding to a request in a narrow or minimal way. Rather, they aim

EXHIBIT 5 Tracking Support for Service to the Public (Front Line Staff Only)

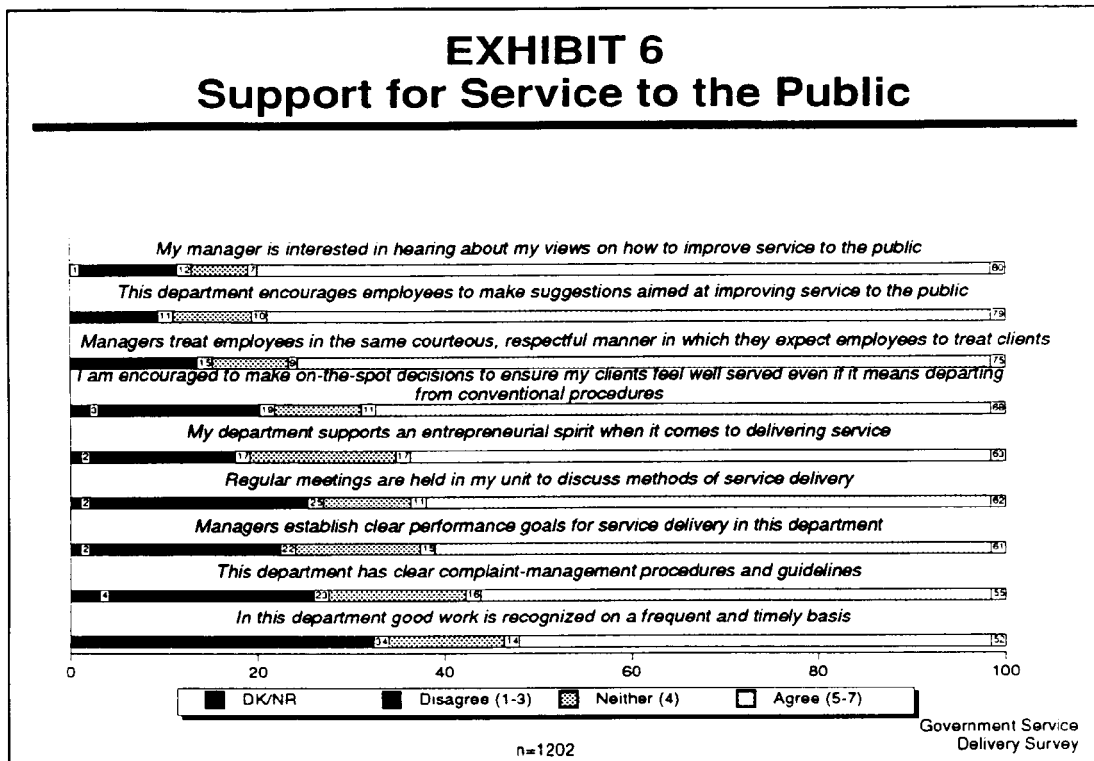
"To what extent does your management/do you and other managers encourage this type of behaviour in staff contacts with clients?"



to respond in a manner which allows the client to *understand why*, for example, a certain decision was made. The second point of consensus revolved around the question of openness as it relates to managing client expectations. Front line staff and middle managers in particular expressed frustration and concern at not being able to explain to clients/the general public that service levels and quality have been negatively affected due to budget cuts: "We have half the staff we did three years ago and the same amount of calls. People want to now why they have to wait longer for their call to be answered, but we are not allowed to tell them about the [budget] cuts. It makes us look bad and it's demoralizing!" (Middle manager — Vancouver)

Respondents were also asked a variety of attitudinal questions aimed at examining management's support of service to the public (Exhibit 6). Public servants indicated that, generally speaking, they are supported by their managers in efforts to serve the public, particularly with respect to listening to employees' views and encouraging suggestions about how to improve service to the public.

EXHIBIT 6 Support for Service to the Public



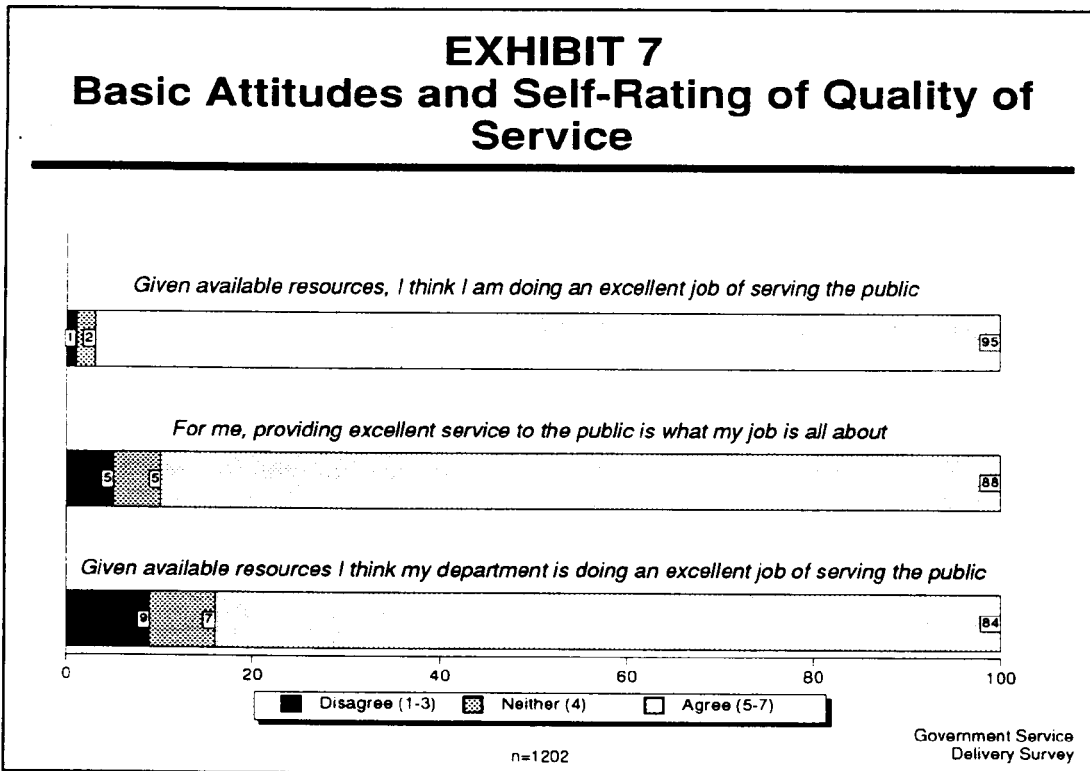
Senior management, those with less education, those with higher personal and departmental morale, those with a written plan for service delivery and those with an innovative service delivery mechanism expressed the most positive attitudes about support from management.

The focus group findings suggest that front line staff and middle managers feel that they receive strong support for serving the public from their immediate supervisor and senior manager. In contrast, many identified a lack of support from the most senior departmental officials, their department and the federal government.

3.4 Commitment, Values and Attitudes Toward Service to the Public

(a) Service Ethic and Self-Rating of Quality of Service

There is evidence of a strong service ethic in the federal public service (Exhibit 7). Overall, fully 95 per cent of respondents felt that given available resources, they are doing an excellent job of serving the public. Eighty-eight per cent felt that providing excellent service to the public is what their job is all about. Eighty-four per cent indicated that given available resources, their department is doing an excellent job of serving the public.



Generally, across all three questions the following sub-groups were the most likely to express a commitment to service to the public:

- front line staff;
- respondents from outside the National Capital Region;
- less educated;
- non-anglophones;
- higher morale (both departmental and personal);
- those who have a written plan for service delivery; and
- those with an innovative service delivery mechanism.

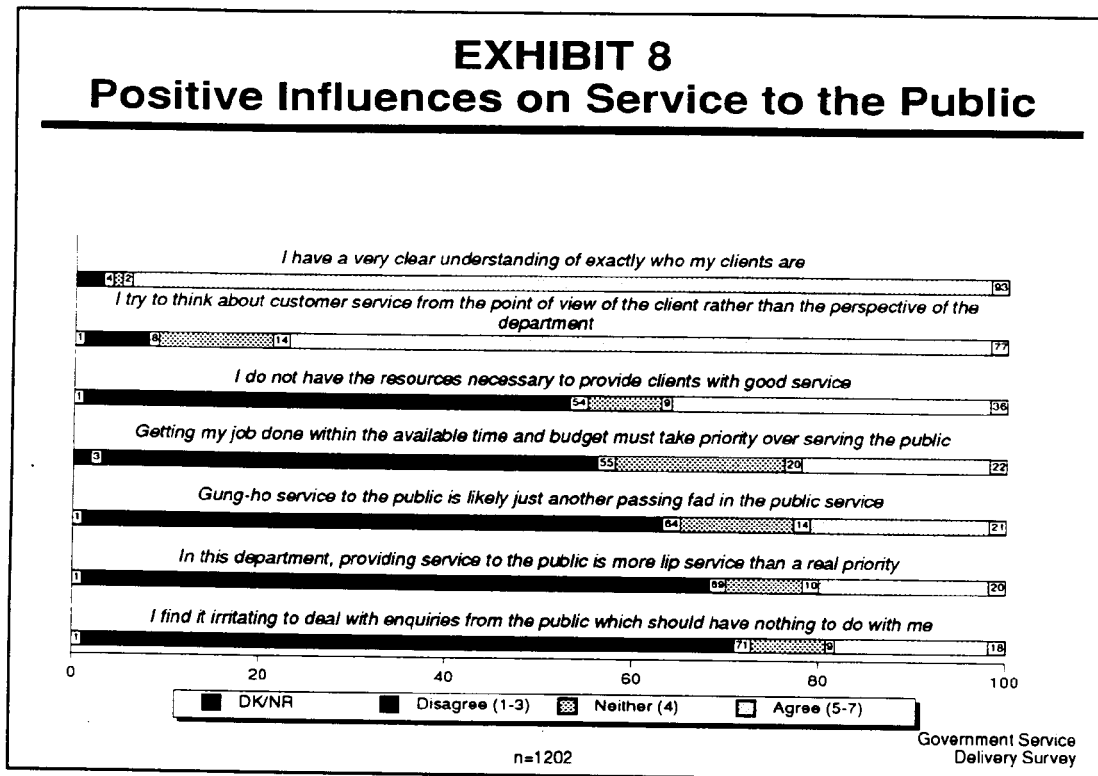
The survey findings were mirrored in the focus groups. Front line staff and middle managers pledged their commitment to serving the public, while senior managers concurred that their employees are very devoted to serving the public: "Frankly, given all of the changes and cut backs that have gone on, I'm sometimes astounded that [the level of commitment] is so high." (Senior manager — Ottawa) Public servants explained their high level of commitment as stemming from "pride", "representing Canada" and from the positive feedback they received from satisfied clients. In fact, positive client feedback was identified as a major source of motivation in the relative absence of extrinsic rewards such as pay raises and promotions: "There haven't been raises in five years and the possibility of advancement is pretty limited right now, so the main reward I get is the satisfaction from helping my clients."

Despite the positive commitment to service expressed by respondents, there is evidence that these views of public service delivery are somewhat self-lionizing. The clients of the public servants (the general public) were far less likely to feel that the public service espouses this strong service ethic. These gaps in service performance are discussed in complete detail in the next chapter of this report.

Commitment to public service also varies somewhat by department. Fully 96 per cent of respondents from department B indicated that providing excellent service to the public is what their job is all about, whereas just 82 per cent of respondents from department H expressed the same degree of service ethic.

(b) Positive Influences on Service to the Public

A range of positive influences on service to the public exist in the federal public service, as summarized in Exhibit 8.



Participants believe they have very clear understanding of exactly who their clients are and that they try to think about customer service from the point of view of the client rather than the department. Participants strongly disagree that they are irritated with enquiries from the public which should have nothing to do with them. Public servants also disputed the notion that providing service to the public is more lip service than a real priority.

Generally, across all of these positive influences, the following sub-groups were the most likely to agree with the propositions:

- senior management;
- less educated;
- higher morale (both department and personal);
- those who have a written plan for service delivery; and
- those with an innovative service delivery mechanism.

These positive influences were found to be significantly correlated with morale in the public service, both departmental and personal.

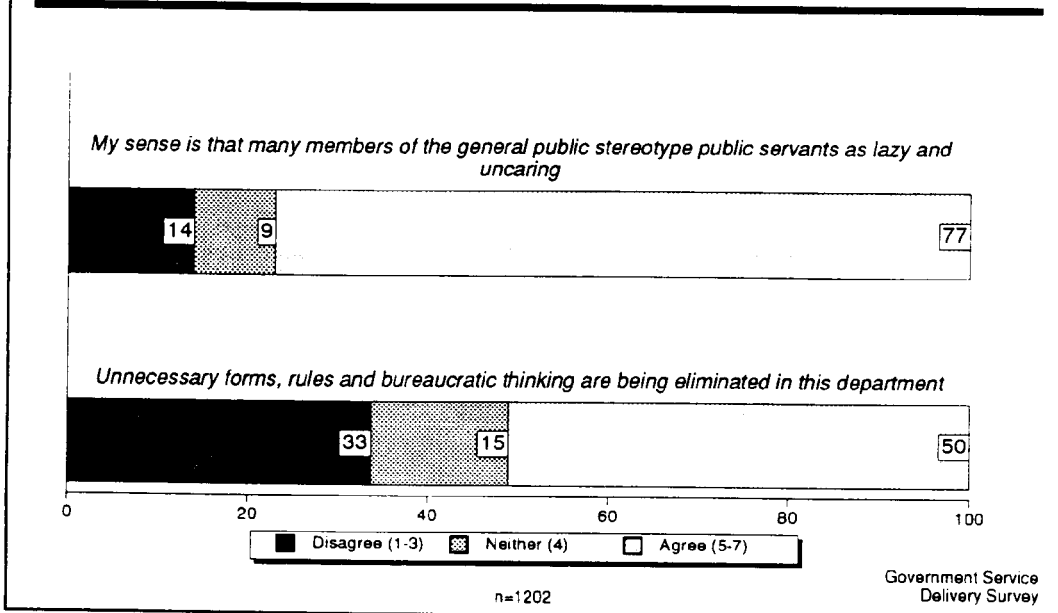
A number of the issues highlighted in Exhibit 8 were also discussed in the focus groups. As in the survey, participants indicated that they have a solid grasp of who their clients are. For the most part, the client was identified as the Canadian public at large (e.g., in the case of regulators/inspectors) and/or the individuals with whom they have contact. Several participants noted that they often get telephone enquiries that are not within their area of responsibility, and that an important aspect of good service is to help direct the person to the appropriate government contact.

***(c) Troubling Forces/Threats to Service
to the Public***

In addition to positive influences, the findings reveal a number of troubling forces which may impede service to the public (Exhibit 9).

Three in four respondents believed that many members of the general public stereotype public servants as lazy and uncaring. This belief was particularly pronounced among front line staff (78 per cent), less educated respondents, those with lower morale (both departmental and personal), and those whose department uses a traditional service mechanism (87 per cent).

EXHIBIT 9 Troubling Influences/Threats to Service to the Public



In the focus groups, public servants spoke about this issue in more subtle terms. While they tended to agree that the popular conception of public servants is largely pejorative, they were also quick to note that the majority of their clients and members of the public with whom they deal do not harbour this stereotypical view. This finding was generally corroborated in the discussions with members of the public, where participants were more likely to describe specific transactions with federal public servants in more positive terms, compared to their general negative impression of government services and public servants.

Another troubling finding is that only about half (48 per cent) of front line staff believed that unnecessary forms, rules and bureaucratic thinking are being eliminated in their department. Senior management (61 per cent), less educated respondents, those with higher morale (both departmental and personal), those who have a written plan for service delivery (53 per cent), and those with an innovative

service delivery mechanism (59 per cent) were the most likely to believe that bureaucratic procedures and thinking are being eliminated in the government.

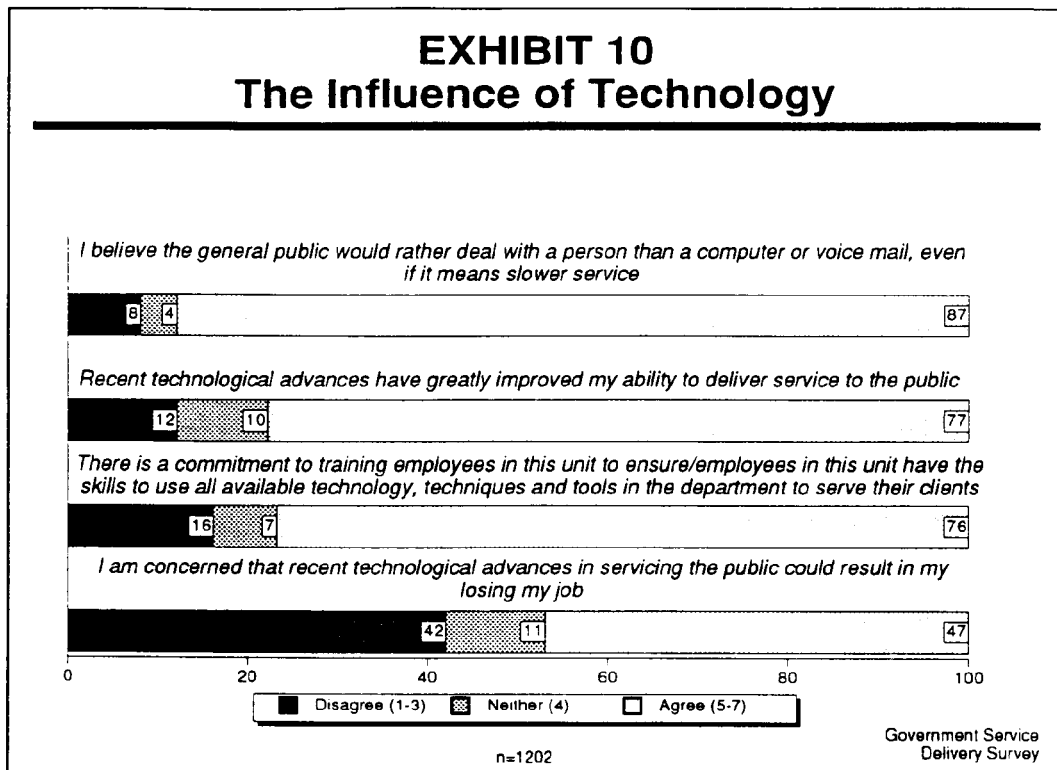
The existence of too many unnecessary forms, rules and bureaucratic processes was identified by focus group participants as a key barrier to the development of innovative service delivery models and the improvement of existing systems. Public servants at all levels, but particularly middle managers, said there are too many internal requirements to "feed the bureaucracy". In the regions they spoke of having to meet the requests of Ottawa, while in Ottawa they referred to sometimes onerous and often seemingly superfluous central agency requirements. The requirements and process for submitting travel claims and the need to obtain signing authority from a number of levels in order to proceed with fairly ordinary tasks were given as mundane examples of this key barrier.

(d) The Influence of Technology

Respondents were asked a variety of questions aimed at determining their views about how technological advances have influenced their ability to serve the public. These findings are displayed in Exhibit 10.

Respondents expressed positive views about the influence of technology on service delivery. Over three in four believed that technological advances have greatly improved their ability to deliver service, and that a commitment to training exists to ensure employees have the skills to use all the technology available to serve the public. As many disagreed as agreed with the notion that technological advances could result in personal job loss. Respondents with higher personal and departmental morale, a written plan for service delivery and an innovative delivery mechanism, younger respondents and those owning a computer, fax or modem were the most supportive of technological advances. On the other hand, less educated respondents, those with lower personal morale, and those without a computer, fax or modem were the most likely to feel threatened by technological advances.

EXHIBIT 10 The Influence of Technology

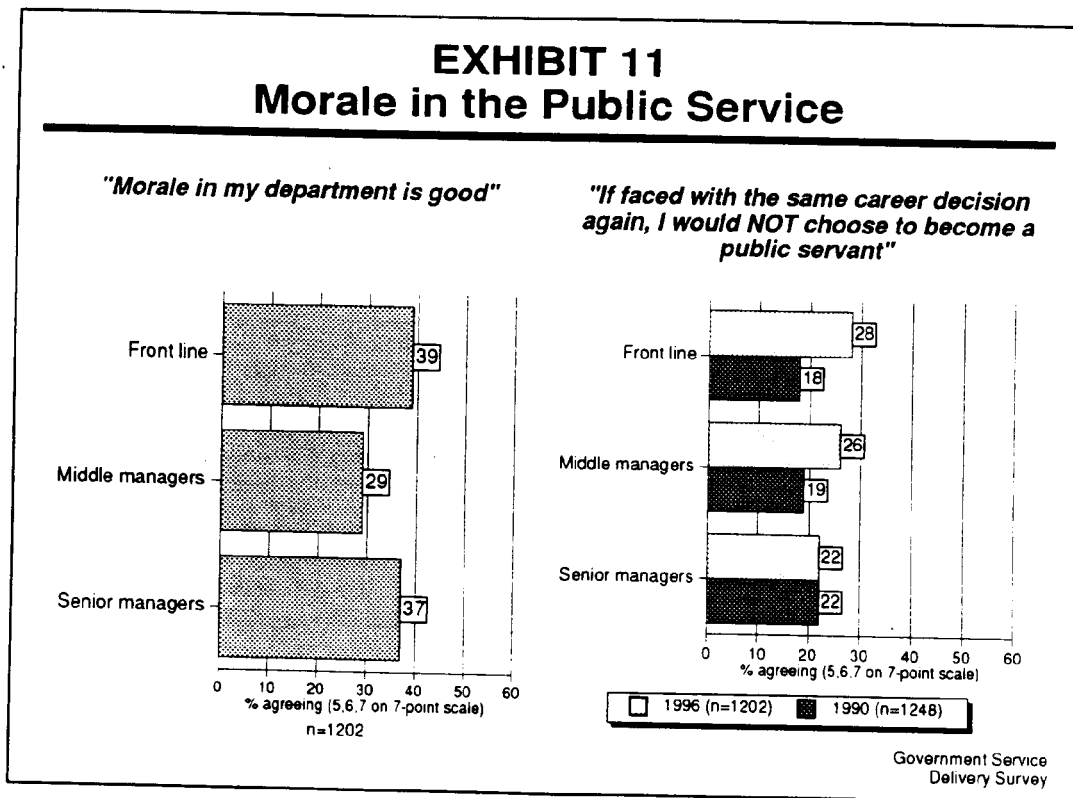


The views expressed in the focus groups are consistent with these findings. Most participants acknowledged that technological advances have helped them bridge the gap between sustained demand and reduced resources, and were convinced that technology would have an increasing role to play in the delivery of services. In this vein, automated voice systems were often provided as a current example of technological impacts on service delivery, while many expected the INTERNET to play a major role in the near future. Concern was expressed, however, about the impact that relying increasingly on technology would have on service delivery. Generally, participants agreed that the public prefers human interaction over self-directed automated interaction: "We are leaving communities and leaving technology behind". (Senior manager — Vancouver). Moreover, it was noted that a technology like automated voice systems is unsuitable for elderly people. As mentioned earlier, for many participants the challenge is to make the most of the remaining opportunities for human interaction.

Comparing public servants' beliefs about public preferences related to technology with the actual preference of the general public reveals a sizable gap between the two groups. Eighty-seven per cent of public servants believed the general public would rather deal with a person than a computer or voice mail even if it means slower service; only 68 per cent of the general public actually expressed such a preference.

(e) Morale in the Public Service

Morale in the public service was examined on both a departmental and a personal basis. Overall, only 35 per cent of participants felt that morale in their department is good; middle managers were particularly pessimistic in their view of departmental morale (Exhibit 11).



Departmental morale tends to be higher among front line staff, less educated respondents, those who have a written plan for service delivery, and those with an innovative service delivery mechanism. Departmental morale also varies across government departments. Fully 71 per cent of respondents from department H disagreed that morale is good (compared to 50 per cent overall). Respondents from department A were the most likely to feel that morale in their department is good (41 per cent).

Only a minority (26 per cent) of participants indicated that if faced with the same career decision they would not choose to become a public servant. However tracking this question from the 1990 STP survey reveals a significant increase in the proportion of both front line staff and middle managers questioning their career decision (Exhibit 11). Front line (28 per cent) and middle management (26 per cent), more educated respondents, those with lower departmental morale (35 per cent) those whose department uses traditional service mechanisms (39 per cent), and those with no written plan for service delivery (27 per cent) expressed the least desire to repeat their career path.

Similar findings emerged from the focus groups. Almost everyone agreed that morale in their group is low and many specified that morale is "at an all time low". Participants identified a number of explanatory factors to account for low morale:

- 1) *Employees do not feel valued.* That the organization does not value employees was conveyed to participants in number of ways: the five year wage freeze, public derision, pejorative comments from MPs and even some members of the government (e.g., the reference in the last budget about government inspectors stepping on each other's toes), having to give priority to serving senior officials and the minister over serving the public, and a lack of adequate tools and resources.
- 2) *A pervading climate of uncertainty.* Many participants, particularly those in "most affected departments", spoke of a seemingly never ending state of change. This has depressed morale in two ways. First it breeds insecurity about job loss: "We have created massive instability within

delivery by the necessity to plan layoffs 12-18 months ahead." (Senior manager — Vancouver) Second, it creates confusion among staff about their purpose, mission and direction: "Things have changed so much I don't even know what our mandate is any more." (Front line — Halifax) "It's death by initiative." (Middle manager — Halifax)

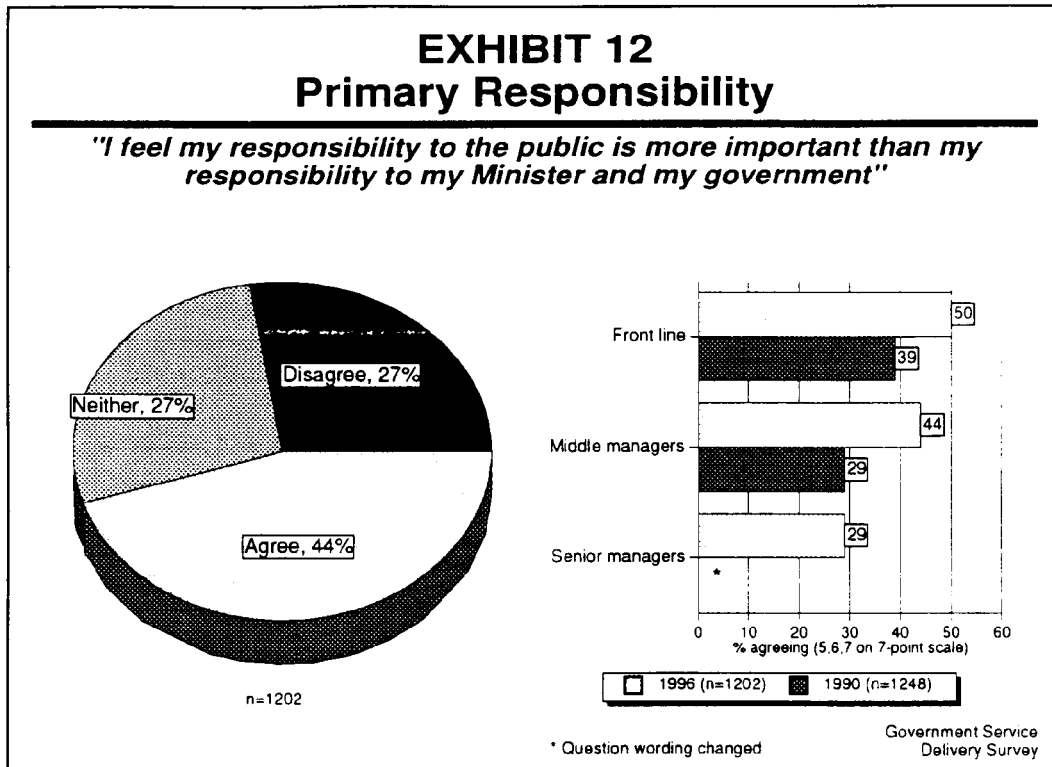
- 3) *Having to meet client needs and expectations with diminishing resources.* Most public servants who participated in the focus groups felt that client expectations remain high. This demand, coupled with diminishing resources, results in higher levels of stress and frustration. A number of managers and front line staff described the situation in their group as nearing the breaking point: "You can call it service delivery, but I call it crisis management". (Middle manager — Montreal)

(f) Mixed Allegiances

Respondents were asked if their primary responsibility is to the public or to their Minister and government (Exhibit 12).

The responses suggest that there is some confusion as to where public servants' primary responsibility lies. On an overall basis, 44 per cent agreed on the priority of serving the public and 27 per cent disagreed. Front line staff (50 per cent), middle managers (44 per cent) and respondents from outside the National Capital Region (52 per cent) were more likely than their counterparts to indicate a primary responsibility to serving the public. This commitment, while somewhat mixed, has improved over the past five years (Exhibit 12).

This confusion between serving the public and serving the Minister was echoed in the focus group sessions. In many cases, public servants talked of having external and internal clients (e.g., DM, Minister). Here, probing revealed that for many participants serving the needs of the Minister and senior officials must take precedence over serving the public. While for most, having to meet this type of internal need is relatively rare, a significant amount of concern was expressed about the issue because participants feel it detracts from their ability to focus on serving the public. What



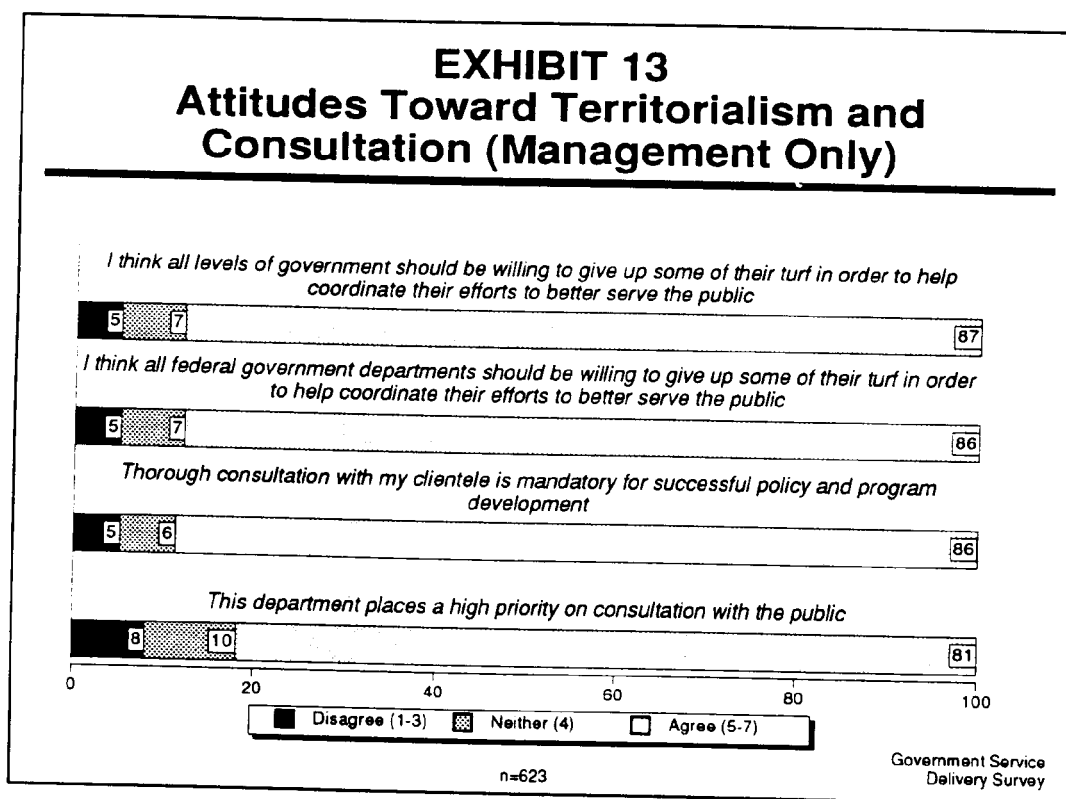
bothers participants is not the occasional need to respond to a Minister or senior official's request, but the inflated degree of urgency which surrounds those requests. "We are expected to drop everything." (Middle manager — Halifax)

Focus group participants described how the natural tension in government between serving the public and responding to political imperatives is increasingly dominated by the latter function as one moves up the departmental hierarchy and from the regions to Ottawa. In the eyes of participants, this results in dissonance at the departmental and ministerial levels, where senior officials can be heard singing the praises of client service, but given their proximity to the centre and resulting concern with political issues, do not appear to be genuinely committed to service based on their actions. To many participants, this lack of commitment from the top of the organization is exemplified by budget cuts which affect service delivery (while sparing other functions) and by the immediate response required to requests

from senior officials and the Minister's office: "They talk the talk, but they expect us to walk it." (Front line — Toronto)

(g) Territorialism and Consultation

Middle and senior managers were asked several questions addressing how territorialism in the public service and consultation with the public are viewed with respect to service delivery (Exhibit 13).



Managers, particularly senior managers (94 per cent), strongly endorsed the idea that all levels of government should be willing to give up some of their turf in order to coordinate their efforts to better serve the public. Similar findings were observed with respect to the willingness of all federal government departments to

become less territorial. Few other consistent sub-group differences were found across these questions.

Managers also strongly supported thorough consultation with their clientele, and indicated that their department places a high priority on consultation. Senior managers, those with higher education, higher personal and departmental morale, a written plan, and an innovative delivery mechanism were particularly likely to feel that their department accords a prominent position to consultation with the public.

Comparing this consultation data to the 1990 STP survey, middle managers are now somewhat more likely to feel that their department places a high priority on consultation (from 70 per cent to 78 per cent), and are slightly more likely to feel that thorough consultation with the public is mandatory (from 80 per cent to 85 per cent). Senior managers show virtually no change (80 per cent to 83 per cent) with respect to the priority of consultation, or with regard to the necessity of close consultation with their clientele (89 per cent to 87 per cent).

Public servants who participated in the focus groups agreed that consultation is increasingly a priority in their group. About one half tend to rely on informal means of consultations and/or by taking corrective action in response to complaints. Other participants spoke of having instituted more systematic consultative mechanisms, such as surveys and focus groups with clients, as well as meetings and calls specifically related to consultation/gathering feedback. A number of participants also indicated that their group or department had set-up consultative committees with representation from both public servants and clients (e.g., industry representatives).

In a somewhat different view, some senior managers argued that more sophisticated methods of consultation with the public would be increasingly required as the federal government focuses more on governance, policy development and macro-level coordination, as opposed to direct service delivery. In this context, core

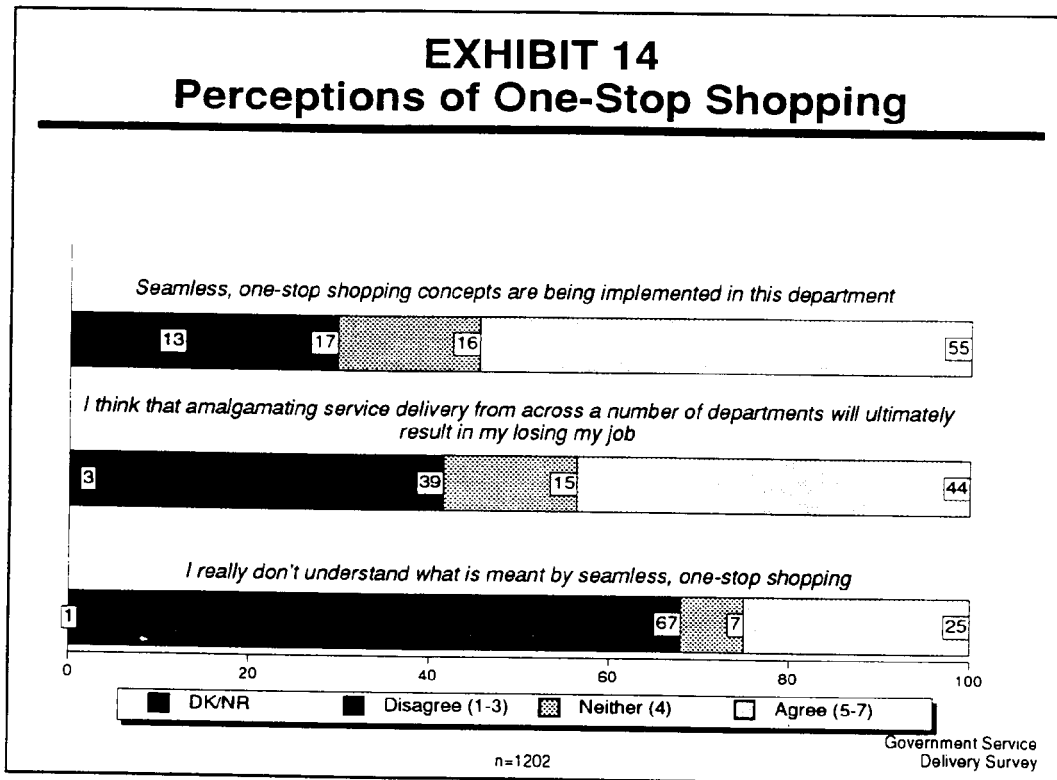
challenges identified by participants were: ensuring that public and stakeholder views are well reflected in public policy decisions, and effectively communicating government direction and policy back to Canadians; and convincing partners that the federal government can still play a useful role even if it comes to the table with less or no funding.

The perceptions of managers in the public service concerning consultation and partnership were compared with those of the general public. Findings from this comparison suggest that the general public do not share public servants' conviction regarding the prominence given consultation by the government. Only 37 per cent feel that government places a high priority on consulting with the public in order to provide a higher quality service (compared to 81 per cent of public servant management). Despite cynicism about governments' commitment to consultation, a strong majority of the general public (81 per cent) feel that governments should be looking for new ways to better to serve the public through partnerships with business and community organizations.

(h) Perceptions of One-Stop Shopping

Respondents were asked several questions about one-stop shopping concepts as a way delivering service to the public (Exhibit 14).

The majority of respondents (67 per cent) indicated that they understand the meaning of one-stop shopping. On an overall basis, only a slight majority (55 per cent) believed that these concepts are being implemented in their department; however, this percentage is influenced by the fact that one-third of respondents do not know what is meant by one-stop shopping concepts. Of those public servants aware of one-stop shopping concepts, 67 per cent indicated that the concepts are being implemented in their department. Front line staff (33 per cent), less educated, and francophone (32 per cent) respondents were the most likely to indicate *not* understanding the meaning of one-stop shopping. Respondents working outside of the National Capital



Region, those with higher education, those with higher departmental morale, and those whose department has a written plan for service delivery and employs an innovative service delivery mechanism were more likely than their counterparts to believe that one-stop shopping concepts are being implemented in their department.

A plurality (44 per cent) of front line staff believed that amalgamating service delivery from across a number of departments will ultimately result in their losing their job. These feelings were particularly pronounced among those working outside of the National Capital Region, those with less education and those with lower personal morale.

The one-stop shopping approach to service delivery was noted as a key trend by public servants in the focus groups. Most saw both advantages and disadvantages inherent in this model of service delivery. On the positive side, they recognized the convenience for the client of having to make fewer contacts to obtain

government services and products. The main drawback was felt to be the loss of expertise resulting from having clients/members of the public deal with "a generalist".

3.5 Perceptions of Innovation in Delivery of Government Service

Respondents were asked to rate how innovative their service delivery mechanism is in relation to other areas of government, as well as the private sector. Overall, a majority (67 per cent) of public servants believe that their department delivers innovative service. Senior management (74 per cent), those with higher morale, both personal (71 per cent) and departmental (81 per cent) were particularly likely to feel that their department is innovative. As mentioned earlier, this variable strongly influences beliefs about support from management as well as morale and service ethic.

The focus group results suggest that in most quarters innovation is more likely to be seen as something which is in the offing, as opposed to a reality. Current service innovations described by participants include: self-directed work teams; new partnerships with provincial governments, community organizations and the private sector; published service standards; decentralizing decision-making to the lowest possible level in the organization; and formal client feedback mechanisms. Participants seemed to share the view that further innovation is possible and desirable. While some expressed concern stemming from a fear of the unknown, most who commented on this issue expressed optimism about the development of innovative service delivery models. Some middle managers and front line staff saw in innovation the possibility of more secure and satisfying employment.

Most senior managers also realized the promise of innovation. In fact, quite a few commented on how well their group had been able to maintain quality service delivery in the midst of cut backs by reorganizing and re-designing systems and procedures. However, many also voiced concern about insufficient information

(e.g., case studies, sample agreements, best practices, practical advice) and insufficient support from the most senior levels of their department for them to feel secure in designing further innovations in service delivery. One participant suggested: "An inventory of expertise or a speakers tour or an extension of a CCMD-kind of program where they bring in people who have done something useful to share it. I would like to see that extended out across the country so I can have an opportunity to send my staff to a presentation by somebody who has put it all together." (Senior manager — Vancouver)

3.6 Government Service Delivery — Past and Future

Public servants felt that service delivery has improved over the past five years, and that it will continue to improve over the next five years (Exhibit 15). Senior managers, those with higher morale (both departmental and personal), those with a written plan for service delivery and those with an innovative service delivery mechanism were particularly optimistic about improvements made over the past few years, as well as the continuation of these improvements in the future.

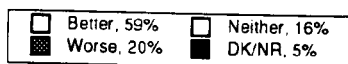
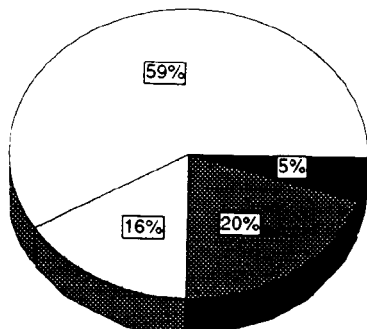
These optimistic perceptions about government service delivery were not shared by the general public. Only a minority (39 per cent) of public respondents felt that government service has improved over the last five years; and an even smaller proportion (30 per cent) believed that service delivery will improve over the next five years.

3.7 Improving Service to the Public

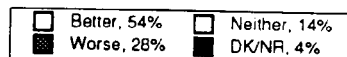
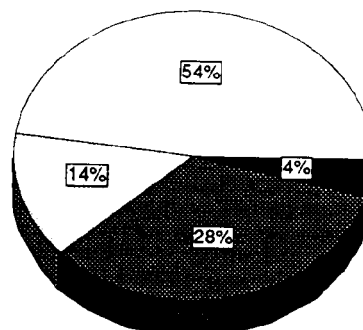
Front line staff were asked to rate the importance of a range of initiatives in improving service to the public (Exhibit 16). Across all but one of the areas listed (financial incentives to reward people who serve the public well) at least three in four

EXHIBIT 15 Government Service Delivery — Past and Future

"Would you say that the delivery of service in your department is improving or declining, compared to what it was five years ago?"



"Would you say that the delivery of service in your department will probably have improved or declined five years from now?"



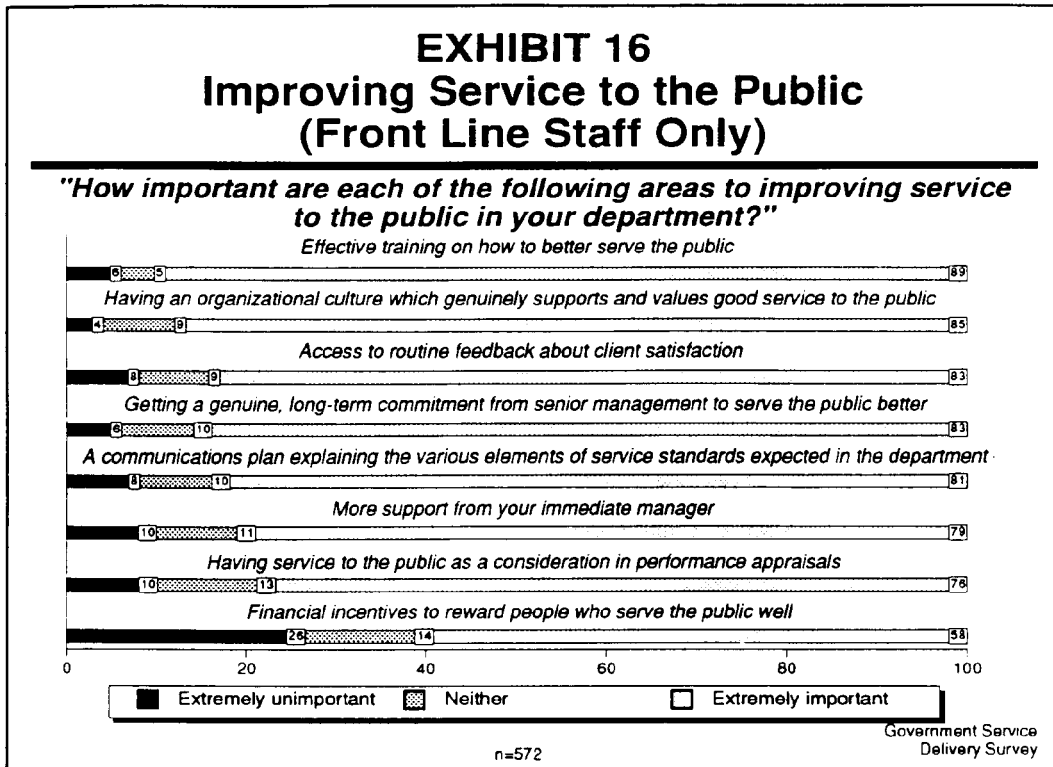
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believed that implementation of the initiative would improve service. Training, support from management and feedback about client satisfaction were the areas most strongly endorsed by front line staff. In general, those with higher departmental morale and an innovative service delivery mechanism were the most fervent in their support for these initiatives.

It is instructive to note that while 81 per cent of front line staff felt that a communications plan explaining the various elements of service standards expected in the department would improve service to the public, only 64 per cent indicated having such a written plan in their unit.

Many focus groups participants, including employees at all levels, suggested that their department institute a 1-800 number which would allow inquiries from the public to be efficiently and accurately routed to the appropriate group within the department: "We still receive a lot of calls from people asking about things that we

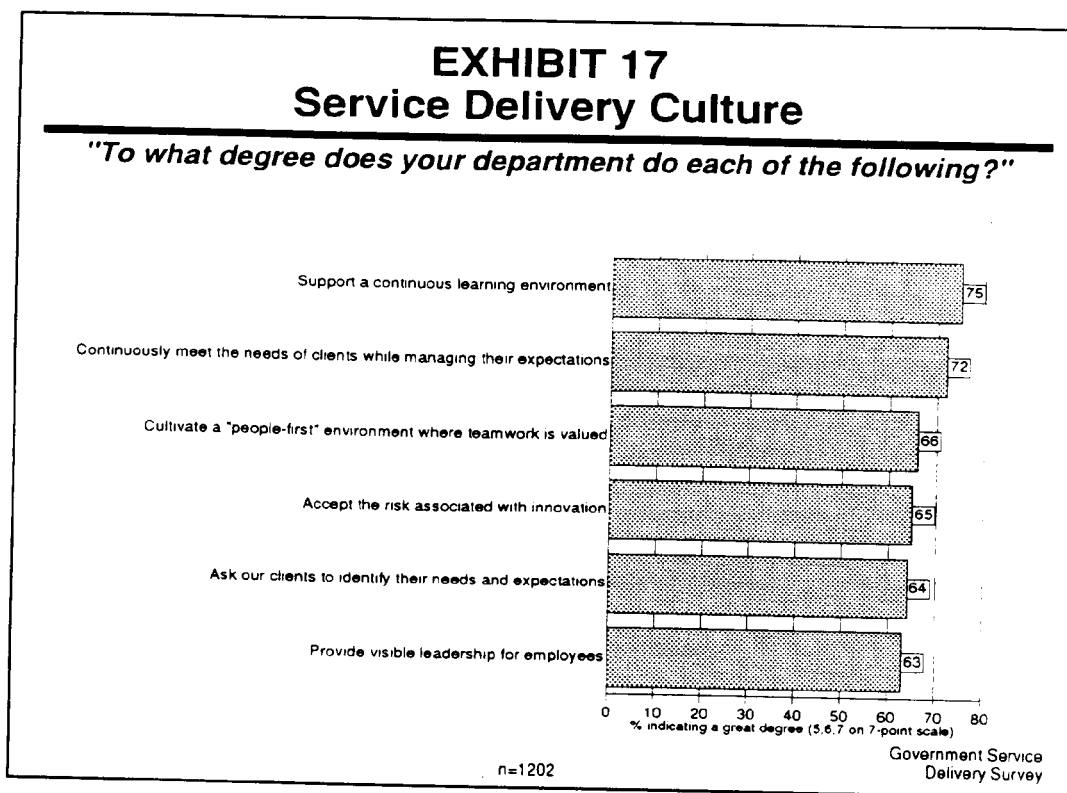


have no idea about. We try to steer them in the right direction, but [a 1-800 number] would make sense." (Front line — Toronto)

3.8 Service Delivery Culture

Respondents were asked to rate the degree to which their department undertakes a variety of initiatives related to service delivery (Exhibit 17).

Respondents were quite positive in their assessment of the implementation of these initiatives by their department, particularly with respect to supporting a continuous learning environment and meeting the needs of clients. Those most positive in their assessment were senior management (middle management were the most negative), those with less education, those with higher morale (both departmental and personal), those who have a written plan for service delivery and



those with an innovative service delivery mechanism.

Focus groups participants tended to agree that a service culture has developed in their group and throughout the government. They also felt that there is still much room for improvement. A key barrier to the further development of a service culture was identified — the persistence of a strong aversion to risk-taking in the corporate culture. Linking this trait to the need to "protect the Minister", many focus group participants characterized the prevailing ethos as one which "avoid[s] making mistakes". In the eyes of most participants, such an attitude stifles empowerment and the development of truly innovative service delivery models: "Sure we are encouraged to innovate, 'just don't make a mistake'". (Middle manager — Halifax)

