



JOINING THE CORE WORKFORCE:

A PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE SURVEY OF NEWLY HIRED INDETERMINATE EMPLOYEES IN THE FEDERAL PUBLIC SERVICE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In response to tightened labour markets and changing demographic realities, the federal Public Service (FPS) has been searching for new strategies to recruit and retain employees. In creating the Recruitment Action Plan, the Committee of Senior Officials in the Public Service (COSO) recognized the need for further analysis of current hiring patterns, to better market the FPS to potential recruits. In support of that objective, the Research Directorate of the Public Service Commission (PSC) carried out a survey of recently hired indeterminate public servants in January and February 2001.

The new hires survey examined the recruitment experience, job satisfaction and career plans of a representative sample of the 8473 people hired into the indeterminate core of the federal Public Service during the 12 month period between July 1, 1999 and June 30, 2000.

While the questionnaire was designed by the Research Directorate of the PSC, the actual administration of the survey was undertaken via the Internet by Ipsos-Reid. A representative sample of the new hires (including recruits to the core of the indeterminate workforce from both the external labour market and from the term population) was invited to participate in the survey via E-mail. A total of 990 federal public servants completed the questionnaire, sufficient numbers to permit detailed analysis.

Prior to this survey, the FPS had no systematic information about the job search methods employed by new hires. However, based on the preliminary results from this survey, we know they rely heavily on the Internet and their social networks for information, and that they judge the public service to be too slow in making hiring decisions.

The survey results also indicate that while new recruits have a generally positive assessment of their early experience in the FPS, they are concerned about a number of issues affecting their jobs and working environment. For example, many think the FPS has failed to make full use of their knowledge, skills and abilities, while others think it does not provide competitive salaries, and has poor employee morale.

The new hires survey also highlights the retention problem facing the FPS. Almost a quarter of new recruits plan to resign from the FPS within five years, with one in eight planning to leave in the next three years. Among the latter group, most are already searching for work elsewhere, in an effort to get higher salaries, more opportunity for advancement, and make better use of their knowledge, skills and abilities.

This preliminary report on the survey is only based on the top line results, examining the response frequencies of the participants. There is more analysis to be done, with a number of more detailed and focused reports to be issued. They should provide COSO, the PSC and human resources staff throughout the FPS with a variety of ideas about how to better target recruitment efforts.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Almost half of respondents (47%) said their main work activity during the 12 months prior to entering the federal Public Service (FPS) was in the private sector. That far exceeded the number employed in some type of public sector job (31%).
- Six in ten respondents used the Internet in their job search. Almost half of them (49%) used the Internet for at least three quarters of their job search activity and about a third (30%) used it for about half their job search activity.
- More than half (59%) of respondents indicated that searching the Public Service Commission website (Jobs.gc.ca) was among the most valuable job search activities. This was followed by 40% who indicated talking to family, friends and their contacts, looking elsewhere on the Internet (39%), talking to contacts or colleagues from previous jobs or school (36%), and placing their names in an inventory for a FPS job (30%).
- Respondents indicated two key reasons for accepting their first position in the FPS: the desire to make full use of their knowledge, skills and abilities (40%), and to get into the FPS (40%). Job security (35%), the opportunity to work in one's field of study (32%), and salary (28%) were also important reasons.
- Almost all respondents (95%) said their colleagues have treated them with respect, and that they would recommend the FPS to others as a good place to work (85%). However, more than a third (36%) of respondents indicated their job did not make full use of their education. This is a matter of real concern, since 40% said their prime motivation for entering the FPS was a desire to make full use of their knowledge skills and abilities.
- Most respondents expressed positive views about the FPS. Almost nine in ten of them (87%) thought the FPS offers a wide variety of career jobs, and the same proportion liked the flexibility to balance work and personal life (87%). The respondents also liked the benefits offered by the FPS (86%), the interesting nature of the work (86%), and the commitment to diversity in the workplace (85%).
- However, respondents do not like slowness with which hiring decisions are made (74%), the failure to offer competitive salaries (53%), the lack of openness to change (52%), the level of employee morale (50%), and the failure to encourage independent decision-making (49%).

- Almost three quarters of respondents (73%) expect to remain in the FPS for at least five years. The other quarter (25%) expect to leave within the next five years, with one in eight (12%) indicating they plan to leave within 3 years. In fact, 57% of those who plan to leave within three years are already actively or casually searching for a job outside the FPS.
- More than eight in ten respondents (83%) who are planning to leave the FPS within three years, will do so to make better use of their skills and abilities (83%), to earn more money (74%), to find a job where they can better see the results or impacts of their work (73%), or to increase their opportunities for advancement (72%).

BACKGROUND

In recent years, tightened labour markets and concerns about demographic changes have encouraged senior officials in the federal Public Service (FPS) to search for new strategies to recruit and retain employees.

Last year, when the Committee of Senior Officials in the Public Service (COSO), issued its report on recruitment¹, it recognized the need for further analysis of current hiring patterns, research that could assist the FPS in better marketing itself to potential recruits. In support of that objective, the Research Directorate of the Public Service Commission (PSC) conducted a survey of recently hired indeterminate public servants in January and February 2001.²

The new hires survey examined the recruitment experience, job satisfaction and career plans of a representative sample of the 8743 people hired into the indeterminate core of the federal Public Service (FPS) during the 12 month period between July 1, 1999 and June 30, 2000.³

There are two key channels through which people are recruited into the core of the indeterminate workforce in the FPS; about one third of those recruits come directly from the external labour market⁴, while the remainder come from the term population. During the period under consideration in this study, 3135 people

¹ *Recruitment and Results: Report of the COSO Sub-Committee on Recruitment*, Privy Council Office, July 2000.

² The expression "indeterminate employee" refers to the status of people appointed to the Federal Public Service (FPS) whose tenure in the position is of an unspecified duration. Those people are commonly referred to as "permanent" employees. By contrast, a "term employee" is someone whose expected duration of employment is fixed in advance.

³ While the new hires survey focused on the FPS as defined in the *Public Service Employment Act* (PSEA), it also included new hires at the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA). Invitations to participate in the survey were extended to 724 of the people who were newly recruited into the indeterminate workforce at CCRA during the same time period.

⁴ For our purposes, hirings from the student and casual population are considered to come from the external labour market.

were recruited into the indeterminate workforce from the external labour market (37%), while 5608 people were 'converted' from term to indeterminate status (63%). Both groups were surveyed for this project.⁵

The new hires survey was designed to give COSO, the PSC, and the Human Resources (HR) community a sense of how the new hires were recruited, their motivations for joining the FPS, their level of satisfaction with their new jobs and their future career plans.⁶ The findings -- evident in this preliminary report -- cast new light on a variety of recruitment and retention issues, particularly as they apply to particular sub-groups within the FPS workforce (e.g., the various Employment Equity (EE) groups, youth and recent graduates).

⁵ Throughout the remainder of this report, those two distinct but closely related groups will be referred to as 'external recruits' and 'recruits from the term population' (and sometimes 'term conversions') respectively. Considered together, the two groups will be referred to as the 'new hires'. In the past, some people in the FPS have used the expression 'term conversions' to refer to the policy which dictated that any term employee who worked for five years in the same position would be automatically 'converted' to indeterminate status. In this report, we use that expression to refer to the thousands of people who are recruited into the indeterminate workforce from the term population each year.

⁶ The final section of this report outlines some of the additional reports that will be written based on the results of this survey.

METHODOLOGY

The new hires survey (NHS) is based on analysis of the data gained from a questionnaire administered to 990 public servants during a three-week period in January and February 2001.

Survey Instrument and Method of Delivery

The questionnaire consisted of about 100 items covering a wide variety of issues related to the recruitment and retention of the people newly hired into the indeterminate workforce.

Because there were two distinct subgroups targeted for this study – external recruits as well as those people recruited from the term population – it was necessary to develop two slightly different versions of the questionnaire. Thus, new hires from the term population were asked a number of questions about their experience as term employees, questions that did not apply to external recruits.

The questionnaire was designed by the Research Directorate of the PSC. However, the survey was actually administered via E-mail and the Internet by the Ipsos-Reid polling company under contract to the PSC. Each potential respondent was sent a letter of invitation by E-mail, along with a unique personal identification number (PIN) and the Internet address for the website on which the questionnaire was located. The subjects were sent several reminder notices to encourage them to respond.

Population and Sample

The population for this study consisted of the 8743 people recruited into the indeterminate workforce in the PSEA defined FPS between July 1, 1999 and June 30, 2000, combined with 724 people recruited into the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA) during the same period. (A basic profile of the population is contained in the table below.)

The sampling procedure was as follows. For new hires in the FPS subject to the *Public Service Employment Act* (PSEA), a representative sample of 4328 people was randomly selected to participate in the study. To facilitate our analysis of the recruitment experience of new hires from the various EE groups, we over-sampled for Aboriginal peoples, visible minorities and persons with a disability. All the new hires that fell into those categories were selected to participate in the study.

NEW HIRES IN THE INDETERMINATE WORKFORCE OF THE FPS, JULY 1999-JUNE 30, 2000

	External Recruits	Term Conversions	Total
Occupational Categories			
Executive	29	3	32
Scientific and Professional	505	770	1275
Administrative and Foreign Services	1221	1746	2967
Technical	378	347	725
Administrative Support	474	1973	2447
Operations	527	768	1295
Others	1	1	2
Regions			
Atlantic	231	422	653
Quebec (except NCR)	210	464	674
National Capital Region (NCR)	1282	2479	3761
Ontario (except NCR)	234	861	1095
Prairies	517	456	973
Alberta	252	361	613
British Columbia	340	506	846
Territories	69	57	126
Employment Equity Groups			
Women	991	2690	3681
Persons with Disabilities	50	183	233
Visible Minorities	228	391	619
Aboriginal Peoples	117	270	387
Agencies outside the PSEA			
Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA)	793	1074	1867
Totals			
Without CCRA	3135	5608	8743
With CCRA	3928	6682	10610

Source: Data supplied by Information Management Division of the Public Service Commission

Once the selection was completed, a list of E-mail addresses for those people was constructed. The master list of E-mail addresses included 3706 individuals (85.6% of the total) from the PSEA defined FPS, with another 724 addresses from CCRA, for a total of 4430. In all, 990 public servants completed the survey.⁷

The sampling procedure for CCRA was somewhat different. HR staff at the Agency forwarded a list of 724 E-mail addresses to us from the total of 1867 people (793 external recruits and 1074 term conversions) recruited into their indeterminate workforce during the July 1, 1999 - June 30, 2000 period.

This study targeted those newly hired indeterminate employees who have access to E-mail and the Internet at work. Unfortunately, the new hires without such access were excluded because of the prohibitive costs of doing a survey by any means other than the Internet.

⁷ Because a significant proportion of the E-mail addresses on the master list proved to be inoperable or mistaken, the responses of several hundred people were not incorporated into the final results. Those were people who became indeterminate employees prior to July 1, 1999.

SURVEY RESPONDENT PROFILE

The 990 respondents in this study obtained their indeterminate jobs in the FPS through both channels of recruitment: slightly more than half were external recruits (52%), while the remainder (48%) were recruited from the term population.

English was the first language of 67% of all respondents, and French that of 28%. Over half (56%) of all respondents were women.

More women respondents came from the ranks of the term conversions than the external recruits. Among the new hires from the term population, roughly two-thirds (67%) were women. By contrast, more than half the respondents who were external recruits (54%) were men.

One-third of all respondents had a bachelor's degree, while an additional 26% had a post-graduate degree (i.e., a master's degree, professional degree, or doctorate). A further 25% had a college/technical certificate or diploma. A larger proportion of university trained new hires entered the indeterminate workforce of the FPS through external recruitment (68%) than from the term population (50%).

Not surprisingly, given the population targeted for this study, the average age of all respondents (36 years) was low by comparison with the FPS as a whole.⁸ The distribution of respondents by age group was as follows: 4% under 24 years of age, 28% between 25 and 30, 22% between 31 and 35, 16% between 36 and 40, 23% between 41-50, and 7% over 50 years of age.

The strategy of oversampling for Employment Equity (EE) groups resulted in a large representation for Aboriginal peoples (8%) persons with disabilities (4%), and visible minorities (19%) among the respondents.

⁸ The average age for the FPS during the year 2000 was 44.6 years.

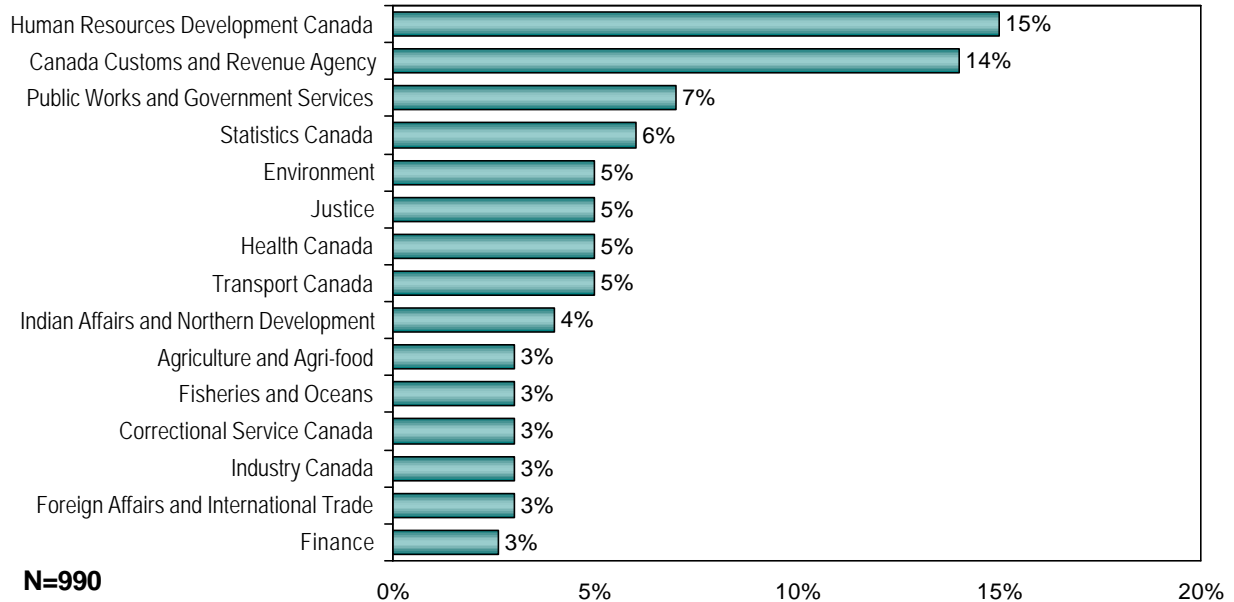
RESPONDENT PROFILE

	Total		Term Conversion		External Recruits	
All Respondents	990	100%	478	48%	512	52%
Language (first language)						
English	666	67%	318	67%	348	68%
French	276	28%	137	29%	139	27%
Gender						
Women	550	56%	313	65%	237	46%
Men	440	44%	165	35%	275	54%
Employment Equity Groups						
Aboriginal Peoples	79	8%	44	9%	35	7%
Persons with disabilities	42	4%	23	5%	19	4%
Visible minorities	189	19%	94	20%	95	19%
Age						
24 or less	39	4%	15	3%	24	5%
25-30	276	28%	139	29%	137	27%
31-35	216	22%	101	21%	115	22%
36-40	163	16%	77	16%	86	17%
41-50	231	23%	106	22%	125	24%
51 and above	65	7%	40	8%	25	5%
Education						
High School	111	11%	73	15%	38	7%
College/Tech	248	25%	144	30%	104	20%
University Diploma/Certificate	31	3%	15	3%	16	3%
Bachelor Degree	322	33%	144	30%	178	35%
Masters/Doctoral level	200	20%	71	15%	129	25%
Professional degree	63	6%	24	5%	39	8%

Distribution of Respondents by Department/Agency and by Region

The respondents in this survey were employed in a wide variety of government departments and agencies. Among those departments and agencies with especially large representation were Human Resources Development Canada (15%), the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (11%) and Public Works and Government Services (7%). In addition, Statistics Canada accounted for 6% of all respondents, while four other departments (i.e., Environment Canada, Justice, Health Canada, and Transport Canada) each accounted for 5% of the total.

Distribution of Respondents by Department/Agency *Fifteen Largest Departments and Agencies*



In terms of regional representation, almost half (46%) of all respondents were employed in the National Capital Region (NCR). Slightly more than one in ten of all the respondents (11%) were employed in Ontario (excluding the NCR), with several other regions have a comparable representation: 10% in British Columbia, followed by 9% in Alberta. Smaller numbers of respondents were located in the Atlantic Provinces (7%) and Quebec (excluding the NCR) (6%). Manitoba accounted for 5% of respondents and Saskatchewan for 3%. Respondents from the three territories (Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut) made up about 2% of the total.

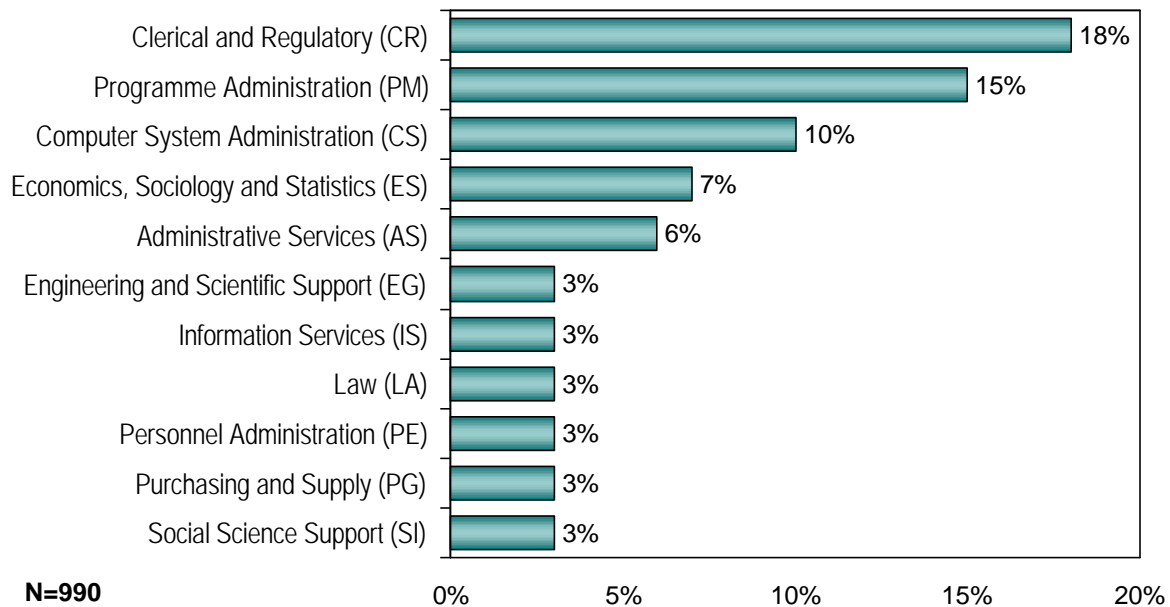
Type of Work

Overall 67% of the respondents were employed in one of the three occupational categories usually considered to constitute the knowledge worker component within the FPS. Thus, 19% of the survey

participants were drawn from the Scientific and Professional category, and 46% from the Administrative and Foreign Services category. (Only two people employed as EXs completed the survey.)⁹

The largest single occupational group, however, was the clerical and regulatory (CR) group accounting for 18% of all respondents. Almost one in seven (15%) respondents worked in the Programme Administration (PM) group, 10% worked in Computer System Administration (CS), 7% as Economists, Sociologists and Statisticians (ES), 6% in Administrative Services (AS), and 3% in each of, Engineering and Scientific Support (EG), Information Services (IS), Law (LA), Personnel Administration (PE), Purchasing and Supply (PG) and Social Science Support (SI).

Distribution of Respondents by Occupational Groups *Eleven Largest Occupational Groups*



⁹ The proportion of respondents in the other three occupational categories is as follows: Technical (8%), Administrative Support (19%), Operational (2%). The low response rate among new hires in the Operational category stems from certain technical constraints inherent in an Internet based survey; many workers in that category either do not have E-mail, or do not have access to the Internet in their workplace.

OVERALL SURVEY RESULTS

Experience before Joining the Federal Public Service

Respondents were asked about their main activity during the 12-month period prior to joining the federal Public Service. Most (62%) explained they were working, while 27% were going to school, 7% were looking for work and 3% were taking care of family.

Respondents were also asked to specify the sector of the economy they had worked in just prior to joining the FPS. The largest group said their main work activity prior to entering the FPS had been in the private sector (47%). A further one third (31%) had worked in some type of public sector job. This latter group was split among those employed at other levels of government (11%), in the fields of health and education (7%), at crown corporations and agencies (6%), and in the federal Public Service (in something other than a term or indeterminate position) (5%). Almost one in six employees (16%) said they had not been working for pay before entering the FPS, while 4% worked for non-profit organizations or as volunteers.

Roughly two-thirds of respondents indicated their main job before entering the federal Public Service was completely related or related (60%) to their field of study or their long-term career plans. However, more than one in five (22%) respondents said the opposite. This was particularly true for women (27%) and Aboriginal respondents (28%).

One third of all respondents (33%) said they had previously worked (in some capacity) within the department or agency that hired them into their first indeterminate position (in the case of external recruits) or the first term position that led to their indeterminate position (for term conversions).

Almost one in five (18%) of the people participating in this survey had previously been employed in the FPS through the Federal Student Work Experience Program (FSWEP) or on a CO-OP assignment.

Recruitment from the Contingent Workforce

The FPS recruits a significant portion of its indeterminate workforce from the large contingent workforce that surrounds it. While 38% of the respondents in this survey said they had never worked in any capacity for the FPS (or another federal government employer) prior to obtaining their first term or indeterminate position, a substantial number had. For example, 14% had been casuals in the FPS, 8% had been self-employed contractors or consultants working for the federal government, 7% had been temporary workers

(i.e., those employed by an agency under contract to the FPS), and 3% had been consultants working for the FPS while employed by a private sector firm.

Respondents were also specifically asked if they were already working in the federal Public Service in some capacity at the time when they got their first job in the FPS. (That entry job was defined as the first indeterminate position for external recruits, and the first term position for the term conversions.) Almost seven in ten respondents (68%) said that they were not working in the FPS in any capacity immediately prior to obtaining their first indeterminate or term position. However, fully 28% were already employed in some kind of FPS-related position just prior to their entry into a term or indeterminate job. The largest number (10%) said they were working as a casual employee¹⁰ in the FPS, followed by 6% who were working within the FSWEF or COOP programs, 5% who were self-employed contractors or consultants, and 4% who were temporary workers employed by an outside agency.

The Job Search Activity of the New Hires

Almost half (44%) of the respondents were casually searching for a job during the month before they got their first term employment with the federal Public Service (i.e. they were gathering information about or applying for a new job fewer than three times a week). Another 31% were actively searching for work during that month (i.e. gathering information about or making an application for a new job more than three times a week). Fully 25% indicated they had not been searching for work during the month prior to getting their entry job in either the indeterminate or term components of the FPS workforce.

Roughly one-third (31%) of respondents said that it took them more than six months of searching for a job before they obtained their first term or indeterminate employment with the federal Public Service. Another 27% said that it took them between one to three months, 20% between four to sixth months, and 15% less than one month.

Respondents were asked to indicate the three most valuable job search activities in terms of finding out about their first indeterminate or term position in the FPS. Looking at the Public Service Commission Jobs.gc.ca website was the first choice of 59% of the respondents, followed by talking to family, friends and their contacts (40%), looking elsewhere on the Internet (39%), and talking to contacts or colleagues from

¹⁰ In the FPS, a “casual employee” refers to someone appointed to a position for a period not exceeding 90 days, or more than 25 working days within a 12-month period, in any one department.

previous jobs or school (36%). Other job search activities deemed to be valuable included placing their names in an inventory for a federal Public Service job (30%), using Human Resources Centres of Canada (17%), and going to campus-based placement offices (13%).

When asked which sector of the economy they had wanted to work in while searching for their first indeterminate or term job in the FPS, more than half (59%) of all respondents identified the public sector as their first choice. More importantly 52% specifically identified the federal Public Service as their first choice. (This was particularly the case for French-speaking respondents (61%).) Another 27% chose the private sector as their first choice.

The Internet is clearly playing an increasingly important role in the job search activities of people like the respondents to this survey. Fully 60% of the new hires used the Internet in their job search, although another 17% had access to the Internet but did not use it. Those who use the Internet do so quite intensively. Almost half of all respondents using the Internet indicated that somewhere between three quarters and all of their job search activity involved use of the Internet. Another 30% indicated that about half their job search activity involved use of the Internet.

Among those who used the Internet in their job search, the majority used it to check the PSC's Jobs.gc.ca website (81%), check the websites of other employers they were interested in working for (70%), and to apply for jobs online (67%). Other Internet based job search activities included using E-mail to communicate with contacts or potential employers (37%), doing research for an interview or to determine what it might be like to work for a specific employer (36%), requesting a 'career alert' notice from the PSC website (35%), and looking for information about salary levels and benefit packages (33%).

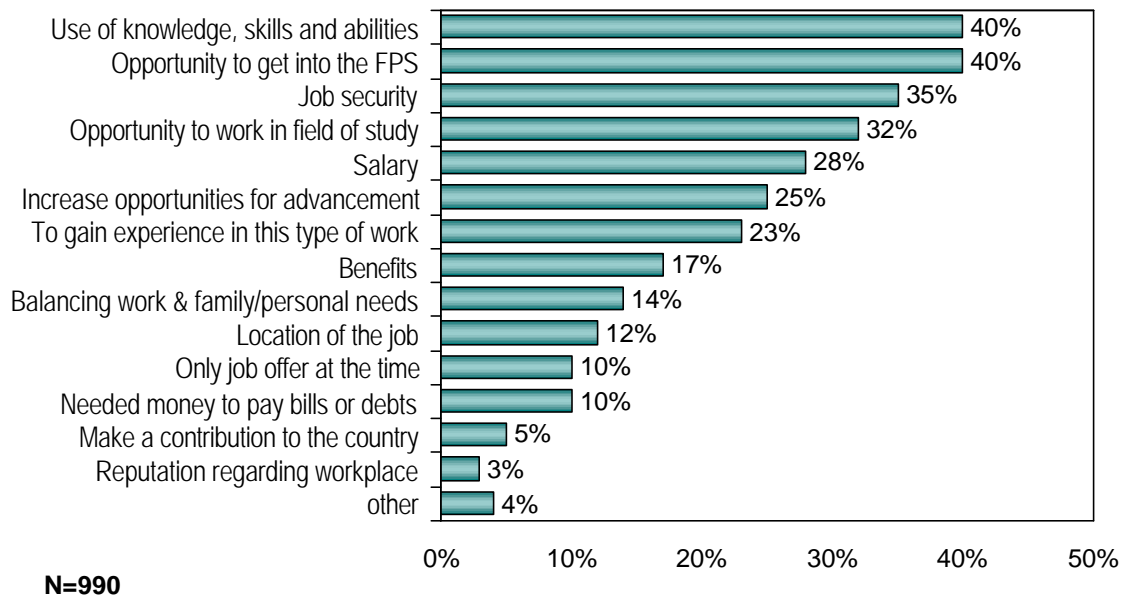
The survey of new hires also suggests that informal networking remains a vital means by which people succeed in getting employment in the FPS. The respondents were asked to identify the three most important sources of information that helped them get their first indeterminate job in the FPS (in the case of the external recruits) or their first term job in the FPS (in the case of the term conversions). Even though the single factor cited more often than any other was the PSC's Jobs.gc.ca website (32%), the next five sources all point to the continuing importance of the flow of information through informal channels. Respondents identified each of the following as important sources of information: contacts or colleagues from previous jobs or school (31%), the manager in the work unit where the person was applying for the job (29%), family and friends or people they know (28%), other people in the work unit where the person was applying for the job (21%), and other people in the department or agency where the person was applying for the job (21%).

To further highlight this point, it should be noted that fully 28% of the new hires in this survey had some previous experience with or knowledge about their first manager prior to entering the FPS.

Reasons for Accepting First Job

The newly hired employees surveyed for this study provided a wide variety of reasons for having accepted their first job in the federal Public Service (i.e. the first indeterminate position for external recruits, or the term position that led to an indeterminate position in the case of the term conversions). The two motivations that were cited most frequently (each by 40% of the respondents) were to take the opportunity to get into the federal Public Service, and the desire to make full use of their knowledge, skills and abilities. Other considerations that were important to more than a quarter of all respondents included job security (35%), the opportunity to work in one's field of study (32%), and salary (28%).

Three Most Important Reasons for Accepting First Job in the Federal Public Service



Male and English speaking respondents, as well as members of visible minorities, tended to emphasize the importance of being able to make full use of their knowledge, skills and abilities. Conversely, female, French speaking, and Aboriginal respondents stressed the importance of taking the opportunity to enter the federal Public Service.

A comparison of the responses given by survey participants formerly employed on a term basis, to those provided by external recruits, shows that although the two groups identified the same five factors as being most important, their ranking of those factors differed. Half of all former term employees (50%) identified the opportunity to enter the federal Public Service as an important reason for having accepted their present positions. In contrast, this factor was selected by only 30% of external recruits, thus ranking as fourth most popular consideration for that group of respondents.

Making full use of one's knowledge, skills and abilities was less frequently identified as important by former term employees (34%) than by external recruits (46%). A similar difference was evident in the importance attached by the two groups to job security. It was identified as one of the three most important reasons for accepting employment in the Public Service by just over a quarter (28%) of former term employees, while it was chosen by a considerably larger proportion (40%) of external recruits.

Job Satisfaction

In general, the respondents expressed satisfaction with their new jobs in the FPS. Large numbers felt their colleagues have treated them with respect (95%); that all individuals (including members of EE groups) were accepted as equal members of the team (89%); that their department or agency was a good place to work (87%); that they would recommend the federal Public Service to others as a good place to work (85%); and that they knew what their manager expected from them in their job (82%).

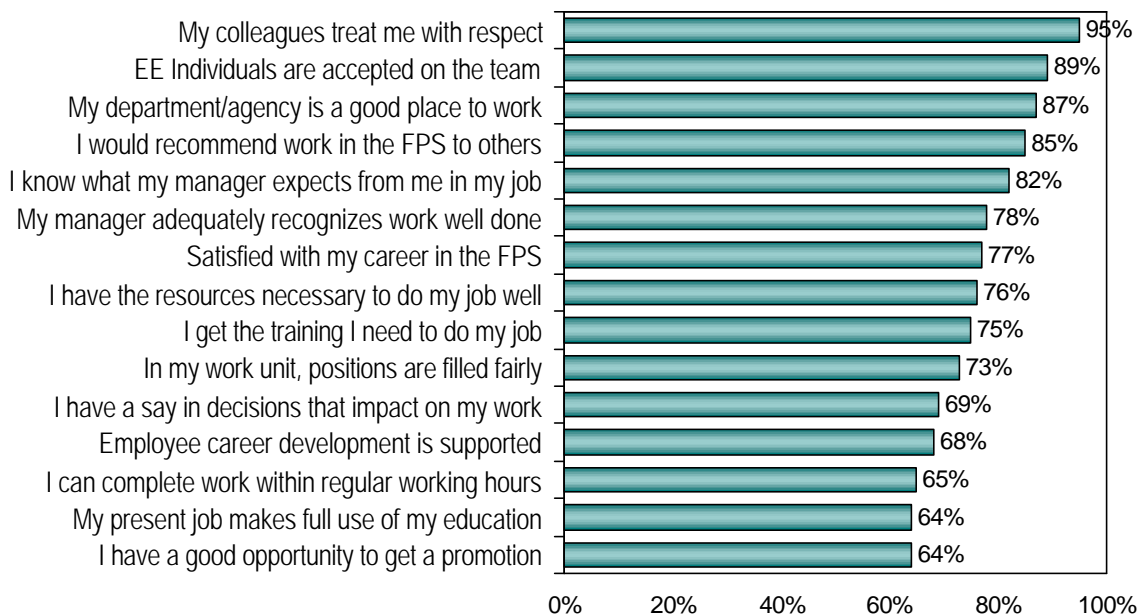
Despite this overall positive picture, a significant number of the survey participants expressed dissatisfaction with some aspects of their new jobs. More than a third of the respondents (36%) believed they were underemployed, indicating their job did not make full use of their education. This is a matter of real concern, since fully 40% of the new hires indicated their prime motivation for entering the FPS was a desire to make full use of their knowledge skills and abilities.

Other aspects of their employment with which many new hires were dissatisfied included having a good opportunity for promotion (36%), the workload (35%), insufficient support for career development (32%), and having a say in decisions that impact their work (31%). New hires drawn from the term population were

more inclined to be pessimistic about their chances of being promoted (41%) than the external recruits (31%); the former term employees were also more often unhappy about not receiving adequate recognition for work well done (27%) than the external recruits (17%).

Overall, the responses given by women were somewhat less positive than those given by men. Women were more likely than men to feel that they did not received adequate recognition from their managers for high quality work (25% versus 18%), that they did not have a good opportunity to get a promotion (38% versus 33%), that the process of selecting a person for a position was executed unfairly (31% versus 22%), and that they did not have the resources necessary to do their job (27% versus 22%).

Job Satisfaction



N=990

Similarly, English-speaking respondents tended to be less positive than their French-speaking counterparts. In particular, English-speaking respondents were more inclined than the French-speaking

ones to be dissatisfied with their opportunities for promotion (38% versus 32%), with the resources available to do their job (26% versus 20%), and with the recognition they received from their managers (24% versus 17%). Members of visible minorities were also relatively pessimistic about their chances of being promoted (44%), while large numbers of Aboriginal respondents indicated they did not feel that the hiring process was conducted fairly in their unit (37%), and that they did not have the resources necessary to do their job well (34%).

Perceptions of the Federal Public Service

In general, the new hires have a very positive perception about employment in the federal Public Service. Among the things that account for that positive assessment are the variety of career jobs offered (87%), the flexibility to balance work and personal life (87%), the benefits offered by the FPS (86%), the interesting nature of the work (86%), and the commitment to diversity in the workplace (85%). External recruits were more likely than people recruited from the term population to say the federal Public Service offers a wide variety of career jobs (91% versus 83%), but less likely to agree that it offers excellent benefits (83% versus 90%).

However, despite that generally positive evaluation of the FPS as an employer, much smaller numbers of the new hires expressed satisfaction with some other aspects of their public service experience. Only one quarter (26%) agreed that that hiring decisions in the federal Public Service were made within a reasonable period of time. In addition, about half the respondents (47%) agreed that the FPS offers competitive salaries in comparison to the private sector, is open to change (48%), has good employee morale (50%), and encourages independent decision-making (51%). (A particularly small proportion of external recruits (39%) agreed the FPS offers competitive wages.)

The views of women and men contrasted sharply on the question of whether or not FPS salaries are competitive with those in the private sector. While a majority of women believed federal Public Service salaries compared favorably (59%), a majority of men did not agree (69%). Interestingly, Aboriginal respondents tended to perceive the salaries offered in the federal Public Service as competitive (56%), while members of visible minorities did not (68%).

French speaking respondents generally expressed more positive views about the FPS than their English-speaking counterparts. These two groups were split on the issue of salaries, with a majority of French speaking respondents feeling the salaries were competitive (54%), and a majority of English speaking

respondents disagreeing (55%). In addition, French-speaking respondents were more likely than the English ones to be positive about the benefits (94% versus 84%) and employee morale (57% versus 46%).

Perceptions of the Federal Public Service



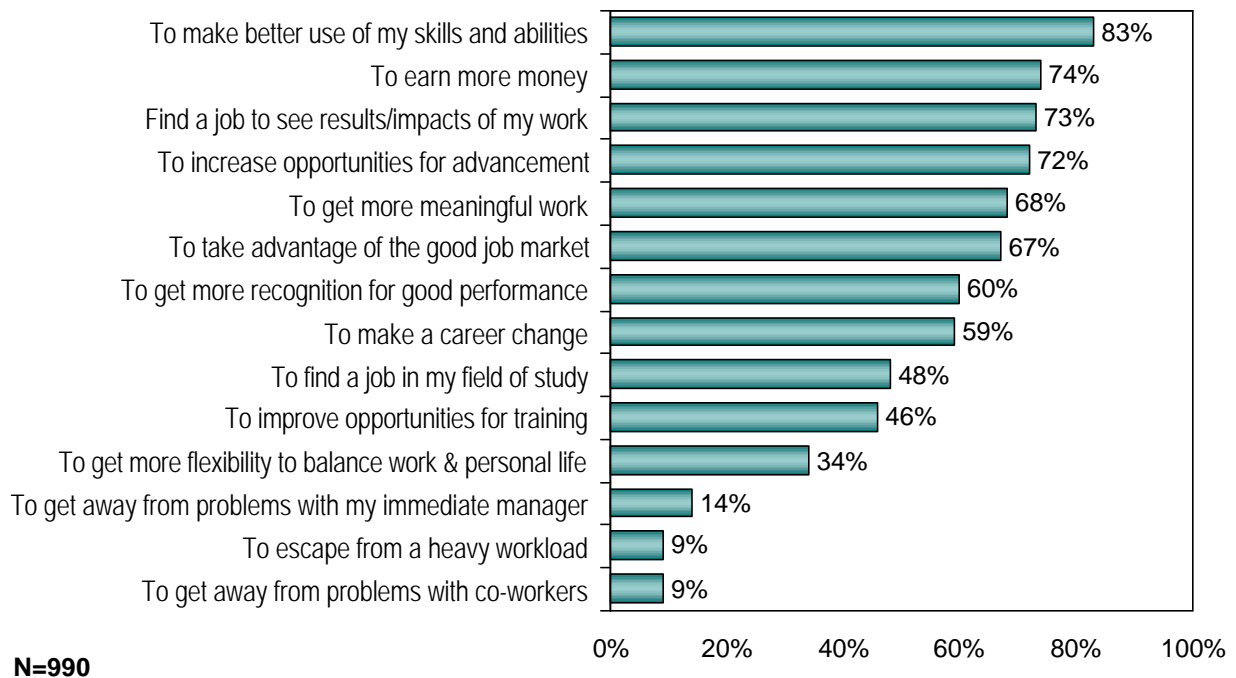
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Future Intentions

A large majority of the newly hired employees surveyed for this study (73%) expected to remain in the FPS for at least five years. However, fully 27% of the respondents indicated they expect to leave within the next five years, with one in seven (15%) suggesting that it will happen between 3 and 5 years from now, and one in eight (12%) indicating they plan to leave within the next 3 years. A relatively small proportion (6%) of those planning to leave the FPS during the next three years are already actively searching for another job, by gathering information or making applications at least three times a week. However, the magnitude of the retention problem is better indicated by the proportion of those new hires planning to leave (51%) who acknowledge they are casually searching for a new job by gathering information or making applications less than three times a week.

When asked to identify the reasons they plan to leave the FPS, those respondents who say they are likely to depart within three years indicated their resignation will be motivated by a desire to make better use of their skills and abilities (83%), to earn more money (74%), to find a job where they can better see the results or impacts of their work (73%), and to increase their opportunities for advancement (72%). In addition, a majority of those planning to leave in the next few years cited four other reasons for leaving the FPS: to get more meaningful work (68%), to take advantage of the good job market (67%), to get more recognition for good performance (60%), and to make a career change (59%).

Factors that Contribute to Decision to leave Federal Public Service



PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS AND OBSERVATIONS

This preliminary report on the new hires survey provides a first take on what the data tell us about the recruitment experience, job satisfaction and future plans of the new hires. While there is much more to be learned from the survey results, several things are already quite clear.

- Since 47% of the new hires surveyed indicated their main employment prior to joining the FPS was in the private sector, the FPS may be doing a better job of dealing with its labour market competition than previously thought. However, we still need to examine this new data in more detail to determine who those private sector recruits are, and why those people left the private sector for the FPS.
- Because 60% of the new hires used the Internet during their job search, with many of them relying upon it quite heavily, E-recruitment must be central to the HR strategy of the FPS. (The people who used the Internet are most likely the same people (59% of all respondents) who indicated the PSC's Jobs.gc.ca website was one of the three most important sources of information in their job search.) Further analysis should tell us much more about the differences between those new hires who are Internet users and those who are not.
- The reliance of new hires upon the Internet for their job search should not obscure the fact that they are also heavily dependent upon informal networking to gather information about employment opportunities inside the FPS. Thus, the existing staff plays an important role in providing potential recruits with an appraisal of the work environment in the FPS. The informal networks public servants are enmeshed in can become an important tool in the overall marketing strategy of the FPS.
- The levels of job satisfaction among the new hires suggest they are probably among the best ambassadors the FPS has. On the whole, they have a fairly positive evaluation of their experience to date.
- People enter the indeterminate workforce in the FPS for a wide variety of reasons. However, as the data suggest, there is a worrisome contrast between the 40% of new hires who indicated they joined the FPS to make full use of their knowledge, skills and abilities, and the 36% who believe they are currently underemployed. Until we examine the data further, we will not be able to determine the extent to which the two groups overlap, or the degree to which the gap between initial motivation and current reality may have contributed to a decision to leave the FPS. While those issues remain to be further explored, we do know that 83% of the new hires planning to leave within three years indicated one of their reasons for doing so is a desire to make better use of their knowledge, skills and abilities.

All of this suggests there may be a need to address the apparent lack of fit between some new hires and the jobs they occupy in the early stages of their careers.

- The survey highlights the dimensions of the retention problem confronting the FPS. As we saw, fully 12% of the new hires plan to leave within the next three years, with an additional 13% saying they will leave during the two years after that. Probing the former group, we found that 57% of them are already looking for a job outside the FPS. That suggests the critical importance of retention strategies that specifically address the situation of new hires.

FUTURE ANALYSIS

Obviously, a survey of this size and complexity yields a rich collection of data that can be mined to produce detailed analyses of a number of issues of concern to the FPS. The Research Directorate of the PSC is committed to producing a number of small thematic reports dealing with sub-groups of the new hires population and with various aspects of the recruitment and retention process. Among the sub-groups which may receive special attention are the following: visible minorities, youth and recent university graduates, and people recruited through the Post-secondary Recruitment Program. Recruitment and retention processes that may be studied in some detail include: recruitment from the external labour market, recruitment from the term population, the role of the Internet in recruitment, and the challenge of retaining newly hired indeterminate employees.