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New Hires Survey Technical Paper #5

Mid-Career New Recruits

**Their recruitment experiences, job
satisfaction and career plans**

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Executive Summary

In response to an increasingly competitive labour market and demographic changes in the Canadian population, the federal Public Service (FPS) is pursuing new strategies to recruit and retain employees. Given the concern with the large number of anticipated retirements in senior level positions, this report focuses on mid-career new hires. It is based on research conducted by the Research Directorate of the Public Service Commission in a survey of recently hired indeterminate public servants across all occupational categories in January and February 2001. This survey examined the recruitment experiences, job satisfaction and career plans of a representative sample of the 8743 people hired into the indeterminate core of the FPS during the 12 month period between July 1, 1999 and June 30, 2000.

Of the 990 survey respondents 438 were in the mid-career group. Over two fifths (42%) of this group had been recruited from term positions, while 58% had been hired from the external labour market. A slightly larger proportion of mid-career recruits were male (51%) than female (49%). Over two thirds (69%) of mid-career new recruits were in the administrative and foreign service group while the remaining 31% were in the scientific and professional group. Even though almost equal proportions of mid-career (30%) and others (34%) had Bachelors degrees, many more of the former group had professional degrees (12% versus 2% of others) or post-graduate training (30% versus 13% of others).

Questions addressing preferences in sector of employment revealed that when respondents' first and second choices are aggregated, distinct differences are observed. Mid-career respondents (47%) were less likely than others (54%) to have selected the private sector as their first or second work sector of choice.

For many mid-career new recruits, the first indeterminate position which qualified them for inclusion in the study did not represent their first contact with the FPS as an employer. For example, a much larger proportion of those in the mid-career stream (12%) had worked as self-employed contractors or consultants compared to others (5%) in the sample.

The importance of certain sources of information during job searches varied among respondents, with mid-career new recruits placing a greater value on talking to contacts from previous jobs or school. Over two fifths (42%) of these individuals considered talking to such contacts as important in their job searches, whereas less than one third (31%) of others did so. Moreover, those in the mid-career group (14%) were more likely than others (9%) to have contacted a federal government department or agency where they had not previously worked.

With regards to Internet usage, a smaller proportion of mid-career new recruits (18%) did not have access than others (26%). Among those who did have access, mid-career recruits (64%) are much more likely than others (58%) to indicate using the Internet in their job searches. For both mid-career (15%) and others (13%) the most important source of information during their job search was the work unit manager. Also considered important among numerous mid-career respondents (15% versus 12% of others) was the PSC website.

Finally, mid-career new recruits were more likely than others to indicate that their most important reason for accepting their first job was to use their knowledge, skills and abilities.

1.0 Background

In May 2000 a preliminary report was released on findings from a survey of newly hired indeterminate employees in the federal Public Service (FPS).¹ The current report explores in further detail the issues of particular concern among respondents in the mid-career positions. Questions that are addressed include: how were they recruited to the FPS? What have been their experiences as new recruits? What are their intentions regarding remaining in the FPS?

The New Hires Survey (NHS) examined the recruitment experiences, job satisfaction and career plans of a representative sample of the 8743 people hired into the federal Public Service's indeterminate workforce between July 1, 1999 and June 30, 2000.²

Individuals are recruited into the FPS indeterminate workforce from the external labour market or internally, from those working on a term basis. During the one year period under investigation 3135 individuals or 37% were recruited from the external labour market and the remaining 5608 individuals or 63% were recruited from the term population.

¹ McDougall, Brian; Nehme, Micheline; and van Gaalen, Rolina (March 2001) *Joining the Core Workforce: A Preliminary Report on the Survey of Newly Hired Indeterminate Employees in the Federal Public Service* (<http://www.psc-cfp.gc.ca/research>).

² Although this survey focused on the FPS as defined in the *Public Service Employment Act* (PSEA), those who were new hires (N=724) at the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA) during that time period were also invited to participate in the study.

2.0 Methodology

Results from the New Hires Survey are based on an analysis of responses to a questionnaire by 990 public servants during a three-week period in January and February 2001. The questionnaire consisted of about 100 items covering a wide range of issues related to the recruitment and retention of people newly hired into the indeterminate workforce.

Although designed by the Research Directorate of the Public Service Commission (PSC), the survey was administered via the Internet by the Ipsos-Reid polling company under contract to the PSC. Each potential respondent was sent by E-mail a letter of invitation to participate in the study, a unique personal identification number (PIN), and the Internet address of the survey. Employees were sent several reminder notices encouraging them to participate in the study.

2.1 Population and Sample

The study population consisted of 8743 people recruited into the core workforce between July 1, 1999 and June 30, 2000, and 1867 people recruited into the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA) during this period. Table 1 presents the population profile.

Table 1.1.
New Hires in the Indeterminate Workforce of the FPS, July 1999-June 2000

	External Recruits	Term Conversions	Total
Occupational Categories			
Executive	29	3	32
Scientific and Professional	505	770	1275
Administrative and Foreign Service	1221	1746	2967
Technical	378	347	725
Administrative Support	474	1973	2447
Operations	527	168	1295
Others	1	1	2
Regions			
Atlantic	231	422	653
Quebec (except NCR)	210	464	674
National Capital Region (except 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)	783	1074	1867
Totals			
With CCRA	3928	6682	10610
Source: Data supplied by the Information Management Division of the Public Service Commission			

The sampling procedure was as follows. For new hires in the FPS subject to the PSEA, a representative sample of 4328 people was randomly selected to participate in the study. To facilitate our analysis of the experiences of new hires from the various Employment Equity (EE) groups, we over-sampled by inviting all those who identified themselves as Aboriginal peoples, visible minorities and persons with disabilities to participate.

2.2 Survey Respondent Profile

The 990 respondents in this study obtained their indeterminate jobs in the FPS through two channels of recruitment: over half (52%) were external hires, while the remainder (48%) were recruited from the term population. English was the first language of 67% of all respondents and French for 28% of respondents. The average age of respondents was 36 years of age, which generally reflects younger new recruits as compared to the overall FPS workforce which has an average age of 44.6 years of age.

More women respondents came from the ranks of the term conversions than the external recruits. Among the new hires from the term population, two thirds (67%) were women. In contrast, only 46% of respondents who were recruited externally were women.

One-third (33%) of all respondents had a bachelor's degree, while 27% had a post-graduate degree (e.g. a master's, professional or doctoral degree). A further 25% had a college/technical certificate or diploma, including CEGEP. Only 15% had a high school diploma or apprentice/trade credentials. A larger proportion of university trained new hires entered the core workforce through external recruitment (68%) than from the term population (50%).

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

2.3 Distribution of Respondents by Department/Agency and by Region

Survey respondents were working in numerous 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%). Additionally, respondents employed at Statistics Canada accounted for 6% of the responses, while four other departments (i.e. Environment Canada, Justice, Health Canada and Transport Canada) accounted for 5% of the total.

Almost two thirds (68%) of respondents were employed in one of the following two occupational categories: scientific and professional (20%), and administrative and foreign service (48%). Only two respondents employed as executives completed the survey. The proportions of the other three occupational categories are as follows: technical (10%), administrative support (20%) and operational (2%). The low response rate among those in the operational category is due to technical constraints such as not having access to the Internet in their workplaces.

2.4 Definition of Mid-Career New Hires

In this report, mid-career new hires are defined as those respondents who indicated that they held in Executive levels minus three (EX minus 3) positions and were 31 years of age and older. The reason these individuals are categorized as mid-career is because they are in medium to high level positions, and by excluding the younger respondents, the analysis is able to focus on those who are further along in their career development.

3.0 Results

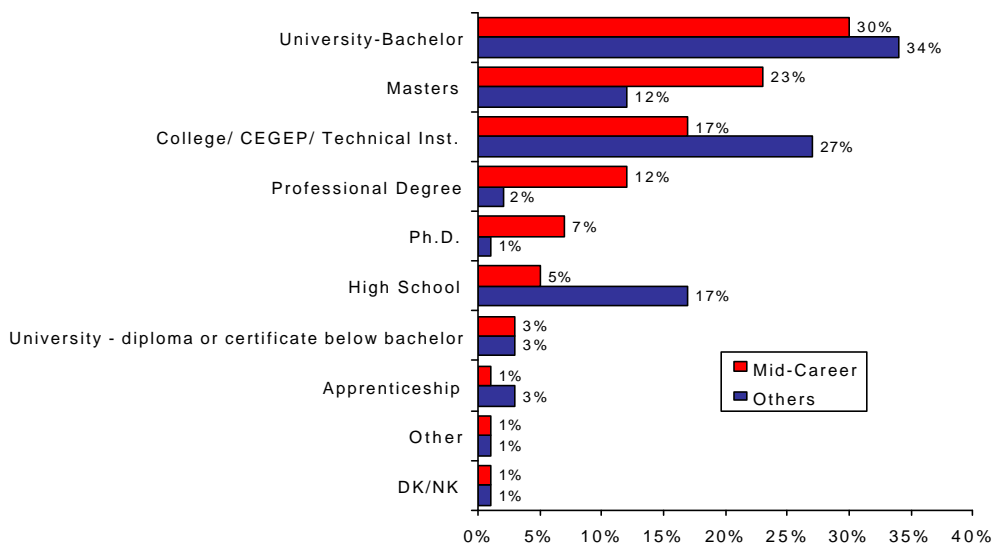
Of the 990 respondents, 438 individuals met the two criteria outlined above. Of these 42% had been hired from the term population while 58% had been hired from the external labour market. There were significant differences based on gender. Half (51%) of those in the mid-career group were men while 49% of them were women. However, there were no differences among mid-career respondents and others in terms of being a member of a visible minority group, Aboriginal peoples, or peoples with disabilities. On account of the way the mid-career group has been defined, they have a much higher average age (39) than others (33).

Exploring the relationship between channel of recruitment and whether or not one was in the mid-career stream reveals that women (59%) who were hired as terms had a higher likelihood of being in this stream, than their male counterparts (42%). In contrast, among those hired from the external labour market, men (55%) were more likely to be in the mid-career stream than women (45%).

In terms of occupational classification, over two thirds (70%) of mid-career new recruits were in the administrative and foreign service category while the remaining 30% were in the scientific and professional category. Looking at this variable in more detail reveals that a greater proportion of women in the mid-career group were in the administrative and foreign service category (78%) than men (60%). The opposite is also true in that a smaller proportion of women (22%) in the mid-career group were in the scientific and professional category compared to men (40%).

3.1 Educational attainment

Graph 1: Educational Attainment comparing Mid-Career and All Other Respondents (n=990)



As Graph 1 illustrates, mid-career respondents had higher levels of educational attainment than all others. This is explained by the fact that the mid-career group includes many respondents in the administrative and foreign service and scientific and professional categories, which require at least an undergraduate degree and frequently a post-graduate one. Although almost equal

proportions of mid-career (30%) and others (34%) had Bachelors degrees, many more of the former group had professional degrees (12% versus 2% of others) or post-graduate training (30% versus 13% of others).

3.2 Previous experience

Respondents were asked to indicate what activity they were engaged in 12 months prior to entering the FPS. Almost three-quarters (70%) of those in the mid-career stream were working, whereas just over half (55%) of all others were so engaged. In contrast, 33% of all others were going to school compared to only 18% of those in the mid-career group. Given that those in the mid-career group include individuals who are 31 years of age and older, it is not surprising that fewer of them were students a year before starting work in the FPS.

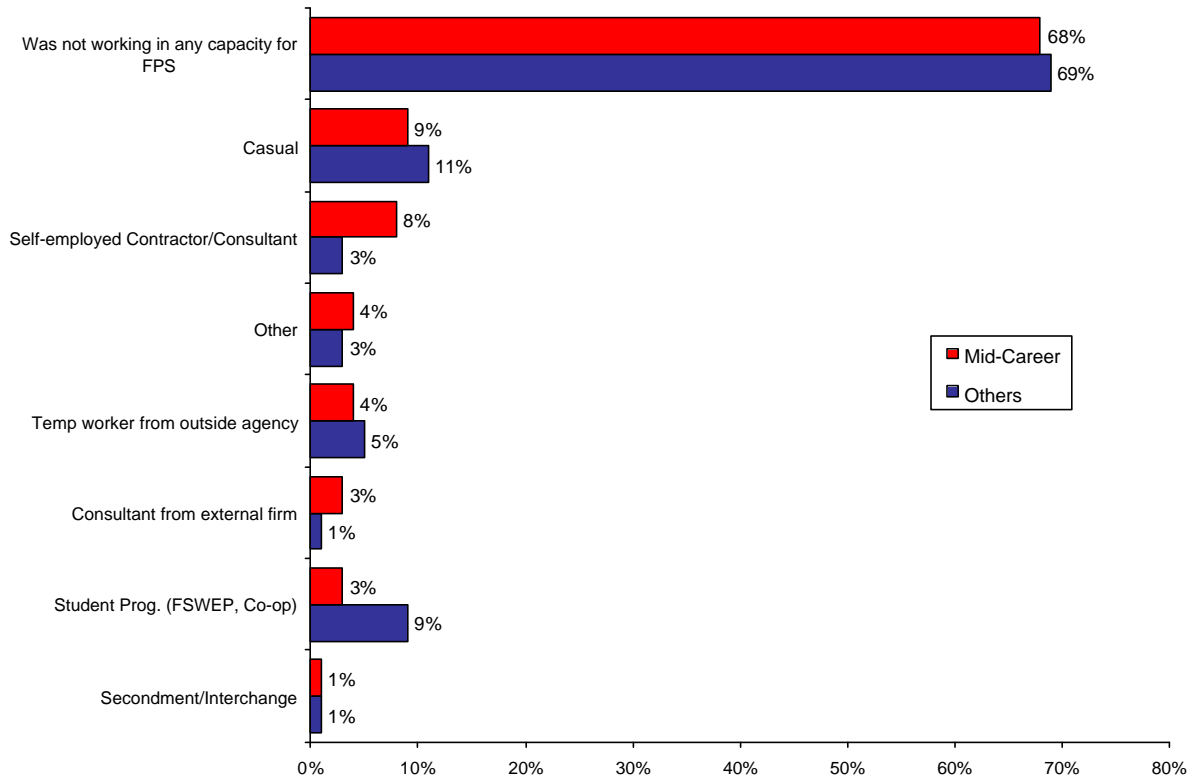
Differences between those in the mid-career group and all others are also found regarding the sector of employment in which they worked previously. A smaller proportion of those in the mid-career group (43%) than all others (51%) were working in the private sector prior to commencing work with the FPS. Those in the mid-career stream (7%) were more likely than others (5%) to have been working for a federal government employer outside the FPS. Similarly, 14% of mid-career respondents compared to 8% of all others were working in other public sector organizations (i.e. provincial, territorial, municipal) previously.

In terms of preferences, respondents were asked to identify the sector of the economy which was their first choice for employment. When asked to indicate their first choice among a list, there was no difference between the mid-career and other respondents. However, when respondents' first and second choices are aggregated, distinct differences are revealed. For example, mid-career respondents (47%) were less likely than others (54%) to have indicated the private sector as their first or second choice of sector to work in. This may be due to a pre-selection effect among mid-career individuals. In other words, those at this level whose first choice was in the private sector would have probably not remained in the public sector. In contrast, those in the mid-career group (13%) were more likely than others (8%) to indicate that the broader public sector was their first or second choice.

Those in the mid-career group (53%) were more likely to have been in a previous main job that was permanent than other (40%) respondents who were in temporary, casual and/or term positions. Similarly, those in the mid-career stream were more likely to have been in positions that were either completely related (43%) or related (31%) to their field of study compared to others who were more likely to be in positions that were either unrelated (14%) or completely unrelated (16%). Again, these differences are at least partly due to the fact that mid-career respondents are older and thus, have had more opportunities to establish themselves in their careers and in the labour market.

Differences between all others and those in the mid-career group were also found regarding whether or not respondents had already worked in the FPS in a certain capacity before getting their current indeterminate position. As Graph 2 illustrates, a greater proportion of those in the mid-career stream (8%) had been self-employed contractors or consultants whereas only three percent of others had been so employed.

Graph 2: Comparison between Mid-Career respondents and all others on whether or not they had worked for the FPS in any capacity (n=990)



Respondents were asked a specific question regarding their previous employment relationship with the FPS prior to securing their first indeterminate job. Mid-career (3%) respondents were less likely than others (9%) to have worked in one of the FPS student programs previous to getting their first indeterminate job. This is probably due to the fact that the mid-career group includes only those over 30 years of age. Three percent of mid-career respondents worked as consultants employed by a firm working for a government department or agency, compared to only one percent of all others. These results indicate that mid-career new recruits had previous exposure to the FPS and as such were undoubtedly more familiar with the context and how it fit their own preferences and dispositions.

Survey participants were given a list of possible job search activities and were asked to identify the three that were most valuable. Although there were no differences on certain indicators, such as accessing the PSC job website and looking at other job websites, there were significant differences on others between mid-career recruits and others. For instance, fewer mid-career respondents (26%) had placed their names on an inventory for a FPS job than all others (34%).

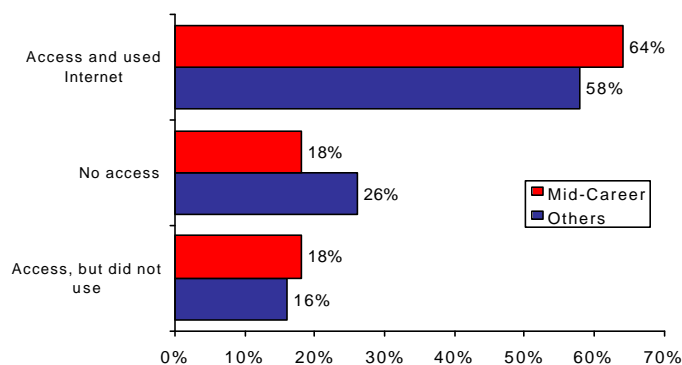
Similarly, 9% of mid-career respondents went to a campus visit, whereas 17% of all others did so. Half (7%) as many in the mid-career group indicated that using the PSC's telephone based information service was useful, compared to others (14%).

An area where those in the mid-career stream were much more likely to have had a higher participation was in talking to contacts or colleagues from previous jobs or school. Over two fifths (42%) of these individuals talked to such contacts, whereas less than one third (31%) of others did so. Moreover, those in the mid-career group (14%) were more likely than others (9%) to have contacted a federal government department or agency where they had not previously worked. Those in the mid-career group (13%) were much less likely to have gone to a Human Resources Centre of Canada than others (21%). Interestingly, mid-career respondents (12%) were much more likely than others (4%) to have indicated that they found newspaper advertisements valuable in their job searches.

3.3 Internet Usage

Differences between mid-career and all other respondents were found in reference to access and use of the Internet. A smaller proportion of mid-career respondents (18%) than others (26%) did not have access to the Internet. This difference in access may be due to mid-career hires' greater educational attainment levels. Almost equal proportions of mid-career (18%) and others (16%) had access, but did not use the Internet. Yet, when we look at usage of the Internet among those who did have access, mid-career respondents (64%) are much more likely than others (58%) to indicate doing so. Again, this may be due to their higher levels of educational qualifications. As Graph 3 reveals, the significant difference between the two groups regarding the last comparison is due to the fact that other respondents had a much greater likelihood of not having access to the Internet.

**Graph 3: Use of Internet in Job Search
comparing Mid-Career and Other
Respondents (n=735)**



3.4 Information received before starting work

Respondents were asked to indicate the types of information they received prior to starting their first job. Mid-career respondents (51%) were more likely than others (44%) to receive a general description of the department/agency's activities. Although respondents overall had a low likelihood of receiving information about the opportunities for career advancement in their job, mid-career respondents (21%) were more likely to receive such information than others (16%). Moreover, a greater proportion of mid-career respondents (20%) had information about the hiring manager, than others (14%) did so.

3.5 Most important sources of information for applicants

Survey participants were asked to select their most important source of information about their first position. Interestingly, for both mid-career respondents (15%) and others (13%) the most important source was the manager in the work unit. Also considered most important among a number of mid-career respondents (15% versus 12% of others) was the PSC website. A greater proportion (13%) of other respondents indicated that family and friends were their most important source of information compared to 11% of those in the mid-career group.

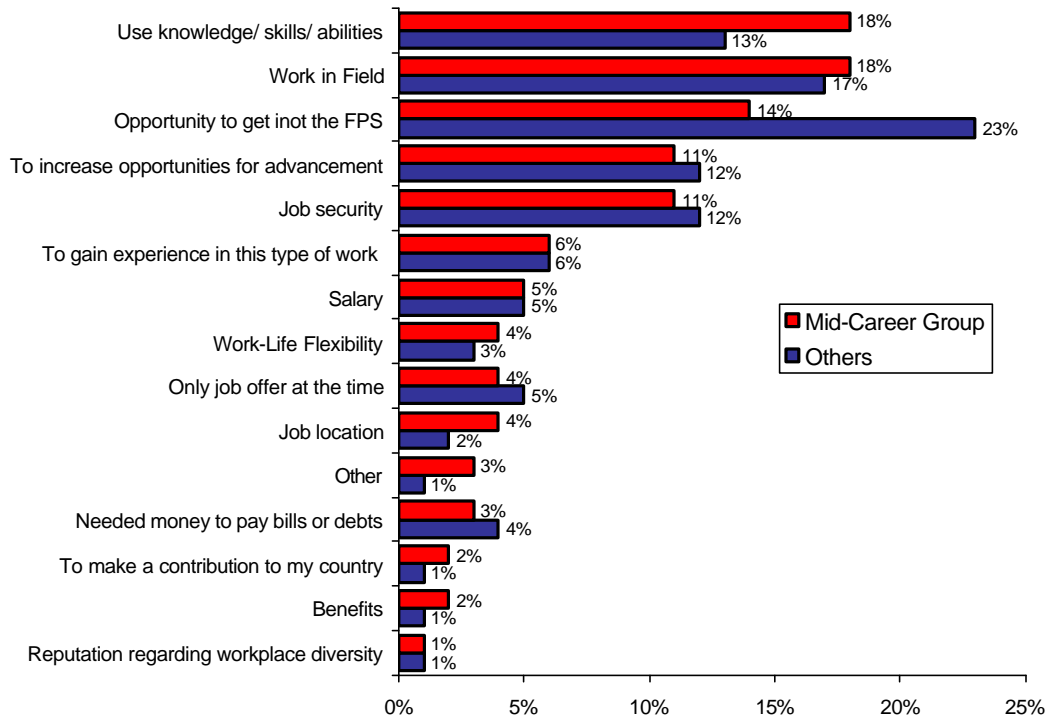
Respondents were also asked to indicate their first, second and third most important sources. There were differences between the two groups in regards to which sources were considered first, second or third in importance. For example, only 13% of mid-career respondents, compared to 20% of others indicated that they considered information about one of the special recruitment programs organized by the PSC or by a department/agency (i.e. Post-Secondary recruitment campaign) as important. As one would expect, mid-career respondents (6%) were less likely than others (11%) to have indicated that a campus-based employment centre was one of their top three most valuable sources of information. Again, those in the mid-career group (6%) were less likely than others (10%) to have indicated that the PSC's telephone based information system, Infotel, was among their top three choices of important information.

3.6 Reasons for accepting their first jobs

Among the single most important reasons for accepting their first jobs in the FPS, mid-career respondents indicated the following: to make full use of their knowledge, skills and abilities; to work in their field of study; and the opportunity to get into the FPS. Graph 4 illustrates the differences between the mid-career group and all other respondents.

A notable difference between the two groups illustrated in the graph below, is that those in the mid-career group were much less likely than others to indicate that their most important reason for accepting their first job was because they wanted the opportunity to get into the FPS. In addition, mid-career new recruits were more likely to indicate that their most important reason for accepting their first job was to use their knowledge, skills and abilities. Otherwise, the two groups were quite similar in the reasons they selected for accepting their jobs.

Graph 4: Most important reasons for accepting job offer comparing Mid-Career respondents with all others (n=990)



In addition to being asked to select their most important reason for accepting their jobs, respondents were asked to indicate their second and third most important reasons. All three reasons were aggregated for each of the items so that the differences between respondents on their top three most important reasons could be analyzed. For example, a greater proportion of mid-career respondents (44%) compared to all others (37%) indicated that that they took their jobs in order to make full use of their knowledge, skills and abilities. In contrast, mid-career respondents (24%) were less likely than others (30%) to indicate that salary considerations were among their top three reasons for accepting their jobs.

Given mid-career respondents' stage in the life course, it is not surprising that they (8%) were much less likely than others (12%) to have indicated that one of their top three reasons for taking their jobs was on account of needing money to pay bills or debts. As in Graph 4 above, when the top three reasons for accepting a job are aggregated, those in the mid-career group are still less likely to have accepted their jobs on account of the opportunity to get into the FPS (25%) than others (44%). However, mid-career respondents (17%) were more likely than others (11%) to indicate that an important reason for accepting their job was because of the flexibility to balance work with family and other personal needs.

3.7 Satisfaction

In order to find out new recruits' satisfaction with working in the FPS in general, respondents were asked to state the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a series of twelve statements including the competitiveness of salaries, diversity in the workplace, employee morale, benefits and workplace flexibility. Statistically significant results were found when we compared those in the mid-career group with others on a number of statements. For example, mid-career respondents (35%) were much less likely than others (41%) to agree with the statement, the FPS has competitive salaries compared to the private sector. Similarly, those in the mid-career group (51%) were slightly less likely than others (56%) to agree that the FPS offers sufficient flexibility to balance work and personal life. This difference may be due to the greater amount of responsibility inherent in intermediate and senior positions. A smaller proportion of mid-career respondents (37%) than others (46%) agreed that the FPS is open to change.

A series of more specific statements were presented to respondents regarding their actual job. Again, we find significant differences between those in the mid-career stream and all others. For example, those in the mid-career group were more likely (46%) than others (41%) to agree that their present job makes full use of their education. Mid-career respondents (57%) were also more likely than others (53%) to agree that they receive adequate recognition from their manager when they do a good job. However, mid-career respondents (56%) are less likely than others (60%) to agree that they have a say in decisions which impact on their work. Similarly, mid-career respondents (44%) were less likely than others (57%) to agree that they can complete their assigned workload during their regular working hours. As mentioned above, this difference in ratings is probably due to more responsibility and a greater workload as one moves up the occupational hierarchy.

3.8 Career Plans

In order to explore retention issues, respondents were asked to indicate their intentions to remain in the FPS. Overall, 27% of all respondents indicate an intention to leave within five years. However, there was no statistically significant difference between mid-career respondents and all others regarding their intentions to remain in the FPS. Despite this, there were differences between these groups in reference to their reasons for planning to leave. Specifically, a larger proportion of mid-career respondents (61%) than others (55%) indicated an intention to leave within three years in order to take a job outside the FPS. However, given results presented earlier in this report, one cannot conclude that mid-career new recruits are necessarily planning to leave the FPS in order to take up employment in the private sector since this group appears to have a preference for the public and the broader public sectors.

Those respondents who plan to leave within three years were asked to indicate the importance of various factors to their decision. Mid-career respondents (44%) were much less likely than others (70%) to indicate that the reason, 'to make a career change', was very important or important to them. As mentioned previously, the older average age of mid-career respondents and their corollary stage in the life course to some extent explain why they would be less likely to be leave in order to make a career change. Along similar lines, mid-career respondents (60%) were less likely than others (73%) to consider very important or important the reason, to get more meaningful work, in their decision to look for another job outside the FPS.

4.0 Conclusion

Although satisfied with many aspects of working in the FPS, mid-career new recruits were less satisfied than others on certain factors. For example, mid-career respondents (35%) were much less likely than others (41%) to agree with the statement, 'the FPS has competitive salaries compared to the private sector'. Similarly, those in the mid-career group (51%) were slightly less likely than others (56%) to agree that the FPS offers sufficient flexibility to balance work and personal life. This result may be due to the fact that individuals in higher level occupational categories have greater demands on their time than entry level employees and as such have more difficult balancing work-life demands.

Importantly, when asked about specific aspects of their jobs respondents in the mid-career group were more likely (46%) than others (41%) to agree that their present job makes full use of their education. Moreover, mid-career new recruits (57%) were more likely than others (53%) to agree that they receive adequate recognition from their manager when they do a good job. Despite these positive appraisals, a smaller proportion of those in the mid-career group (44%) than others (57%) agreed that they can complete their assigned workload during their regular working hours. To some extent, this difference is due to being in mid-level positions which usually involve a greater degree of responsibility and a heavier workload than junior positions.

Interestingly, there was no statistically significant difference between mid-career respondents and all others regarding their intentions to remain in the FPS. This result suggests that they are not at greater risk of leaving the FPS than others.

Among those who did indicate an intention to leave within three years, mid-career respondents (44%) were much less likely than others (70%) to indicate that the reason 'to make a career change', was very important or important to them. As mentioned previously, the older average age of mid-career respondents and their corollary stage in the life course to some extent explain why they are less likely to leave in order to make a career change. Along similar lines, mid-career respondents (60%) were less likely than others (73%) to consider very important or important the reason, 'to get more meaningful work in their decision to look for another job outside the FPS'.