

APEX 2017 EXECUTIVE WORK AND HEALTH SURVEY QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. Why was the survey conducted?

- APEX conducts a survey on the health of executives every 5 years. The 2017 survey is the 5th in the series.
- The first APEX survey was conducted in 1997, in response to concerns about the health of executives in the wake of significant organizational change and downsizing of the public service.
- APEX is recognized as an important contributor to the body of research on workplace health. Its studies have been cited in World Health Organization reports on the determinants of health.

2. Who conducted the survey?

- The survey was conducted by Ipsos. It was significantly reduced in length (from 350 questions in 2012 to 165 questions in 2017).
- The previous four surveys were developed and conducted by GAP-Santé of the Institute of Population Health, University of Ottawa.

3. When was the survey conducted?

- The survey was in the field between May 2 and June 19, 2017.

4. Who was surveyed?

- The survey was sent to 6,406 executives in all departments, agencies, crown corporations and special operating agencies.

5. How many executives completed the survey?

- 3,075 executives provided a response to the survey which constitutes a 48% response rate (an increase over the 35% response rate achieved in 2012). Of those who provided a response, 2,674 executives fully completed the survey.
- At the time of the survey, there were 6,406 executives working for the federal government.

6. How reliable are the results?

- The results are extremely reliable. The credibility interval for the sample of executives who fully completed the survey is +/-2.2 percentage points.

7. Do the results apply to all executives?

- Yes, the results can be generalized with confidence to all executives because the survey sample was both large enough and representative of the executive community across all demographic factors, including age, level, gender, language and region.

8. What did the survey look at?

- The survey included questions on:
 - Work characteristics (e.g. hours worked, workload);
 - The social and interpersonal work environment (support from supervisors and colleagues, verbal harassment and incivility in the workplace);
 - Individual health, both physical and psychological;
 - Organizational health (e.g. job satisfaction, engagement and absenteeism);
 - Readiness for the future.

9. What are the key findings of the survey?

- The 2017 Executive Work and Health survey paints a picture of an executive population that feels pride in their work, respected by their superiors and are increasingly committed despite a high-stress, demanding work environment with constant time-pressure and an increasing workload. Key outcome measures like job satisfaction and self-rated health status remain stable and relatively strong compared to 2012.
- There are, however, some worrisome trends which could negatively impact individual and organizational health over time. Thirty-five percent report working 55 or more hours per week (up from 25% in 2012), satisfaction with pay has declined and 70% have thought about leaving their current position at least monthly in the past 6 months. Further, from a personal health standpoint the majority of executives are classified as overweight or obese, more executives have been diagnosed with musculoskeletal (from 28% to 45%), mental health (from 11% to 21%), and gastro intestinal (from 8% to 18%) issues than in 2012. The incidence of incivility continues to be of concern.
- For most, managing the demands of work has only been exacerbated by the increasing use of e-technology which led executives to feel obligated to work after hours, has made it more difficult to take a break from work and has not provided them any more flexibility. While the majority feel e-technology has increased their productivity (particularly among younger executives), their ability to do their job and ability to communicate, it has also increased their workload and steadily decreased work life balance over the years.
- Public sector executives are much less confident in their ability to balance the demands of work and personal life compared to those in similar managerial positions across Canada, as well as less likely to feel their employer promotes a work-life balance or that they have a psychologically healthy workplace.
- Lower level executives, while reporting fewer work hours, are much more likely to have issues managing the demands of work. Lower level executives are less satisfied with their job, feel less respected, are more likely to get burnt out from work and are less likely to feel they can take risks on their team. They are also less likely to rate their mental health as positive and more likely to report being diagnosed with mental health issues or to seek professional counselling.
- There are also consistent differences between male and female executives. Female executives report higher levels of stress, absenteeism, incidence of harassment and generally have more trouble separating themselves from the demands of work, however

they are also more satisfied with their pay and career prospects, rate their personal health higher, are more likely to fall into an acceptable BMI, sleep better and drink less than male executives.

10. How healthy is the federal workplace?

- Executives continue to be generally satisfied with their work and proud of the work they do.
- Engagement levels have increased, exceeding levels in 2007.
- More executives are working longer hours.
- Satisfaction with pay has decreased.
- Few executives (one in five) are satisfied with the opportunities offered by the Executive Talent Management System.

11. How healthy are executives?

- Although gains have been made in some areas, the survey reveals that overall, executive health has declined since 2012.
- On the positive side, fewer executives are smoking and suffering from respiratory diseases. Executives are also active more frequently than in the past.
- On the negative side, more executives have been diagnosed with musculoskeletal (from 28% to 45%), mental health (from 11% to 21%), gastro intestinal (from 8% to 18%) than in 2012. And, there has been an increase in problem drinking.
- Fewer executives sought counselling for personal or work-related reasons; however, entry level executives are much more likely to seek counselling than others.
- Fewer executives report being verbally harassed, however, levels hover persistently around 1 in 5. The incidence of incivility continues to be of concern.

12. How prepared is the federal workplace for the future?

- In a context of rapid change, and expectations that they be agile and resilient, executives express a high level of uncertainty that we are well positioned to respond to future demands with respect to the use of technology and social media, the recruitment and retention of talent, adapting our workplace environment to a new context, and building a strong, capable leadership team.

13. How do the results of the survey compare with the findings of the Public Sector Employee Survey (PSES) or the Public Service Annual Employee Survey (PSEAS)?

- The results of the 2017 Executive Work and Health Survey cannot be compared to those of the PSES or PSEAS. Survey questions were different and the surveys use different response scales. The surveys also use different methodologies.

14. How do the results of the survey compare with those of the private sector or other governments?

- At this time, the results of the survey have not been compared to data on the health of executives in the private sector or other governments.
- APEX will conduct research in the months ahead to determine if these results can be compared to the general Canadian population or survey results that may have been conducted by private sector organizations or other governments.

15. What will APEX do now that the results have been released?

- The health and well-being of executives will continue to be a key priority for APEX in the months ahead.
- The survey results are the beginning of a conversation to lead to concrete actions.
- Executives will be engaged in further exploring the results. As part of the survey process, many executives volunteered to continue the discussion about the survey results; we will reach out to all those who volunteered to invite participation in follow up discussions.
- APEX is available to share results through organizational presentations and discussions -- to dive in to the results.
- APEX will continue its advocacy role, focusing in on creating conditions for success for Executives, and as a result, the public service overall.
- In some of these areas, APEX is already working to build capacity to improve results: for example, for Talent Management, and support for new Executives.
- APEX will also further mine the results of the survey with researchers on spotlight areas.