



ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL EXECUTIVES  
OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE OF CANADA  
ASSOCIATION PROFESSIONNELLE DES CADRES  
SUPÉRIEURS DE LA FONCTION PUBLIQUE DU CANADA



Association of Professional Executives of the Public  
Service of Canada (APEX)

## **EXECUTIVE WORK AND HEALTH SURVEY**

2017 RESULTS, 5<sup>TH</sup> Edition

Summary

**JANUARY 2018**

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# Background and Objectives

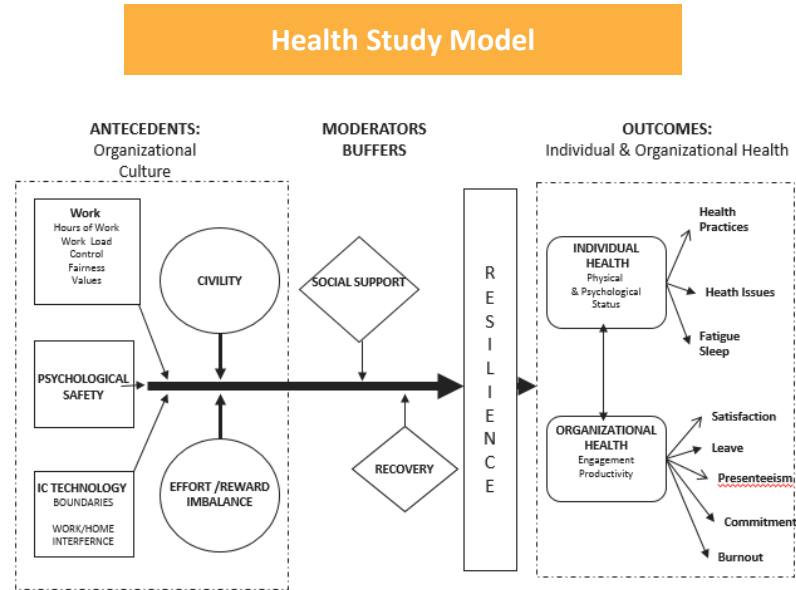
- Since 1997, the Association of Professional Executives of the Public Service of Canada (APEX) has conducted research focused on the health and wellbeing of executives within the federal public service. Every 5 years, the organization conducts an in-depth survey of all executives within the public service with the most recent in 2012. In 2017, APEX commissioned Ipsos to conduct the fifth iteration of the study.
- The survey provides an assessment of individual and organizational health measures as well as the executive work environment. This year we also explored new issues such as readiness for the future with a focus on preparing for the digital economy and digital services and addressing psychological and mental health issues in the workplace.
- The primary objectives of the research include:
  - 1) Measure the current situation for executives with respect to their work, organizational environment and personal health;
  - 2) Identify trends compared to previous iterations of the survey in these key areas.
- As part of an effort to streamline the survey, several changes were made to the 2012 survey instrument. Key measures were maintained to ensure consistency and the ability to measure trends over time.

# Methodology

- The survey was conducted using Computer Assisted Web Interviewing (CAWI), programmed using the FluidSurveys platform. A paper version of the survey was provided on an as needed basis, while a limited number were requested and provided, no paper version was returned.
- Ipsos provided APEX with a unique-link for each of the approximately 6,400 individuals in the executive community. For those departments for which individual email addresses could not be provided (i.e. high-security level) an open-link was provided.
- In total, 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. The fully complete sample maintained proportional representation of the actual distribution of EX levels and by region. The survey fielded from May 2<sup>nd</sup> to June 19<sup>th</sup> 2017.
- The credibility interval for the sample of executives who fully completed the survey is +/-2.2 percentage points. The credibility interval will be higher for subgroups of the population like executive level, region, gender or age.
- The survey was offered in English and French. On average, the survey took 29 minutes to complete.
- Throughout the report, commentary noting differences in the data should be interpreted to mean statistically significant differences. Figures throughout are rounded up and shown as whole percentages, in some cases they may not add exactly to 100% or when summary figures are provided may not add exactly to the sum of their parts.

# Methodology ...cont'd

- Several changes to the survey were made to the 2012 survey in an effort to shorten the length and increase participation. As a result, some measures contained in the APEX Health Study Model were not included in the 2017 survey.



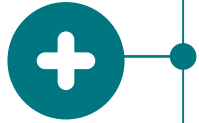
# Key Findings

- 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.

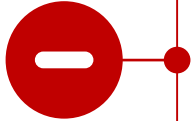
# Key Findings ...continued

- 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, higher absenteeism, higher 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.
- 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.

# Key Trends vs. 2012



- Satisfaction with job security has increased (4.0 Mean score vs. 3.7 in 2012).
- The proportion who feel committed to their department has increased (57% vs. 52% in 2012).
- Less likely to have experienced harassment in the workplace (19% vs. 22% in 2012).
- More likely to be active more frequently than in the past (3.2x / week vs. 2.9x in 2012).



- Satisfaction with pay has decreased (3.2 Mean score vs. 3.8 in 2012).
- More executives are working longer hours (35% working on average 55+ hours vs. 25% in 2012).
- More executives have thought about leaving their current position at least once a month in the past 6 months (70% vs. 52% in 2012).
- More likely to report being diagnosed with a musculoskeletal condition (45% vs. 28% in 2012), mental health issue (21% vs. 11%) or gastro-intestinal issue than in 2012 (18% vs. 8%).
- Increase in problem drinking (13% vs. 9% in 2012).
- Fewer sought counselling for personal or work-related reasons (15% vs. 21% in 2012), despite increase in mental health diagnosis.



# Conclusions

- The survey highlights a number of challenges facing the executive community, primarily that of increasing work pressures, decreasing work-life balance and satisfaction with remuneration, a lack of knowledge about emerging technologies and challenges associated with poor impressions of mental health in the workplace. Despite these headwinds, it can be said that executives remain generally satisfied with their job, the work they do and most rate their health as very good or excellent, all of which are consistent with past years.
- While concerns about work hours and salary are more systemic and less easily addressed, executives attitudes towards career planning, which is seen as lacking, and the value offered by the Executive Talent Management system (particularly among lower level executives) could more realistically be improved through better professional development and career planning opportunities.
- Perceptions of mental health in the workplace among executives are generally poor and considerably lower than people in similar managerial positions across Canada\*. There is also evidence of an increase in mental health issues and a rise in problem drinking (albeit limited) since 2012. All combined it is evident that more can be done to create a healthier work environment and to help executives understand the best ways to maintain good mental health, stay physically healthy and achieve a better work-life balance.
- Executives also feel a general lack of preparedness regarding emerging digital technologies and social media both personally and at a government level. More training and policies are necessary to provide executives the confidence they need to navigate these new platforms and social media from the federal government's perspective.

# YOUR WORK...

## COMMITMENT

*'I am proud of what I do'*

**86%** ALWAYS, VERY OFTEN OR OFTEN

Level of high commitment

**57%**

2012: 52%

## JOB SATISFACTION

**72%** VERY SATISFIED/ SATISFIED  
'Job in general'

2012: 3.5 MEAN (vs 3.7 in 2017)

✓ *Most satisfied with job security (77%), the things you do (73%), job in general (72%). More satisfied with job security than in 2012.*

✗ *Least satisfied with Executive Talent Management (22%), workload (32%) or hours (36%). Satisfaction with pay has declined since 2012.*

## WORKING HOURS

**50.9** hrs/week

2012: 50.7 hrs/week

**35%** working 55+ hours per week

2012: 25%

## PRESENTEEISM

Days went to work feeling unwell

**7.5** /year

2012: 7.5/year

## INTENT TO LEAVE

Thought about leaving their position at least monthly in the past 6 months

**70%**

2012: 52%

## EFFORT / REWARD

*I receive the respect I deserve from my superior or a respective relevant person.*

**79%** AGREE

*Considering my efforts and achievements my salary / income is adequate*

**56%** AGREE



CIRCLES

REPRESENT WHEN A FIGURE IS STATISTICALLY HIGHER OR LOWER THAN THE 2012 FIGURE.

# YOUR WORKPLACE...

## TAKING RISKS

*'Members of this team are able to bring up tough issues'*

**64%**  
AGREE

*'It is safe to take a risk on this management team'*

**53%**  
AGREE

## INCIVILITY

% ever in the past 6 months

**25%** Supervisor put you down in some way

**15%** Supervisor made jokes at your expense

## STRESSFULNESS

Those who report that most days are extremely or quite stressful

**51%**  
2012: 51%

## HARASSMENT

Those who have experienced verbal harassment in the past year

**19%**  
2012: 22%

## IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY

**INCREASED WORKLOAD**  
2012: 84%

**75%**

**DECREASED WORK/LIFE BALANCE**  
2012: 46%

**49%**

**INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY**  
2012: 59%

**57%**



## ATTITUDES TOWARDS TECH

*'I am confident the federal government has policies in place to keep pace with changes in technology as they emerge.'*

**11%** AGREE

*'Federal government employees have the tools and technology available to them to do their jobs properly.'*

**26%** AGREE

*'Federal government employees are well-trained on how to utilize social media.'*

**6%** AGREE

## ATTITUDES TOWARDS HEALTH

*'My employer promotes work-life balance.'*

**41%** AGREE  
Manager Norm\*: 73%

*'Feel used up at the end of the workday'*

**48%** AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK

*'I would describe my workplace as being psychologically healthy.'*

**47%** AGREE  
Manager Norm\*: 75%

# YOUR HEALTH...

## GENERAL HEALTH

SCALE	APEX OVERALL 2017	APEX OVERALL 2012
Excellent / Very good	<b>57%</b>	57%
Good	<b>31%</b>	30%
Fair / Poor	<b>12%</b>	13%

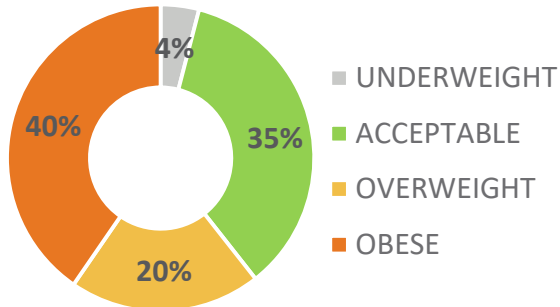
## MENTAL HEALTH

SCALE	APEX OVERALL 2017	APEX OVERALL 2012
Excellent / Very good	<b>54%</b>	N/A
Good	<b>31%</b>	N/A
Fair / Poor	<b>15%</b>	N/A

## SOUGHT PROFESSIONAL COUNSELLING

	APEX OVERALL 2017	APEX OVERALL 2012
Work-related	<b>15%</b>	21%
EX01	19%	
EX02	14%	
EX03	13%	
EX04	5%	
EX05	2%	

## BMI SCALE



APEX Overall



## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

**3.2** times/week

APEX overall 2012: 2.9 times/week

## SMOKING / DRINKING

**6%** Smoke daily or occasionally      **13%** High risk drinker

APEX overall 2012: 7%

APEX overall 2012: 9%

## CHRONIC CONDITIONS

**Musculoskeletal**  
APEX overall 2012: 28%

**45%**

**Mental Health**  
APEX overall 2012: 11%

**21%**

**Gastro-intestinal**  
APEX overall 2012: 8%

**18%**

**Cardiovascular**  
APEX overall 2012: 17%

**14%**





# PROFILE

# PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS: National

- The national sample of respondents (fully completed) is proportional to the distribution of executives across Ex-level, region, age, gender and official language according to the latest TBS Affiliation Report.

LEVEL	Public Service	Survey respondents
EX-1	51%	<b>49%</b>
EX-2	26%	<b>27%</b>
EX-3	17%	<b>18%</b>
EX-4	4%	<b>4%</b>
EX-5	2%	<b>2%</b>

AGE	Public Service	Survey respondents
Under 40	8%	<b>6%</b>
40-44	16%	<b>14%</b>
45-49	23%	<b>25%</b>
50-54	28%	<b>29%</b>
55-59	19%	<b>19%</b>
60+	7%	<b>7%</b>

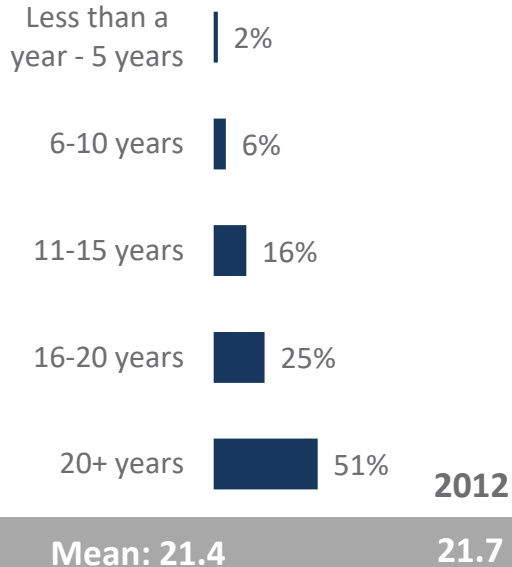
REGION	Public Service	Survey respondents
NCR	72%	<b>74%</b>
Atlantic	5%	<b>5%</b>
Quebec	4%	<b>5%</b>
Ontario	5%	<b>5%</b>
Prairies	4%	<b>4%</b>
Pacific	4%	<b>5%</b>
Outside Canada	2%	<b>3%</b>

GENDER	Public Service	Survey respondents
Male	47%	<b>50%</b>
Female	53%	<b>50%</b>

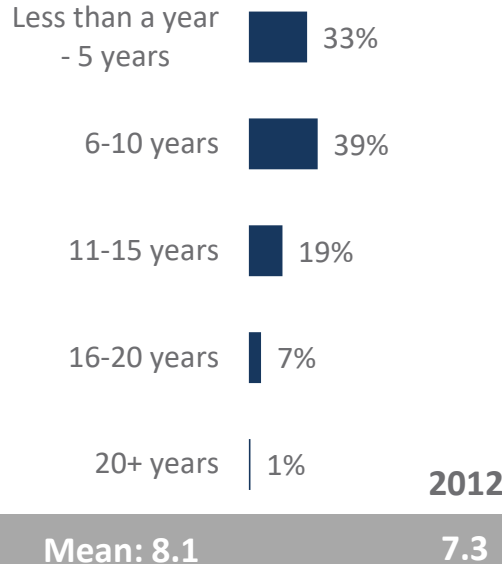
OFFICIAL LANGUAGE	Public Service	Survey respondents
English	70%	<b>65%</b>
French	30%	<b>35%</b>

# PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

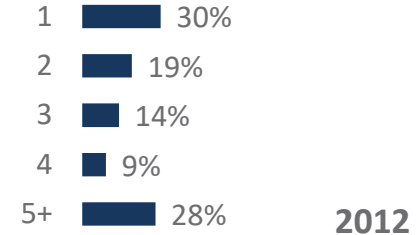
## YEARS WITH THE FEDERAL PUBLIC SERVICE



## YEARS AS AN EXECUTIVE



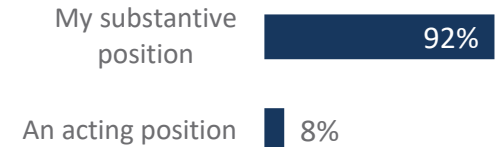
## LENGTH OF TIME IN CURRENT POSITION



Mean: 3.6

3.0

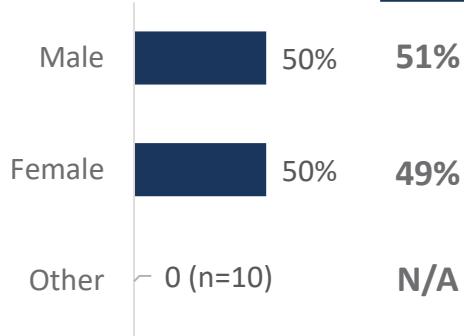
## POSITION TYPE



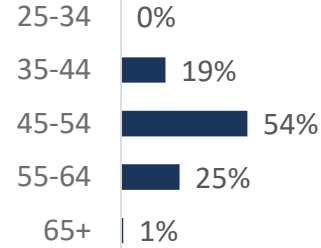
# PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

## GENDER

**2012**



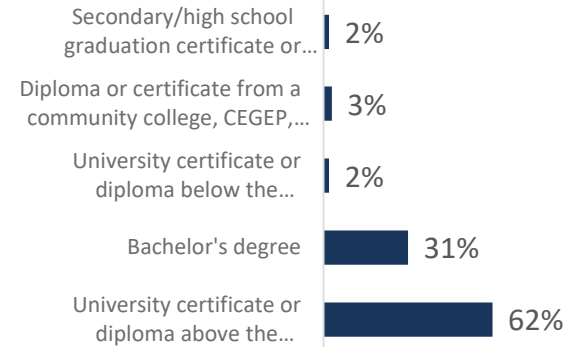
## AGE



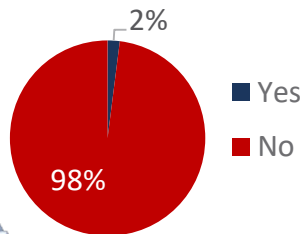
**2012**

Mean: 50.4      50.1

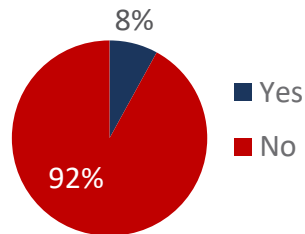
## EDUCATION



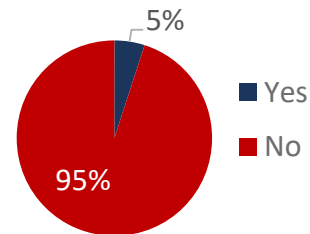
## ABORIGINAL



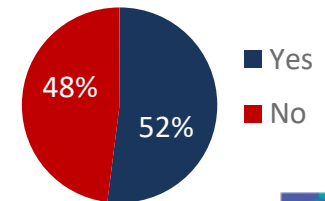
## VISIBLE MINORITY



## PERSON WITH DISABILITY



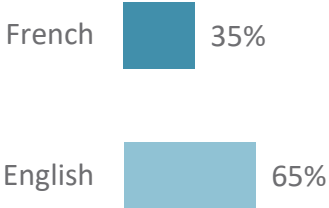
## APEX MEMBER



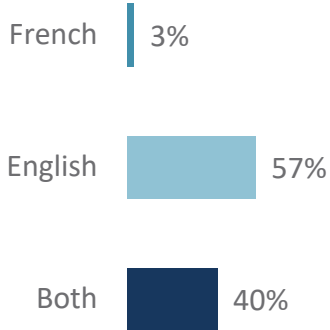


# PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

## OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

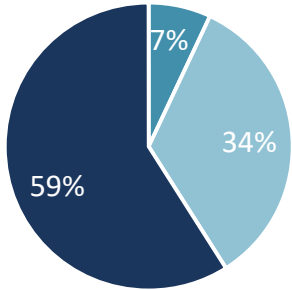


## WORK LANGUAGE

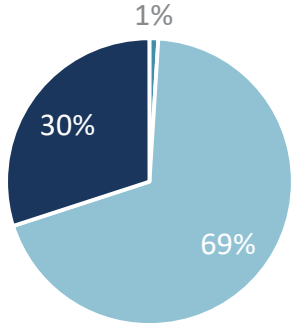


## WORK LANGUAGE BY OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

### FRENCH



### ENGLISH



■ French ■ English ■ Both

# Contacts

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