



# Highlights



## Study on mobility of public servants

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*The Public Service Commission (PSC) is an independent agency reporting to Parliament, mandated to safeguard the integrity of the public service staffing system and the political neutrality of the public service. In addition, the PSC recruits qualified Canadians from across the country.*

### Why did the PSC conduct this study?

In its 2006-2007 Annual Report, the Public Service Commission (PSC) identified the level of movement within the federal public service as a challenge. The PSC undertook the Study on mobility of public servants to better understand recent movement trends.

The objectives of the study are to describe the nature and level of appointments leading to movement in the federal government, examine factors influencing that movement and identify lessons learned. The study examined employee movement over 11 years (from 1997-1998 to 2007-2008). It is based on statistical information and interviews with senior officials in eight departments/agencies.

### What did the PSC find?

Mobility, if well-managed, can make a positive contribution, both organizationally and government-wide. It introduces new ideas and supports employee development and career advancement. However, significantly high or low mobility can lead to negative impacts, including operational inefficiencies.

Public service mobility over the study period varied from a low of 28% in 1997-1998 to a high of 43% in 2001-2002. Mobility in the last four years increased from 30% in 2004-2005 to 42% in 2007-2008. A combination of increases in internal promotions and lateral movements contributed to this trend. There were more indeterminate appointments (67 287)<sup>1</sup> in 2007-2008 than at any other time in the study period.

Both public service growth and retirements over the past 11 years influenced movement patterns. The indeterminate workforce grew by 36% (between March 1999 and March 2008) to reach 161 998 in March 2008. At the same time, retirements almost quadrupled over the study period. A total of 34 647 public servants retired over the last 11 years. About 68% of these employees retired in the last five years.

Mobility in some occupational groups is especially high. The Personnel Administration Group (PE), the Economics, Sociology and Statistics Group (ES) and the Executive Group (EX) reached 74%, 71%, and 55% mobility rates respectively, in 2007-2008. Influencing factors such as growth, retirement and resignation differed by occupational group.

<sup>1</sup> The Mobility study is based on departments and agencies which were under the *Public Service Employment Act* for the past 11 years, which means that appointments and population numbers for Canada Border Services and several small agencies are not included in these numbers.

Growth was a key factor contributing to movement. Even though all six groups grew over the study period, the ES and IS groups had much higher growth rates than the other four groups.

Retirement was another key factor contributing to movement in the public service. While retirements increased for all groups, they were more pronounced in the PE, AS and EX groups. Retirements accounted for most separations in the PE, AS and EX groups. Conversely, resignations accounted for most separations in the ES and IS groups for the majority of the study period.

Workforce age distribution – an indicator of who is on the move – also differed. The ES, IS and FI groups had a relatively younger workforce, and one more likely to be on the move. On the other hand, the PE group had an age gap, with a sizeable proportion of the workforce close to retirement. The EX group also had a high proportion of its workforce close to retirement, creating opportunities for feeder groups such as ESs.

The number of years employees stayed at level before promotion declined for some occupational groups, creating a less experienced workforce. The PE group experienced the most significant decline in years at level of all groups examined.

The National Capital Region consistently had a higher rate of employee movement than the regions. We observed little movement between the National Capital Region and the other regions over the study period.

With the exception of central agencies, we noted little movement between organizations. Small and medium-sized organizations demonstrated higher interorganizational movement than their larger counterparts. Some high-movement occupational groups are moving increasingly between departments/agencies.

## What's next?

Mobility is a complex phenomenon that is influenced by a combination of factors. Its nature, magnitude and the factors influencing it differ by occupational group, organization, and region. This study reinforces the need for human resources planning to take into account the nature and scope of employee movement in each organization. It underlines the importance of recruitment, retention, and succession strategies for specific occupational groups. It provides information to departments/agencies and functional communities on staffing and development strategies. It also helps identify areas that may benefit from collective recruitment strategies.

