



2021 Staffing and Non-Partisanship Survey: Highlights Report



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2021 Staffing and Non-Partisanship Survey: Highlights Report

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Introduction

The Public Service Commission of Canada is responsible for promoting and safeguarding a merit-based, representative and non-partisan public service that serves all Canadians. To achieve these goals, we:

- promote diversity and inclusion in public service appointments
- enable effective and efficient hiring processes across the federal public service
- support departments and agencies in hiring the talent that they need

The Staffing and Non-Partisanship Survey gathers the views of public servants, hiring managers and staffing advisors on important staffing-related topics in the federal public service. It also provides a snapshot of the state of the federal public service staffing system.

This report provides a high-level overview of the data from the 2021 survey. It summarizes some preliminary findings and sheds light on the progress made since 2018 on key indicators (including fairness and transparency), as well as areas that represent opportunities for improvement. The themes covered in this report include:

- perceptions of merit, fairness and transparency in staffing, with breakdowns for 3 employment equity groups
- organizational staffing policies and practices
- perspectives on staffing services and advice
- priority placement for veterans and public servants with priority entitlements
- the impact of COVID-19 on staffing
- political activities and non-partisanship

In addition to this report, we have developed an [interactive data visualization tool](#) allowing users to explore the survey data.

A data breakdown for persons with disabilities is not available for analysis, as more consultations are required on how to interpret the data for this employment equity group. This is due to the substantial increase in the proportion of respondents who reported experiencing daily activity limitations (which increased from 7% in 2018 to 39% in 2021). The Public Service Commission of Canada is working with Statistics Canada, the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat and Employment and Social Development Canada to determine how best to analyze, interpret and compare these data. This will allow for the development of a separate report focussing on persons with disabilities. Other thematic reports will also be available in the coming months.

If you have any questions about this report, please email us at: cfp.sdip-snps.psc@cfp-psc.gc.ca.

[An overview of the 2021 Staffing and Non-Partisanship Survey](#)

The 2021 Staffing and Non-Partisanship Survey is an online survey of federal public servants, administered on behalf of the Public Service Commission of Canada by Statistics Canada. The survey is sent to all employees in the federal public service subject to the *Public Service Employment Act*. In total, 75 federal departments and agencies participated in the survey, with 75 440 employee responses received. The methodological approach is described in [Appendix A](#).

[Transparency, fairness and merit-based nature of the staffing process](#)

This section explores the views of federal public service hiring managers, staffing advisors and employees on the fairness, transparency and merit-based nature of federal public service staffing. It also highlights the perspectives of employment equity group members relative to their counterparts including women, Indigenous peoples and members of visible minorities.

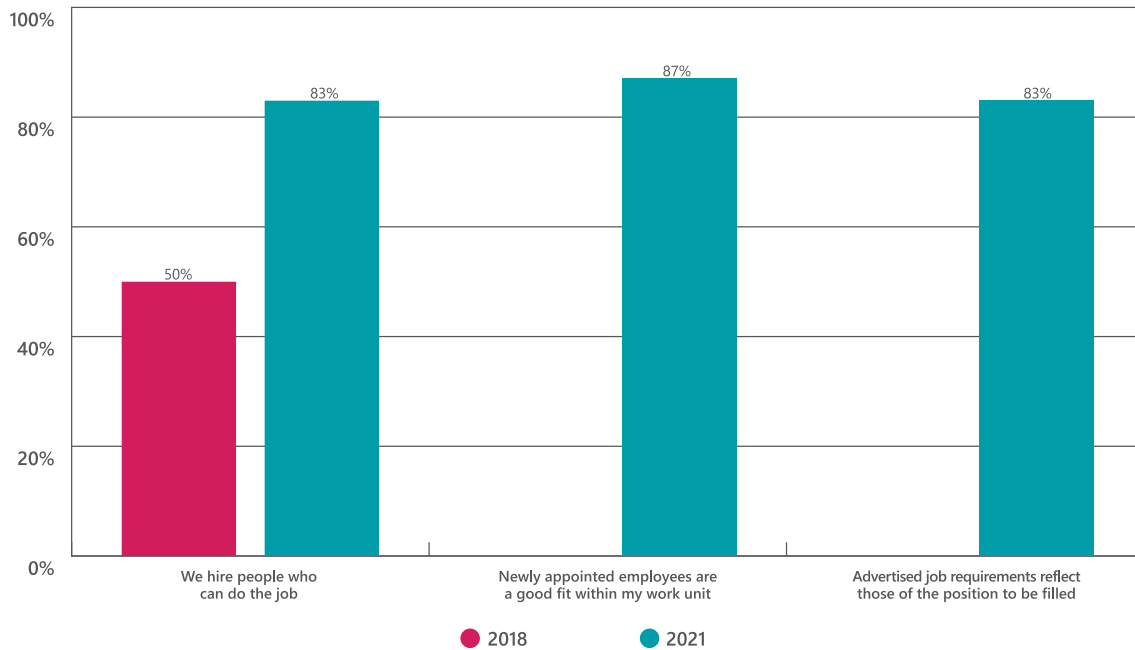
Overall, perceptions about the fairness, transparency and merit of staffing processes have improved between 2018 and 2021. There has been a positive “closing of the gap” between the perspectives of hiring managers and employees. This suggests that a period of adjustment may have been required to communicate and understand the significant changes introduced by the [New Direction in Staffing](#) in 2016. The results for 2021 are similar to the results observed in the 2013 Survey of Staffing, which was carried out before the introduction of the New Direction in Staffing. Below is a summary of the survey’s key findings on the perceived fairness, transparency and merit-based nature of the staffing process in the federal public service. This section focuses on hiring managers who recently engaged in a staffing process for their work unit. Later sections use a broader definition of the term “manager,” including those who indicated they had been in a managerial and supervisory role at some point in the previous year.

Merit

In 2021, employees’ perceptions of merit improved when compared to 2018. A greater proportion of employees agreed that the people hired in their work units could do the job (83% versus 50%). Overall, 87% of employees agreed that newly appointed employees were a good fit within the team, and 83% said that advertised job requirements reflected those of the position to be filled.

Figure 1

Employees' perceptions of merit in the staffing process;
changes from 2018 to 2021



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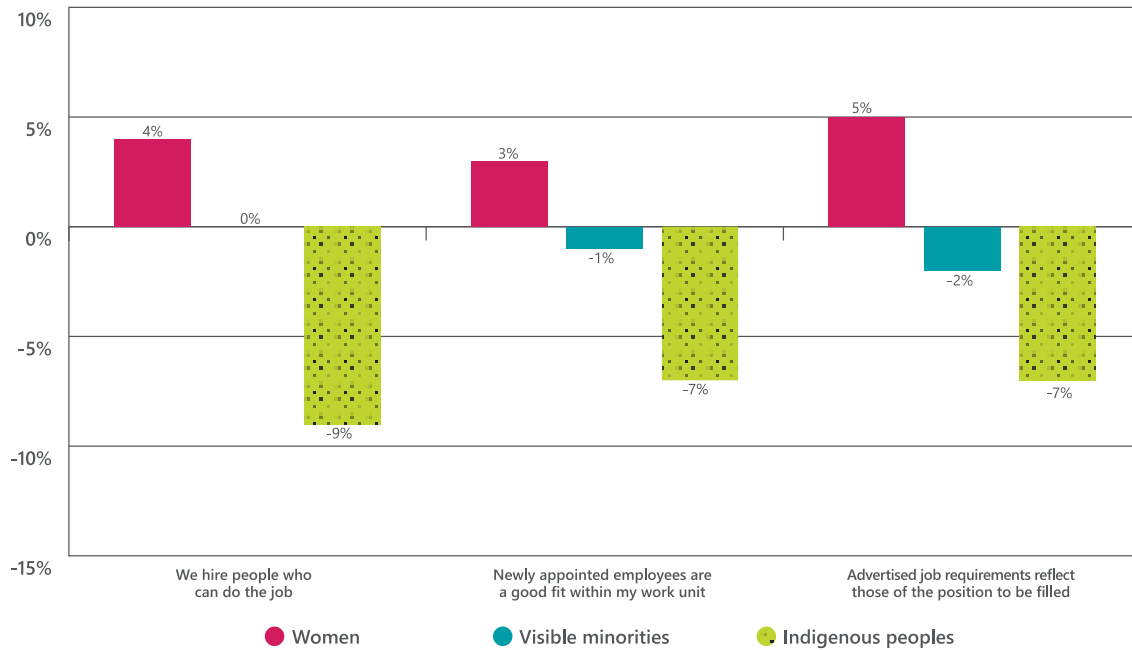
Figure 1: Employees' perceptions of merit in the staffing process; changes from 2018 to 2021

Questions related to merit	2018	2021
We hire people who can do the job	50%	83%
Newly appointed employees are a good fit within my work unit	n/a	87%
Advertised job requirements reflect those of the position to be filled	n/a	83%

In 2021, among employment equity groups, women were more likely than their counterparts to agree that the people hired within their work units could do the job (85% versus 81%), that newly appointed employees were a good fit within the work unit (88% versus 85%), and that advertised job requirements reflected those of the position to be filled (85% versus 80%). Members of visible minorities had similar perceptions to their counterparts on the merit-based nature of the staffing process. Indigenous employees were among the least likely to agree that people hired within their work units could do the job (75% versus 84%), that newly appointed employees were a good fit within the team (80% versus 87%), and that advertised job requirements reflected those of the position to be filled (76% versus 83%).

Figure 2

Differences between employment equity groups' perceptions of merit in the staffing process and those of their counterparts



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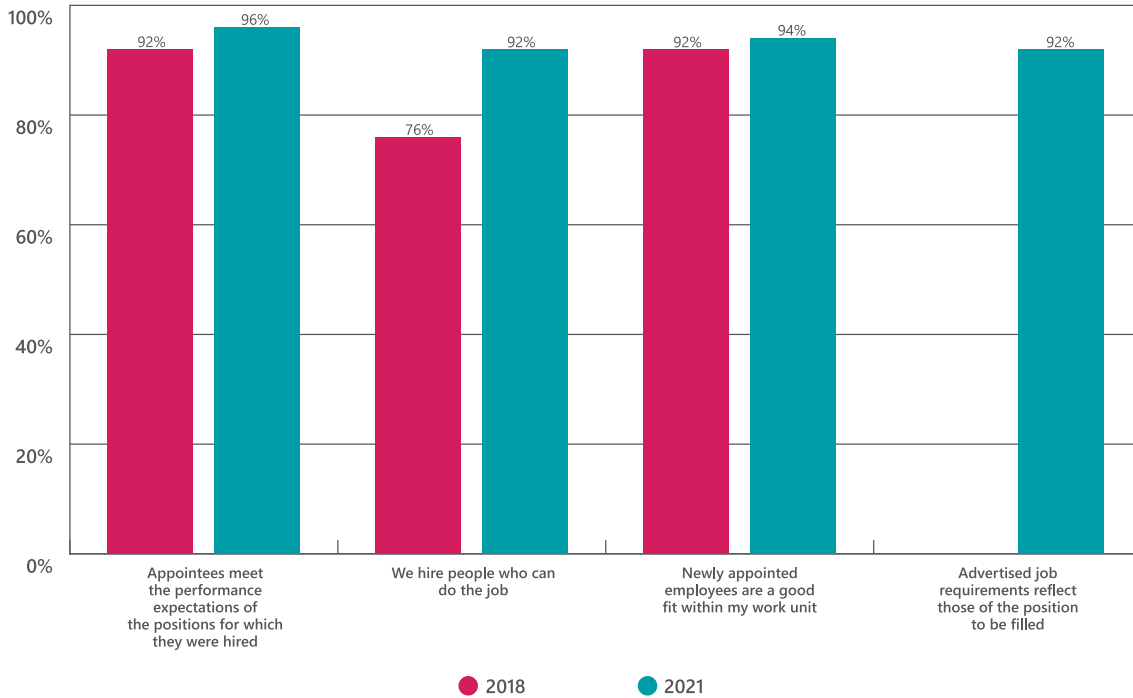
Figure 2: Differences between employment equity groups' perceptions of merit in the staffing process and those of their counterparts

Questions related to merit	Women	Visible minorities	Indigenous peoples
We hire people who can do the job	+4%	0%	-9%
Newly appointed employees are a good fit within my work unit	+3%	-1%	-7%
Advertised job requirements reflect those of the position to be filled	+5%	-2%	-7%

In 2021, hiring managers were more likely than in 2018 to report that hired candidates could do the job (92% versus 76%), met their performance expectations (96% versus 92%) and were a good fit within the team (94% versus 92%). Also, 92% of hiring managers indicated that the advertised job requirements reflected those of the position to be filled (not asked in 2018).

Figure 3

Managers' perceptions of merit in the staffing process; changes from 2018 to 2021



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Figure 3: Managers' perceptions of merit in the staffing process; changes from 2018 to 2021

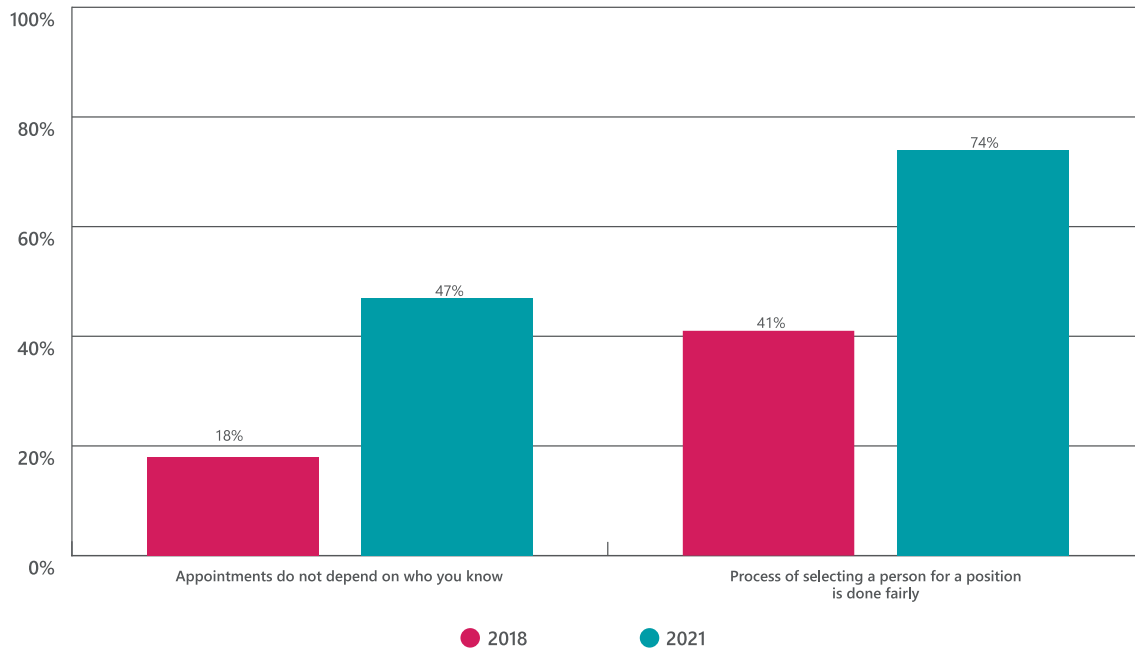
Questions related to merit	2018	2021
Appointees meet the performance expectations of the positions for which they were hired	92%	96%
We hire people who can do the job	76%	92%
Newly appointed employees are a good fit within my work unit	92%	94%
Advertised job requirements reflect those of the position to be filled	n/a	92%

Fairness

In 2021, employees' perceptions of fairness in staffing also improved when compared to 2018. There was an increase in the share of employees who agreed that appointments were made fairly (74% versus 41%) and that appointments did not depend on who you know (47% versus 18%).

Figure 4

Employees' perceptions of fairness in the staffing process;
changes from 2018 to 2021



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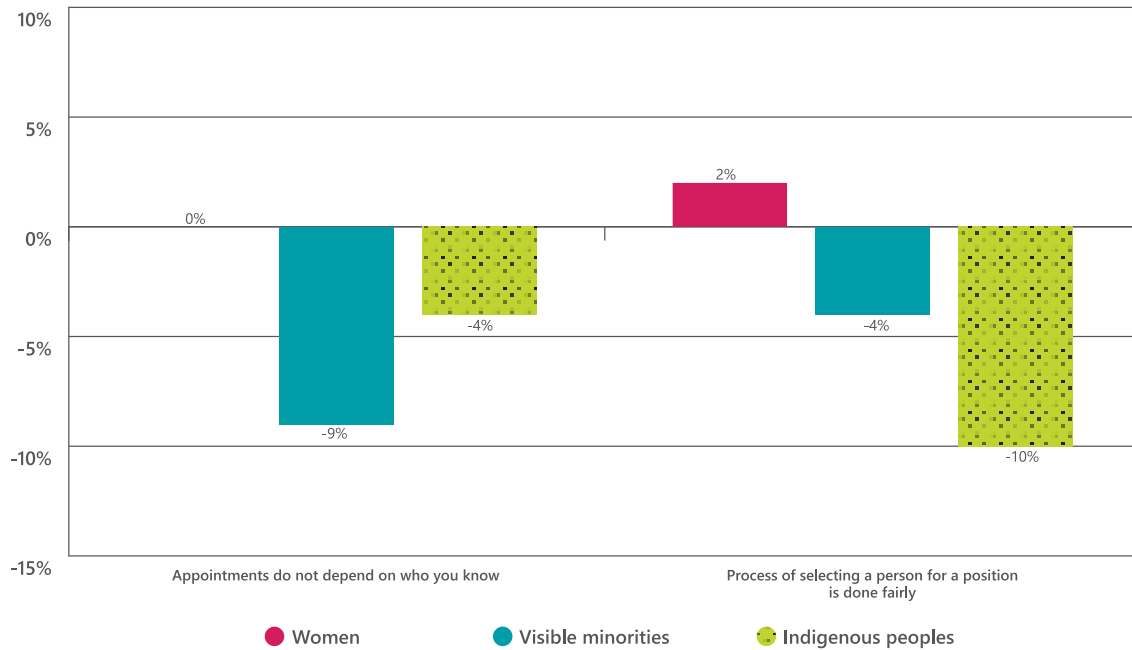
Figure 4: Employees' perceptions of fairness in the staffing process; changes from 2018 to 2021

Questions related to fairness	2018	2021
Appointments do not depend on who you know	18%	47%
Process of selecting a person for a position is done fairly	41%	74%

Among employment equity groups, women were more likely than their counterparts to agree that appointments were made fairly (74% versus 72%), and equally likely to agree that appointments did not depend on who you know (47%). However, members of visible minorities were less likely than their counterparts to agree that the process for selecting a person for a position was done fairly (71% versus 75%), and that appointments did not depend on who you know (39% versus 48%). Indigenous employees were among the least likely to agree that appointments were made fairly (64% versus 74%), and that appointments did not depend on who you know (43% versus 47%).

Figure 5

Differences between employment equity groups' perceptions of fairness in the staffing process and those of their counterparts



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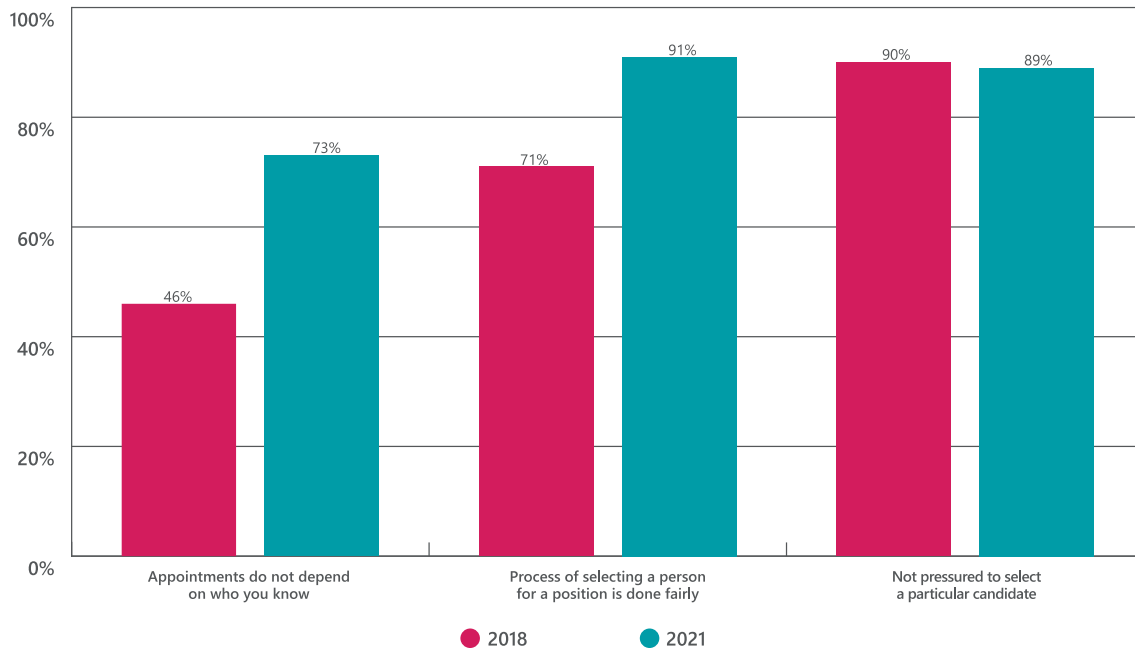
Figure 5: Differences between employment equity groups' perceptions of fairness in the staffing process and those of their counterparts

Questions related to fairness	Women	Visible minorities	Indigenous peoples
Appointments do not depend on who you know	0%	-9%	-4%
Process of selecting a person for a position is done fairly	+2%	-4%	-10%

Hiring managers' perceptions of fairness also improved in 2021 as compared to 2018. For example, 91% of hiring managers reported that staffing processes were conducted fairly (versus 71% in 2018), and 73% of hiring managers said that appointments did not depend on who you know (versus 46% in 2018). As well, 90% of hiring managers did not feel pressured to hire a particular candidate (versus 89% in 2018).

Figure 6

Managers' perceptions of fairness in the staffing process;
changes from 2018 to 2021



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Figure 6: Managers' perceptions of fairness in the staffing process; changes from 2018 to 2021

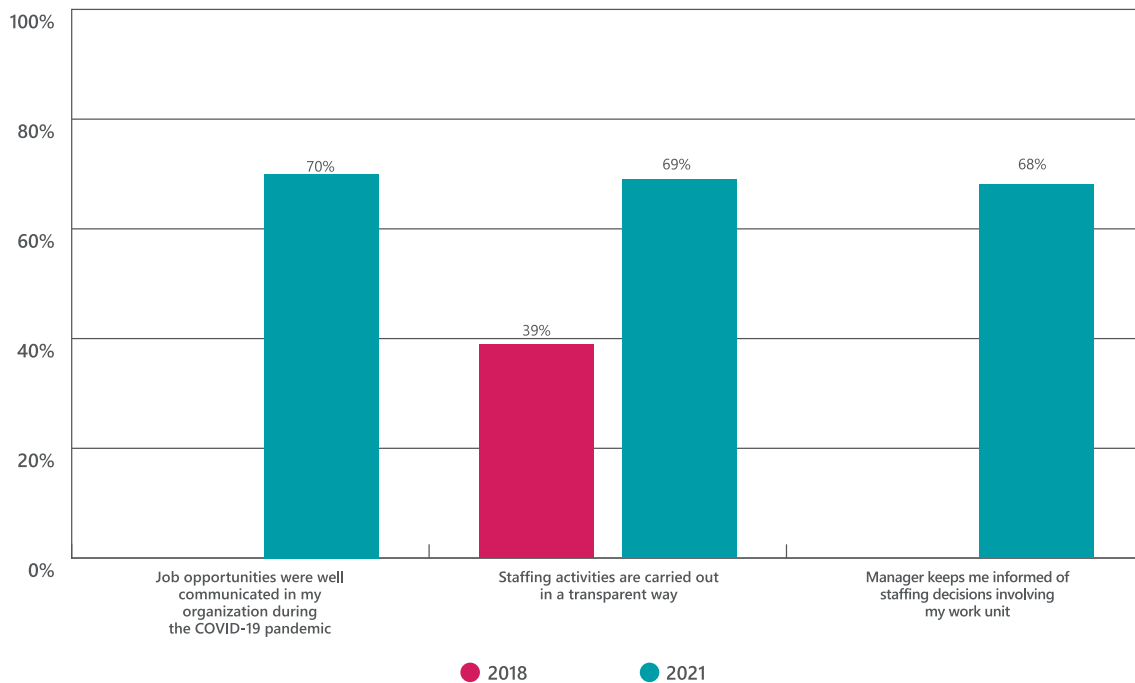
Questions related to fairness	2018	2021
Appointments do not depend on who you know	46%	73%
Process of selecting a person for a position is done fairly	71%	91%
Not pressured to select a particular candidate	90%	89%

Transparency

In 2021, employees were more likely than in 2018 to report that staffing activities were carried out in a transparent way (69% versus 39%). Also, 70% of employees agreed that job opportunities were well communicated (not asked in 2018), and 68% agreed that they were informed of staffing decisions involving their work unit (not asked in 2018).

Figure 7

Employees' perceptions of transparency in the staffing process; changes from 2018 to 2021



Text alternative

Figure 7: Employees' perceptions of transparency in the staffing process; changes from 2018 to 2021

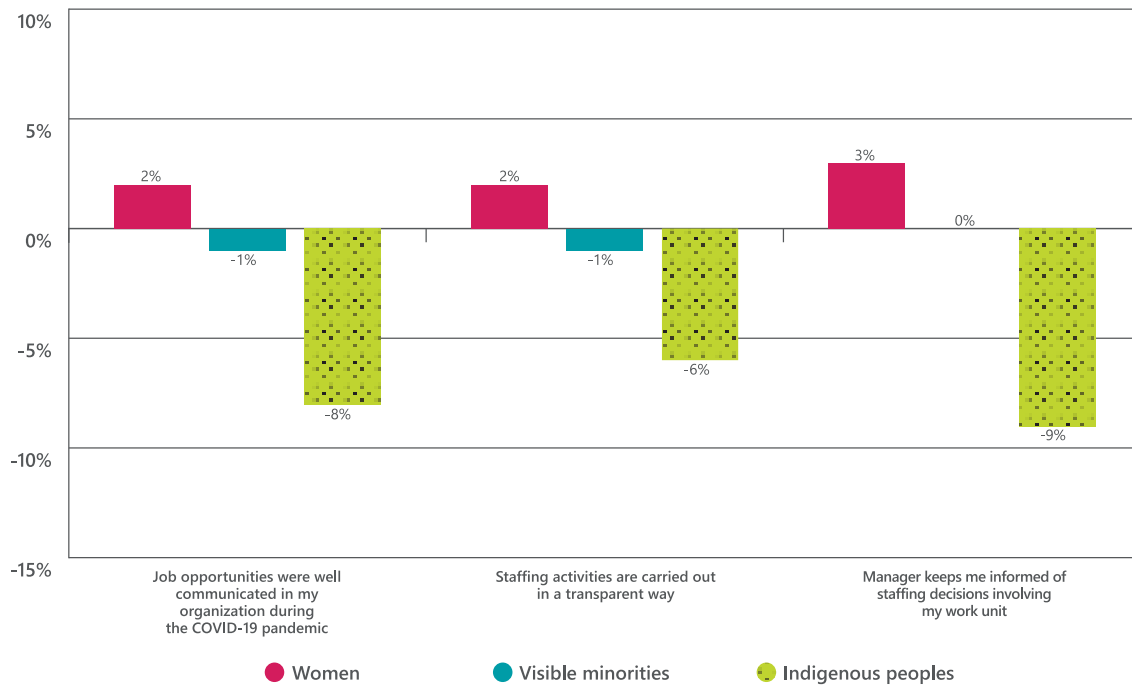
Questions related to transparency	2018	2021
Job opportunities were well communicated in my organization during the COVID-19 pandemic	n/a	70%
Staffing activities are carried out in a transparent way	39%	69%
Manager keeps me informed of staffing decisions involving work unit	n/a	68%

Among employment equity groups, women were more likely than their counterparts to agree that staffing activities were carried out in a transparent way (70% versus 68%), that job opportunities were well communicated (71% versus 69%), and that their managers kept them informed of staffing decisions involving the work unit (70% versus 67%). Members of visible minorities had similar views to their counterparts on transparency. However, Indigenous employees were less likely than their counterparts to concur that staffing activities were carried out in a transparent way (63% versus 69%), that job opportunities were well communicated

(63% versus 71%), and that managers kept them informed of staffing decisions involving the work unit (60% versus 69%).

Figure 8

Differences between employment equity groups' perceptions of transparency in the staffing process and those of their counterparts



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Figure 8: Differences between employment equity groups' perceptions of transparency in the staffing process and those of their counterparts

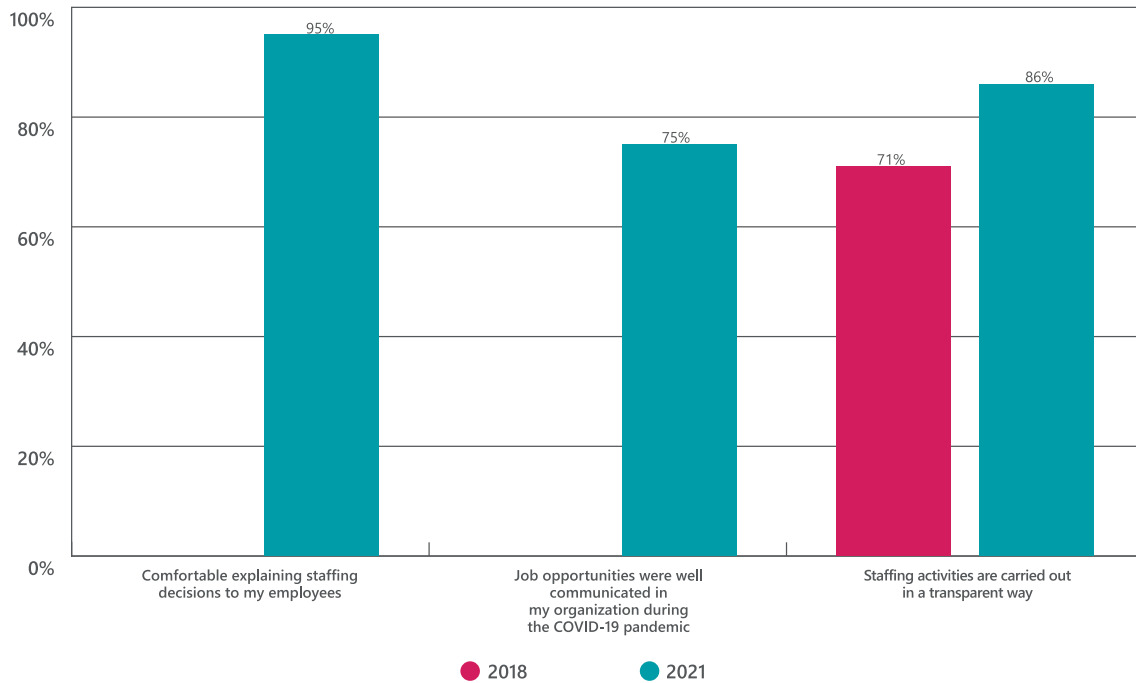
Questions related to transparency	Women	Visible minorities	Indigenous peoples
Job opportunities were well communicated in my organization during the COVID-19 pandemic	+2%	-1%	-8%
Staffing activities are carried out in a transparent way	+2%	-1%	-6%
My manager keeps me informed of staffing decisions involving my work unit	+3%	0%	-9%

In 2021, a greater share of hiring managers than in 2018 reported that staffing activities were carried out in a transparent way (86% versus 71%). In 2021, 3 quarters of hiring managers said that job opportunities were well communicated to employees within their organization (not

asked in 2018). Another important aspect of transparency is a willingness to communicate staffing decisions clearly to employees, and 95% of hiring managers were comfortable explaining staffing decisions to their employees (not asked in 2018).

Figure 9

Managers' perceptions of transparency in the staffing process; changes from 2018 to 2021



Text alternative

Figure 9: Managers' perceptions of transparency in the staffing process; changes from 2018 to 2021

Questions related to transparency	2018	2021
Comfortable explaining staffing decisions to my employees	n/a	95%
Job opportunities were well communicated in my organization during the COVID-19 pandemic	n/a	75%
Staffing activities are carried out in a transparent way	71%	86%

Priority entitlements

The Public Service Commission of Canada is responsible for administering and overseeing the provisions of the [Public Service Employment Act](#) and the [Public Service Employment Regulations](#) for priority measures that help public servants with career transitions due to various life and work-related events, including:

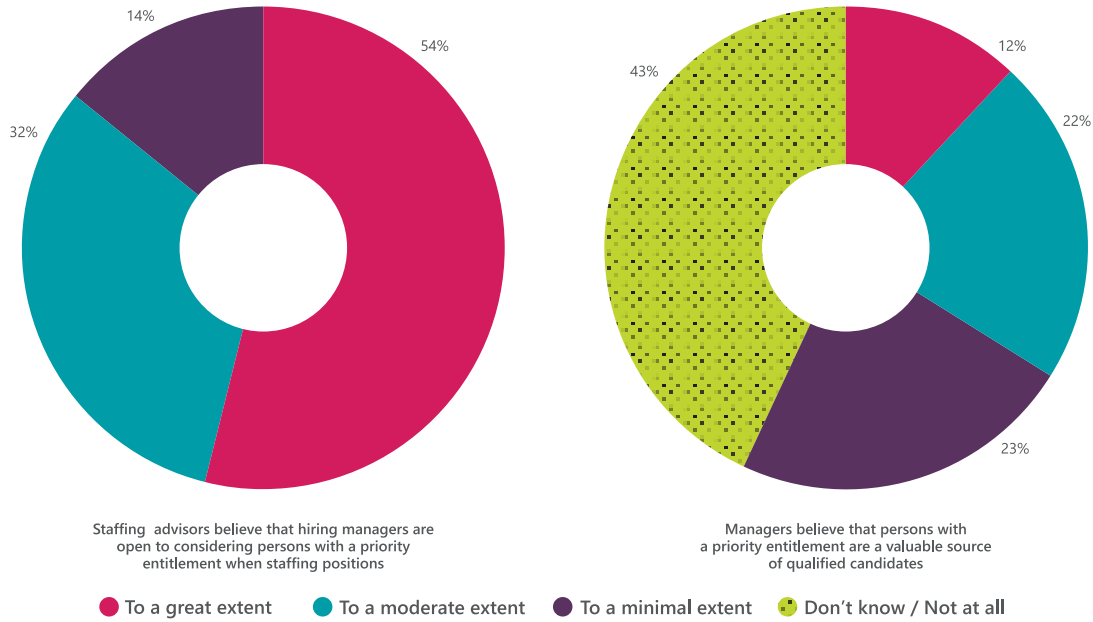
- a disability
- workforce adjustment
- returning from extended leave
- relocating with a spouse or common-law partner
- being medically released from the Canadian Armed Forces or the Royal Canadian Mounted Police

As of the end of 2021, there were about 1 340 persons with a priority entitlement, representing approximately 0.6% of all federal public service employees. Along with Veterans Affairs Canada, the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces, the Public Service Commission of Canada continues to work on increasing veterans' support and hiring so that the public service can fully benefit from their skills and experience.

Results from the 2021 survey reveal that staffing advisors believe that hiring managers are respecting their obligations to properly consider persons with a priority entitlement when staffing positions (86%). As well, 2 thirds of hiring managers indicated that they did not know if, or did not think that, persons with a priority entitlement represent a valuable source of qualified candidates. The main rationales cited were a lack of qualifications and the need for additional training. These results suggest that there is a need to improve the matching process and to increase awareness among managers about the value of public servants with priority entitlements.

Figure 10

Staffing advisors' and managers' views of persons with a priority entitlement as a source of qualified candidates



Text alternative

Figure 10: Staffing advisors' and managers' views of persons with a priority entitlement as a source of qualified candidates

Questions	To a great extent	To a moderate extent	To a minimal extent	Don't know / Not at all
Staffing advisors believe that hiring managers are open to considering persons with a priority entitlement when staffing positions	54%	32%	14%	1%
Managers believe that persons with a priority entitlement are a valuable source of qualified candidates	12%	22%	23%	43%

Perspectives on the staffing process and staffing advice

The following section explores the perceptions of managers, staffing advisors and employees on staffing as well as the perceived impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on staffing.

Perspectives of managers and staffing advisors on the ability to staff during the COVID-19 pandemic

Staffing advisors and hiring managers were confident that their organizations could recruit the staff needed for day-to-day operations and to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, there are gaps between the perceptions of hiring managers and those of staffing advisors with respect to the ability of the public service to successfully staff positions.

- In terms of recruiting the staff needed to carry out daily operations, 9 in 10 staffing advisors (92%; not asked in 2018) were confident in their organization's ability to successfully staff these positions. In contrast, about 8 in 10 hiring managers shared this level of confidence (79%; not asked in 2018).
- In terms of recruiting the staff needed to address the COVID-19 response, more than 9 in 10 staffing advisors (93%) were confident in their organization's ability to successfully staff these positions, whereas fewer hiring managers (70%) expressed this level of confidence.

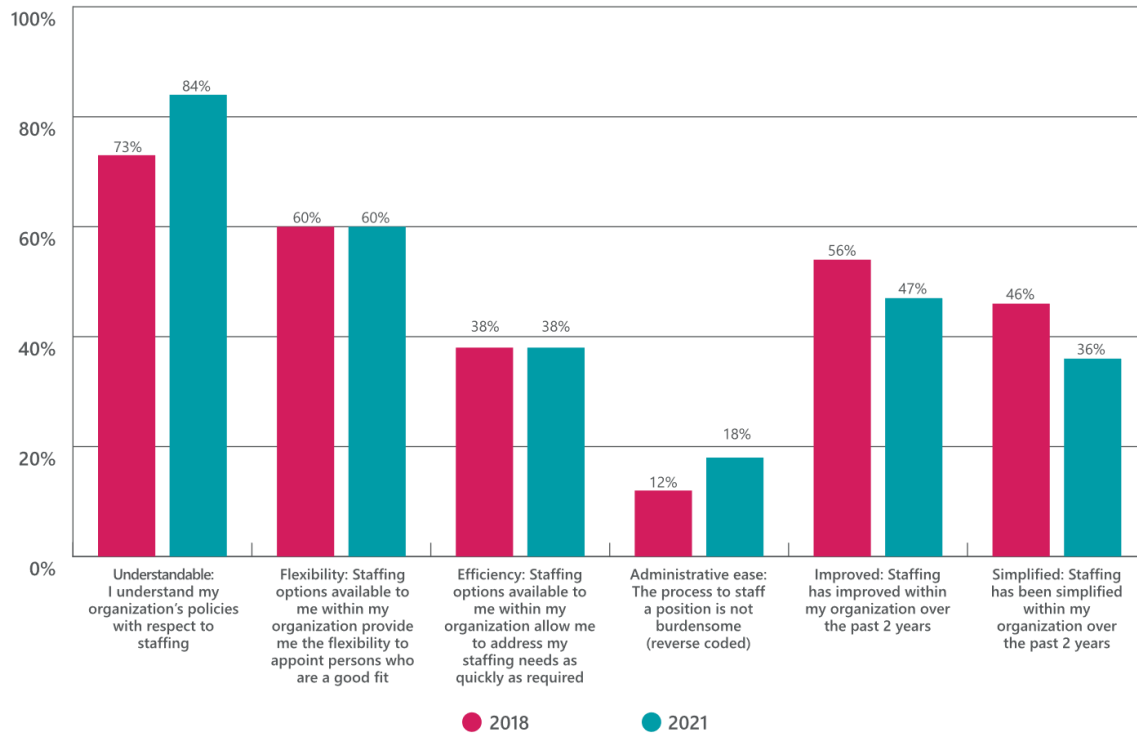
Managers' perceptions of staffing advice and services

Managers' perceptions of the staffing process have improved since the implementation of the [New Direction in Staffing](#) in 2016. In the 2021 survey, they recognized further improvements (47%) and simplification (36%) of the staffing process. A greater share of managers were satisfied with staffing services (78% versus 59% in 2018). Hiring managers' views of the staffing process have remained stable or improved in the following areas:

- **Understandability:** More managers understand the staffing process and policies (84% versus 73% in 2018).
- **Administrative ease:** A small portion of managers found the staffing process was not burdensome (18%, an improvement compared to 12% in 2018).
- **Flexibility:** The same share of hiring managers reported that staffing options within their organization provided flexibility to appoint persons who are a good fit (60% in both 2018 and 2021).
- **Efficiency:** The same share of hiring managers found that staffing options available within their organizations enabled them to address staffing needs as quickly as needed (38% in both 2018 and 2021).

Figure 11

Managers' perceptions of the understandability, flexibility, efficiency and administrative ease of the staffing process; changes from 2018 to 2021



Text alternative

Figure 11: Managers' perceptions of the understandability, flexibility, efficiency and administrative ease of the staffing process; changes from 2018 to 2021

Questions	2018	2021
Understandable: I understand my organization's policies with respect to staffing	73%	84%
Flexibility: Staffing options available to me within my organization provide me the flexibility to appoint persons who are a good fit	60%	60%
Efficiency: Staffing options available to me within my organization allow me to address my staffing needs as quickly as required	38%	38%
Administrative ease: The process to staff a position is not burdensome (reverse coded)	12%	18%
Improved: Staffing has improved within my organization over the past 2 years	56%	47%
Simplified: Staffing has been simplified within my organization over the past 2 years	46%	36%

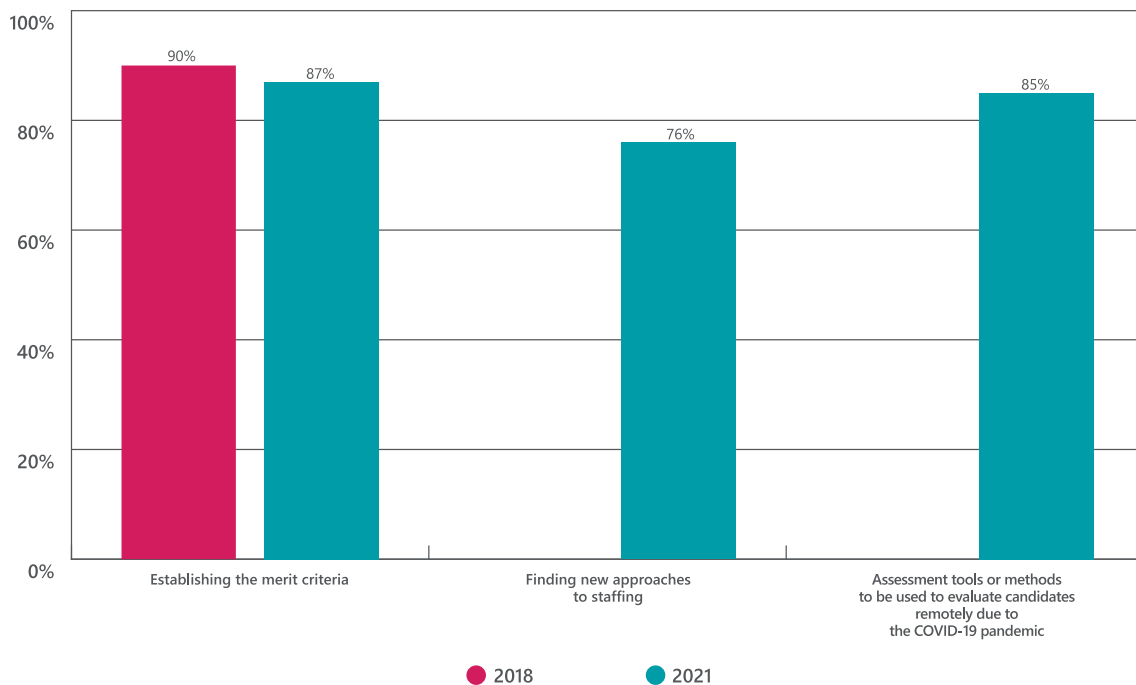
The role and influence of staffing advisors in the staffing process

A total of 98% of staffing advisors were confident in their ability to provide advice, including during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, hiring managers' satisfaction with staffing services and advice increased as compared to 2018 (78% versus 59%). Hiring managers also found that the advice received was useful (83% versus 73%), and 2 thirds reported that staffing advisors were proactive in helping to fill positions (67% versus 52%). Staffing advisors identified the following core areas of strategic advice that they offer to hiring managers:

- **Setting up the staffing process:** In 2021, staffing advisors reported providing considerable support in setting up the staffing process, especially in establishing merit criteria (87% versus 90% in 2018). As well, 3 quarters of staffing advisors said they provided support to hiring managers in finding new approaches to staff positions (76%), and 85% said they recommended remote assessment tools or methods to evaluate candidates during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 12

Areas of strategic advice that staffing advisors reported providing to hiring managers: Setting up the staffing process; changes from 2018 to 2021



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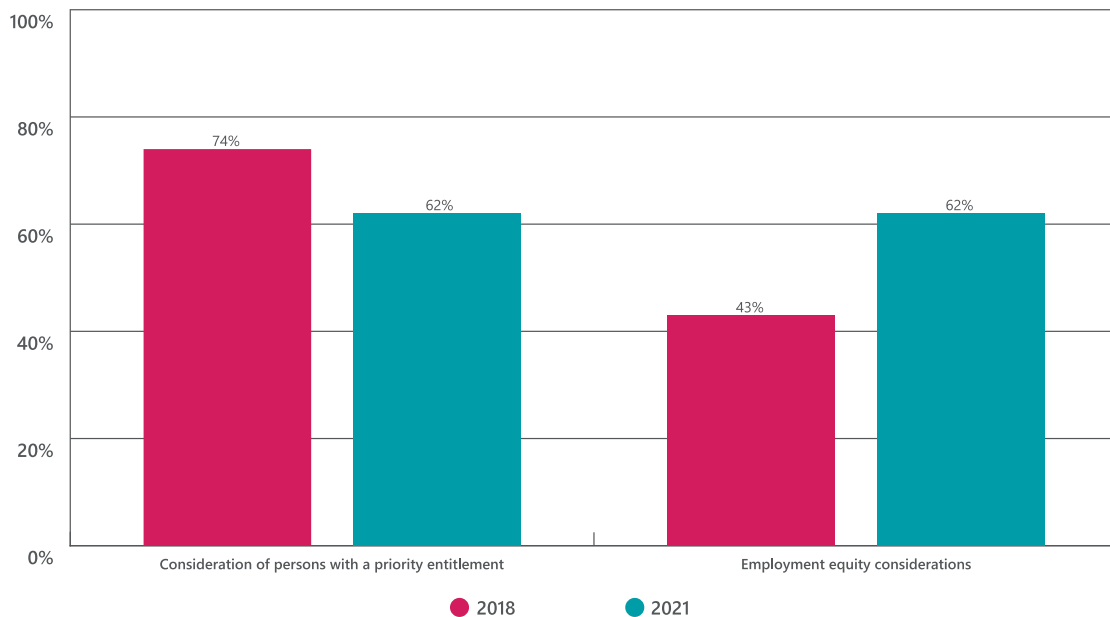
Figure 12: Areas of strategic advice that staffing advisors reported providing to hiring managers: Setting up the staffing process; changes from 2018 to 2021

Questions	2018	2021
Establishing the merit criteria	90%	87%
Finding new approaches to staffing	n/a	76%
Assessment tools or methods to be used to evaluate candidates remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic	n/a	85%

- Identifying pools of candidates for recruitment:** In 2021, 3 in 5 staffing advisors reported providing advice on identifying pools of candidates to support employment equity objectives (62% versus 43% in 2018). However, fewer staffing advisors provided advice on considerations for persons with a priority entitlement (62% versus 74%). In 2021, the survey probed staffing advisors on additional areas of support such as helping to identify candidates within the organization (86%) and providing support related to Public Service Commission of Canada recruitment programs (56%).

Figure 13

Areas of strategic advice that staffing advisors reported providing to hiring managers: Identifying pools of candidates for recruitment; changes from 2018 to 2021



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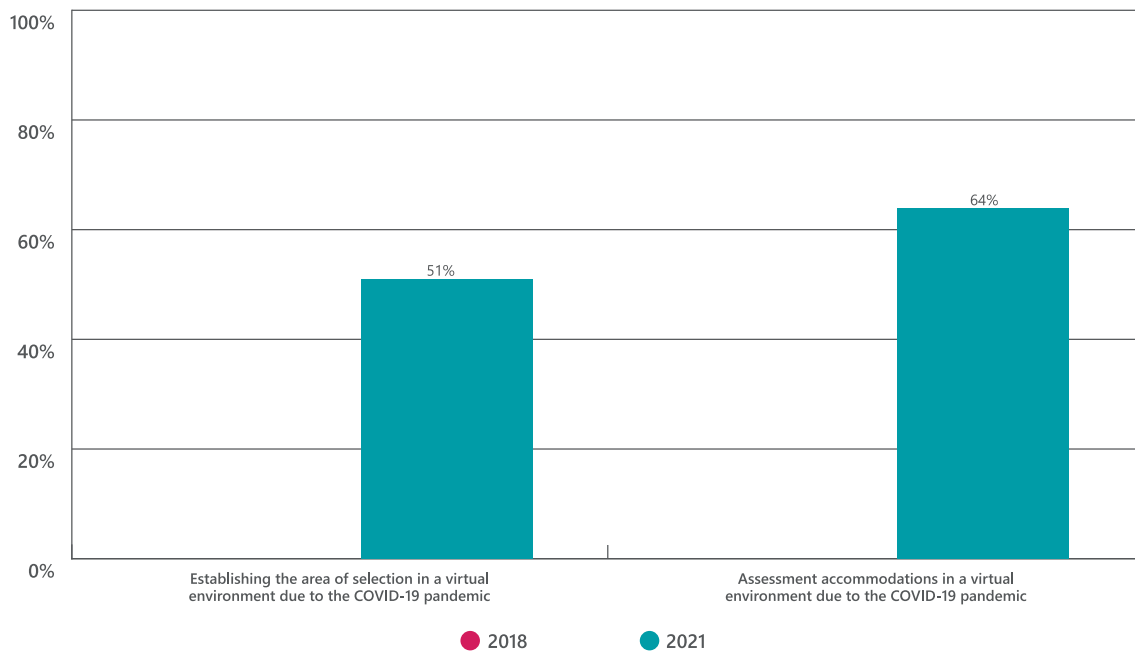
Figure 13: Areas of strategic advice that staffing advisors reported providing to hiring managers: Identifying pools of candidates for recruitment; changes from 2018 to 2021

Questions	2018	2021
Consideration of persons with a priority entitlement	74%	62%
Employment equity considerations	43%	62%

- **Staffing in a remote environment:** The shift to more remote staffing processes due to the pandemic also influenced the support offered by staffing advisors. New survey questions in 2021 revealed that approximately half of staffing advisors provided support on establishing the area of selection in a virtual environment due to telework (51%). Almost 2 thirds of staffing advisors provided support related to assessment accommodation for candidates in staffing processes in a virtual environment (64%).

Figure 14

Areas of strategic advice that staffing advisors reported providing to hiring managers: Staffing in a remote environment; changes from 2018 to 2021



Text alternative

Figure 14: Areas of strategic advice that staffing advisors reported providing to hiring managers: Staffing in a remote environment; changes from 2018 to 2021

Questions	2018	2021
Establishing the area of selection in a virtual environment due to the COVID-19 pandemic	n/a	51%
Assessment accommodation in a virtual environment due to the COVID-19	n/a	64%

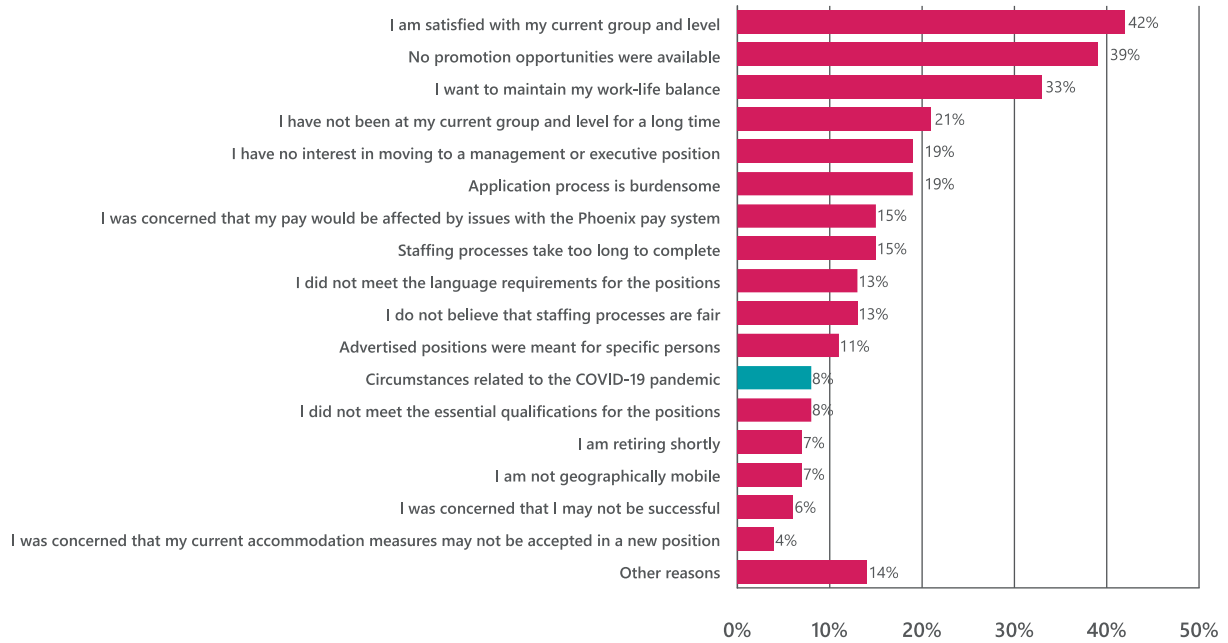
Employee perspectives on staffing activities during the COVID-19 pandemic

Seventy-three percent of employees reported that they were satisfied with how staffing activities were conducted in their work unit during the pandemic.

- **Experience of employees seeking a promotion during the COVID-19 pandemic:** Among all federal public service employees surveyed, about 28% participated in an advertised staffing process for a promotion in the past 12 months (not asked in 2018). Among those who had participated in such a process that had used virtual assessments, 82% reported that they had an opportunity to demonstrate their qualifications. Moreover, 81% were satisfied that the virtual assessment was comparable to an in-person interview.
- **Reasons for not seeking a promotion during the COVID-19 pandemic:** Among the remaining 72% of employees who did not seek a promotion through an advertised staffing process, 42% indicated this was because they were satisfied with their current group and level. Many employees indicated there were no opportunities for a promotion (39%) while others indicated that they wanted to maintain work-life balance (33%). Finally, only about 8% said it was due to circumstances directly related to the pandemic.

Figure 15

Reasons for not participating in an advertised staffing process for a promotion



Text alternative

Figure 15: Reasons for not participating in an advertised staffing process for a promotion

Reasons	Proportion of respondents who said yes
I am satisfied with my current group and level	42%
No promotion opportunities were available	39%
I want to maintain my work-life balance	33%
I have not been at my current group and level for a long time	21%
I have no interest in moving to a management or executive position	19%
Application process is burdensome	19%
I was concerned that my pay would be affected by issues with the Phoenix pay system	15%
Staffing processes take too long to complete	15%
I did not meet the language requirements for the positions	13%
I do not believe that staffing processes are fair	13%
Advertised positions were meant for specific persons	11%
Circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic	8%

I did not meet the essential qualifications for the positions	8%
I am retiring shortly	7%
I am not geographically mobile	7%
I was concerned that I may not be successful	6%
I was concerned that my current accommodation measures may not be accepted in a new position	4%
Other reasons	14%

Political activities and non-partisanship

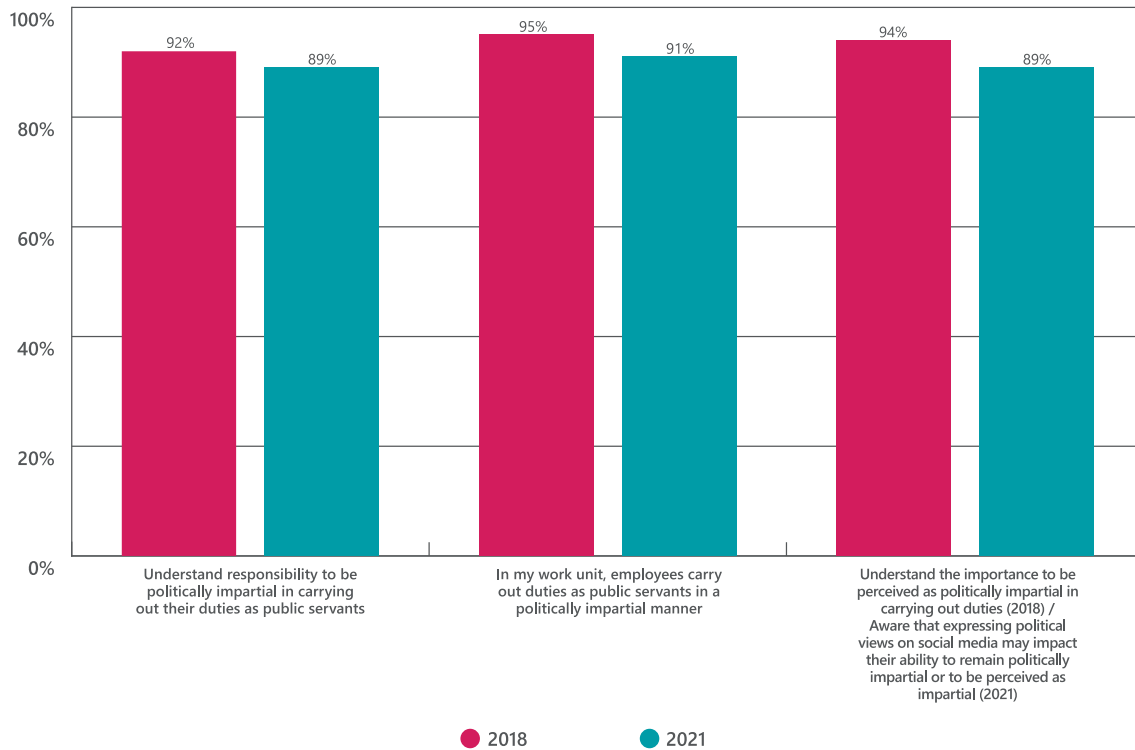
The Public Service Commission of Canada provides guidance to help employees of the federal public service assess their specific circumstances and make an informed decision about participating in non-candidacy political activities (that is, political activities other than seeking nomination or being a candidate in an election). Results from the 2021 survey show that:

- Employees' awareness of rights and responsibilities related to non-partisanship:**

Employees tended to believe they could carry out their duties in a politically impartial manner. For example, almost 9 in 10 indicated that they understood their responsibilities to be politically impartial in carrying out their duties as public servants (89% in 2021 versus 92% in 2018), and that employees in their work unit carried out their duties as public servants in a politically impartial manner (91% in 2021 versus 95% in 2018). Further, 89% of employees reported being aware that expressing their political views on social media could impact their ability to remain politically impartial or to be perceived as impartial when carrying out their public service duties (not asked in 2018).

Figure 16

Employees' awareness of rights and responsibilities related to non-partisanship; changes from 2018 to 2021



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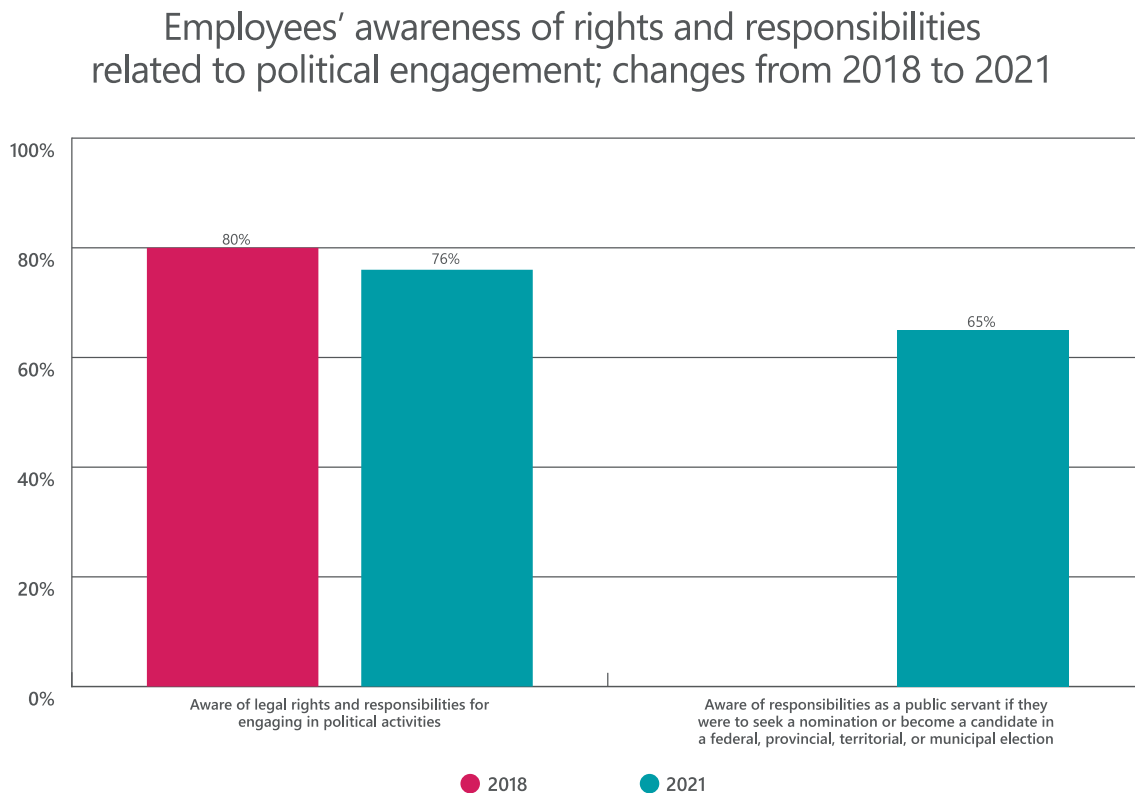
Figure 16: Employees' awareness of rights and responsibilities related to non-partisanship; changes from 2018 to 2021

Questions	2018	2021
Understand responsibility to be politically impartial in carrying out their duties as public servants	92%	89%
In my work unit, employees carry out duties as public servants in a politically impartial manner	95%	91%
Understand the importance to be perceived as politically impartial in carrying out duties (2018) / Aware that expressing political views on social media may impact their ability to remain politically impartial or to be perceived as impartial (2021)	94%	89%

- Employees' awareness of rights and responsibilities related to political engagement:** In 2021, 97% of employees did not engage in political activities beyond voting (versus 98% in 2018), and more than 3 quarters reported that they were aware of their rights and responsibilities for engaging in political activities (76% in 2021 versus 80% in 2018). In 2021,

a new question in the survey asked if employees were aware of their responsibilities when seeking nomination or to become a candidate in a federal, provincial, territorial or municipal election. As well, 2 thirds agreed they understood their responsibilities (65%). Very few employees seek political candidacy in any given year.

Figure 17



Text alternative

Figure 17: Employees' awareness of rights and responsibilities related to political engagement; changes from 2018 to 2021

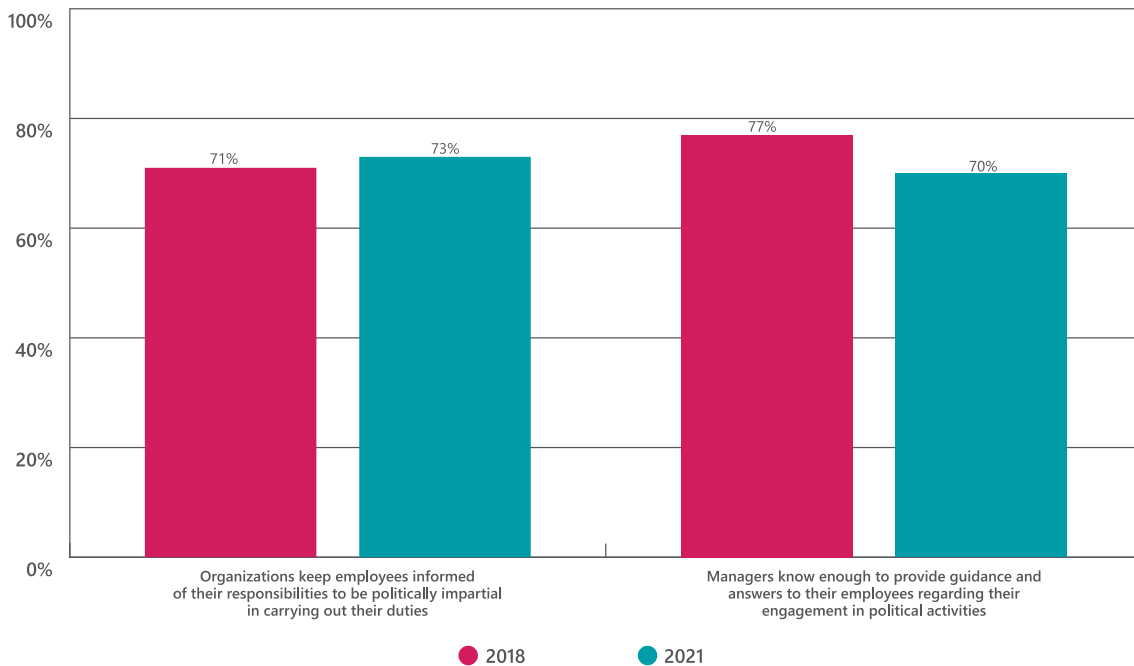
Questions	2018	2021
Aware of legal rights and responsibilities for engaging in political activities	80%	76%
Aware of responsibilities as a public servant if they were to seek a nomination or become a candidate in a federal, provincial, territorial, or municipal election	n/a	65%

- Employees' views on management communication related to non-partisanship and political engagement:** As noted above, there may be room for improvement in supporting management to communicate with employees on rights and responsibilities related to non-partisanship and political engagement. For example, while employees generally agreed that their organization kept them informed of their responsibilities to be politically impartial in

carrying out their duties (73% in 2021 compared to 71% in 2018), slightly fewer managers believed that they could provide guidance to their employees on engagement in political activities (70% in 2021 compared to 77% in 2018).

Figure 18

Employees' views on management communication related to non-partisanship and political engagement; changes from 2018 to 2021



Text alternative

Figure 18: Employees' views on management communication related to non-partisanship and political engagement; changes from 2018 to 2021

Questions	2018	2021
Organizations keep employees informed of their responsibilities to be politically impartial in carrying out their duties	71%	73%
Managers know enough to provide guidance and answers to their employees regarding their engagement in political activities	77%	70%

Conclusion

The Public Service Commission of Canada is responsible for promoting and safeguarding a merit-based, representative and non-partisan public service that serves all Canadians. The 2021 Staffing and Non-Partisanship Survey makes available detailed information on the perceptions of public servants regarding staffing, and their awareness of their obligations related to political impartiality.

The survey results reveal that:

- employees' views on merit, fairness and transparency have improved since 2018
- differences persist in employment equity groups' perceptions of merit, fairness and transparency
- employees' awareness of obligations related to political impartiality remains high
- there is a need to raise hiring managers' awareness of persons with a priority entitlement as a valuable source of qualified candidates
- despite staffing during a pandemic, managers and staffing advisors expressed a high degree of confidence in their organizations' ability to recruit needed staff

Federal public service organizations will need to take a hard look at these results, identify gaps and develop measures to address them. More in-depth analysis will help pinpoint how to address key areas that still need improvement.

Appendix A

Methodology

Survey results are based on the responses of full-time indeterminate or term public service employees, including members of the regular Canadian Armed Forces and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police who conduct staffing activities under the *Public Service Employment Act*. Part-time and seasonal employees, casuals, students, contractors, Governor-in-Council appointees and ministers' exempt staff are excluded from this analysis. Responses of those who did not agree to share their data with the Public Service Commission of Canada are also excluded. The sample consists of 75 440 public service employees, including:

- 51 889 non-manager/supervisor employees (69% of respondents)
- 23 444 managers/supervisors (31% of respondents)
- 633 staffing advisors (1% of respondents)

The 2021 survey response rate is 34.2% and the results are considered representative of the 234 757 federal public servants that are included in this broad definition. The data collection took place over a period of 9 weeks, between March 16, 2021, and May 14, 2021. For questions about their past experience, respondents were asked to refer to the previous 12 months, from March 16, 2020, to March 15, 2021 (for example, regarding the COVID-19 pandemic).

As in the previous cycle of the survey, the 2021 survey frequently uses response categories that ask respondents the extent to which they agree with the question based on a 4-point scale:

- “Not at all”
- “To a minimal extent”
- “To a moderate extent”
- “To a great extent”

In the rare exception where a question is posed negatively, the most positive response would be for those who say “not at all” or “to a minimal extent” and this is the result included. For simplicity, this report groups these results into 2 categories to highlight the share of respondents responding most affirmatively to a “moderate” or “great extent.”

When drawing comparisons, it is important to note that in 2018, a 5-point scale was used for response categories for some questions mostly concentrated in the section on merit, fairness and transparency. For simplicity, the results for the unadjusted positive scores are reported for 2018 since more complex adjustments do not substantially alter the findings.