



Correctional Service
Canada

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2021 National Employment Equity Survey of Women Employees at Correctional Service Canada

Executive summary

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Ce rapport est aussi disponible en français.

Canada

Executive summary

Background and research objectives

The Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) is the federal government agency responsible for administering sentences of a term of two years or more, as imposed by the courts. CSC is responsible for managing institutions of various security levels and supervising offenders under conditional release in the community.

CSC acknowledges its obligations as an employer under the Employment Equity Act and as such is committed to creating a workplace that is inclusive and barrier-free for all, including employees and candidates for employment.

CSC aims to achieve equity in the workplace so that no person shall be denied employment opportunities or benefits for reasons unrelated to ability and, in the fulfilment of that goal, to correct the conditions of disadvantage in employment experienced by women.

Methodology

The research methodology consisted of an online survey with CSC employees. Quorus was responsible for coordinating nearly all aspects of the research project including advising on the design of the research instrument, coordinating specific aspects of data collection and delivering the required research report.

The target population for the online survey met the following criteria:

- CSC employees identifying themselves as women
- CSC employees of a sexual orientation, gender identity and expression minority

Other details of the study include:

- The goal was to conduct a census of the CSC staff. The database of roughly 20,035 eligible survey candidates, provided by CSC, was used to distribute the individual links to each employee. As such, respondents were invited to participate through an email survey invitation.
- Quorus collaborated with the client team at CSC to design the survey instrument in English. CSC translated the final English version of the survey and all other research materials into French.
- Respondents had the choice to complete the survey in English or French and were informed of their rights under the Privacy and Access to Information Acts.

- The survey took on average 15 to 20 minutes to complete and consisted of mostly closed-ended questions.
- Data collection occurred between March 25 and May 25, 2021 and included a pretest of 25 surveys conducted in English and eight in French.
- A total of 2,563 surveys were completed. The equivalent margin of error for a probability study would be +/-2%.
- The final participation rate for this study was 13%.

This report compares significant findings among key demographic subgroups including region, age and self-identification groups, however, given the non-probability sample methodology used, these comparisons are directional and not for statistical use.

All research was conducted in accordance with the *Standards for the Conduct of Government of Canada Public Opinion Research – Online Surveys*.

Summary of research findings

A. Previous employment equity feedback

Nearly three in four staff members (71%) specified that they had voluntarily completed the *CSC Employment Equity Self-Identification Questionnaire*, while nearly one in five (17%) were unsure.

Of those who specified that they did not complete the questionnaire, 46% indicated they were not aware of the survey and an additional 15% explained they were not aware of how to access the form for completion. Nearly one in 10 respondents (11%) did not think that the questionnaire was relevant for them to complete.

B. Safe work environment

Perceived safety of their work environment

CSC staff were asked to state their level of agreement with a series of statements pertaining to the safety of their work environment.

Agreement was highest in terms of feeling comfortable disclosing incidents that compromise physical well-being to supervisors, having access to training and tools to perform their work safely, and knowing where to go for health and safety information and resources (79% strongly agreed or agreed respectively). Additionally, 76% agree they feel physically safe in their work environment.

Roughly two in three employees or less agree that their immediate work environment represents a culture that supports women (66%), that they feel comfortable expressing situations that compromise mental or emotional well-being to supervisors (65%), and that they feel mentally and emotionally safe in their work environment (62%).

Perceptions of gender-based harassment and/or violence

Staff were asked to state their level of agreement with a series of statements after being provided with a definition of harassment and violence according to the Canada Labour Code. Acknowledging that harassment and violence can be based on any number of characteristics (e.g., age, ethnicity, religion), the statements focused on **gender-based** harassment and violence (i.e. harassment and violence experienced because employee is a woman).

Staff more commonly describe having the knowledge of the tools available to combat harassment and violence, however, they are less likely to believe that they work in an environment that does not tolerate these behaviours. More specifically, 73% agree that if needed, they would know where to go for resources and information for harassment and violence in the workplace. Comparatively, 61% agree that their work environment represents a culture of zero tolerance to gender-based harassment and violence.

Experience with gender-based harassment and/or violence

Roughly two in three staff members (66%) reported that they have never experienced gender-based harassment or violence over the past five years, while 29% have experienced issues.

Sources of workplace harassment and/or violence

Results among staff having experienced gender-based harassment or violence reveal that the predominant sources of harassment and/or violence were co-workers, as indicated by 63% of employees, while 55% specified it came from individuals who had authority over them. Furthermore, 36% indicated having experienced this form of harassment from individuals for whom they had custodial responsibility. To a lesser degree, these incidents involved individuals from other departments (11%), members of the public (9%), and individuals on hiring boards or selection panels (8%).

Specific workplace harassment and/or violence experiences

The most common forms of harassment and/or violence were barriers being put in place on their career, including being excluded or ignored (56%), unfair treatment (52%), and interference with their work or withholding resources (34%).

Others described inappropriate behaviours, including sexual comments or gestures (49%), aggressive behaviour (45%), and humiliation (45%); or cited issues of personal attacks (38%), excessive control (37%), and yelling or shouting (35%).

Rating CSC's measures pertaining to gender-based harassment and/or violence

All employees were asked to rate the extent to which CSC is meeting their expectations across a variety of prevention and support measures. Overall, the results consistently show that each specific measure was more likely to be deemed absent or needing improvement than to be considered exceptional or exceeding expectations.

The most noteworthy gaps appear when it comes to CSC taking action in a proactive and timely manner and when it comes to disciplining perpetrators. For each of these two measures, more than half of staff (51% each) felt the measure was either absent or needing improvement.

Results also show that nearly half of staff believe support for victims is either absent or needing improvement (48%), and a similar rating was given when it comes to senior management leading by example (44%), and when it comes to ensuring a confidential and safe space to file complaints (42%).

It is important to note that for each of the measures, an important proportion of respondents did not know how CSC performed.

C. Discrimination in the workplace

Employees were presented with a definition of discrimination and asked to reflect on the last five years of their career at CSC when answering each question.

Experience with and sources of gender-based discrimination

More than one in four employees believe they have experienced gender-based discrimination (27%). When asked to specify the sources of these incidents, the most common response was coworkers (63%), followed by individuals who have authority over them (57%), and another 25% indicating individuals for whom they had custodial responsibility.

Filing formal discrimination complaints

Less than half of surveyed employees (46%) were aware of how to file a formal discrimination complaint should an incident occur.

Attitudes towards gender-based discrimination at CSC

Nearly two in three staff members (65%) strongly agree or agree that they would feel supported by their immediate supervisor when raising concerns over gender-based discrimination, and 54% agree their immediate environment represents a culture of zero tolerance to gender-based discrimination. In terms of taking action, 51% agree that they would feel comfortable taking action if they were to observe incidents in the workplace, while likelihood of taking action drops to 44% if the incident is personally experienced.

Finally, 42% agree that CSC works hard to prevent discrimination in the workplace, while 36% agree that CSC has the appropriate support measures in place.

Rating CSC's measures pertaining to gender-based discrimination

Specific measures receiving low ratings by nearly half of employees include the disciplining of perpetrators (48% rated this measure as absent or needing improvement), taking action in a proactive and timely manner (47%), and supporting victims (46%).

The measure most likely to meet or exceed expectations was having policies and procedures that align with legislation and regulations (63%). This was followed by launching promotion and prevention campaigns (61%) and by adhering to legislation and regulations (51%).

D. Work life – personal life balance

Employees were asked to think about the questions related to personal life balance thinking back to the five years of their career at CSC before the pandemic (i.e. before March, 2020).

Perceptions of work-life balance at CSC

Over three quarters of staff (78%) feel comfortable requesting leave for standard work life accommodations. Another 70% feel supported by their immediate supervisor to take appropriate leave (70%) and a similar proportion (69%) agree that their immediate supervisor ensures flexible work arrangements when needed.

Nearly three in five employees (59%) are aware of their rights and where to go to access additional information and resources, while 38% feel that CSC does a good job of promoting work life balance for female staff, and 25% agree that the nature of their position makes it difficult for their supervisor to approve flexible work arrangements.

Use and benefit of the employee assistance program (EAP)

Results show that half of all employees (50%) had previously used the EAP over the last five years of their career. Over two in three of these employees (67%) rated the EAP as very or somewhat

beneficial, 12% rated it more or less beneficial, and nearly one in five (19%) scored the service as not very or not at all beneficial.

E. Professional development and promotion

Professional development and promotion

Over four in five respondents (84%) agree (strongly agree or agree) that women are represented in senior management levels of employment, while 73% agree women have been represented in their interview boards and selection committees. Over two thirds agree they are valued and respected and considered an equal member of their team (69%), and that they are given feedback (both formal and informal) from their immediate supervisor on their performance (69%).

Roughly six in 10 staff agree their gender has not been a barrier for career advancements (62%), that they are supported and encouraged by their immediate supervisor to pursue career advancement (61%), and that they have the information and support needed from their immediate supervisor to set career goals (60%).

Professional development appears to be a weakness according to staff. Roughly half of employees agree they have been given adequate opportunity to participate in professional development activities (56%), they have been given adequate opportunity to participate in acting opportunities (52%), and that they are well informed about the professional development and training opportunities that exist within CSC (46%).

Ultimately, 60% agree that they have a sense of belonging to CSC.

Perceived impact of training and professional development activities

Nearly half of all employees (46%) believe their training and professional development activities have had a positive impact on their career growth at CSC, which translates to 65% of all employees if those who stated they are not certain or that they have not pursued training and professional development activities are excluded from the calculations (i.e. if we only focus on staff who have pursued training and are able to assess its impact on their career growth).

Opportunities for and factors impeding career advancement

Nearly six in 10 (59%) respondents say they have been provided opportunities to advance their career or been promoted while at CSC. The main barrier faced when looking for career advancement opportunities at CSC, representing 37% of all responses, is the negative impact career advancement could have on employees' work-life balance, followed by not having a clear

understanding of what the next steps are in their career path (28%), and the lack of experience to apply for promotional opportunities (26%).

Parental leave

Nearly one in five respondents (19%) have used maternity, parental, care and nurturing, or other caregiver leave in the past five years of their career at CSC. Nearly three quarters (74%) of these respondents agreed they were encouraged to take the leave and supported throughout the process, while 34% agreed the leave had a negative impact on their career. The most noteworthy negative impacts included missing promotion or acting opportunities (69%), changing how they really were or are perceived by their supervisor or management (41%), having financial implications (38%), changing how they really were or are perceived by colleagues and peers (22%), and having to retrain due to outdated skills (18%).

Best practices for professional development or to improve women's experiences at CSC

Employees were given the opportunity to suggest strategies or best practices that are not currently implemented and that could help them with their professional development and career advancement or improve women's experiences as CSC employees. Nearly eight in 10 did not provide any suggestions. Among those who did, the more common comments focused on providing formal mentorship or a career development program (6%), having a more transparent and timely promotion processes to correct nepotism, favouritism, or sexism (6%), and providing skills training and education opportunities, including language programs and financial assistance (5%).

In terms of improving women's experiences at CSC, suggestions included equality training to change the male dominated workplace culture (6%), having a confidential and accountable external reporting process (4%), improving upper management and supervision levels to correct a poor workplace environment (3%), and having transparent and timely promotion processes to correct nepotism, favouritism, or sexism (3%).

Likelihood to recommend CSC as an employer

Nearly two thirds of respondents (64%) indicated they are likely to recommend CSC as an employer of choice to women, among whom 35% are very likely and 29% are somewhat likely. Fully 17% are not likely to make such a recommendation while 14% would say they are more or less likely.