# Women's Leadership Matters

**The Impact Of Women's Leadership In The Canadian Federal Public Service**

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Marika Morris is an Adjunct Research Professor in the School of Canadian Studies at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada. She has over 25 years of experience in public policy research both directly in the federal government, and for Members of Parliament, non-governmental organizations and as a consultant. She also has significant community-based research experience, particularly as Research Coordinator for the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women and as a consultant working on Indigenous issues. She was involved in Metropolis, a Canadian and international network of researchers, policy-makers and community organizations interested in issues of migration and diversity.

Dr. Morris helped one of Canada's largest government departments, known then as Human Resources Development Canada, establish its processes to conduct gender-based analysis. She was also invited to help develop a 4th year/graduate course at McGill University in Montreal on gender-based analysis of public policy.

Dr. Morris currently heads a research, communications and training consulting business with several specializations, one of which is working with governments within Canada and around the world on how to conduct and utilize gender and diversity analysis in the development and evaluation of policy, programs and legislation.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Purpose

This study was undertaken to determine whether women in leadership positions in the Canadian federal Public Service (PS) have had an impact on policy, programs, operations, administration or workplace conditions, what that impact might be, and how to measure it. The impact of other Employment Equity groups (persons with disabilities, members of visible minorities and Aboriginal peoples) also formed part of this research in a preliminary exploration of how and why representative bureaucracy may work. This report is also Canada's contribution to the Wilson Center's Global Women's Leadership Initiative Women in Public Service Project (WPSP). The WPSP seeks to have 50% representation of women in public services around the world by 2050. Women already make up 55% of Canada's federal Public Service (PS), including 46% at the Executive level of management and about a third at the most senior level (Deputy Minister and equivalent). The question Canada may be in the position is to answer is, "now that women are in, what difference does it make?" This report is aimed at a Canadian and international audience that seeks to understand the impact of women's leadership, and particularly at governments that wish to make the most of women's skills, experience and talent.

## Method

The study is based on qualitative interviews with 26 female and male, current and retired Executive (EX) and Deputy Minister (DM) and equivalent level managers in the Canadian federal PS, striving for representation of Francophones and Anglophones, executives in the regions and headquarters, and members of Employment Equity groups.

# Key Findings

**Women have a significant impact on programs and culture:**
• All of the interviewees said public servants can and do make an impact, and were able to provide personal examples of how they had done so. Many said that this is why most people join the public service, to make a difference.

• The major impact over the past 25 years is on changing cultural norms, establishing an inclusive workplace and influencing leadership expectations. The majority of women and a minority of men interviewed for this study identified their leadership style as a significant contribution they are making to the PS. All of them characterized their leadership style as open, collaborative, and less hierarchical. They emphasized empathy and supporting employees to be their best. This corresponds to the "women's leadership style" documented in management literature. It should be noted that not all women embody this style and some men do. Although the value of this style is recognized, PS structures and hierarchies do not necessarily facilitate this style.

• The cultural change brought about by women has been widespread across government, albeit less so in the central agencies and in those where women are neither half the personnel nor half the leadership, such as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and Canadian Armed Forces (CAF).

• Through their work in the PS, women also have an impact on policy, programs and operations such as in fisheries, the automotive industry, national security, natural resources, the environment, science, human resources and international relations. In some cases, these public servants may have been among the few or only women in discussions that involved male-dominated industries or sectors, providing an avenue for the representation of Canadian women's perspectives in these areas.

**Impact is difficult to measure:**
• There is no empirical measure of women's impact in the PS that would be accurate or unproblematic, including gender analyses of existing performance measures. The majority view was that a series of case studies of policy change in which all the players could be interviewed, including junior and senior bureaucrats, politicians, and members of NGOs, business, media and other stakeholders, might yield the best results that could take context into account.

• More than half of our sample did not see any difference in approach or perspective between women and men, although an empirical study of public service leaders in Canadian federal, provincial and territorial governments did find gender differences in priorities, reflecting gender trends in the wider Canadian public on policy issues.

**Diversity matters:**
• All the research participants agreed that having diversity around the table contributes to better policy, program development, operations, public consultations, services and workplace conditions. Most were able to give concrete examples of how women, people with disabilities, Aboriginal people and people from ethnocultural minority or linguistic minority backgrounds were able to bring something to the table from their own backgrounds, experiences or perspectives by being able to see something that was otherwise missed.

• The value of this diversity was not limited to gender and the Employment Equity (EE) groups (persons with disabilities, members of visible minorities and Aboriginal peoples), but also included having operations and regional people at the policy development table.

• A critical mass was seen as important for members of under-represented groups to feel comfortable and to be able to contribute without fear of marginalization or harassment.

**Facilitating factors and barriers:**
• Factors that enabled public servants to make a difference included trust, leadership programs and training, management that is open, supportive and flexible, latitude, a non-hierarchical approach, an open and inclusive workplace culture, openness at the political level, being allowed to take initiative and innovate, role models and mentorship, having intelligent and skilled team members, and determination, persistence, and resilience.

• Fear, lack of trust, risk aversion are the primary factors that can constrain public servants from making a difference, followed by system rigidity (including hierarchy, onerous, unnecessary time-consuming procedures and paperwork and structural blocks), the political level and other workplace constraints (such as bad managers and constant changes in priorities). The interviews were conducted in late 2014 and early 2015 in a certain political atmosphere. Although the atmosphere has since changed, it remains to be seen whether the mechanisms entrenched in the PS will also change.

**Senior leadership lags:**
• The Deputy Minister level was viewed as lacking a "diversity of mindset", and was not as diverse in gender or other characteristics as the Executive level. Where hiring is based on open, merit-based processes, women do well. When hiring is based on appointment at the Prime Minister's pleasure, such as the Deputy Minister level, women and other EE groups do not do as well.

• Some interviewees observed that now that women have made it to the top, the PS has less influence than ever, particularly on policy.

**Recommendations for the Government of Canada**
• **Flatten the PS hierarchy and support "women's leadership style".** This is a non-hierarchical form of leadership described by

# Many countries are watching Canada's progress and may welcome greater Canadian participation in the Worldwide Women Public Sector Leaders Network.

many of our female and some of our male research participants, which corresponds to the "women's leadership style" documented in the academic literature as being particularly successful for organizations with a substantially professional workforce. This leadership style is characterized by respecting staff and "getting out of their way", gathering information and viewpoints from staff and making decisions based on these, and coordinating and facilitating the work of staff rather than dictating it.

• **Lessen fear through developing an approach to taking calculated risks and making mistakes.** Publicise this approach, so that the media and most Canadians can recognize that basing decisions on evidence and "due diligence" is what is important, as well as acknowledging and correcting any unintended consequences.

• **Streamline accountability paperwork to free up the time and energy of managers and employees.** This could involve the better use of electronic systems so that information need only be entered once.

• **Reinstate and modernize past successful programs or develop new leadership development programs to build and strengthen leadership capacity in the PS.**

• **Re-examine the process of appointing by Governor-in-Council to ensure that the criteria being used are not disadvantaging women and other EE groups.** Questions to consider in particular would be, how are people's leadership skills and abilities being evaluated? Is it based on years in certain positions, which might disadvantage anyone with significant family responsibilities or who started further down? Is a background in economics seen as more of an advantage than a background in other areas? Is a policy background favoured over an operational or administrative one? Is there a premium placed on people's reputation or what they say about themselves, which may not capture the skills and abilities of people who may be more modest? Is there an "image of leadership" that is considered, and is this image based on evidence, or on what has been the practice in the past?

• **Promote an inclusive workplace culture in the pockets of the PS where it has not yet taken root.**

• **Routinely include the feedback of employees in promotion considerations for managers**. Bad managers should be retrained or moved to a non-management position.

• **Play a greater role to help other countries improve gender, diversity and inclusion practices in their public services**. Many countries are watching Canada's progress and may welcome greater Canadian participation in the Worldwide Women Public Sector Leaders Network.

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Canada is ranked number one in the world in terms of women's representation in public service leadership by Ernst & Young (EY, 2014). Most countries in the world are trying to get more women into their public service, whereas 55% of Canada's federal Public Service (PS) is made up of women, including 46% at the Executive level (Treasury Board, 2014) and about a third of the Deputy Minister (senior leadership) level.

The Washington, D.C.-based Wilson Center, as part of its Global Women's Leadership Initiative, launched the Women in Public Service Project. The aim of this project is to have women make up 50% of public service leadership around the world by 2050. There are many studies about the barriers to women in the PS, and this is what most countries are concentrating on. This research paper is Canada's contribution to the Women in Public Service Project, not another study of barriers, but a preliminary investigation into the impact of women's leadership in the PS. The research question is: Now that women are in, what difference does it make?

Although some of the evidence is conflicting, mounting data indicates that women in key leadership/management roles and on boards of directors in the private sector are associated with an improvement in performance in general (Dezso and Ross, 2012), financial performance in particular (Catalyst, 2004) and higher scores on nine organizational dimensions (including leadership, work environment and values, coordination and control) that are positively associated with higher operating margins (McKinsey, 2008). Most research on the impact of women's leadership in the private sector focuses on the bottom line. In Canada's PS, departmental and agency budgets are set by Parliament, and senior public servants are expected to spend what has been allocated, certainly not more, and not much less. The bottom line cannot, therefore, be used as an indicator. Twenty-one female and five male current and former Canadian federal public servants at the top two ranks of management were interviewed about how best to measure the impact of women in the PS, as well as what making an impact meant to them and how public servants in general and senior public servants in particular can have an impact including their personal experiences. Further inquiries related to observations of how women and members of other EE groups have had an impact, what

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enables and constrains public servants from making an impact, and how women and other groups are viewed within the PS when speaking about issues related to their demographic groups. Although most of the interviews were a half hour long, some gave us over an hour of their time discussing their experiences and insights with us about these topics. This research paper is the only known study of the impact of women's leadership in the public sector.

In Canada, women are one of four Employment Equity (EE)[1] groups, which also include Aboriginal Peoples, Members of Visible Minority Groups and Persons with Disabilities. We have taken into account in this research the other EE groups because women are a part of the other three, and because it is important to understand how a diversity of women can have an impact.

Canada's *Employment Equity Act* applies to federally-regulated businesses with 100 or more employees and the federal public sector. It requires those organizations covered by the *Act* to report annually on the representation of the four designated groups and also on what measures, if any, the organization has taken to improve representation. The data are compared not to the presence of these groups in the population, but their presence in the labour force. It is not a quota system.

The research generated a great deal of data, not all of which is contained in this report. The purpose of this report is a practical one – to be used by governments and anyone interested in understanding the impact of women's leadership and let them know how to support women's leadership if they so choose.

Although this research was a preliminary qualitative foray into how to measure the impact of women in the PS, findings emerged about how public servants (male or female) could have an impact in general, and what supported women in management.

The Canadian federal PS did not start out as welcoming toward women. Women were fired upon marriage until 1955. The 1990 Task Force on Barriers to Women in the Public Service found widespread discrimination and obstacles to women's advancement. Twenty-five years later, Canada rose to the top PS in the world in terms of the representation of women in management. Considering the many international users of this report who may be interested in removing barriers to women in management, or simply to the entry of women into the PS, and the fact that some of our research findings were about this topic, we address this issue in Appendix A.

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# 02

## METHODOLOGY

Twenty-six Executive (EX) and Deputy Minister (DM) and equivalent level managers in the PS[2] were interviewed for this study between October 2014 and March 2015. These are the two most senior categories of public servants in the Government of Canada. The sample was identified by various means. A list of suggested interviewees was provided by the Public Service Commission of Canada, some of whom were contacted for an interview. Some other potential interviewees were approached because of their known work on issues of leadership, gender or diversity. Some were chosen from the Government Electronic Directory Services (GEDS) to ensure regional representation. Using a snowball sampling method, interviewees were also asked to provide suggestions of others to interview. We attempted to ensure representation of other EE groups, Francophones and public servants based in regional offices and agencies as well as the National Capital Region (Ottawa-Gatineau) where the PS is headquartered.

An optional demographic questionnaire was administered to the interviewees. The interviewees included 21 women and five men. Nineteen were currently in the PS, five were retired PS managers and two had left the PS to work in another sector. In terms of current or last rank or level in the PS, Figure 1 shows that there was good representation of all levels. Fourteen interviewees spoke English

as a first language, six spoke French, five had a mother tongue that was neither English nor French, and there was no data for one. Of the interviewees who provided the data, 20 were born in Canada and five outside Canada, a ratio similar to the Canadian population as a whole. Three interviewees identified as a person with a disability [3], one as an Aboriginal person, five as visible minorities, and three as members of sexual identity minorities. Five interviewees came from family socioeconomic backgrounds which were in the upper third of society, ten from the middle, eight from the bottom third, and there was no data for three. The age range of our interviewees was 38 to 68, reflecting the fact that managers tend to be older than 30. All had at least one university degree, reflecting the value of education in the PS, and most had degrees beyond the Bachelor level. Only 24 interviewees provided information about number of children. Of 20 women who did so, two had no children, three had one child, 12 had two children, and three had three children each. Among the four men who provided this information, one had no children and three had two children. Eight female and one male manager currently had children under 18.

Typically, managers in the PS move around to a number of departments and agencies, gaining experience. Our sample was no exception. Interviewees had worked in a wide range of departments/agencies[4] during their careers. Only five of our sample had never worked outside the PS, and all of these were in the top or middle thirds in terms of family socioeconomic background. Those with work experience outside the PS had an eclectic variety of occupations, from call centre operator, restaurant server and retail clerk, to university professor, private practice lawyer and corporate vice-president. There were also teachers, consultants, political staff. people who had worked in not-for-profit organizations, the private sector and provincial governments.

We aimed for a full range of perspectives and a good diversity of interviewees as we were looking for insights from every possible angle, and we succeeded in finding these. Other demographic information collected will be outlined where relevant in the discussion.

Of 37 EX and DM level individuals who were approached to participate in the study, 30 accepted, 1 declined and 6 did not reply. This is a positive response rate of 81%, although scheduling conflicts prevented four of these from participating before the end of the study. There was a lot of interest about the topic. Interviews were conducted by telephone or in person.

On behalf of researchers from Carleton University's Faculties of Public Affairs (Centre for Women in Politics and Public Leadership), Arts and Social Sciences, and the Sprott School of Business (Centre for Research and Education on Women and Work) with the strong support of the Public Service Commission of Canada, Carleton University's President invited senior public servants, academics, members of the private sector, media representatives and other interested parties to a Critical Conversation held on February 24, 2015 to discuss and give feedback about the study's preliminary findings. This feedback helped us gain further insight into the findings.

As a qualitative study meant to explore ideas about how to measure women's impact, we also collected information about the impact women had in the PS. Although this is not a quantitative measurement, the findings are put in the context of existing, related literature about women's impact in the workplace and on decision-making.

4 We advised our sample that if a department or agency had been renamed or amalgamated with another, to choose the department/ agency that most closely corresponded with it today. Our interviewees were working in or had worked in: Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Canada Border Services Agency, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Canada Revenue Agency, Canada School of Public Service, Canadian Heritage, Canadian Human Rights Commission, Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Correctional Service of Canada, Department of Finance, Employment and Social Development Canada / Service Canada / Labour Program, Environment Canada, Financial Consumer Agency of Canada, Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Foreign Affairs Canada and International Trade Canada, Health Canada, Industry Canada, Infrastructure Canada, Justice Canada, National Defence, Natural Resources Canada, Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions, Privy Council Office, Public Health Agency of Canada, Public Safety Canada, Public Servants Disclosure Protection Tribunal, Public Service Commission of Canada, Public Service Staffing Tribunal Canada, Public Works and Government Services Canada, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Senate of Canada (staff), Statistics Canada, Status of Women Canada, Transport Canada, Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, Veteran Affairs, Western Economic Diversification Canada and two departments/agencies that no longer exist.
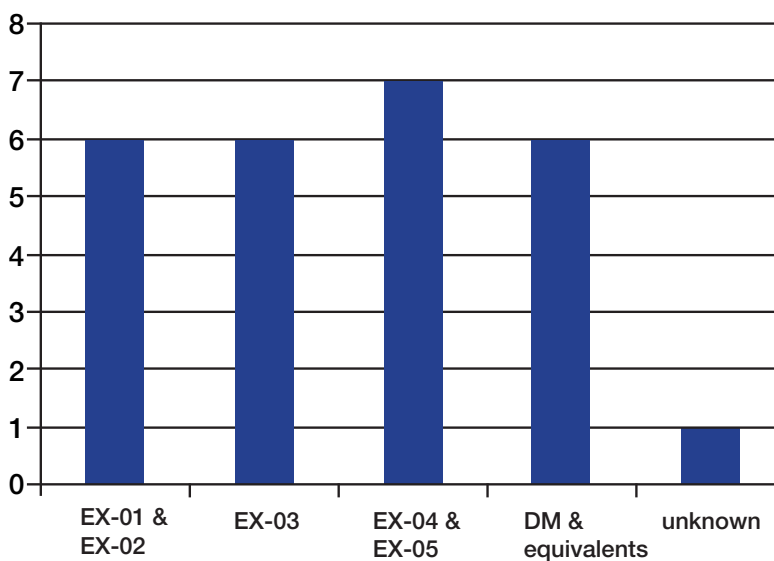


**Figure 1: Rank/level of interviewees**
This bar chart shows that there was good representation of all levels of management-category public servants.

## 03
## RESEARCH FINDINGS

The research findings are divided into three main areas: impact, gender and diversity. The first section documents the findings on whether public servants in general and senior public servants in particular can have an impact and how they have an impact on policies, programs, operations, administration and workplace conditions.

### Impact

We asked our participants what having an impact meant to them. A good encapsulation was "contributing to a positive change for Canada though policy, program or regulatory development, operations and provision of service and workplace conditions." Research participants were very proud of the contributions they had made, and everyone was able to name examples of where they had personally made a difference.

This section discusses the impact public servants make; the perception that making a difference is part of what attracts people, particularly women, to the PS; the factors that enable and constrain public servants from making an impact; and whether it is possible to measure the impact women have had in the PS, or specifically in PS leadership, over the years.

## How Public Servants Have An Impact On Policy, Programs, Operations, Administration And Workplace Conditions

It is very rare in research to have 100% of a sample of people say one thing. In this case, every single participant interviewed for this study said that individual public servants can and do have an impact, that they make a difference. Many even said that this was the reason they joined the public service. The following were a few of the many examples that were given:

• Introducing health and safety regulations that saved lives.

• Having a major, positive financial impact on some of the most vulnerable Canadians through improvements to pensions, Worker's Compensation, Wage Earner Protection Program, and other programs.

• Protecting ecosystems and habitats.

• Aligning federal, provincial and territorial systems so people in need could have access to the support they needed without having to fill out multiple forms for different levels of government operating with different criteria.

• Coming up with policy options in a crisis, one of which was implemented.

• Hearing the words one wrote coming out of the Prime Minister's mouth on a major international issue.

• Starting a program with three people in one region, and having it become so successful it became a national program.

• Doing a program review involving 22 million tax files and recommending policy changes that were carried out to benefit taxpayers.

• Stakeholder relations – being the face of the Government of Canada and knowing that stakeholders' perceptions of government were improved.

• Building trust and relationships with provinces and stakeholders in order to introduce solutions or measures that benefitted Canadians.

• Exceptional service – such as putting a lot of effort and creativity into coaching unemployed people on how to find work, and

making a substantial difference to them and their families because they found work.[6]

• Changing a recruitment test that seemed biased to allow for a greater diversity of people to be recruited. This had an impact on the lives of all those who were recruited, as well as the government agency, which benefited from increasing diversity.

• Negotiating a security agreement with foreign governments.

• Providing cultural awareness training to front-line service providers to ensure all Canadians are treated with sensitivity and respect.

• Modelling a collaborative style, appreciation of others and openness to ideas that became the cultural norm at the workplace.

• Influencing workplace conditions through participation in departmental committees, such as Occupational Health and Safety, Equity, etc.

• Mentoring others to succeed.

Many Canadians do not realize how much the PS permeates their lives, and how the PS can have a life and death impact on Canadians, such as through food inspection, drug regulation and search and rescue.

*I'm in a regulatory organization with service delivery. If we don't do our job, people get hurt and people can die.*

There are many ways to have an impact, and many levels at which impact can take place. Impact can be large in scale, such as developing legislation or a program in effect throughout the country or working on an international initiative, or having a positive effect on colleagues and staff in a workplace that better enables them to do a good job. Although some people were able to point to particular initiatives that had been their idea, most felt they contributed something valuable to a team. The difference many public servants make is not necessarily what someone outside the public service in an individualistic culture might expect. By definition, public servants work with many others both inside and outside the PS:

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6 This example came from an Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM) who started out at a much lower level (CR-03) in the regions, and talked about the impact she had had at every level of her career.

# Leading by example. That is the single most important thing you do, and the higher up you go, the more important it becomes.

*There's no end to the good you can do in the world if you're not worried about who gets the credit.*

Sometimes the true impact of their work cannot be seen for many years, and sometimes it is hard to ascribe full credit. Policy development is a complex process influenced by many different factors inside and outside government, and often relies on windows of opportunity.

   Most of the female managers and some of the male managers interviewed overwhelmingly spoke of an individual public servant's impact on workplace conditions and other people as the major impact any public servant, and especially managers, could make. Creating good workplace conditions facilitates public servants to work at their best:

*Leading by example. That is the single most important thing you do, and the higher up you go, the more important it becomes. It's like you're always on display, and you really need to be conscious of the effect that you have on other people.*

## The Attraction Of Public Service And Making A Difference

*The reason I'm a Public Servant is a really simple one. I want to make Canada better. It's as simple as that, and I don't think there's a better place to do that than within the Federal Public Service.*

*I think that's why Public Servants join the Public Service, is they want to make a difference, they want to have an impact, and they stay in the public service because they feel that they are making that that difference.*

Lina Nilsson, Innovation Director at the Blum Center for Developing Economies at the University of California, Berkeley, suggests that women are drawn to fields and organizations where they can make a difference. Nilsson, herself a Ph.D. in Biomedical Engineering, cites as an example the low numbers of female engineers, except in programs focussed on having a positive social and economic impact. When U.C. Berkeley began offering a new Ph.D. minor in development engineering for students doing work to design solutions for low-income communities, half the students enrolled in the inaugural class were women (Nilsson, 2015). Whether women are naturally drawn to areas in which they can make a difference, or whether they are socialized to work primarily for the good of others rather than themselves, it could explain in part why women are drawn to the public service.

*In terms of a rewarding job versus what you see in the private sector, it's clear, night and day. In the private sector it's all economics, all bottom line. For us, it's about helping people, making people's lives better. Making the country better.*

*My mother, as a nurse, was in the service area and I think that she instilled in us the notion of … providing service to others.*

## Factors That Enable Public Servants To Make An Impact

Empowering and enabling workplaces were the number one set of factors cited by our research participants as enabling public servants to make a difference, over and above personal qualities, skills and experience.
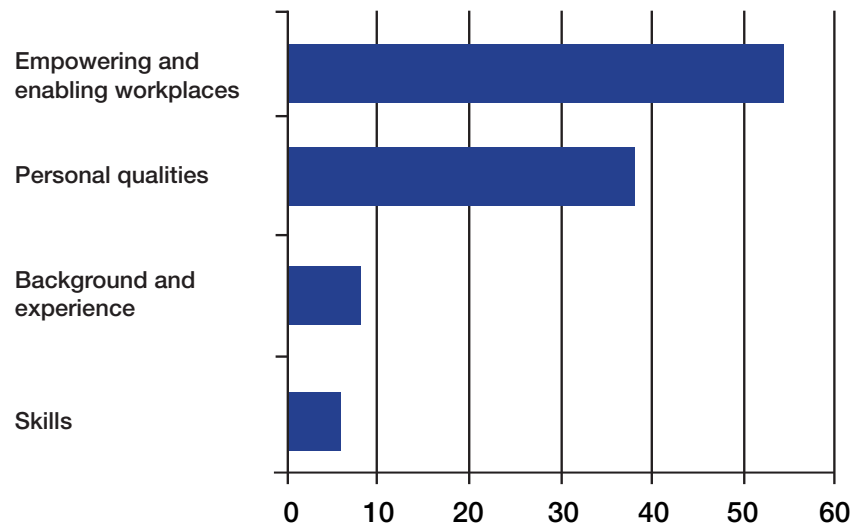
**Figure 2: Factors that enabled public servants to make a difference**
Note: Numbers do not add up to the numbers of interviewees because most interviewees named several factors.

The following were the qualities most identified as contributing to an empowering and enabling workplace, in order of frequency: Trust, leadership programs and training, management that is open, great/supportive managers, flexibility, latitude, a non-hierarchical approach, an open and inclusive workplace culture, openness at the political level, being allowed to take initiative and innovate, role models and mentorship, having intelligent and skilled team members. Also mentioned to a lesser extent were: Being able to connect with colleagues in other countries, being permitted to speak outside the organization, clear direction, commitment to work-life balance, culture of creativity, exchanges with NGOs, the private sector and other governments, good morale and collaboration among team members, mentorship, role models, rewards and recognition, sufficient tools and resources to do the job, and support from the top.

Determination, persistence, and resilience were the personal qualities most often cited as enabling public servants to make a difference, followed by creativity, courage/boldness, ability and willingness to ask for and take responsibility and challenge, curiosity, motivation, open-mindedness, credibility and an entrepreneurial or innovative bent. In terms of skill sets that enabled public servants to make a difference, the most frequently cited was communication or interpersonal skills, followed by analytical skills. In terms of background and experience,

exposure to different places, people and things were important to our research participants, and two found being close to retirement empowering for being better able to say what one thought and push harder.

In addition to asking what enabled public servants in general, we asked our sample of managers what enabled them in particular. Work experience was most important, followed by family background and education. Interestingly, in terms of personal qualities, two of our male interviewees offered things like "arrogance" and "knowing I'm right" as factors that had personally enabled them, whereas one of our female interviewees cited "the right amount of humility" as an enabling factor.

Some context and texture are given to these results below.

## Empowering And Enabling Work Environments

Trust was the number one enabling factor cited by our participants. Related to this was management openness and latitude to let people do their jobs and exercise judgment and creativity. A number of managers talked about creating space for their employees, and mentioned that they themselves had great managers who did this for them and from whom they learned:

Team dynamics were influenced by managers, who both set the tone and established trust, but also dealt effectively with any problems arising from personality issues or mismatches between what people were assigned to do and what they were capable of producing.

Determination, persistence, and resilience were the personal qualities most often cited as enabling public servants to make a difference, followed by creativity, courage/boldness, ability and willingness to ask for and take responsibility and challenge, curiosity, motivation, open-mindedness, credibility and an entrepreneurial or innovative bent.

*I'm an energetic person and I was excited about it [the initiative the interviewee was in charge of.] But it was their [her staff's] project… So I had to let them do it. And it can be hard for me sometimes, or at least it was for me at that stage of my career. I was just a new DG at that point. To sort of step back and let them have it. Guide them as you would a ship – from way back.*

*Great managers that I worked for said, "That's a great idea. Why don't you go do it?" And you're like, 'What?' But they create the space in your job or your assignment of duties for you to go either work on a team or go do different things.*

*And another time would be at Service Canada under the time of [a particular leader] which was just a wonderful heady time. You could do anything, and if you could sell her with the idea of change and pushing the envelope, she would support you. And the last example is [a specific initiative] and again, I was given the latitude to run with it. So if you're at the right place at the right time with the right management structure, you can actually do a lot. But, if that space isn't given for you then you're marking time. You know, I think overall in my career I've been pretty lucky to have a lot of opportunities where I've had good managers who have given me that space.*

*I do find in my experience that people can rise above where they are and do more if they're allowed to.… The best thing a boss can do is get out of the way.*

Latitude is not the same as lack of direction. It is clear direction that employees who want the responsibility can shape a project or initiative. An empowering workplace was also described as one in which hierarchy did not matter, that people's abilities were used and recognized no matter what level they were at. A manager felt he accomplished most when:

*…the discussions were open and the hierarchy was kept outside the door.*

Good team dynamics were important to doing a great, rather than a good enough, job. Team dynamics were influenced by managers, who both set the tone and established trust, but also dealt effectively with any problems arising from personality issues or mismatches between what people were assigned to do and what they were capable of producing.

*We had fun doing it, and we did a good job. We liked each other, and we delivered.*

## Leadership Development Programs

Canada has now had two female Clerks of the Privy Council, Canada's highest PS position. Jocelyne Bourgon, the first female in the position held the office from 1994 to 1999, and was mentioned as having made a significant impact in the PS.

*The first female clerk Jocelyne Bourgon … completely re-imagined how we do leadership development in the Public Service. And it's actually thanks to her that I became an ADM [be]cause I'm not sure that I would have otherwise. She created a program called the ADM Pre-qualification Pool which allowed people to put their hands up and say, "I think I might like to become an ADM." Now, you still had to get the approval of your Deputy Minister to actually go through the process, but it was a neutralizing process … you did a battery of behavioural tests and you did a very deep dive into your CV, and then you went through a really scary interview with a bunch of Deputy Ministers. And if you did all of these things, and you had the support of your deputy, you would be pre-qualified at the ADM*

If you really want to see something change, you really have to show the leadership and change it yourself.

*level, so that anybody could pick you up. And I decided to do that, and it was thanks to her. She also created a great Accelerated Executive Development Program, which, allowed people who might not normally have come up to self-identify and then to be put through really intensive development to help them get ready f or more senior levels. That …[made] a huge change. We got a lot more women coming up through that. A lot more people who self-identified as being visible minorities, and a few more people who self-identified as persons with disabilities. So that had a profound effect. That's one woman in the most senior position who made a lasting difference.*

The Accelerated Executive Development Program was mentioned by a number of managers who credited this program for much of what they learned about leadership, and for creating a mutually supportive community of leaders. At one point, it was also used as a way to attract qualified managers from outside the PS who were already in mid-career, so that they would not have to start from the bottom in the PS. This helped to bolster the ranks of managers who were members of visible minority groups. This program no longer exists. Some managers also identified the Direxion program as having a major, positive influence on their ability to lead:

*I think that the very valuable training that I received through… the Direxion program [was] really critical and instrumental in helping equip me as a manager and as a leader, to be able to work towards those kinds of collaborative environments and being mindful of how you deliver things, and the importance of a quality work environment from a people perspective. I really fundamentally think that the training I received enabled me to do that…. Direxion was a life-changing experience.*

Dirextion does not exist anymore either. The Canada School of Public Service now offers a leadership course called ConnEXion, for EX-02s and EX-03s. The Management Trainee Program (MTP), which also no longer exists was also cited as being helpful:

*I came into government through the management trainee program so I've been trained from the beginning, through the School of the Public Service, where they really have a management model that's different, I think, from "old school" management. Much more focused on leadership, and much more focused on empowering people, and supporting people, and coaching and mentoring, and achieving results in a way that's respectful, and that's engaging, that's supportive of people.*

In some ways, the successor to the MTP is the Recruitment of Policy Leaders (RPL) program, also cited as successful. This program seeks to identify and bring exceptional candidates into the PS:

*I do have a bias towards those kinds of programs that shake up the system a bit, because it will bring new ideas and new perspectives. I found that they provide value-added. And they are different, and of course, Directors were confident and happy having those kind[s] of people.*

The cost of leadership programs and the time away from work were identified as reasons why these are scaled down and some managers never get to do them. The shorter required training focuses on understanding financial authorities and paperwork, and very little time is spent teaching people the skills of leadership. As a result, the PS does have managers who do not know how to be good managers.

*Organizationally, we need to make sure managers are equipped to do their jobs. It's a hard job…. We're still dealing with a lot of managers who come up through the ranks because they're being promoted because they're good at their job. They're good policy analysts, they're good engineers, they're good whatever the heck they are, and then they get promoted to management positions without the support they need to become good managers.*

## Personal Qualities: Persistence, Optimism, Flexibility, Initiative

*If you really want to see something change, you really have to show the leadership and change it yourself.*

Persistence, optimism and determination were cited as a way to deal with bad experiences without becoming discouraged. A woman who rose through the ranks to become a senior leader, and had many examples of where she had developed and implemented major successful initiatives, was not always encouraged by her managers on her way up:

*He just laughed and said, "That's a stupid idea." … [After that,] I was no more interested in helping that guy succeed in his goals than to fly to the moon.*

*This is a hard thing about Public Service is that the impact of what we do is often very indirect and often very distant. I do something here and it becomes something over there and it goes over and it's part of something else, and sometimes ten years later something happens. It's hard for people to stay motivated when the results of what you're doing are so far away it's so hard to see your impact. So part of what is enabling is the capacity to stay motivated, the supports around you to keep you and your colleagues motivated, those become really important to allowing a person to have a positive impact, in terms of the factors being the same for members of the executive ranks.*

Although some perceived these qualities as innate, others stated that they could be learned:

*Lots of this has to do with personal and individual empowerment and enablement. Whatever those capacities are that allow us as individuals to say, I have something to say, I have a right to be heard, all of those kinds of capacities that we either developed early in childhood or developed as we go through life.*

## Work Experience And Family Background

Work experience was most cited as a personally enabling factor for the managers in our sample, followed by family background.

Within the category of work experience, varied work experience and experience outside the PS (in NGOs, the private sector and provincial governments) were most helpful to the managers, followed by political experience, working in the regions and working overseas.

Family background had also made a significant impact on managers' ability to make a difference. The experience of growing up in a lower socioeconomic context motivated a number of managers to make a difference, or to succeed as individuals. One credited her character, resilience, work ethic and ability to handle unexpected challenges to growing up doing hard work on a farm. The immigrant experience was also significant for a number of interviewees.

*When they [interviewee's parents] came here they left everything they knew and everything they had and they came here and really we had nothing. We had absolutely nothing, but we had really good values. They instilled some really good values and an excellent work ethic…. You know that immigrant reality makes a difference, and I know that many of my colleagues talk about the rural reality making a difference. And others like my partner talks about poverty making a difference in terms of what you value and what you see. At the end of the day, my parents taught me, us, there were five of us, that it doesn't matter what you have. It matters who you are, and what you do with who you are, and how you extend who you are to others, in order to move communities forward.*

Regardless of socioeconomic status, the values instilled by parents came up as an enabling factor, particularly also a commitment by parents to community service and helping others. In an organization as large as the PS comprising hundreds of thousands of employees, the likelihood of some public servants not coming from a supportive background is assured. This underscores the need for mentorship and good role models in the PS, so those who did not have the benefit of good parental values can learn if need be how to make a positive difference and that they and their work matter.

## Factors That Constrain Public Servants From Making An Impact

Fear, lack of trust and risk aversion were overwhelmingly named as the number one factors constraining public servants' ability to make a difference (see Figure 3). This category also included "culture of blame", "lack of respect" and "managers who are too controlling".

The second most common set of factors was grouped under "system rigidity": hierarchy, structural blocks, turf issues, lack of sharing information within and between departments, onerous time-wasting procedures and paperwork, size and complexity of government, and budgetary constraints. The political level and other workplace constraints were tied. Comments about the role of the political level are found below. Other workplace constraints include:

bad and/or unsupportive managers, constant changes in priorities or lack of clarity and inconsistencies in priorities, harassment, incompetence and mediocrity that is not dealt with or removed, lack of clear accountability, poisoned workplace or hostile work environment, and revolving leadership – where leaders do not stay long. Personal constraints included disillusionment, assuming one can't do something so one doesn't try, family responsibilities, becoming too attached to one's work, and lack of varied experience with different kinds of work and people.

In terms of gender and diversity in particular, departmental culture and the culture of individual work units could either be enabling or constraining for public servants. Commitment to inclusion was not found across the board.

*At Canadian Heritage, you can have fuchsia hair. People are tolerant of creativity. At DND [Department of National Defence], not so much.*

*There are spots of [departmental] culture which are supportive and helpful and then there are places that aren't. And there are spots of culture that don't yet accept women, and places that don't accept gays, disabled, and First Nations, and then there are others that are more welcoming and will use those talents as much as they can.*

## Lack Of Trust, Fear, Risk Aversion, And A "No Mistakes" Environment

Lack of trust, risk aversion a culture of fear were at the very top of the list of factors that constrain public servants from making a difference.

*Fear. Fear of failure…. There's a culture-risk aversion in the Public Service that's grown up in the past 10-15 years. As we've moved to a much more 24-7 news cycle, where decision-making gets questioned all the time, there's a decline in deference for political institutions. The Public Service has suffered from that as well…. You get people who are afraid to take risks [and] you get delegation up. People don't want to be held accountable, and you get a culture of blame as well. So I think that is a terrible inhibitor…. So I think that is the single biggest thing inhibiting public servants, particularly senior public servants from being bold.*

Lack of confidence among managers was seen to contribute to risk aversion:

*Leaders or people in the system who don't have a good view of themselves, nervous about making mistakes or lack[ing in]… confidence. They don't want to make a mistake, don't want to look bad, so they stifle innovation and stifle any intelligent risk-taking.*

Lack of trust increases the time and paperwork required to get anything accomplished, and sometimes is a barrier to accomplishing anything.
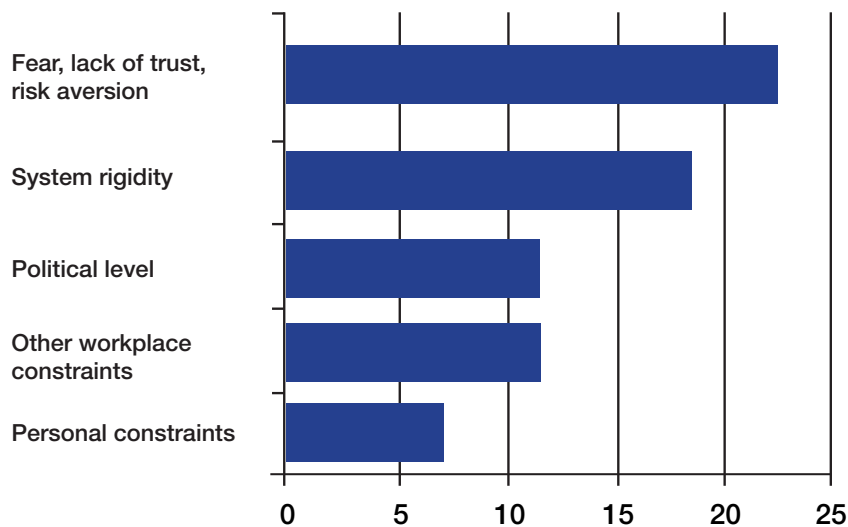
**Figure 3: Factors that constrain public servants from making a difference**
Note: Numbers do not add up to the numbers of interviewees because most interviewees named several factors.

*What gets in the way is managers who will not have confidence in their staff to do their job. Managers who feel they have to control or who simply don't trust their staff.*

Some mentioned constraints on managers in particular:
*As I got higher and higher, you're allowed to say less and less. You couldn't have a real conversation with somebody.*

*I remember at one point in my career, having to do some consultations [with stakeholders external to the PS] and realizing that I used to do this all the time, but it's been 10 years since I've had to consult with anyone because we weren't allowed to consult. Now we're being allowed to consult, but everybody's got such constraints on because they're afraid you might say something wrong. And then it became you had to have media training before you would be allowed to talk to a reporter. So it just narrowed to the point where no one below knew how to talk to anybody, and the people above didn't know anything about the detail they were talking about. It's broken the relationships in many ways…. So there has to be trust, you have to allow people to talk within their areas of expertise…. I do believe that our lack of involvement with Canadian citizens and understanding how their government works is not helpful at all.*

Shortly after the October 2015 election, scientists in the PS were once again given the authority to speak to the media about their area of expertise. However, the issue of the quality and nature of public consultations and what public servants are allowed to say is yet unknown.

*Seeking feedback – it's an underrated thing. I think that we often think we know a lot, but you should just ask more questions of the people that you're trying to serve.*

No one interviewed in the study attributed the greater risk aversion in the PS to an increased presence of women in management. In fact, all who mentioned risk aversion as a constraining factor perceived it from coming from above, from the political and PS senior leadership levels, both of which continue to be dominated by men. Other factors were the "24/7 media cycle", social media on which small errors could become major public relations problems, and an increased public cynicism about government. The academic literature does imply that at this cultural and historical moment, women tend to be more risk averse than men (Coates and Herbert, 2008). A major study of female senior corporate leaders found that they are in fact less risk averse than their male counterparts (Caliper, 2014), perhaps because these are the women who make it into senior levels despite the barriers they face.

Whatever the case with risk aversion, it is seen by many of our interviewees as a constraining factor in public servants being able to make a difference. This is a difficult problem for the PS to deal with, as many of the factors contributing to risk aversion are external. It does underline the need for a national conversation

# If you have a culture where ideas only come from the top, you waste all of the energy, creativity, great ideas and hard work of people below.

about collaborative governance. It may be worth studying processes in countries in which there is greater collaboration between political parties and between the public service and all elements of society to see how issues of risk and error are handled constructively.

## Rigid Hierarchies And Systems

Rigid hierarchies were identified as destructive to employee morale and wasteful of their talent.

*If you have a culture where ideas only come from the top, you waste all of the energy, creativity, great ideas and hard work of people below.*

"Leaving hierarchy at the door" was seen as a way to make the most of the skills and ideas of the whole team, even when operating in a large department.

*Back in the [name of particular] Secretariat we had the team of about 12 people and we had regular team meetings once a week and everybody went. It wasn't just people at a particular level and hierarchy, everybody went and were encouraged to provide ideas, ownership, leadership and we'd discuss it as a group. And one of the people who emerged as a serious leader was the lowest person on the totem pole. She became one of the most influential people*

*in the group, even though she received the lowest pay. She was a woman, with nothing more than a high school education and yet because of her personality, intelligence, willingness to take risks and because of the willingness of the group to listen to her she made an enormous difference to how we operated.*

The amount of time taken up with multiple layers of paperwork, reporting and approvals was seen as distracting public servants from their actual jobs. Onerous accountability mechanisms resulting in multiplied paperwork was also frequently cited as a barrier to making an impact, as some managers particularly in high-profile areas felt they spent more time accounting for the same work in various different ways than in actually doing the work. Processes and paperwork were also identified as an irritant in the Blueprint 2020 initiative and a team has been put together to suggest solutions (Wouters, 2014).

*I was reporting on a weekly basis to three separate central agencies through separate reporting mechanisms… that was kind of a little crazy. It was crazy that they couldn't come together and figure out a single reporting system.*

*We are constrained by procedural pressure, I mean the hoops. You used to have to jump through six and now you do actually have to jump through 18.*

*As a senior manager, my God! The MAFs [Management Accountability Framework], SMAFs [Staffing Management Accountability Framework], RBAFs [Risk-based Audit Framework], audits, evaluations, there's a long string,… the Privacy Commissioner. Once in my sleep, I did a poem. I was going to send it to [the Clerk of the Privy Council] about all of the acronyms and all of the ways that the senior managers are accountable…. So the PSC [Public Service Commission], they want your report on Official Languages, or your report on delegation and DSR [Departmental Staffing Report]… The bottom line is that there's a hell of a lot of reporting that you don't have time to do.*

*I have no hesitation in being accountable for taxpayers' dollars... It's important for us to be accountable, although the Travel and Hospitality thing is a little over the top.*

The Travel and Hospitality Policy mentioned above involved the generation of additional paperwork and approvals to hold events, for example, even if the funds for the event were already set aside by Parliament. Every time a document is changed, it must be re-approved by many layers of managers, which takes time, and the time of public servants costs money. In addition, this vertical approval structure was a significant barrier in working on any initiative requiring the participation of multiple departments, because of the sheer numbers of managers involved in the approval process.

*The classical challenge of us working in very vertical structures when issues are horizontal…. We don't seem to have good mechanisms to bring people together. We can create communities of practice, but we actually need communities of action.*

*I mean, never mind the greater public service, as a department [we] are huge. We've got currently, two ministers, four ministers of state, four Parliamentary secretaries within a portfolio, four deputy heads, twenty ADMs that drive an organization of some twenty-three thousand people. So, that in itself is really complicated, but you have to get past those constraints, and understand those constraints. Which means we're not going to be as nimble as you would like, so the constraints of actually having to work with different people and systems, and process-es…. You have to be very pragmatic about it because it's so big.*

A number of research participants spoke of being able to have a bigger impact when they worked in smaller agencies, as there was less bureaucracy, a flatter hierarchy and better access to senior decision-makers. Examples were given of working at the Privy Council Office (PCO), Treasury Board and Finance, where because of the smaller size and fewer signatures between analysts and the Prime Minister, Treasury Board President or Minister of Finance, even analysts had more influence than in larger departments. Although not in the same league in terms of power, the same experience of being able to get things done because of flatter hierarchies was said of small agencies such as Status of Women Canada and the Canadian Ra-dio-television and Telecommunications Commission.

*So I can have an impact and can change the lives of people by virtue of having a conversation with one of my managers. Now he has that [idea] in the back of his head. And who knows where he may share that?*

Being in places where there were few staff, such as some foreign posts, was also experienced as a way to influence policy-making, by being able to provide undiluted advice. Flatter agencies were also seen as places in which incompetence was less hidden or less tolerated:

*I now run an agency of 230 people. There's nowhere to hide. If you're not good, everyone knows it.*

The business literature contains analyses and case studies of organi-zational flattening, also called delayering, which usually means cutting out middle management and reducing the distance between staff and decision-makers. Organizational flattening has been found to improve organizational flexibility, creativity and efficiency, reduce time required for decision-making, and save money (Li and Chen, 2013), although the caveat is that optimal organizational design is contingent on the organization's environment and strategies (Colombo et al., 2012). In a comprehensive quantitative review, Colombo and his colleagues (2012) found that organizations with a workforce of mainly skilled professionals are good candidates for organizational flattening. Reducing layers of managers, particularly those doing the same thing at different levels, while empowering and trusting staff to make more decisions should have the effect of improving morale, reducing paperwork and duplication, encouraging innovation and speeding up the decision-making process. Should the task of delayering or organizational flattening be undertaken in the Canadian PS, care would have to be taken, as women are concentrated in middle management.

## The Political Level

A complex view emerged of the effect of the political level of decision-makers (Prime Minister, Cabinet, Members of Parliament). The Deputy Minister's relationship with the Minister was seen as playing a key role in how much public servants in a given depart-ment were able to make an impact. The personality and orientation of the Minister was another factor. An example was given of a Minis-ter and his political staff who did not trust or respect his public ser-vants and insisted on putting in place an initiative that was a failure, even by the Minister's own standards. Examples were also given of good relationships with Minister's offices which facilitated translat-ing the needs and priorities of the political level into effective action.

The political level was seen as the main source of risk aversion. However, there was also some compassion for and understanding of the challenges to the political level which would be blamed for any mistakes made by public servants. On balance, the problem was seen as deeper than this.

*I think the Public Service is facing a huge trust issue, and part of that is this Government who doesn't trust the Public Service. That's been an issue since they've come into power. It's been very clear it's kind of the*

*"elephant in the room", that there's no trust from the political level, and that kind of cascades down to every single level given that the Ministers' offices don't trust the public servants, and the Deputies [are] super risk averse, and that cascades down. There is very little trust in these organizations. So that's a huge issue, and I think that is the number one factor reflecting the quality of workplaces, and the sustainability of our workplaces.*

Some research participants found aspects of the relationship at the time this study was undertaken particularly difficult, especially when public servants were publicly blamed for advice when in fact they had given the opposite advice. The need to maintain the scientific integrity of the PS and the democratic principle of making government open and accessible to Canadians were also important to some participants. The research participants had enormous respect for the democratic process and were happy to implement decisions made by the duly elected government. However, there was a malaise about the shutting down of conversations between Canadians and the PS, the move away from evidence-based decision-making, and concern that the current situation was generating a great deal of fear and mistrust within the PS which was hampering the work.

Some managers talked about the courage to give evidence and advice even if it is not what the Minister wants to hear. Some concern was expressed about "careerists" in the PS who censor crucial advice in order to please the people above them, and how this was a greater problem wherever a lack of openness was expressed by the political leadership.

Paradoxically, there has both been a politicization of the PS and a de-politicisation. There used to be a direct absorption of political staff (people who had worked in the offices of Ministers and Members of Parliament) into the PS. This was stopped. Even though the PS has in recent years been asked to do more activity that some see as partisan, it has pushed back in terms of encoding non-partisanship in the Values and Ethics Code for the Public Sector. However, this may have had the effect of casting suspicion on political staff or those active in politics becoming a part of the public service, when this experience of how policy is made is extremely valuable. A senior manager who had political experience said it was possible to have political views and be engaged in political activity while still taking your job as a public servant seriously and doing it impartially. People who are interested in policy and making change will naturally be attracted to the PS and to
political activity.

## Other Constraints

Negative work environments could involve individuals who were hostile and made their colleagues' lives miserable, or whole units in which the morale was generally low.

*I've worked in several of those places and also other microcosms where there's so much negativity—the messaging that the Public*

*Service is not effective and can't be effective; our own messaging to ourselves that the government won't let us; and we can't move; and we can't do this and can't do that - gets really debilitating for everybody.*

*On the negative side of things, I've worked in units where the mood, the morale of the unit was utterly negative because of the attitude of one or two people who would bring everyone down.*

This is not an issue that is unique to the PS, but good leadership was seen as key to setting the overall tone:

*A lot of that has to do with people who are leading those organizations, because regardless of what you do, you can either walk into an environment that feels positive and welcoming, or you can walk into an environment that [is] very tense and stressful.*

Many of the research participants talked about how the brightest and most competent people they had ever met were public servants. The PS does attract a high caliber of talent. Retaining some of the talent is another matter, and overburdening the talent because of incompetent or hostile people who continue to be paid and take up positions was cited as a barrier to getting things done. A new performance management system is supposed to make it easier for managers to nudge underperforming employees to improve with training or clearer direction, and if these do not work, to be able to fire them.

Bad managers, particularly those with poor interpersonal skills, were identified as a constraining factor that could have a profound, rippling effect in the workplace. One manager talked about as one rises through the ranks, "the gloves come off," referring to her experience of how all pretence of caring about employees can drop:

*We no longer care that much about who you are, we just want you to deliver.*

Another perspective was that although excellence is often lauded in the PS in theory, it is undermined in practice:

*She [a senior leader in the PS] always talked about excellence, and I couldn't stand it, because we're not about excellence. We don't have a Steve Jobs and [when] we do have somebody like that in [name of a particular person], [they get] pushed out because they're too challenging for the system. We're more stewardship or management consensus building but it's not really excellence. It's finding a way through the maze.*

Another manager expressed skepticism about the awards and recognition program because of the inconsistent process, lack of thought, and perception that it is mainly a popularity contest. She cited the example of a public servant who was tasked with writing her own award nomination because the manager could not be bothered to do it. However, the public servant was too busy actually completing the work for which she was being nominated and never got the application in.

Some public servants become demoralized when issues they have worked on for years come to nothing. What seems to separate the managers from the more junior levels is persistence and acceptance that not everything will go your way all the time. It is also difficult to separate yourself and your views from issues that you have invested time and effort in and to which you may develop a personal commitment. The need to consider alternate views and solutions, the realization that now may not be the time for your work to come to fruition but that it may do so at a later date in some other form, and to let go of your work are key to not becoming discouraged in an environment where you do not own your work.

Research and evidence are an essential part of policy analysis within the PS, so knowing what the evidence says sometimes creates a personal commitment to initiatives or courses of action that make good policy sense according to the available evidence. Convincing others that these courses of action would make good policy is sometimes difficult because of political considerations, risk aversion or a lack of familiarity with or belief in the evidence.

Some public servants are constrained by their own personalities and fear, by critical perspectives that see all the reasons why something can't be done rather than potential solutions, or as described above, demoralizing experiences within the PS that convince them that having an impact is impossible.

*Everybody can impact on the Public Service. But you have to see yourself being able to do that, and not everybody does.*

In one manager's view, existing motivational initiatives were simply empty messages written by communications staff, although other managers were hopeful about initiatives like Blueprint 2020, particularly the commitment in Destination 2020 to deal with roadblocks to collaboration and innovation.

## Constraints With A Gender Dimension

Gender was not raised as a constraining factor, although family responsibilities was. One participant discussed the fact that some women and some cultures may still retain more of a fear of speaking or challenging authority. Although research does show gender differences in communication (Basow and Rubenfeld, 2003), this was not a barrier for the women who made it into management.

*I think that if women still retain the fear of speaking out that can be a restraint. And there certainly is still some of that. If you have more male-dominated departments where it's harder for women to speak up and be heard, that is a constraint. It's still there in some areas. Not as much as in the private sector, but it's still there in areas…. The majority of senior women who are Deputies, or Assistant Deputy Ministers, they probably don't have those constraints, because they will speak up or they probably wouldn't have become an Assistant Deputy Minister or certainly not a Deputy. You have to be able to hold your own in any environment.*

I've worked in several of those places and also other microcosms where there's so much negativity—the messaging that the Public Service is not effective and can't be effective; our own messaging to ourselves that the government won't let us; and we can't move; and we can't do this and can't do that - gets really debilitating for everybody.

...we're always redefining success so that we don't really have to measure it…. It's hard because we're working at such a high level that in order to measure the impact we have, it can only be measured over a long time.

## Measuring The Impact Women Have Had

We asked research participants about how to best measure the impact made by women and other members of employment equity groups on shaping policy, improving programs, operations or administrative procedures, or through improving workplace conditions. The most frequent answer was that there was no suitable measure. Some suggested that we should not try.

*Can we reduce everything to the level of figures and measurements?*

*What are you actually trying to measure? Is the advice better? Are the outcomes better? Then how do you … find the attribution?…. There's no bottom line. You can't say that our ROI [return on investment] is better. How do we know? Are we going to measure GDP per capita the more women we have? I just don't think we can do that. So, to me, I have to look at it … from a very different perspective which is we are the Public Service of Canada and therefore we have to represent Canada, and if we're not representative then we're failing.*

A controlled experiment is not possible. One cannot set up a PS that is entirely made of white, able-bodied men and another made up of a diversity of Canadians and see which one produces better policy. Although Canada's PS was once led only by white, mainly Anglophone men, the political, social, international and economic context were so completely different, this cannot be used as a comparison.

Some took a stab at empirical measures, such as a gender analysis of existing measures such as the Management Accountability Framework (MAF), Reports on Plans and Priorities (RPP), Departmental Performance Reports (DPR), leadership competencies and the Public Service Employee Survey (PSES). This type of suggestion involved looking at performance ratings by the gender of the leader, leadership team or in female- versus male-dominated departments. Problems with this included the fact that leaders frequently move around, so problems may be inherited and solutions may take time to implement and measure; policy impact may not be immediate; policy is by definition the product of many hands; the political, social, economic and international context of departments in which women dominate (social policy departments) may differ from the ones in which men dominate; and that particularly with the MAF, RPP and DPR, the indicators and results can be massaged.

*Well, there's a bit of a game with the MAF.*

*Performance indicators have come a long way in the Public Service but they're still … 'feed the beast' exercises. So Treasury Board wants to measure something, and second, let's measure something that we're going to look good doing. So they're not real storytellers of [how] an organization is doing…. very rarely do people say, "We failed miserably [be]cause we were lazy bums". It will be, like, "we narrowly missed this target due to these 17 extenuating circumstances." You have to do a lot of work again to eliminate all kinds of caveats before you could use those effectively. I'm sceptical as to whether you'd get valid results if you use them.*

I really don't think there'd ever be a one to one impact between an individual leader and some kind of outcome, because it's complicated. Especially if being successful policy-wise meant that you had to herd cats, as is often the case.

Another suggestion was to look at the output of male-dominated versus female dominated departments. However, the problem with that is that these are very different types of policy areas and the political level of government may lean toward some types of policies and resourcing certain types of activities over others. It is the Prime Minister that sends a mandate letter to each of his or her Cabinet Ministers with expectations about what should be accomplished, and the resources for these activities set by Parliament. The measures then focus on whether the department or agency has achieved the politically set goals, rather than whether women or members of other EE groups influenced the outcomes in any way, perhaps by making a stark policy less harmful or contributing some major plank.

Another issue in measurement is that most of the impact may be in the long-term and be entangled with a myriad of other influences. There are also different perspectives on what "success" is, which would play a role in what measures one would choose. So for one government a measure might have been successful if the budget was balanced, but for another government the same measure might be viewed as unsuccessful if it was associated with an increase in economic inequality.

*One of my colleagues said many years ago, and I loved it, he was saying that we're always redefining success so that we don't really have to measure it…. It's hard because we're working at such a high level that in order to measure the impact we have, it can only be measured over a long time. I think we can do qualitative assessments. Quantitative [assessment of women's impact in the PS] is difficult.*

Others suggested qualitative measures and case studies, such as tracing the trajectory of certain policies and programs, conducting interviews both inside and outside the PS to see who contributed what, and looking at the role of gender. An example was how the change in Employment Insurance (EI) policy was made, whereby women who had quit because they were sexually harassed on the job were no longer deemed ineligible for EI benefits because it was considered a "voluntary quit". Policy development is complex and multi-faceted, so this may have involved interactions between the political level, the media, individual complainants and both junior and senior public servants. Some research participants gave examples, reported in the impact of gender section, that suggest that women public servants were key players in a number of equity issues that affected the nation. What is less known is if there is a measurable gender impact on issues that are not considered on the surface to be equity issues.

# GENDER

The last section discussed the impact PS leaders had both when they were junior staff and when they were in management. This section discusses gendered impacts in particular.

Appendix A outlines how Canada achieved a 55% representation of women in its PS, drawing on historical documents and the insights of our research participants. By definition, given that we have established all the many ways in which both female and male public servants have an impact, having an equal number of women in the PS in general and PS leadership affords Canadian women the opportunity to have an impact on important policy issues. We then move on to what women bring that is different and valuable. In particular, we discuss the finding that most women who participated in this research identified their leadership style as their primary contribution to the PS. We look at this in the context of the academic and business literature on "women's leadership style" which they characterized as open, collaborative, non-hierarchical, empowering, empathetic and facilitating. This style is referred to in quotation marks because this is not a leadership style tied to biology – some women do not have this type of style, and some men do. However, it is possible that this style may be developed more by women because of gender socialization.

This section also discusses why it is important to have both women and men well represented at the very top of the PS hierarchy. The data for this discussion come mainly from the answers to one of the questions we posed to interviewees, namely how senior public servants can make an additional impact over and above the impact all public servants can make.

We begin with the impact women have had on the making the workplace one that recognizes and supports that many workers are also parents.

## The Importance Of Family-Friendly Policies, Workplaces And Managers

Even in this day and age, parenthood does not have the same impact on the careers of women and men (Pew Research Center, 2013).

*The new Pew Research survey finds that among working parents of all ages with children younger than 18, mothers are three times as likely as fathers to say that being a working parent has made it harder for them to advance in their job or career (51% vs. 16%). The survey also finds that women are much more likely than men to experience family-related career interruptions.*

In its study of 85 senior female American and British corporate leaders, Caliper (2014) found that of three of the five most frequently cited barriers by female leaders were related to work and family (feelings of guilt for not spending enough time with family because of work, family responsibilities interfering with work, and lack of support in the household when work is demanding).

The 1990 Task Force on Barriers to Women in the Public Service documented many cases of men who had been promoted over more qualified women. Many of these had to do with assumptions about women's ability to do a good job and also be a mother. Since then, the PS has made a concerted effort to become a workplace where "work-life balance" can be achieved, and where parental responsibilities can be accommodated. The PS is now known for family-friendly policies, a commitment to work-life balance, merit-based hiring, and implementation of pay equity. However, the issue of family responsibilities as an impediment to management is far from over. Treasury Board's (2008) report of a Census of the EX level and EX feeder groups found:

*Work-life balance represents an important challenge; one which may discourage some from seeking advancement. Work-life balance is seen to be a positive aspect of working in the Public Service for feeder groups but not for the EX cadre. In fact it appears to be becoming a deterrent at the EX level. New and younger EXs want work-life balance.*

In Canada, women not only still bear the primary responsibility for care of children, but also of the elderly. In 2010, in dual-earner couples with children aged 14 and under, women working full-time performed an average of 50 hours per week of child care, compared with 27 hours for men working full-time (Statistics Canada, 2012). The lack of family-friendly policies and cultures within private sector workplaces was seen as a major disadvantage for women in management, according to our interviewees:

*I have very good friends who work in really big law practices where they're senior partners, and that's a disaster. That is the Dark Ages. Women take, literally, maybe three months off to have a child. It's insane. I could never work in a place like that. So I feel kind of fortunate to work where I do.*

Family-friendly policies not only include the formal benefits but also practices such as when meetings are scheduled, so that public servants who are parents can drop their kids off or pick them up from daycare or school. An interviewee mentioned how technology has enabled a better work-life balance because whereas in the past, a manager might be expected to work late hours rather than go home and make the family dinner and help with homework, now they continue to be available through technology even if not physically present in the office.

*What I found with people, like [a particular individual], who is one of my stars, she managed it by leaving at a reasonable time, but if I need her in the evening on the Blackberry, she was there. The technology, if you use it right, can actually help manage those kinds of things.*

A number of participants talked about generational differences in family responsibilities, with most young male public servants being committed to sharing the full responsibilities of parenthood, and also needing the flexibility that some women have experienced. One day this issue of family responsibilities may not eat into women's careers and impede their advancement to the most senior roles. But for now, some managers are recognizing that in order to fully utilize the talent pool, the accommodation of family responsibilities has a greater impact on women.

The family-friendly policies available in the PS are advanced compared to what is available to most Canadians. Public servants who take paid parental leave, which is available to any Canadian who qualifies for the Employment Insurance program at a rate of 55% of their salary to a maximum of $524 per week[7], get a top-up to more closely approximate their regular salaries so that parental leave does not precipitate a huge drop in income, as it does for many Canadian families. Public servants have access to five days per year of family leave, which can be used to take children to appointments, or stay home with a sick child. This is largely unheard of in the private sector, where workers must take their own sick leave, vacation leave or unpaid leave to do the same, and without union protection or other contracts can be fired depending on the employment standards of their particular jurisdiction. This is not to say that the PS has good policies and benefits that should be taken away, but that the PS is a model for the rest of society to show how talented and qualified women can reach management levels.

*We're very attractive as an employer.*

Family responsibilities should not just be seen as a disadvantage to the employee that must be accommodated, but also a good training ground for empathy, patience, persistence, multi-tasking, budgeting, prioritizing, anticipating the needs of others, handling challenges and difficulties arising out of the blue, enabling others and helping them grow, modelling the behaviour you want to see, and gaining the collaboration of stakeholders with different needs and motivations.

*One of the things in my background [that enabled me to make a difference] are my kids. They've made me a better manager.*

The positive spin-off about greater flexibility and work-life balance is that it not only benefits those who have young children or aging parents to care for, but also allows those who don't a broader and more well-rounded life, which also has a positive impact on their work.

## Support From Managers

EY (2014) mentioned that in research with senior UK public servants, in addition to responsibility for children cutting into their careers, there was also a tendency for women to underestimate their ability to do a job compared to men, which has also been very well documented by Facebook Chief Operating Officer Sheryl Sandberg (2013) in *Lean In.* A number of female managers interviewed for our study said that they had to be persuaded to take on a managerial role. They themselves had a manager, in each case a male manager, who convinced them that they could do the job despite family responsibilities. This was especially important for the advancement of women who were lone parents and those who had simultaneous responsibility for both children and ailing parents. The key to their success was managers who trusted them to determine for themselves how to manage their time, and who made it clear that their brains and talent were needed in those particular jobs at that particular time:

*I was very young and my kids were very young. I told him "no" twice,… and in fact I remember vividly that conversation when I told him, "Listen, you don't know what it means to be a single mom with two kids … I don't want to live with the pressure of having to tell you that I can't do certain things because I have to be at daycare at five-thirty…." And his answer, which was very compelling to me, was to tell me, "You're right! I have no clue! But if I don't bring people that actually know that, and if I don't create space for that to hap- pen, it will never happen." He told me, "I will support you in this, and I won't question your judgement … because I need your brain." I re- member … thinking, "Ok… He doesn't know, do I take the risk? And what's going to happen when I tell him 'time out' [to attend to family responsibilities]" And I realized that he was truthful…. He used terms like, "You know, I'm an old dinosaur. If nobody educates me as to what it means, we will have the same Public Service in twenty years from now." And he was right. He was right.*

This was the perspective of a male executive:

*It's also that male managers realize that if they want to keep women, they have to make some adjustments. I had some of the more concrete manifestations of that as I was staffing the new unit at [certain department], and there was somebody who I really wanted, and she wanted to work with me and said, "You know I'm three months pregnant." I said, "I'll take you for six months" because she was worth it, and I knew her, so you have to adapt. I certainly was not the only manager in that kind of situation, and she certainly wasn't the only woman in that situation.*

This was the perspective of one of our interviewees - a senior public servant who had started in the PS decades ago when there were few women in senior leadership positions - and what a difference it made for her when there were significant numbers of women managers in terms of understanding of family responsibilities:

*[A certain department] was 80% women and when you get those numbers you do get an incredible tolerance around a sick child. You get an elevated level of comfort. When people say, "I have a sick child, I have to be home," without fear that somebody is going to say, "Well how old is that child? "That child is 9." "Couldn't that child stay on their own?"*

It should also be said that not all mothers in the PS have experienced flexibility on the part of managers, and perhaps it is telling that many of the women who made it into management had. The tone needs to be set from the very top.

*Signals from the top matter a lot.*

However, communication about work-life balance, and anything else, has to be more than words, it has to be seen to be practised by high-level individuals.

The positive spin-off about greater flexibility and work-life balance is that it not only benefits those who have young children or aging parents to care for, but also allows those who don't a broader and more well-rounded life, which also has a positive impact on their work.

Beyond support from managers around family responsibilities, mentorship and support from managers and colleagues was considered important. A "baby DM" (Associate Deputy Minister), as she called herself, talked about the sense of community among Associate Deputy Ministers, and support from the most senior levels of management as a factor in her progress and success.

*Senior personnel [DMs] know us extremely well…. because they make us talk and say "what worries you the most?" … and they say… "You may want to talk to that person. He or she walked that similar path or had that struggle, or had that anxiety…"*

Another way in which the PS signals support is by appointing senior managers as "champions" for equity groups and other issues, whereby the champions are not necessarily associated with the group or issue they are championing. This sends a message that inclusion is something everyone needs to attend to.

A number of female managers interviewed for our study said that they had to be persuaded to take on a managerial role.

# My view is that women do, for the most part, have a more collaborative collegial and supportive, nurturing attitude.

## Impact Of Equity Issues And Beyond

Although impossible to accurately measure, we do know from our research participants that women and other members of EE groups have made a difference in the PS. Although few were able to identify the impact they had had as groups, everyone was able to identify the impact people had had as individuals.

*Some examples of where women and/or other members of employment equity groups have made an impact would be the whole conversation we had with our Government about Employment Equity. It was driven by women and Francophone minorities particularly who felt that there were equity issues at play in terms of their representation. So when you think about that discussion of Employment Equity in Canada you have to think of the women who started to give voice to some of those concerns. The same is true of other Employment Equity groups.*

A research participant described the process of getting women's equality rights into the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms which is entrenched in Canada's Constitution officially repatriated in 1982. Originally, there was no guarantee of women's equality. Women's organizations across the country mounted an effort, supported by some women parliamentarians to get gender equality guarantees. The untold story is the role played by women inside the PS. It was one of those efforts in which women dropped partisan, professional or sectoral differences to work together to advance equality for all women.

The positive transformation of pay equity approaches and the implementation of the Gender-based Analysis (GBA) policy[8] were also seen by some participants as a contribution mainly of women. The latter policy stemmed from Canada's formal agreement to the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995. However, its implementation was a result of the efforts of the tiny federal agency Status of Women Canada. The original GBA policy, which addressed only incorporating the statistical realities and perspectives of women and men has now grown into GBA+, which also addresses different kinds of diversity. GBA implementation has not been a government-wide success, but has been incorporated into the core processes of a number of federal departments and agencies, including the Canadian International Development Agency (now a part of Global Affairs), Health Canada, the Department of Justice Canada, Indigenous and Northern Affairs and some others. Our research participants expressed different views on how useful GBA+ was in terms of the ability of public servants to raise issues of gender and diversity. Some saw it as a powerful tool, because departments and agencies are at least confronted with the topic as a routine part of submitting a Memorandum to Cabinet, so it enables public servants to raise these issues as a matter of policy and procedure rather than being seen as advocating for certain groups. Others saw it as pointless, because analysts in their departments would of course be considering various perspectives when doing policy analysis or program evaluation, and they saw the existence of GBA+ as a marginalizing thing rather than a mainstreaming initiative. Others did not see that GBA+ had any effect. A research participant involved in GBA+ implementation talked about the initial resistance of many departments and agencies as an indication that gender and diversity issues, unless placed front and centre, are not considered or are seen as marginal.

8 *Status of Women Canada (2015) describes the current policy as follows: "Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) is an analytical tool for examining the potential impacts of policies, programs, and initiatives on diverse groups of women and men, girls and boys, taking into account gender and other identity factors. When applied to government work, GBA+ can help us understand how diverse groups of women and men experience public policy in Canada."*

Other examples were given of women's impact on national programs:

*I've had the privilege of working under some really great women, at ADM and Deputy level. I'm now the custodian of many social programs that were introduced by some other woman in my position… so some benefit programs, and kids' benefits, things like that. So, definitely, so women for sure [have made a difference.]*

There were a number of examples of women who had made a difference for other women by seeing things in a new way. For example, the first female Director General in a forestry-related area noticed that there were a number of women with Ph.D.s working as lower-paid technicians, but that they were capable and qualified to do the higher-paid research positions. However, because of the way they entered the PS and their classification, it was difficult for them to move to these positions. Through opening up the process, eight of the women technicians qualified for the researcher positions. This made better use of their skills and qualifications. In many ways, what women have already done in most of the PS is now being done by other groups:

*In our organization we had Aboriginal and visible minorities push for changes. They pushed for having recognition of what it means to be a visible minority, what were the challenges for them, and how the organization needed to change to make it possible for them to feel included.*

The critical mass of women in the core PS has effected a major cultural change toward inclusion and respect, which was not the norm 25 years ago documented by the Task Force on Barriers to Women in the Public Service. Inclusion and respect help all public servants do the best job they can do, and makes the most of diverse experiences.

*My view is that women do, for the most part, have a more collaborative collegial and supportive, nurturing attitude.*

In addition to the culture having been transformed from the past due to the influx of women, a male manager observed how different the culture of the Canadian PS is from others around the world.

*I was at a course in Australia, where I was regularly shocked by the conduct, the attitude, and the commentary of the men on my course towards the women on my course. It was stuff for which you would be fired if you were to say those things in the Canadian Public Service.*

Related to the development of an inclusive collegiality, some research participants pointed out that the focus on process and leadership in the PS was a gradual change that came with the increase in numbers of women in leadership positions.

*There's a lot more focus now on people leadership than there certainly was when I came in. There was no thought about leadership at all when I came into the Public Service. There were leaders, but no one talked about leadership. And as far as people focusing [on] how you lead people as being something important, it wasn't there at all. I think as women have come in greater numbers, there has been much more focus on not only getting things done, but on how you get them done. How do you use people and bring people along to get things done? It's only the management and leadership styles have changed, and those competencies at the top have changed around what you're looking for, in senior leadership positions.*

There are pockets of the public sector not included in PS statistics which have not fully incorporated women's perspectives or leadership styles. Some of these are currently facing legal challenges, such as a class action lawsuit by over 400 women against the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) on allegations of widespread harassment and assault. A recent report into sexual harassment and misconduct in the mainly male-led Canadian Armed Forces found:

*…an underlying sexualized culture in the CAF that is hostile to women and LGTBQ members, and conducive to more serious incidents of sexual harassment and assault. Cultural change is therefore key. (Deschamps, 2015)*

As seen in the impact section, women public servants work on a wide range of issues and have had an impact in many different policy and program areas. For example, we spoke with a retired female senior leader who outlined a long list of major changes she was responsible for, such as the overhaul of the *Fisheries Act*, and decisions which had an impact on the environment and natural resource industries. Another manager gave a start to finish example of an impact:

*My boss was a woman, and actually designed the automotive innovation fund and drove that file through the system from an idea to the creation of a program, MC [Memorandum to Cabinet], getting the Minister on board, got the program launched and which was a really fundamental pillar of the strategy to support the automotive industry.*

Sometimes, public servants are the only women or one of a few with a voice in certain discussions, such as negotiations with the male-dominated automotive industry, or international affairs dominated by male political leaders, or national security issues dominated by mainly male political, military and law enforcement leaders. The PS can then ensure that women's approaches and perspectives are at least considered in discussions that have a national impact.

We discussed impact in the first section of this report. It was a female public servant who said she developed three options for action during a crisis, one of which was taken. She was gratified to see and hear her words coming out of the Prime Minister's mouth at a news conference. Although women are now 50% of Canada's Cabinet ministers as of late 2015, only 26% of Canada's Members of Parliament are female (Parliament of Canada, 2015). A fully representative PS may be one of the more significant and effective ways Canadian women have had an impact on national decisions in the absence of equal representation of women in Parliament.

## Different Views About Whether There Is Any Gender Issue Or Impact

Our research sample was divided in terms of whether there was any gender impact. Some research participants were able to give specific examples of where women brought forward different perspectives, and others were adamant that there was no difference in approach or perspective between women and men.

*I've had a mix of male and female managers, gender never really came up. I had some really strong female managers, ranging from the DM level down to Director "plus" level, and I've had, equally, some very strong male managers, and, of course, every manager has their own little quirks, because every person has their own little quirks. But the women managers you're working with, they were playing a pretty strong role in policy, and programs, and everything like that. But it wasn't necessarily unique to them.*

*ADM Operations used to be a woman. I forget her name. She was really good. And now we have a man, and I don't think there's any real difference, you know?*

Some women even decades ago in the PS did not "see gender":

*It was very male and I'm thinking of environments that I've worked in where you simply didn't bring up issues. I can remember working with a woman who was an engineer and at that time I was in Public Works and Public Works had a whole thing about trying to get women into non-traditional roles, working as engineers, architects, property managers. This woman was …outraged. She was furious. "I'm an engineer. That's all I am. That's what matters." I said, "Yeah, but if you look at systemic barriers," and she said, "That's all just rubbish." I mean she just didn't buy it. She's got this completely different perspective.*

A participant who worked on EE issues mentioned the surprise encountered among managers and employees when they discover that women don't do so well outside the PS. The fact that the PS is a more inclusive workplace that does more to accommodate family responsibilities than the private sector, and where there are avenues to deal with harassment and discrimination that are not costly in terms of time or money, may be lulling some public servants into thinking that women have already achieved equality. Clearly, the gendered data on income and violence, available through Statistics Canada (2012) do not support this conclusion. Neither does the rating of Canada as number 30 in terms of gender equality internationally (World Economic Forum, 2015). Canada does very well on measures of educational and health equality for women, but less well on economic opportunities and political representation.

*Women don't seem to be doing well at all [in the federally-regulated private sector] and everybody's shocked, including my Minister, my Deputies and everybody else I talk to. Nobody believes. "Really? After 28 years, or so, we haven't moved at all?"*

A large majority of female and male research participants stated that there were no more barriers for women in succeeding in the PS. The barrier that did come up the most, particularly for women at senior levels, was family responsibilities. Participants had different experiences of how their family responsibilities were accommodated or not, depending primarily on their immediate managers and the culture of the organization.

Support at home was cited by a number of female participants as an enabling factor, in particular husbands who played a key role in child care. There were also at least four interviewees who mentioned that their spouses were also in the PS, and viewed this as an enabling factor, because they had someone at home who understood the context and pressures. An interesting study for another time might look at public service marriages.

One interviewee raised the issue of violence against women and how that can have an impact on a woman's work life. Out of 257,000 public servants, the chances are that a significant number have dealt with sexual and physical violence while working in the public service.[9]

Male public servants who are committed to equality issues and incorporating women's perspectives can also have a positive impact for women:

*There's lots of work that still needs to be done, and on my side, every time I was being asked because I got that question so many times, why the heck did you choose to [work on gender equality issues]? I said, "I see this as an investment in our society and in the future of my own daughters." If I can help make this world somewhat better for my two daughters, if I can contribute even in my minimal way, that will be a plus for me.*

## Numbers Make A Difference

Individuals can and do make a difference, even if they are outnumbered:

*I've seen women in Cabinet sway Cabinet, do things that Cabinet wouldn't have otherwise done, because these women came up with that particular perspective on it.*

Within the PS, it is more difficult to trace or acknowledge the impact a single individual may have. However, women have had an impact in the PS just from sheer numbers, particularly at the leadership level at which they can have a greater influence. A number of our research participants addressed the issue of critical mass.

*The increase in the number of women definitely had an influence on how things were done at more senior levels. Did you notice the difference in departments that still don't have a lot of women and those that do? And there are still pockets like the Department of Justice, which is not very good in the senior levels. Finance has never had a great number of women. There are pockets in the scientific ones that are still very male-dominated, and you notice the cultural difference in those, because I worked with all-male teams.*

9 Statistics Canada data for 2009 show that there were 1.6 million incidents of violence against women in Canada in the year leading up to the survey (Sinha, 2013). The rate of sexual assault against women in that year was 34 per 1,000 (Sinha, 2013).

Out of 257,000 public servants, the chances are that a significant number have dealt with sexual and physical violence while working in the public service.

*When I was head counsel of [male-dominated agency], I worked as part of the executive, and they had a senior executive group of all of the commanding officers and senior officers, and I was the only woman. Huge difference when there are men and women in that same room, and you're having discussions. The whole tenor of how things are done and looked at is different.*

*I think that is the best way that you support women and members of equity groups is by having more numbers of them and …by having the conversation.  It makes a change in terms of the tone of the discussion and the richness of the conversion around the table. Those things vary depending on who's around the table.  And if you've got a more diverse group, you get a more diverse conversation.*

We interviewed managers who had spent most of their career in departments or agencies numerically dominated by women, and managers who had been pioneers – the first woman at senior levels in male-dominated departments and agencies, or the only woman in a work units that had never before had a female member.

   A research participant reflected on the discomfort she felt when she was the first female ADM in a male-dominated department. She felt a duty and responsibility, and still does, to voice the issues that more junior staff tell her but feel they cannot say. Another participant talked about the courage to speak when one is outnumbered on several fronts:

*We have to have the courage to speak up and even though we're in the minority. In an operational context, it's being brave enough.... You know, there were a lot of meetings where… it was mostly men and mostly police officers, so I was different because I was a woman, I was a [civilian occupation]... and my [young] age, quite honestly, at the time, it took a lot of courage to speak up.*

Role models and mentors within the public service can make a difference to the confidence of those with minority experiences, whether those experiences stem from race/ethnicity, immigration, family background or being a lone parent:

*Who can know better what are the struggles than the one who walked a similar path?*

Another way to cope with being outnumbered is to get together with others:

*That being said, there are fora where women Deputies will get together to chat. Not necessarily about what it's like to be a woman Deputy, but more to take comfort in your numbers.*

Many of today's female public servants have not had the experience of being outnumbered on the basis of gender. Some departments, especially those that deal with social policy, are female-dominated.

*I've not worked in a Department where women are not well represented or respected.*

Those who observed a style they thought was more common to women leaders characterized it as: more people-oriented, less hierarchical, in which the manager plays the role of facilitating a team of professionals to do its job.

## Gender And Leadership Style

Some interviewees talked about how women public servants are just public servants doing their jobs, and that there is nothing different in how they do their jobs. Others pointed to a "women's leadership style".

*I think that women bring a whole different perspective around the management table, in how they look at leadership, certainly the next generation of women. The first generation of women leaders in the Public Service probably were more like men than they were women. But the next generation of women leaders are often more willing to work together to be more collaborative, to try to build their teams, and focus on their team.*

Those who observed a style they thought was more common to women leaders characterized it as: more people-oriented, less hierarchical, in which the manager plays the role of facilitating a team of professionals to do its job. This was an example of a male manager who had been inspired and enabled by a female leader:

*One of the persons I admire the most is my previous boss, my previous Deputy head, and I've been working a lot for her many years, because I loved how she would give me lots of room to manoeuvre even though I was an Advisor, not as an Executive [at the time].… I needed that liberty to be able to think and to find solutions to some of the issues we were encountering.*

Listening and considering people's feelings were also a part of this style. One female leader earlier in her career was tasked with handling a major scandal in which people had died, a scandal to which she had had not been involved in creating:

*I was destroyed by [a certain media outlet] on my first Parliamentary Committee. I was put out in front to take the bullet.*

She talked about how she chaired a public town hall on the issue in which people were crying and accusing the government of killing them, but she listened with compassion and did not close the town hall until everyone was heard. She earned respect by listening carefully and taking action which reflected people's concerns. Consensus-building and collaboration were a key component of the style women leaders talked about having:

*I happen to be hard-wired in a way that I'm quite collaborative. I don't think I have an enormous ego in a way that I think about the world in terms of turf. I tend to work in sort of a mode that I'm trying to bring people along and build consensus. That just happens to be my personality. Some of those skill sets are very fundamental to the kind of work that is done in the Public Service now. It's a very complex environment. We work in very collaborative ways. We have to serve all masters: Canadians, Parliamentarians, stakeholders.… As well, I think emotional intelligence – and maybe women are better here - is a very important attribute in managing people. [Be]cause*

*you actually have to understand. It's not like old-school management where the boss comes in and, "It shall be 'like this, and everybody's going to …" This is not the way we work anymore. You have to actually understand … how to motivate people. Everybody is motivated differently. Like in this job, I work with scientists, I work with doctors, I work with people that do policy analysis. That's a lot of very different intrinsic motivations for people. So I have a sense of what makes people tick, and how do you best utilize people, and get people to come along with you. Or the reverse as well. Really inciting them to give you the honest feedback on, "Gee, we might be going the wrong way here." So those kinds of things are critical and maybe a little easier to do if you have that emotional intelligence. And I do think women sometimes tend to have a little more insight into themselves and are maybe a little more willing, perhaps to a fault, to look at what their strengths and weaknesses are.*

The issue of emotional intelligence and picking up on non-verbal cues also came up in several other interviews of female leaders:

*I had an all-male team at one point and getting anything out of those guys was almost impossible. But one guy, his eye would start to twitch. Then I'd say, "[Person's name], what's up?" "Oh, everything's fine." "[Person's name], what do you think of this idea?" "Oh, fine." "Okay, [person's name], I'm going to drag it out of you. What's the problem?" He was almost always right, but to get it out of him was like pulling teeth.*

Emotional intelligence was seen as essential for getting things done in today's PS:

*She is a very good study of people, and how to move things, and how to adapt strategy by personality, which I think is very necessary when you're trying to navigate ideas and changes through a system.*

Whether the women interviewed thought there was a gender difference or not, a significant proportion talked about their leadership style as the major impact they had in the PS:

*I manage people, I think that is the most fundamental way that I impact the workplace. I think there is a direct link between how I impact policy and programming by the way that I manage people. So I encourage debate and I listen. I don't want to be the person doing all the talking. I see my role more as to ask those strategic questions once they've thought through what they want to do, and to encourage them to ask the questions. And so I try to create an environment in which that kind of spirit of debate and that spirit of openness is really apparent.*

Another female senior leader who had experience as the only woman at otherwise all-male tables, as well as experience in mixed and mainly female groups observed that in her view, her male colleagues tended to "drive for the bottom line", while her female colleagues would rake over every consideration ("Well, what about this, and what about this, and what about that?") She favoured mixed teams of women and men, so each could contribute their own strengths and approaches.

*I wonder even if our key leadership competencies, whether those would be the same 15 years ago than they are now, because that's probably an area where women have had a significant impact in the Public Service…. [fostering an expectation of] a more practical leadership, less hierarchical, which might not have been the case without a perspective from women.*

*You do have a new generation of women leaders that's emerging that is more in tune with a contemporary form of leadership.*

The perception of the managers in our study is borne out by a quantitative study of 459 leaders (283 men and 176 women) and 378 of their employees which found that both gender and personality had an impact on leadership style, with a tendency for more women to have an "enabling" style which is seen as part of being a "transformational" leader (Brandt and Laiho, 2013). New PS key leadership competencies articulated in 2015 for all levels of the EX category are in keeping with this style, but this does not mean that structures have changed to support it, or that all managers are trained in this style.

Blueprint 2020 was an initiative undertaken in 2013-2014 which engaged Canadian federal public servants and others in envisioning the future of the PS. In his response to this exercise, then Clerk of the Privy Council Wayne Wouters (2014) released Destination 2020, which among other elements contains some direction to managers about leadership that may seem familiar to those reading about "women's leadership style":

Managers need to:
• Establish a culture where employees bring their hearts and minds to their jobs every day by making sure that their opinion is heard and that their contribution to building the workplace culture is recognized

• Learn to thrive outside their comfort zone by finding the courage to challenge their assumptions and abandon usual management preferences

• Foster innovation and a culture of openness by allowing the space for employees to be creative and to live the vision

• Adopt a networking style of leadership by engaging employees at every stage of change implementation, using two-way communication, and building connections and relationships among people from different areas

• Support employees as they take action to improve their own units and to implement ideas that have a larger application

A number of participants pointed out that expectations of leaders in the PS had changed, moving away from "the brutal type", which some participants put down to the cultural change brought about by the increasing numbers of women in management. Some male managers also had a more collaborative, non-hierarchical leadership style, because this was simply seen as effective:

*I'll have to be honest with you, part of it was that I felt that it was my obligation to treat people with respect, but the main reason [was] I knew this was the way for the team to be most productive. So it wasn't just putting my morality hat on, it was putting my effectiveness hat on.*

A number of women who made it into management cited male leaders with this effective style as having an abiding influence on them:

*Myself as a woman of colour, many of the other women in the office, people were valued for their full package. He had a profound impact on the confidence that people had to take risks, and to make real change.*

Our research findings are in keeping with those of Chown and Mandel (2013) who studied women's leadership in Canada's largest law firms. They found that the turn-offs for women were the onerous work hours (particularly for mothers with young children), a narrow value proposition and the competitive nature of the business. Women did better as general counsel: they enjoyed being part of a team, were able to take a more holistic view and offer more than legal advice, and thrived in a collaborative environment. They tended to encourage others on their team, assisted them in developing their skills, and created a more inclusive and empathetic environment in which people could express themselves free of ridicule. Mandel and Chown (2013) concluded that law firms are beginning to redefine leadership, moving away from the predominantly male-gendered norms of the past and toward traits such as teamwork, consensus building, empathy, listening skills and service-orientation. Not all women embody these traits, as some adapt to existing norms, or are inclined by virtue of their own personality toward the older norms. In fact some of our research participants noted that women could be hard on other women, and that some of the first women in management were so tough they made men cry.

So although this leadership style is not necessarily biologically rooted, research does show that a collaborative leadership style is more common in women. O'Connor's (2010) extensive overview of women's leadership around the world at almost every level of institution and society did lead her to conclude that:

*A significant body of research exists that documents that women not only speak differently than do men, but often lead differently, too. Part of this difference stems from difference in tone and presentation. This, in turn, leads many men to view women as less visionary [because they seek input from others], which many leadership theorists see as key to explaining why women are perceived as weaker leaders. (xiv)*

The management literature also refers to a "women's leadership style", and suggests that it is highly effective. For example, Columbia Business School Professor David Ross and his colleagues in their investigation of 15 years of data from the largest 1,500 US firms, found that there was a strong connection between numbers of women in senior management and better performance as measured by market-to-book ratio, return on assets, return on equity and annual sales growth (Dezso and Ross, 2012). The firms that benefited most from what they dubbed the female participation effect were involved with innovation, "where a democratic and participatory approach to management is known to be important

…and that's consistent with the notion of a female management style." (Ross, 2008)

*Overall, the data suggest that firms that promote women to senior management positions enjoy economically superior performance because of the complementary set of interpersonal management skills related to inclusiveness and the encouragement of employee voices that women bring to the table. (Ross, 2008)*

A Caliper study also found that more women leaders than men had an "open, consensus-building, collegial approach to leading" (Caliper, 2014). This was a study of 85 female leaders from 60 top American and British companies (including Bank of America, Deloitte & Touche, Enterprise Rent-A-Car, Molson Coors, etc.) from 19 business sectors, which included a comparison with male leaders matched for title in the Caliper database. Participants were assessed using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire, the Caliper Profile (a work-focussed personality assessment), self-rated performance and a Barriers Measure. The study found that female leaders tended to be more persuasive, empathetic, flexible and sociable than their male counterparts:

*The strong people skills possessed by female leaders enable them to read situations accurately and take in information from all sides. This willingness to see all sides of a situation enhances their persuasive ability. They can zero in on someone's objections or concerns, weigh them appropriately, address them effectively and incorporate them into the grander scheme of things when appropriate. These female leaders are able to bring others around to their point of view or alter their own point of view—depending upon the circumstances and information they uncover. They can do this because they genuinely understand and care about where others are coming from.*

The Caliper study also found that these female leaders tended to be more assertive, took more risks and were more willing to share in-formation than their male counterparts. It is not known whether these leaders were the first or second generation of women leaders in their organizations, which in our public service sample, made a difference in terms of whether women felt they had to appear "tough" in order to be taken seriously.

The fact that not all women embody this style and some men do is a major caveat. In addition, this style was not typical of the first women managers in the PS, who were described as "iron ladies". These women shattered the glass ceiling, and did it largely by being tougher than men. They opened the door, and the women who walked through were better able to be themselves and to try doing things in a new way.

As "women's leadership style" is increasingly recognized as an effective leadership style, it may simply become expected as the norm in high-functioning, innovative workplaces, regardless of the gender of the manager. It should also be noted that the work environment factors that were identified by research participants as enabling and empowering them to make a difference correspond with the factors associated with "women's leadership style": open-ness, less concern with hierarchy, collaborative decision-making in which employees and junior managers are trusted to bring forward ideas and be heard.

Some interviewees pointed out that current PS hierarchical structures do not support a collaborative leadership style where the manager acts as a team facilitator or coordinator and trusts his or her professionals to make decisions. The PS would have to change in order to reap the benefits of this leadership style.

## Generational Differences

Generational differences were a significant theme in the interviews, although there was no research question about this. As noted in an earlier section, a number of participants whose experience in the PS stretched over decades talked about the first women managers in the PS, and two offered the same expression to describe them: "tough as nails". One participant had a mentor who was one of these first women managers. She was told that as a woman, she would have to be twice as good as men to succeed. A number of participants noted that many of these first women made personal sacrifices, such as never marrying, not having children or enduring marriage breakdown because family and personal responsibilities at that time were seen as incompatible with their jobs. Since then, a deep transformation has taken place.

Some of the managers who noticed a difference in style put it down to generation rather than gender. They talked about how younger public servants are both more diverse and more likely to support gender equality in the home, in terms of expectations of mothers and fathers.

*The younger executives now come with a completely different culture and expectations of work-life balance.*

Generational differences in the workplace are confirmed in the academic literature (Gibson et al., 2009), but so are gender differences (Martel and DeSmet, 2001; Riggio, 2008; Zapf et al., 2011). It is still the case in North America that by the age of three, children are aware of and internalize gendered expectations (Martin, 2013). The research literature shows that male and female leaders are evaluated differently, with female leaders judged more harshly for the same behaviour when that behaviour is seen as more closely resembling male stereotypes (Heilman, 2001). The fact that female leaders in the PS do not feel they are being judged differently at this time attests to how much the culture of the PS has changed even in relation to that of the wider society.

## It Is Important To Have Equal Representation Of Women And Men At The Top

*It's fairly clear that [at] the senior levels particularly, even women haven't made the breakthroughs that they necessarily should and certainly not visible minorities or Aboriginals.*

Three kinds of impacts were brought up by participants in terms of the value of having gender equity in PS senior leadership, that is the DM and equivalent levels. One was about balancing different perspectives, leadership styles and the kind of climate one creates as a senior leader. Another was about modelling and mentorship. The third was simply that senior leaders can have a great deal more impact and influence, so in order to maximize the impact and talent a diversity of women and men have, there must be equity at the top.

*The mix, of men and women working together creates a dynamic that is much more effective than when you have leadership by only one or the other genders.*

## Differences In Perspectives, Experience And Leadership Styles

Those women who now feel at home in the PS and do not see any gender difference may not realize how much the culture may have changed because of the greater presence of women. Certainly the PS of today is different in character that the PS documented in 1990 by the Task Force on Barriers to Women in the Public Service. There is a greater respect for, appreciation of and expectation of equality and inclusion.

Even if women and men are not able to identify how their contributions may be slightly different, it is possible to measure quantitatively the aggregate difference. A national study of federal, provincial and territorial DMs and ADMs conducted in 2006, recently published in *Deputy Ministers in Canada*, found significant gender differences in perspectives on a range of issues such as whether the environment, economic inequality, and the fiscal imbalance between the federal and other levels were pressing policy issues (Evans, Lum & Shields, 2014).

Overall, the data suggest that firms that promote women to senior management positions enjoy economically superior performance because of the complementary set of interpersonal management skills related to inclusiveness and the encouragement of employee voices that women bring to the table.

# The issue of family responsibilities and work-life balance is one that at this time in our history and culture has a greater impact on women and their careers.

Our interviewees were asked whether there were additional ways in which senior leaders could have an impact, over and above public servants at lower levels. Not surprisingly, senior leaders were viewed as having much more extensive influence on policy, on the workplace climate and practices and on the relationship with the political level. Senior leaders are in a much better position to ensure what gets done and when. Given that there are measurable gender differences in the priorities and perspectives of senior leaders, and a gender trend in leadership style, an equal number of female and male senior leaders may be more representative of the priorities, perspectives and experiences of the population, as well as potentially having a transformational impact over time on the workplace.

*It's good to be a senior public servant … because… you're not trying to push the mountain from the bottom.*

## Modelling And Mentorship

A representative senior leadership is encouraging and motivating to public servants from a variety of backgrounds, who can "see themselves" at the top. In addition, whether public servants realize it or not, they are bringing perspectives from their own life experiences and socialization that may be different and valuable.

Because public servants at senior ranks have a greater reach and impact, a representative senior leadership with a significant representation of the "women's leadership style" can in fact be transformative.

*The more people see people like themselves moving into the senior spots the more likely they are to do so.*

*The last data I saw we were 35-36% of the deputy ranks, and just looking at the last round of appointments, that's growing. And once you have that, it changes everything, because there's kind of strength in numbers. So, for me, one best thing that we can do in the Public Service is to make sure that we're representative.*

*If you want diversity … the top has to look diverse. If they all look the same, what are you saying to the people who don't look like that? You're not welcome.*

The issue of family responsibilities and work-life balance is one that at this time in our history and culture has a greater impact on women and their careers. Setting an example at the top sends a message throughout an organization about what is expected.
*I think the culture still exists, where you're not really doing your job unless your adrenaline is going 70 hours per week.  And, personally, I*

*just can't do that. I've got 3 kids and that is just not going to work. So, I try to be a change agent and say, "I am a Deputy that leaves every day by 5:30 PM and I don't bring my work home and I try not to work weekends." I try to send those messages out to adjust the culture, but it's still a long ways from that and I think some of our tools can still better support women in the workplace.*

*I've gone through many Deputy Ministers and I believe the difference in the way the entire bureaucracy functions, depends on the signals emitted by the Deputy's Office.*

*Another thing I would say is that the Public Service has gotten progressively, incrementally better at managing people.*

The importance of mentorship repeatedly came up, with many women in particular saying that they had both female and male mentors who helped their career. Most of the women who benefited from mentorship also made a point, now that they were in senior positions, of mentoring others. Mentorship was viewed by some participants as a way of making space for a diversity of people in the public service.

Support from the top was seen as essential to making any kind of change. An example was given of creating a Pride network in a department to support lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and queer (LGBTQ) employees. Some people objected, but the Deputy Minister publicly supported the network and made it clear that it was a part of creating a welcoming and inclusive work environment.

## The Greater Impact And Power Senior-Level Public Servants Have

Senior public servants were seen as having a greater impact than public servants at more junior levels because of the scope and reach of their influence. They could have an impact on hundreds or thousands of people. They had a direct line to the Minister, and therefore more influence on public policy. They had veto power over any proposal coming up through the ranks. They were able to shape approaches and set out a vision. Senior public servants were seen as freer to raise equity issues without being viewed as whiners or having a chip on their shoulder.

Although much of what public servants now do is implementing directives from above, they do have some leeway in terms of how to do it. A manager raised the example of the job cuts that the PS was told to make by the political level, wherein many managers tried to create processes that were fair. Different departments implemented their own ways of dealing with this directive. A number of managers said that women had brought a more people-oriented approach to the PS that was now a part of the culture, which then had an effect on processes that were created.

*I've spent the last year of my career laying people off. But I can honestly say that I only had one complaint from someone I was laying off and there were 93 affected…. A lot of people don't know how to do that, a lot of people don't want to do that, and you don't get any 'thanks from anybody for doing it well even if you do it well. … I had every single union leader thank me personally. You don't [usually] have union leaders looking after senior managers to thank them.*

Senior public servants not only set the tone for their whole organization, they can undertake many practical changes.

*You do have a lot of freedom as a senior public servant to change operations as long as you're changing them within the parameters set by legislation.*

Senior managers were seen as not only having a profound influence on people's workplace experience, but their lives.

*You can have a lot of impact on people's lives because, like it or not, we spend an extraordinary amount of time together. You come to the office every day, and good managers have a huge impact on the lives that people lead. How they go home at the end of the day, do they feel like they have contributed in a meaningful way, are they grumpy to their spouse and children? [The workplace has] knock-on effects. We carry a huge obligation to do a great job when it comes to managing our people and those are probably the parts of being a senior public servant that are equally or more meaningful. It's in impacting their day-to-day life so they feel what they're doing is good, it's meaningful, they have opportunities to grow and to realize their own potential….*

With greater power and impact comes the need to ensure that a variety of strengths, backgrounds and perspectives are represented at the top, including gender parity. This issue is addressed further in the Diversity section of this report.

## Does It Make A Difference Which Women Are In Leadership Positions?

Two concerns came up about "which women" are in senior leadership positions in particular. One was about diversity on the outside (physical/demographic characteristics), the other was about diversity on this inside (mindset).

*I think that the Public Service is patting itself on the back for achieving a 55% representation. I think that well and good, I would be asking the question who? Which women are they that are making up that 55% and where are they residing in the decision-making hierarchy and the influence hierarchy?*

The diversity of mindset issue is discussed in more detail in the next section. The gist is that appointing women (or men) at the top who just do things the way they have always been done will not change or improve anything. The literature does support the perception that when people come into an institution, they may influence it but they are also changed by it (Guimond and de la Sablonnière, 2014). A successful institution absorbs and is influenced by the best of what a diverse workforce brings rather than trying to make people fit into pre-existing molds or promoting primarily those that do.

# DIVERSITY

This section addresses how people belonging to certain demographic groups in general are able to change the culture of an organization and its policy, program and service outputs. This is an important lens through which to look at the contribution of women, who not only make up a part of every other major demographic group, but who also bring something unique to the table from their own gendered experiences. Many of our research participants were able to pinpoint particular contributions that Aboriginal, disabled, Francophone or immigrant public servants made based on their unique understanding and experiences.

## Diversity Is Greater That Employment Equity Groups

The consensus among our research participants was that policy development and other government work benefits from having different views and backgrounds at the table, in addition to consulting external stakeholder groups. A number of participants stated that it has become harder in recent years to consult Canadians about issues. It used to be a public servant could pick up the phone and call stakeholders and run things by them. Now, stakeholder consultations are managed, communications strategies developed and  public servants are not as free to be frank. Because it has become so much more difficult to engage Canadians in general and certain stakeholders in particular, it is even more imperative to have different backgrounds and views represented within the PS. Research participants had a broad view of the value of diversity, including but not limited the traditional Employment Equity groups.

*I think that EE is a concept of the past as it pertains to creating segregated groups. I believe in diversity, which is about bringing them all together so that we can have a better sharing of ideas and look at how collectively we can make our workspace better.*

Diversity at the table also meant that regional staff should be represented when policy development takes place. Examples were cited by regional executives of policies developed at headquarters without regional input that simply did not work. Including regional and operational staff in policy development could identify potential problems with policy or implementation. A perception was expressed that in recent years fewer employees are brought in from the regions to headquarters due to the cost of travel and relocation.

Diversity of geographic origin of people at headquarters was also seen as a plus in terms of bringing an understanding of different parts of Canada to the table, as well as representing Government to Canadians.

*As a Quebecer working for the federal Public Service, I think that I also contributed to finding platforms for more meaningful dialogue between the federal and the provincial governments.… I was able to use the fact that I was a Francophone from Quebec to build trust and build a real working relationship with people who felt that they were being understood. I was able to be very up front and blunt with them about what could be done, what cannot. So, yeah, I think this background certainly helped.*

Cultural differences between Anglophone and Francophone public servants came up a few times during the interviews. Francophones are not an Employment Equity group and are well-represented in the PS, including at management levels. However, this was not always the case. Of those who mentioned differences, frankness came up most often, with some Francophones viewing themselves as more willing to talk openly and honestly about some kinds of issues, and risk being more vulnerable. Again, this does not mean that all Anglophones exhibit one behaviour and all Francophones another, as intra-group differences are always greater than inter-group differences, but a perception exists among a few that there is a different kind of cultural socialization that can have an impact on outlook and behaviour.

Personal experience of immigration policy and racism was brought up by a number of participants as deepening their understanding of, and commitment to, equity, diversity and fairness issues. When her parents were choosing a country to which to emigrate, one manager said:

*The White Australia policy barred my mother. That's how we ended up in Canada.*

The value of having experienced a lower socioeconomic background came up in the questions to research participants about whether there was anything in their backgrounds that they felt helped them make a difference. Being able to see things through the lens of families having to juggle money for basic needs and being unable to afford user fees, barriers in access to services, and the experiences of neighbours and relatives with low literacy skills and a distrust of government.

A number of participants mentioned the positive role of organizations and networks for minorities within the PS, as well as managers who would become the official "champion" of equity issues. This not only included the traditional EE groups, but Pride networks and the Young Professionals Network.

We asked for examples of where other EE groups had made a difference to policy, programs, operations, administration and workplace conditions. We heard too many examples to include in this report, but some are summarized in the sections below along with particular issues that came up for these groups.

*As I was moving up the ladder in the public service, it helped tremendously to bring a minority perspective to policy development.*

## Aboriginal Cultures and Realities

Most of the interviewees who spoke about Aboriginal public servants were not in fact themselves Aboriginal. The PS seems to have a problem in retaining Aboriginal managers, which will be discussed later in this section.

A number of participants talked about the valuable perspectives Aboriginal people bring to the table that might not otherwise be thought of or represented. Examples included advice about stakeholder relations – Aboriginal public servants vetting approaches that would work and wouldn't work with Aboriginal communities. This would be particularly important given the often tense relationship between the Government of Canada and Indigenous peoples.

*I had Aboriginal advisors who would tell me how to go into a community, offer that kind of respect that was necessary to build a real relationship. And that's really important if you want to get anything done. And there was advice on how best to align some of the programs if we wanted to achieve goals that we wouldn't have otherwise understood because we didn't understand those communities, and how they actually operated. So you're going with real knowledge instead of assumed knowledge.*

*I worked, for a long time with Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal employees. The Aboriginal employees certainly brought their own background, their own life experience to bear on discussions of policy, programs and operations. While we talked about how to negotiate funding and grants with First Nations communities, the cultural dimensions of how that could happen were as important as the operations. When we talked about delivering or developing policy options in the context of [the] Kelowna [Accord], or certain protocols where it was important to understand and incorporate into the discussions those individuals who had the cultural backgrounds were able to help the rest of us understand and to help influence.*

The presence of Aboriginal public servants, particularly at senior levels, is of increasing importance due to changes in how the government formulates policy:

*For many years the Government only developed Aboriginal policy with the active involvement of Aboriginal peoples. That was just our way of working. That's less so the case now. You know the impact there was huge.*

The less a government consults and partners with the people most affected by policy, the more important it becomes to have members of that population inside government at the policy development table.

*I was involved at one point in an initiative on Aboriginal Women in Business and we were trying to increase the number of women entrepreneurs who were running successful businesses in Aboriginal communications, First Nations largely. We worked very closely with women in the communities and it became very clear that a significant barrier was in fact childcare. So many of these women were often between 35 and 40 and wanting to do something but they had small children still and that was a real barrier. Even incorporating childcare provisions into the budgets of economic development plans is something that men wouldn't have necessarily thought of, and Non-Aboriginal people would not necessarily have been as attuned to how critical a dimension that was [as the fertility rate for Aboriginal women is much higher than for non-Aboriginal women]. It was the perspective of Aboriginal women particularly who could say, "This is a critical need."*

*It's a great example of the work we did in researching, in working with [Indian Residential School] survivors. We had a bit of a motto of standing shoulder-to-shoulder with survivors and it was about including them in our work and not pretending that we knew, and certainly I didn't know as a guy who came from a middle-income home, who's white, who comes from a good family in Calgary. What would I know about the kinds of experiences of young Aboriginal kids who were yanked away from their families and sent to a residential school? And so, making sure we had those voices on our team that helped us create understanding.*

A number of participants raised issues of differences in communication styles and cultural values between the expectations of the PS and some Aboriginal people, particularly First Nations people from reserves and Inuit. Managers who do not employ methods to respectfully draw out people's thoughts rather than wait for those thoughts to be inserted into an ongoing discussion may miss out on valuable perspectives. Others did not perceive any difference between Aboriginal employees or managers and non-Aboriginal public servants.

*At Health Canada there was a unit for Aboriginal Health and a very high percentage of the people who worked in that unit were Aboriginal including the DG level. And again it was rare in a meeting that it would come out that these people were Aboriginal, they were just the DG or the Director or whatever. They were doing their job and we just responded to the job they did.*

A senior public servant described the need to attract more Aboriginal public servants. She said they thought at first, education was the barrier. But it turned out to be more than that. Another issue was the awkwardness some Indigenous peoples may feel about working for the Government of Canada, associated with colonization, the reserve system, Indian Agents, assimilation policies, the residential school system and ongoing struggles between the Government and Indigenous communities.

*Aboriginal people working in certain parts of the government, notably Aboriginal Affairs, often have very deeply conflicted relationships with the government and that makes it very difficult. It can be really hard to be clear about who you are working for because all of them of course have a very strong commitment to their communities and their people and can sometimes feel torn.*

A research participant discussed how uncomfortable some of her Aboriginal staff and colleagues were during discussions of Aboriginal communities involved in litigation against the Government of Canada, where government officials were talking about wanting to "win the case". The Aboriginal staff thought the government should be looking to resolve the legal issues rather than to "win the case."

Another concern was that Aboriginal people in the PS tend to be concentrated at the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development (now Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada), rather than spread out equally across departments. Yet Aboriginal perspectives are equally important in matters of foreign policy, fisheries, environment, security and every other department and agency. Some participants also expressed the concern that Aboriginal public servants who reach management level may be finding more attractive jobs elsewhere.

*But Aboriginal people, there's some issue but we're trying to understand what it is. Where we do really well is at the EX-01 level [the lowest executive level] where we're almost at labour market availability. But as you go up, the numbers go down. We think we actually have a problem. The issue with us seems to be that we do a really good job of training people, and then they get picked off by the private sector and by Band Councils because they have such great skill sets, they're really in high demand.*

The belief that one is making a difference may be important to retaining Aboriginal managers:

*From my own perspective, definitely being an Aboriginal person and having worked in an advocacy organization or another government for part of my career for probably half of my career and half of my career in the federal government - I've found that I've actually been able to make a bigger difference from within the federal system, than external to it. Having both perspectives, I think has helped as well to navigate in both areas.*

A deeper investigation into who Aboriginal public servants are, including gender, Aboriginal identity (First Nations, Inuit, Métis), what attracts them to the PS, what they bring to the PS and why they leave would be a useful area of future research.

## Racial, Ethnic and Linguistic Minorities and Immigrants in the Public Service

A manager with a 25 year history in the PS remembers a Deputy Minister making a point of his department hiring more people from racial minority groups.

*Think of the perspectives, think of the information, think of the insights that we can get from having people from visible minorities on our staff. His point was rather than do this so we can meet our numbers, do this so that our performance is enhanced. So the HR folks went out and in a couple of years the numbers were considerably higher.*

A crucial issue for anyone not a part of a dominant societal group is how much you can change any institution as opposed to how much you are changed by the institution.

*I had some discussions with people [about the Council of Federal Visible Minorities, a body of public servants] and they sort of said, "Well they're not really changing the system." I said, "Well, that's not*

*the way life works. The system changes you." …The pressure to conform is always more important.*

Nevertheless, we interviewed managers from visible minority groups who were able to give examples of where they made a difference:

*I wrote the very first race policy, the race investigation policy for the Canadian Human Rights Commission…. Writing the race policy as a person of color who had lived what racism looked like, and thinking of how to investigate a race-based complaint, having that that first-hand experience really brought a lens to the development of that policy framework, coupled with my knowledge and my education, and all those other things. That really afforded me an opportunity to put down on paper [what] many people shied away from.*

Like with women as a group, there were interviewees who did not see any issue with visible minorities in the PS:

*I'm still uncomfortable with the visible minority aspect. I was at a meeting in a committee that was worried about visible minorities and finally a young woman got up in the back room and said, "I don't know what you people are talking about," she was of a different colour, middle European skin tones, she was dressed in a hijab, but she felt really strongly that she wasn't a visible anything. She was a Canadian, she worked in the Public Service and could we just get on with it. You know, it was very funny. So I don't know what to do with that language visible minority anymore. I think we have to leave it behind.*

Of our interviewees who qualified under the government's definition of members of a visible minority group, there were varying levels of personal identification as a "visible minority". For three out of five, issues of racial equality and representation were very important. One out of five said she did not think of herself as a visible minority, although she strongly identified with her gender.

Similar to women in general, there is a resistance to some people's assumptions that someone got the job because of their gender or skin colour, when all PS posts up to Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM) level are staffed on the basis of merit. An interesting observation is that like women, visible minorities do well when the hiring is purely merit-based, that is the candidate must fill all the essential criteria, as many of the additional criteria as possible, pass a structured interview and sometimes additionally pass a test. They do not do as well at the most senior levels, where candidates are appointed at the Prime Minister's pleasure, and for which an open, structured process is not used.

Nevertheless, the numbers show a differential between the chances of promotion of women from visible minority groups in the PS, compared with their male counterparts:

*Men who are members of visible minorities have greater chances of promotion than their comparison group, and women who are members of visible minorities have fewer chances of promotion than their comparison group… (PSC, 2014)*

This gender differential is not seen for women who are not members of other EE groups, for Aboriginal women or women with disabilities, compared with their male counterparts.

We also heard examples of where people's experiences as members of linguistic minorities or having an immigrant background made a difference. For example, a Francophone in an Anglophone region was able to improve services for linguistic minorities because it occurred to him, and someone from an immigrant background made a difference in terms of an approach taken to a national security matter.

*When you have people from different cultural backgrounds, they will be more aware of some of the challenges facing their own communities.*

Neither linguistic minorities nor immigrants form an EE group, but we did hear that being an "auditory" rather than a "visible" minority can also make a difference in terms of how one is perceived.

*You add an additional barrier even if you master the language, if you don't have a culture that accepts the way you will be presenting things either in English or in French. It's not about the language … many people are bilingual on paper but their voice is not heard around the management table. Their voice is not heard either because no matter how they talk, they are in a foreign language. And it doesn't mean that we need to have more official languages, but I think we need to think through whether or not our style of interacting may not create an additional barrier for the people for whom neither English or French is their mother tongue.*

The issue of gender and cultural differences in communication is addressed in more detail in a further section.

Although many PS managers are on board with diversity issues, this is not the case for all managers. In particular, issues of religious accommodation were raised in our study.

A further investigation of what is happening for executives who are visible minority women is warranted. "Visible minority members" are a very diverse group, ranging widely in ethno-racial background, consisting of people whose first language is English, French or something else, and comprising people who are Canadian-born and born outside Canada. Some research participants pointed out that not all groups are doing equally well. In particular, a problem was identified with the hiring and promotion of Black public servants. It would be important under closer examination to look at who is doing well and why, and who isn't and why, and what strategies for improvement visible minority women executives themselves may recommend. Such an investigation can be broadened beyond the EE group to linguistic, religious and cultural minorities, as long as the data for the EE group is disaggregated from the whole.

The absence of people with disabilities at the table in terms of recruiting mechanisms and IT can lead to lack of knowledge and incorrect assumptions that then contribute to a lower likelihood of recruitment and retention of people with disabilities.

## People With Disabilities

*I would say people with disabilities have been champions of change in different organizations. I worked in a federal building one time which was deemed accessible and it was, as long as you went in one certain door and didn't ever want to go out for coffee with all of your colleagues.*

Although three of our interviewees identified as a person with a disability, the definition is very broad, so this does not mean that people who identify in the PS as having a disability are disabled to the degree that the public may assume. Very little was said during the interviews about disability, and about women with disabilities in management. We were not able to use some of the examples that were given of where a positive impact had been made, as the numbers of people with disabilities in management are so few that the examples could identify them.

In the general population, most Canadian with disabilities in general are female (Statistics Canada, 2012), although most individuals with autism or other neurodevelopmental conditions that affect social skills are male (Jacquemont et al., 2014). The latter may face additional hurdles in the PS, as performance management systems and leadership competencies are such that they require ordinary public servants as well as leaders to be generalists, good at everything. This actually may exclude some people who may be very highly skilled in some areas, but are not as able in other ways. For example, a person with autism may excel at some technical area and bring a lot of value to a team, but may have difficulty with social skills. Instead of teams adapting to people's varying capacities, appreciating them for what they do contribute, the focus of performance management is on deficit areas.

Many public servants who may meet the definition of having a disability may have become disabled while employed by the PS, as disability increases with age. Recruitment of people with disabilities was seen as a problem, despite the fact that the PS has a reputation for being accessible.

*Disability is so diverse. I think it's harder to get a handle on, and we don't do a very good job of recruiting out of universities.*

A manager gave an example of finding out the hard way that PS employment mechanisms were not always accessible, even though they claim to be. In 2010, a blind woman won a court case against the Government of Canada because she was unable to apply for jobs through the government's online system (Ireton, 2015). In 2011, Treasury Board Secretariat introduced a new Standard on Web Accessibility that "reflects the government's longstanding commitment to web accessibility for the visually impaired." According to Ireton (2015), this does not seem to have changed the accessibility of internal-facing web sites, and gave an example of a visually-impaired public servant waiting over a month for IT to fix his constantly failing technology.

The absence of people with disabilities at the table in terms of recruiting mechanisms and IT can lead to lack of knowledge and incorrect assumptions that then contribute to a lower likelihood of recruitment and retention of people with disabilities. Wherever disability is an issue, people with disabilities should be on the team.

The PS has built-in mechanisms for inclusion - champions and committees within the PS that deal with issues of disability, accessibility and inclusion, but what is needed is commitment from the top to act on these recommendations.

*The group on persons with disabilities told us stuff that shocked us. We said, "You're kidding, this is still happening in a modern-day Public Service?" Yes, apparently we are still doing silly things…. We're not getting it right on some of the basic, fundamental stuff.*

## Gender And Cultural Differences In Communication

A few female research participants, all EX and DM level leaders, apologized for talking too much, or were afraid they were not giving me what I needed as an interviewer, or hadn't answered the question properly. At first, I thought this demonstrated a peculiar lack of confidence on the part of these high-ranking individuals. But to look at it a different way, perhaps this was their way of asking for feedback during the interview about whether they were contributing what was needed and the amount needed. Although this communication style is often looked down on as under confident, perhaps it actually means the person is self-reflective, adaptive and committed to being as effective as possible.

Some public servants are from cultures that are not as brash as mainstream Anglophone and Francophone cultures in Canada. These include both some Aboriginal public servants and some public servants who are immigrants to Canada or otherwise from some cultural minorities with lower-key communication styles or cultural values of respect for authority rather than expressing views contrary to what managers have already expressed.

*One of the things I've observed…  in the case of people coming from certain ethnocultural backgrounds, some are very shy.  I've had people reporting to me who had a certain vision of respect for leadership, and it tainted even their relationship with me.  I remember one person … was assigned a priority file and would always fear disturbing me because I was a Director General [at the time] and she knew I was extremely busy…. [She] would refrain from coming and sitting with me to talk about an issue and ensure she had my 'green light' before proceeding. She would see her counterparts coming through my door, dropping a note, and [saying] "you have 15 minutes to review and approve that, [be]cause I need to move it on." So yes I've observed that, and I think it can profoundly impact a person's capacity to advance in the system.*

Managers may need to spend more time coaching employees who have internalized a lifetime of expectations that are different from the expectations of the PS, whatever the roots of these different expectations, whether gender or cultural socialization, experience of violence or trauma, or simply introversion and personality.

The requirement for managers to be bilingual in French and English was also seen as a barrier to promotion for some Aboriginal and cultural minority public servants.

## Identification With And Representation Of Demographic Groups

There was a huge variation within the sample of the degree to which participants identified with their own demographic groups (i.e. gender, age, ethnocultural or linguistic background, etc.). For example, some women did not view themselves as women in the context of their work but simply as managers and professionals, and other women felt that being female had an impact on how they did their jobs. There were participants who belonged to visible minority groups who did not associate themselves as a visible minority, and others for whom this identification was very important.

*There is a visible minority community. I've never been a part of it. Invited, never been there, don't want to go there, and it's because I don't think of myself as that.*

Some managers believed that public servants should be professional, and that meant detached from one's own demographic groups:

*You need to be careful with that because we're not advocates. So our personal views have to take a certain place in our interactions … we are a product of where we come from, our various experiences—hence the reason why we should strive to be representative of the population we serve.… But we should not have a personal impact. There are other forums for that. You can advocate outside the Public Service, you can run for office on your personal views, you can do a lot of things.*

Others felt that it was a part of their job to try to ensure that equity was a part of policy and program development, operations and the culture of the workplace. There were different views around how public servants are perceived if they bring up issues associated with their demographic groups. Most agreed that it depended on the time, place and method.

*It depends on the circumstances. It depends very much on the setting, the context, the subject that's being discussed. So, my own example, I bent over backwards, throughout my career, to never go near a file that had anything to do with [a certain group's] issues. [Be]cause you don't want to be branded. You don't want to be perceived as, "I am only 'whatever' group I happen to represent." You want to be seen as a whole individual contributing.*

*Sometimes it can happen that the ideas are ahead of their time. Propose something that's a little bit different, or if you're going to challenge the status quo or you're going to challenge the way people think, part of it is in the way in which you do it… do it in a way that doesn't make people feel badly.*

Some managers had a sense that public servants in general, and women in particular, could lose credibility by expressing ideas with passion.

*Sometimes at the more junior level people are being seen as bring[ing] too much passion. So if you're seen as putting too much passion and emotion in the work you're advancing, especially social policy issues,* *and sometimes for analysts it becomes visceral in working on files…. it would turn some of the interlocutors off. And I remember when I was discussing some sensitive social policy issues I remember hearing those comments "Oh, God, these two analysts are way too passionate." So it's almost like if they start losing credibility, and it was in reference to women.*

Senior leaders were seen as much more at liberty to be passionate and to advocate as they were seen as credible and having "earned their stripes." This is one of the major reasons why it is important to have a senior level of leadership that is representative of Canadians. However, senior leaders still had to be careful about what they said and how, as all eyes were on them. Nevertheless, what they say is given more weight and can make a real difference.

Some managers felt it was their "duty" in the PS to raise issues that occurred to them because of their background and experience, in order to contribute to better and more inclusive policy, programs or workplace conditions. This was, in fact, how representative bureaucracy works, when people have the legitimacy and the space to raise issues that have a wider positive impact on groups in society who are under-represented in power and whose perspectives are not always heard or considered.

## Perceived Lack Of "Diversity Of Mindset" At The Top

A few participants viewed senior leadership, particularly the Clerk and senior deputies as a "club". The gender barrier has been broken for the club, but some participants talked about how there was no "diversity of mindset".

*And just because we have more women and visible minorities, it doesn't mean we're truly diverse if we keep promoting people like us. Typically introverts, economists, policy "wonks". I'm quite serious. There is a typology if you look at who gets promoted.*

*The way the Public Service works is, if you're not "in" the group, it's hard to break in. Hard to get in from the outside, and the hiring at the top is—there's an association.*

*It'll be interesting to see what it's like when Janice [Charette] is the Clerk… because the Clerk has tremendous power. They're the ones who make the recommendations to the Prime Minister about whom to appoint [at the Deputy Minister level]. There was a while, I will be very candid with you, there was a period when [name of another person] was the Clerk where a number of us ADM gals would say, "Oh my God! Not another economist, introvert, policy wonk man!" There was a series of appointments that lasted about a year, where a number of us would say, "oh for God's sake!" And there are women who are being appointed who are also introverted economists, policy wonks. They fit a mold, because somebody decides these are the attributes that we need in the senior leadership positions. I would like to believe that that's changing, but it will be very interesting to see, for example, who stays at the Associate level, and who becomes a Deputy.*

> Senior leaders were seen as much more at liberty to be passionate and to advocate as they were seen as credible and having "earned their stripes." This is one of the major reasons why it is important to have a senior level of leadership that is representative of Canadians.

*[It's important to bring] the other perspectives in, and backgrounds and experiences and making sure that we've got people who've worked out in the regions that are sitting around the Deputy Minister discussions, that they're not just all people who've risen through the ranks of policy jobs, that they have programs and operational experience or some of them have other important experiences to bring to bear or have done other things in their life. Gone and gotten experience outside the Public Service, if that's what it takes.*

*I think you need a diversity of thought and experience to make sure you're thinking things through, completely.*

There was also a concern expressed about the inadequate diversity of the women and men at the top, in terms of representation of other EE groups:

*What do you think is more true, "Opposites attract," or "birds of a feather flock together"? "Birds of a feather," right? Well, that's what you see in the Public Service as well. So, yes, you may have more female representation, but then when you look at them? If you look at our Deputy Minister community, have you ever seen the picture of all of them together? Ask for one.... Get your hand on that and make some observations on that. I think [it's] quite revealing.*

*Because it's not diverse.... So, on the one hand, the numbers say something, but when you peel away at it, I think women, right now, make up about a third of the deputy head table? But look at them. Same thing on the male side. Look at them.*

*We always say that we do extremely well in the Public Service, because yes, we have a large representation of women. Women have made excellent in-roads over the years. If you look at the executive cadre that's also the same, but again, if you start looking and segmenting, and if you look at economic departments, if you look at scientific-based departments, and security-based departments, you're going to see a completely different story.*

A participant pointed out that visible minority men do well at senior levels in the federally-regulated private sector, but they seem to not do as well in the PS.

*I've sat enough on these [hiring] boards.... How it can easily be swayed one way or another. "He's ready," or "she's not".... they all come to the same conclusion. This person's fantastic. They look just like us. It's a mirroring effect. So, until we change all that, you're going to have homogeneous groups running the Public Service.*

Some careers have taken circuitous routes, but what should perhaps count more is whether candidates have the brains, talent, commitment, expertise and varied experience that a senior leader should have. One way to increase "diversity of mindset" at the top is to value this type of varied experience.

There was also a sense that the process of choosing DMs was based on who people knew and who they had worked with, unlike the EX level in which candidates go through a merit-based process.

*It's a small town, and everybody talks, and it's part of, again, that circle. You essentially have a powerful group of senior deputies and the clerk that runs the show…. I was having drinks with an ambassador who told me… [about a case in which an individual who] didn't get their nomination to be ambassador because they were held to account on something they said in 2006. So, it's a small town.*

*When you look at the deputies, they've all gone through the PCO thing. Not a lot of them went through the Regions. They're not really exactly grounded. So that's what was valued, how much time you spent at PCO [Privy Council Office].… They all worked with each other, so it becomes kind of incestuous.*

One of the questions in our demographic questionnaire was to identify the departments and agencies in which the interviewee had worked, to ensure that we were getting people with a diversity of backgrounds and experience. Eleven out of 26 of our interviewees had PCO experience, which really is considered an asset at the management level. PCO is a small agency that deals directly with the Prime Minister. The only department in which an even larger number of people had worked is now called Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC). It is a huge department, and we included Service Canada, Labour Canada, etc. under that rubric. It is harder to see how many interviewees had regional experience, since some departments and agencies have regional offices and we did not ask them to specify.

Some of our interviewees did talk about their regional experience as factors that shaped their perspectives and abilities. Others were profoundly shaped by experiences outside the public sector, which helped them understand the lives of other Canadians, certain regions or segments of the population.

Some participants believed that there is an image of leadership that potential DMs are held up to. You have to "look like a leader."

*There's still a certain perspective around what makes a DM.*

An area of further research could include the beliefs and perceptions of what experience and characteristics are necessary to be a senior leader, and whether those beliefs actually have any evidential basis. Those with an evidence base could continue to be used, whereas those with none could perhaps be set aside in order to broaden the range of people seen as qualified for the top positions. As well, a re-examination of what leadership looks like could take into account the strengths of people who did not have a linear experience into management, but whose experiences, because they are varied, are useful at the top. These may include people who experienced career interruptions because of caregiving responsibilities, people who started in very low-income jobs and worked their way up, people who migrated to Canada and had difficulty at first getting a job at their level due to lack of recognition of foreign experience and credentials. Some careers have taken circuitous routes, but what should perhaps count more is whether candidates have the brains, talent, commitment, expertise and varied experience that a senior leader should have. One way to increase "diversity of mindset" at the top is to value this type of varied experience.

# 04
## CONCLUSION

Public servants make a difference to the population, the country and international events in large and small ways. From developing life-saving health, safety and environmental regulations, to policy options that steer the country into the future, to providing good quality, accessible and inclusive services, the work that public servants do matters.

Every one of the 26 female and male PS managers interviewed for this research were able to give several concrete examples of where they had made a difference, and all were proud of their work. There is no question that women have had an impact as individuals. What is harder to measure is their impact as a group on policy, programs, operations, administration and workplace conditions.

In particular, women have made an impact in terms of significantly transforming workplace culture toward a culture of inclusion, and also profoundly influenced leadership models in the past 25 years. We heard many examples of women having an impact on equity issues including the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms,* Employment Equity and pay equity. What was also clear is that women public servants also had an impact in many other areas, such as fisheries, the environment, the automotive industry, international affairs and national security and may sometimes have been the only women involved in some of these discussions. In that sense, by having women at all levels and empowering them to make a difference, this may

have been the primary influence Canadian women have been able to have on some of these national issues.

What enabled public servants to make a difference and the constraints they face in our sample of managers were somewhat similar to what the Government of Canada heard in its Blueprint 2020 process in which thousands of public servants across the country participated. Factors that enabled public servants to make a difference included trust, leadership programs and training, management that is open, supportive and flexible, latitude, a non-hierarchical approach, an open and inclusive workplace culture, openness at the political level, being allowed to take initiative and innovate, having intelligent and skilled team members, and determination, persistence, and resilience. What is interesting is that these enabling factors overlap with important elements of "women's leadership style", characterized as more open, collaborative, empathetic, supportive of employees and less hierarchical.

Fear, lack of trust, risk aversion were the primary factors constraining public servants from making a difference, followed by system rigidity (including hierarchy, onerous and unnecessary time-consuming procedures, paperwork and structural blocks), the political level and other workplace constraints (such as bad managers and constant changes in priorities).

To be clear, there are bad female managers just as there are bad male managers, so these differences in leadership style are in the aggregate and do not apply to each individual manager. The major constraints that emerged – such as lack of trust and a culture of fear – need to be addressed in order to enable both female and male public servants to continue to make a difference. Some managers expressed concern that when trust and initiative are squelched and those who are creative and entrepreneurial leave, what may be left are careerists, who focus on getting ahead for their own sakes rather than making a positive contribution even if they don't get the credit.

*They get promoted because they haven't rocked the boat. They've dotted the 'i's and crossed the 't's in an era when mistakes are not permitted.*

This will lead to a very different PS than one in which people join to make a difference.

Many research participants also talked about a negative change in the PS over the years which was seen as stemming from pressures and changes from the outside which were affecting the way work was done on the inside. For example, a research participant mentioned that her father had been a public servant in the 1960s, at a time when it was considered an honourable and desirable job. She had always wanted to become a public servant and had not considered any other career. However, today's perception of public servants is that they are "lazy, overpaid fat cats" and disconnected from the public. The policy development role of the PS has declined over the decades from being the primary source of policy ideas to having a lesser policy development role and being less trusted and respected, just at a time when women's leadership has reached an all-time high. Some noted that women have now made it into management, but do not have the same opportunity to make the same level of impact on policy as their male counterparts of the past.

Our findings show that gender is one of many aspects of diversity that are valuable within the PS.

*The reason why we work so hard to have a representative Public Service is because of the kind of impact we can have on public policy and programs, and good public policy and good programs are reflective of the entire diversity of the Canadian population.*

Public servants may move around a lot within the bureaucracy, and managers in particular can come in without the background knowledge necessary for the file. They may read briefing notes, but do not necessarily have a depth of understanding of the issue. This may be particularly true when non-scientists are in charge of scientists. Having a combination of people on a team, those with personal experience and training in the field to provide the history and the depth, and those who come in with a different set of experiences and some distance, can together create good policy that takes a range of possibilities, priorities, circumstances and outcomes into consideration.

*As a senior executive, I think it's our responsibility to … look for diversity of opinion and trying to make sure that in your teams that you're not picking either clones of yourself, or clones of each other... especially in policy work.*

Some departments and agencies are completely on board with equity issues and have workplaces in which women and other traditionally under-represented groups are valued. However, some units or areas within some departments and agencies remain "bastions from another time".

*I'll give you an example of [an executive at a particular department/ agency] who was a very comfortably out gay man, and he would come back from the senior management table outraged at comments that had been made that were homophobic and there was no way he was going to raise that issue at that table. He did not feel it was a table where he could raise that without it being dismissed in a way that would be hurtful to him, and he just wasn't prepared to.*

People who are primary caregivers of children, the elderly or of people with severe disabilities may not have the same career trajectory as others who do not have these responsibilities. They may have to take jobs in which flexibility is allowed. What matters more than years in certain jobs is whether the candidate has the necessary skills. Typically, in merit-based hiring processes in the PS, it is rare to see job postings that require more than a certain number of years in a previous similar job, but the candidate is required to show that she or he has the skills and experience for the job. This has enabled women with less linear career trajectories to move forward. Care should be taken not to overuse the requirement for recent experience, which may disadvantage women and men returning to work from parental leave.

Every one of the 26 female and male PS managers interviewed for this research were able to give several concrete examples of where they had made a difference, and all were proud of their work. There is no question that women have had an impact as individuals.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

*We have one of the best Public Services in the world. Let's not waste that. Let's continue to improve it.*

The Canadian federal PS has a history of modernizing, transforming and improving itself (Wouters, 2014). The PS has already heard through the Blueprint 2020 process about barriers to creativity and innovation, and some measures have already been proposed in Destination 2020. The following are recommendations arising from our research for the further improvement of the PS, particularly to enable both women and men to engage in the collaborative, open and empowering decision-making approach known in the literature as "women's leadership style":

• **Flatten the PS hierarchy and support "women's leadership style".** This is a non-hierarchical form of leadership described by many of our female and some of our male research participants, which corresponds to the "women's leadership style" documented in the academic literature as being particularly successful for organizations with a substantially professional workforce. This leadership style is characterized by respecting staff and "getting out of their way", gathering information and viewpoints from staff and making decisions based on these, and coordinating and facilitating the work of staff rather than dictating it.

• **Lessen fear through developing an approach to taking calculated risks and making mistakes**. Publicise this approach, so that the media and most Canadians can recognize that basing decisions on evidence and "due diligence" is what is important, as well as acknowledging and correcting any unintended consequences.

• **Streamline accountability paperwork to free up the time and energy of managers and employees.** This could involve the better use of electronic systems so that information need only be entered once.

• **Reinstate and modernize past successful programs or develop new leadership development programs to build and strengthen leadership capacity in the PS.**

• **Re-examine the process of appointing by Governor-in-Council to ensure that the criteria being used are not disadvantaging**

# We have one of the best Public Services in the world. Let's not waste that. Let's continue to improve it.

**women and other Employment Equity groups**. Questions to consider in particular would be, how are people's leadership skills and abilities being evaluated? Is it based on years in certain positions, which might disadvantage anyone with significant family responsibilities or who started further down? Is a background in economics seen as more of an advantage than a background in other areas? Is a policy background favoured over an operational or administrative one? Is there a premium placed on people's reputation or what they say about themselves, which may not capture the skills and abilities of people who may be more modest? Is there an "image of leadership" that is considered, and is this image based on evidence, or on what has been the practice in the past?

• **Promote an inclusive workplace culture in the pockets of the PS where it has not yet taken root.**

• **Routinely include the feedback of employees in promotion considerations for managers**. Bad managers should be retrained or moved to a non-management position.

• **Play a greater role to help other countries improve gender, diversity and inclusion practices in their public services**. Many countries are watching Canada's progress and may welcome greater Canadian participation in the Worldwide Women Public Sector Leaders Network.[10]

• **Conduct further research looking more closely at the Executive feeder groups, where many women and members of other EE groups are concentrated, looking at those who have performance appraisals of "exceeds expectations" and have been recommended for promotion, of that pool, who has stayed at their level for many more years than expected, and ask why.** If there are barriers or PS cultural issues that are identified, that would give the PS clear direction in removing any real or perceived barriers to a management track that could enlarge the pool of those qualified and experienced for senior positions.

Further insights about how women came to comprise 55% of Canadian federal public servants and made significant inroads into management can be found in Appendix A.

We wish to thank all the public service managers who shared their time and insights with us, without whom this research would not have been possible.

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10 For more information about the Worldwide Women Public Sector Leaders Network see: http://www.ey.com/GL/en/Industries/worldwidewomeninpublicsector---overview

# 05

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## APPENDIX A
### The Canadian Model - Why Canada Has Gender Parity In Its Public Service

# The first female leaders in the PS were pioneers, showing that it could be done. The second generation of women transformed the culture of the PS.

In 1990, 43% of Canadian federal Public Service (PS) was female, but compressed at lower levels and in occupational "ghettoes". Women formed only 10% of the EX category. The Task Force on Barriers to Women in the Public Service (1990) found both structural and attitudinal barriers to women's advancement, and found many examples of where women had been passed over for promotion in favour of less qualified men. So, what changed?

Advances were made both on the structural front and in workplace culture. Wherever hiring was based purely on qualifications, women did well. Merit-based hiring (described below) meant that stereotypes based on gender were kept to a minimum. Over the years, the PS has placed a higher value on education. In Canada, this is starting to give women an advantage as the scales tip toward women receiving more university degrees than men.

The PS is also characterized by union membership. Unions negotiated family-related benefits in the PS that had a disproportionately positive impact on women. Some of these benefits included: a top-up to maternity and parental benefits so that PS workers do not lose as much money as many other Canadian workers when they take maternity or parental leave under the

Employment Insurance system; and five days of paid leave for family reasons (such as caring for a sick child). In addition, flexible work hours and telework opportunities were offered to some employees to enable them to accommodate family responsibilities. Unions also provided an immediate and free recourse for employees who had experienced sexual harassment or discrimination where no progress could be made within the workplace to resolve it, instead of time-consuming human rights or courts processes.

*I listen to a lot of union grievances, and when those decisions are taken, it has an influence in the overall general direction an organization takes.*

The first female leaders in the PS were pioneers, showing that it could be done. The second generation of women transformed the culture of the PS.

A commitment to representative bureaucracy and equality was made from the top, which was a commitment to the PS looking like all Canadians. At various points both the political level and the top levels of the PS expressed that Canadians must be able to see

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themselves in the PS and feel that they had an equal chance of getting in and being promoted should they meet the qualifications.

Some structural barriers to women's advancement were removed. A number of female leaders either retired or nearing retirement stated that they had started as secretaries or otherwise in administrative work, including some who started in government by being placed there by a temporary staffing agency. This gave them an inside look into Deputy Minister's and Minister's offices before they ever got there as leaders, and may have also given them an appreciation of organization and streamlined administrative procedures. The fact that one of the "feeder groups" into PS management now includes the AS (Administrative Services) category has enabled some very capable women who might not have had access to management to eventually become Deputy Ministers. The 1990 Task Force found that crossing from administrative work into scientific, professional or managerial work despite having the educational qualifications was problematic in the PS in 1990, with some women actually quitting the PS and reapplying in order to do so. Progress has clearly been made on this issue.

*There were a lot of barriers. I was lucky when I came in, they just eliminated salary bands. And literally, I was able to go from CR-03 [a clerical designation] to a PM-02 [program management]. Normally, I would have had to go to CR-04 or CR-05, CR-06, CR-07, PM-01, PM-02.*

Evaluations of skills, qualifications and education over previous job title or classification will benefit women and anyone who has had to start at the bottom.

Ernst & Young Global Limited (EY, 2014) gives credit to Canada's Employment Equity (EE) legislation and policies in terms of increasing women's representation.

*Canada remains at the top of the [Worldwide Women as Public Service Leaders] Index, with women making up 45.9% of leaders in its Government. The country has a long history of taking positive action to promote under-represented groups in public services. Since the early 1980s, there have been voluntary affirmative action programs in both public and private sectors. In the 1990s, these were given legislative force in the public sector, and later in industries regulated by the federal government.*

Although this concerted effort on the numbers is important, it is not the full story. The EY report found that equal opportunity legislation in countries such as South Korea and Japan are undermined by social and cultural discrimination against women. It also does not make clear that the 45.9% statistic is for the EX level, where merit-based hiring practices are used, rather than the DM level, where an appointment process is used. There are also major differences between the Canadian PS and the federally-regulated private sector, also subject to EE reporting, in terms of women's representation and leadership. In 2013, women's labour market availability in Canada was 48%, but women made up 55% of the PS and only 42% of the federally regulated private sector, which includes banking, communications and transportation. In addition, whereas women are well-represented among managers in the PS (earning over $100,000 per year), only 39% of women in the federally-regulated private sector earned $60,000 and above, compared to 56% of men in that sector (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2014).

Employment Equity (EE) has caused some resistance, not just among white males (despite their continued dominance at the top), but within members of EE groups. People don't want to be seen as hired on the basis of gender or skin colour, even though this is not what EE does. In the PS, everyone below the most senior level (DM and equivalent) is hired on the basis of merit, including the Executive level. Jobs are advertised. Only candidates who objectively meet all the mandatory criteria for the job are considered. They may also be ranked according to how many of the asset criteria they meet. For some jobs, one or several written tests are required. Candidates who make it through the screening process are subjected to a structured interview by a panel. The name of the successful candidate is made public, and any public servant may appeal the process or result.

There have not been any job openings open first to women for many years, as women are no longer an under-represented group. Even in the days in which a small minority of jobs were advertised as open first to one of the designated groups, the successful applicant would have to meet all the criteria and pass all of the testing. If no qualified

Canada's PS is recognized as one of the best in the world, and it is also one in which women have made their mark.

candidates were found, the job then might be re-advertized as open to everyone.  Interestingly, women have done well at all ranks where the merit system is used for hiring, but not as well at the DM level and other Governor-in-Council appointments where a less open process is used and appointments are made by the Prime Minister through the Privy Council Office (PCO).

Women's leadership in Canada's Parliament and private sector boards is also woefully far behind women's leadership in the PS (EY, 2014). This points to the PS doing something right that others can learn from, well beyond EE. Although this research report is not about the numbers of women, but rather the impact of women in the PS, we see from some of the findings that the numbers are actually related to impact. There were many interesting insights particularly by female managers interviewed in this report about what enabled them to succeed. In the main report, *Women's Leadership Matters*, we discuss two of the enabling factors that came up most frequently for female managers: family-friendly policies and workplaces, and the support and mentorship of senior managers.

Although Canada may seem further ahead than many other countries in terms of women in the PS, it must be noted that some women continue to face difficulties in the PS in terms of harassment and discrimination, according to the 2014 Public Service Employee Survey (Treasury Board, 2015). However, the fact that the PS asks these questions of employees in a confidential survey is a good step.

Another concern expressed by an interviewee was that the PS was becoming a "female ghetto" particularly for female professionals. She talked about women in female-dominated administrative work being well paid in the PS compared with their counterparts outside, but that female lawyers, doctors, scientists, engineers and other professionals tended to earn less compared their counterparts outside the PS. Many were making a trade-off between pay and flexibility around family.

*Any single mom will want to have benefits for their children, coverage for dental care, capacity to take a decent maternity leave without having your career marginally impacted. Those are all the reasons that made us such a popular employer for those groups.*

This was not so much a fault with the PS, but with other sectors that are lagging behind and not making the most of their female talent pool. Canada's unequal economic opportunities for women have been noted by the World Economic Forum (2014).

Since the purpose of this study is to contribute to the Wilson Center's Global Women's Leadership Initiative Women in Public Service project so that it can be used by other countries, these are specific insights to consider arising from the analysis on what enabled women to progress in their careers as public servants and eventually get into management in the Canadian federal public service:

• Flexibility and supports around family responsibilities, such as fully paid leave and accommodating workplaces.

• Management and leadership training.

• Free and immediate recourse for situations of harassment or discrimination through union representation.

• Partnership with unions on workplace equity issues and pay equity.

• Merit-based hiring: This may involve determining in advance and in writing what the skills and qualifications are required for a job; posting the job openly and making sure the job opportunity is known to under-represented groups; looking at CVs with the name stripped off so that the screeners are not influenced by gender or other factors; writing interview questions in advance so interviewers are not tempted to ask inappropriate questions based on an interviewee's gender, race or other factors.

• Consultations with under-represented groups about what would make for a more inclusive workplace.

• Changes in workplace structure and pay equity: To address structural discrimination against women, female- and male-dominated occupational categories are looked at objectively, and level of skill, education, training and experience to do the job are evaluated and compared. Workers in female-dominated occupations may receive more pay as a result of re-evaluation. Barriers between moving from administrative to other kinds of work are removed.

• Formal and informal mentorship and support of talented individuals.

• Visible and frequent support from the political level and from senior leaders in the bureaucracy that an open, inclusive, representative bureaucracy is not only fair, it is good for decision-making and necessary for the country.

Canada's PS is recognized as one of the best in the world, and it is also one in which women have made their mark.