



# Work Environment Survey

Report of Results 2009

PUBLIC SERVICE SECRETARIAT

  
Newfoundland  
Labrador

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# Acknowledgements

The Public Service Secretariat would like to thank all of the employees who contributed to the Work Environment Survey. By communicating your opinions about the workplace, you are helping departments and central agencies identify human resource issues. While there are some areas of the work environment that can still improve, the results of this year's survey are positive and indicate that government is continuing to make progress in ensuring that employees are satisfied and committed in the workplace.



Exploring the complexity  
of employee *attitudes*.

## Introduction

In 2009, the Public Service Secretariat (PSS), in partnership with the Newfoundland and Labrador Statistics Agency (NLSA), conducted a Work Environment Survey within the core public service. The survey provides executives, managers and organizational planners with information about employee opinions related to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, supervision quality, compensation satisfaction and other aspects of employees' working lives. Employee opinions about the work environment are important because they help identify issues related to employee well-being and organizational functioning. Exploring and discussing these issues has an impact on the direction of human resource management practices in government departments and central agencies.



When *variety* leads  
to opportunity.

## Current Research

Over the last decade, the topic of “employee engagement” has emerged as an increasingly important area in human resources. Employees who are engaged at work are thought to be happier, more productive and less likely to leave their job. As a result, organizations have directed their efforts to improve the level of engagement in their workforce. However, there are many definitions for employee engagement and current research has yet to identify a unique, consistent description of engagement. In this regard, the survey does not presume to measure employee engagement. Instead, the topics measured in the survey are consistent with possible components of employee engagement as identified by current research.



The importance of  
form and *function*.

## Objectives

The survey serves a number of different functions. Primarily, it was designed to explore various topics that are relevant to the strategic management of human resources in the core public service. Specifically, the survey is a long-term initiative that supports several areas of government's Human Resource Management Strategy for 2008-11. Broadly speaking, this strategy addresses topics such as attracting qualified workers to government, best practices in employee retention and improving public service delivery. The survey also helps with the following:

- Identifying organizational strengths and areas for improvement
- Providing executives, directors and managers with information that supports departmental planning and policy development
- Supporting the development of corporate human resource management initiatives
- Giving employees an opportunity to express their opinions about the workplace

An orderly *arrangement* of ideas.



## Methodology

The NLSA mailed 1,865 questionnaires and collected responses from June to September of 2009. Employees were randomly selected as representatives of the core public service, which includes all government departments and central agencies. In cases where employees did not return a completed questionnaire, the NLSA followed-up with a phone call to ensure they had received a survey package. Overall, 909 employees participated in the survey, resulting in a 49 percent response rate. The questionnaire used for the survey asked employees to rate their level of agreement with 73 statements about the work environment. These statements covered a range of workplace topics that included:

- Job satisfaction
- Quality of supervision
- Organizational commitment
- Communication satisfaction
- Co-worker relationships
- Health and safety awareness
- Strategic orientation
- Workload
- Compensation satisfaction
- Work-life balance
- Organizational trust
- Learning and development

Employees rated their level of agreement using a 5-point scale:

Strongly Agree	=	5
Somewhat Agree	=	4
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	=	3
Somewhat Disagree	=	2
Strongly Disagree	=	1

Finding quality through *quantity*.



## Survey Results

For the purpose of this report, survey results were combined into three general categories: Agree, Neutral and Disagree. For example, “Strongly Agree” and “Somewhat Agree” were combined into a general category called “Agree”. The following table shows how survey results were combined:

5-Point Scale	Response Category
Strongly Agree	Agree
Somewhat Agree	
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Neutral
Somewhat Disagree	Disagree
Strongly Disagree	

With respect to interpreting level of agreement, the following is a general guide for interpreting the percentage of employees who generally agreed with statements:

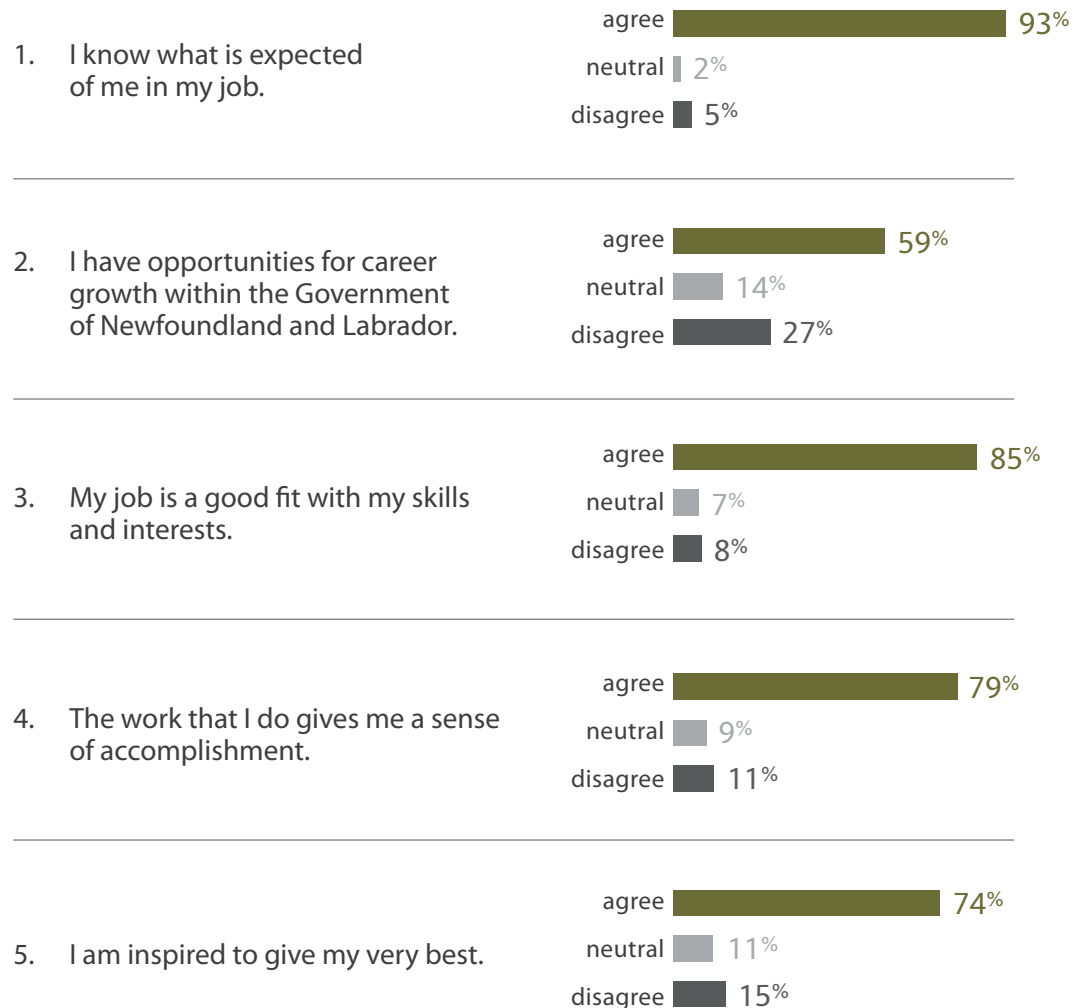
Percent Agree	Interpretation
80% or higher	= Organizational Strengths
60% - 79%	= Emerging Best Practices
59% or lower	= Areas for Improvement

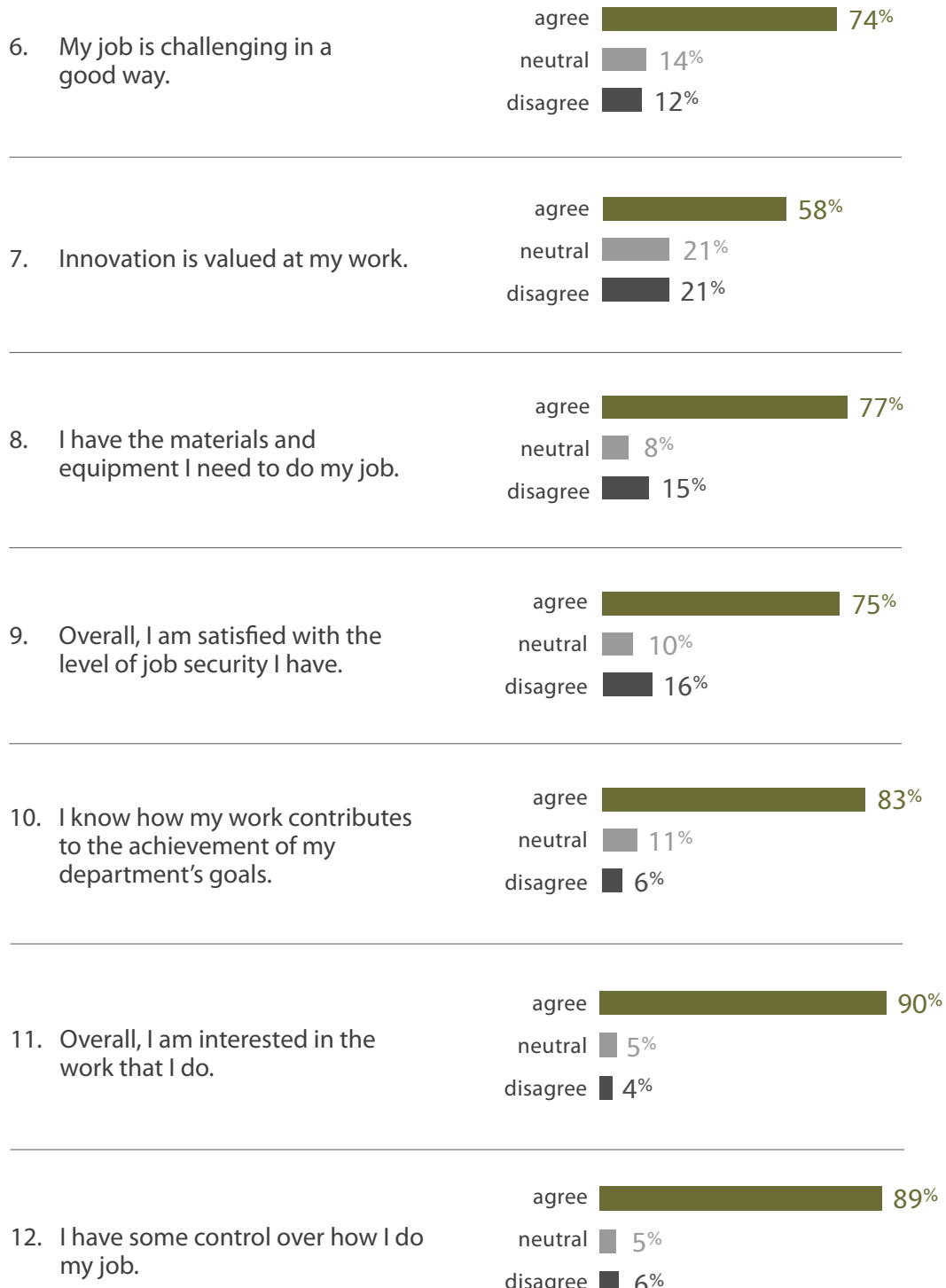
Note that percentage totals may fall below or exceed 100 percent due to rounding.

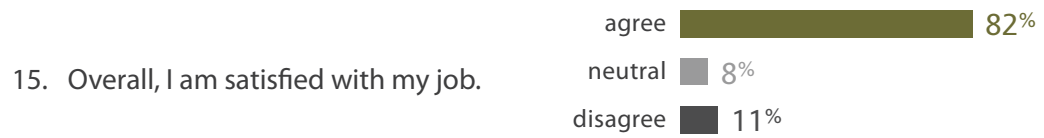
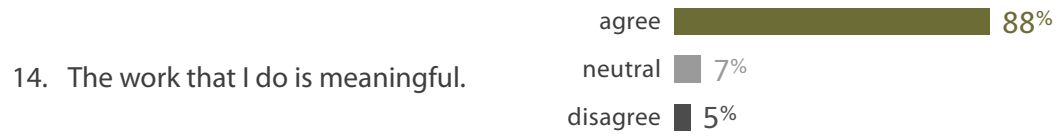
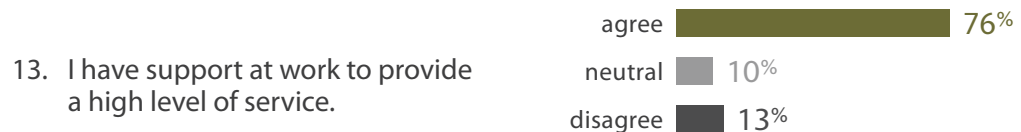


# Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is the extent to which employees like or dislike their job. Of course, satisfaction can depend on many different aspects of the work environment such as job tasks, career development opportunities, supervisor and co-worker relationships, communication and workload. The survey focused on job characteristics as a measure of job satisfaction – specific job characteristics included the meaningfulness of work, job autonomy and knowledge of work outcomes.

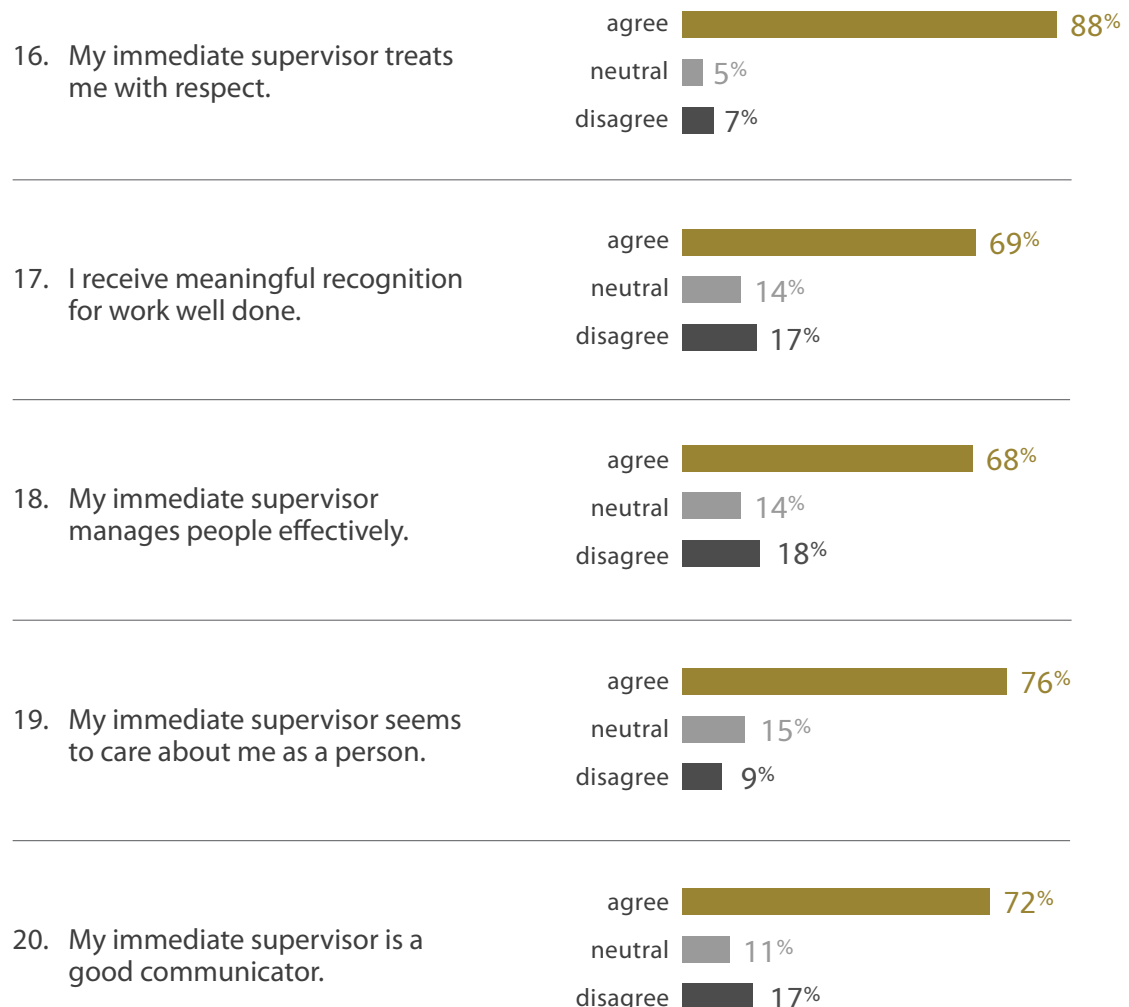


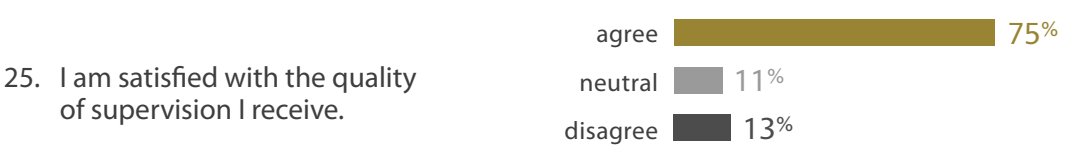
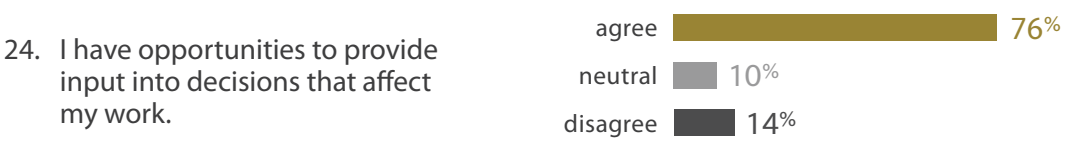
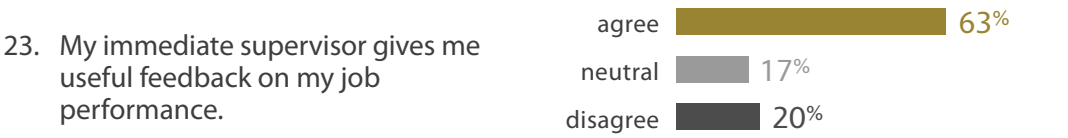
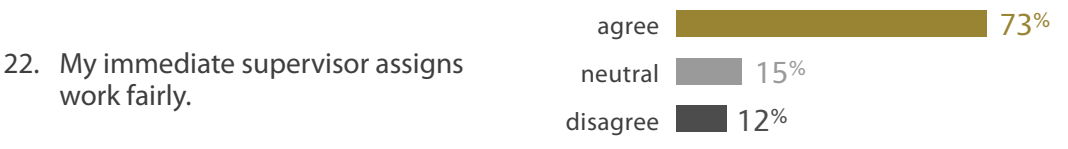
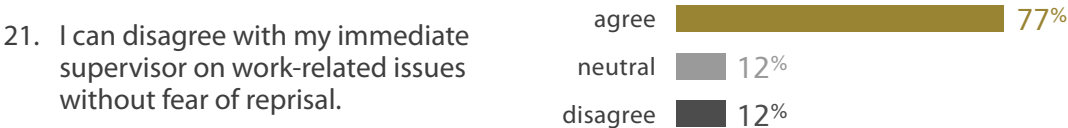




# Quality of Supervision

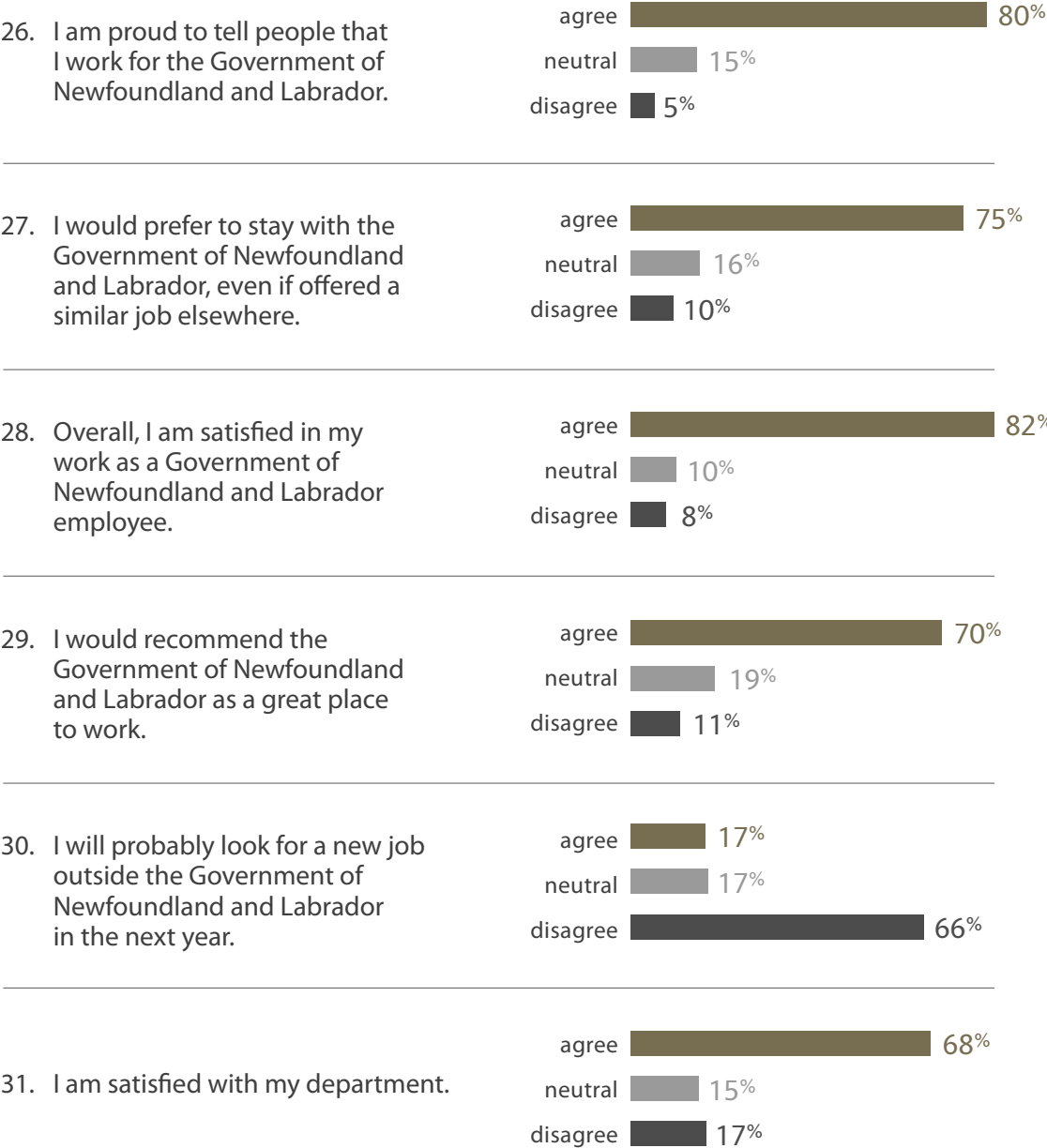
The relationship between employees and their immediate supervisor is thought to be one of the most important aspects of the work environment and a key component of job satisfaction, retention and turnover. Quality of supervision is the degree to which employees feel valued by their supervisor – key aspects of this relationship include respect, recognition, fairness and open communication. In the survey, quality of supervision refers to interpersonal relationships and does not reflect the work, skills and knowledge of supervisors.





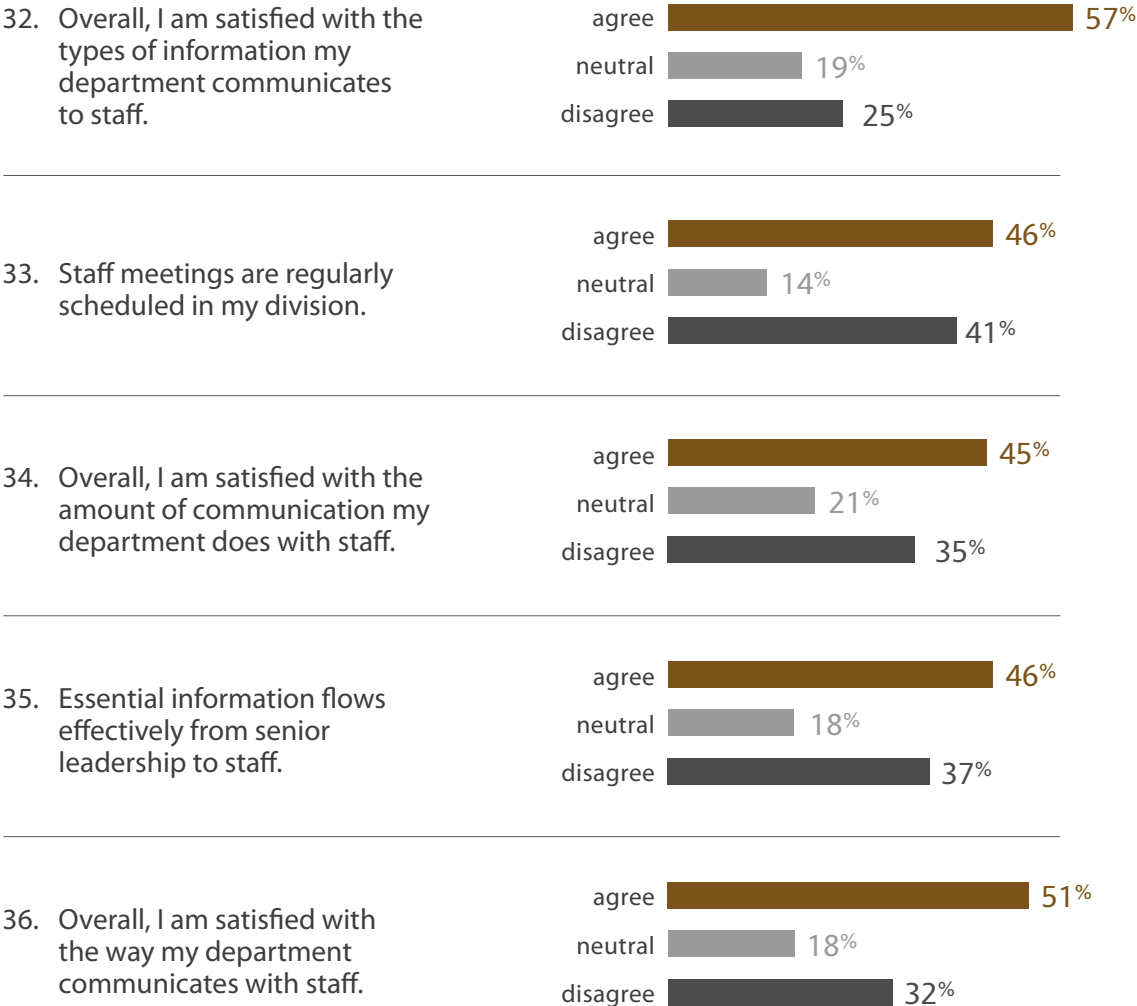
# Organizational Commitment

The relationship between employees and their organization, and whether or not employees stay with the organization, is called organizational commitment. Employees who are committed to the organization are more likely to stay with the organization than those who are not. Furthermore, organizational commitment results in employees who are more likely to show pride in their employer, be productive in their work and offer extra assistance to others in the workplace.



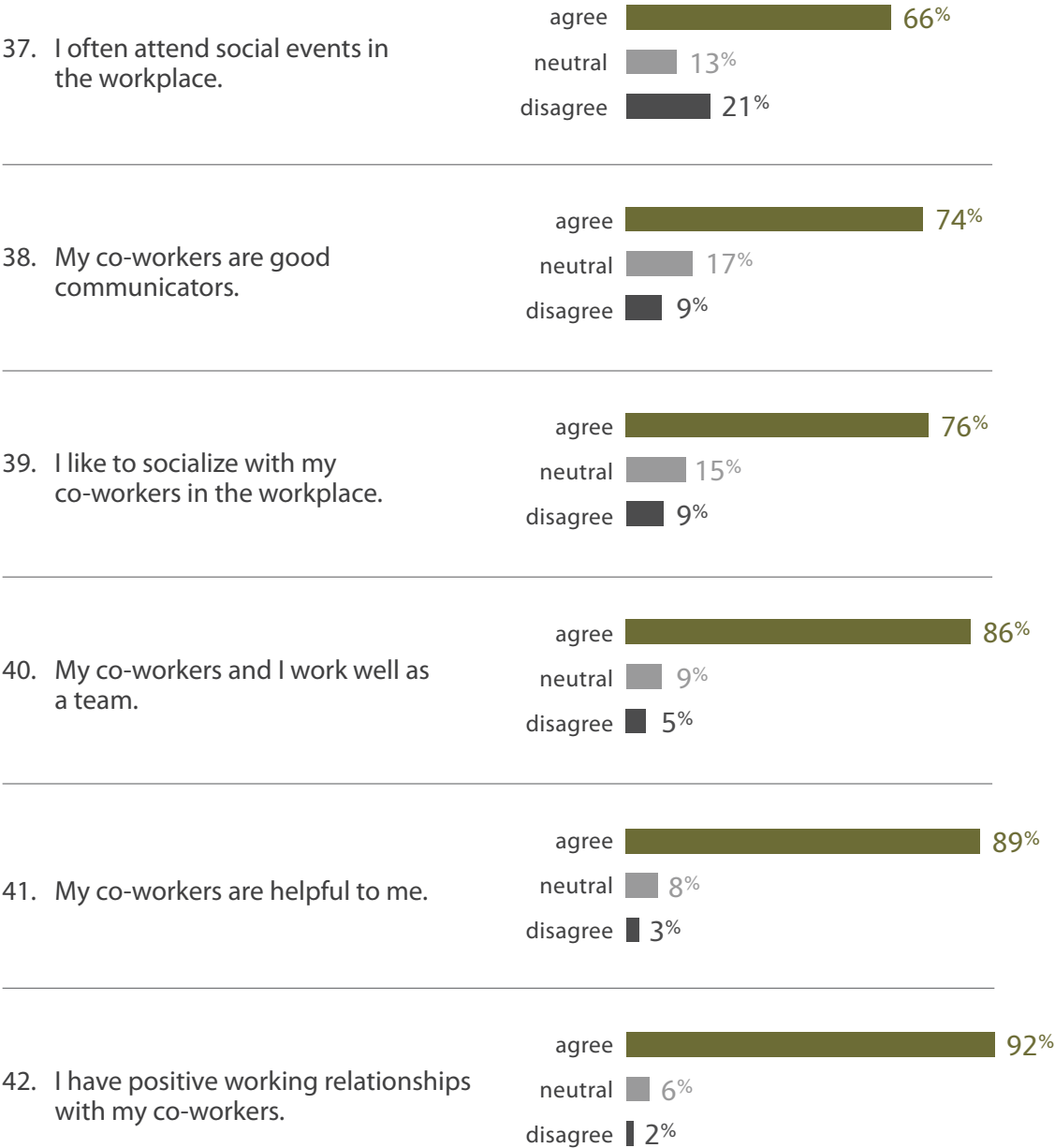
# Communication Satisfaction

Communication is the degree to which information is shared among individuals or groups and it plays a fundamental role in the operation of an organization. Rather than attempting to measure satisfaction with all of the specific communication practices used in the core public service, the survey focused on the general structures necessary for communication. Specifically, the survey examined the type, amount and form of communication within departments.



# Co-Worker Relationships

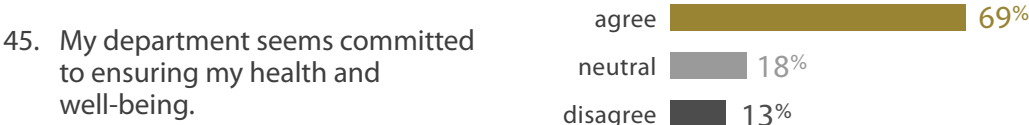
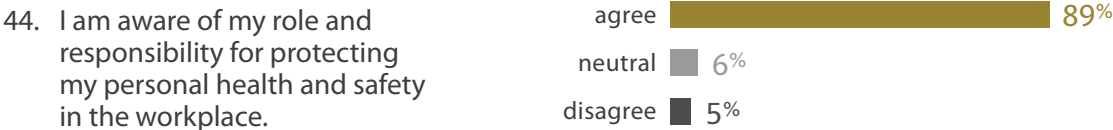
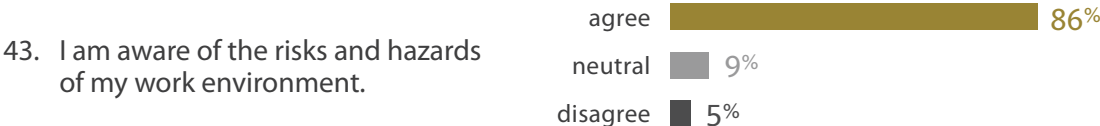
The term “co-workers” generally refers to employees that work in the same division or work unit of a department. Co-worker relationships can be formal and informal. For example, formal co-worker relationships exist when employees must collaborate or share similar work tasks. Informal relationships are typically more personal and often take the form of workplace friendships. In the survey, co-worker relationships are the formal and informal interactions that occur between co-workers. Specific aspects of this relationship included workplace socialization, teamwork, helping behaviour and interpersonal communication.





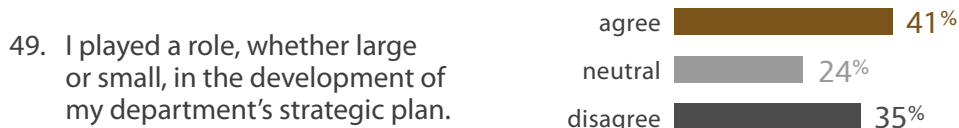
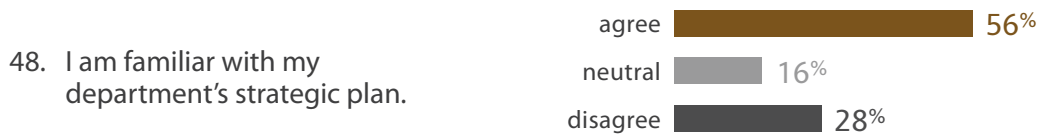
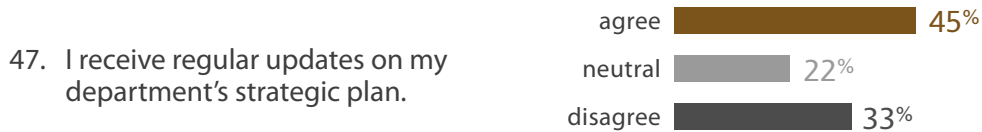
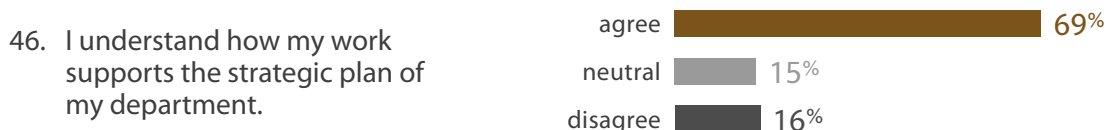
# Health & Safety Awareness

Employee health and safety is essential to the core public service and the vast majority of workplace health and safety initiatives focus on preventable illness and accidents. The degree to which employees are aware of health and safety issues in the workplace was the focus of the survey. This included awareness of risks and hazards, personal roles and responsibilities, as well as perceived efforts of departments to ensure health and safety.



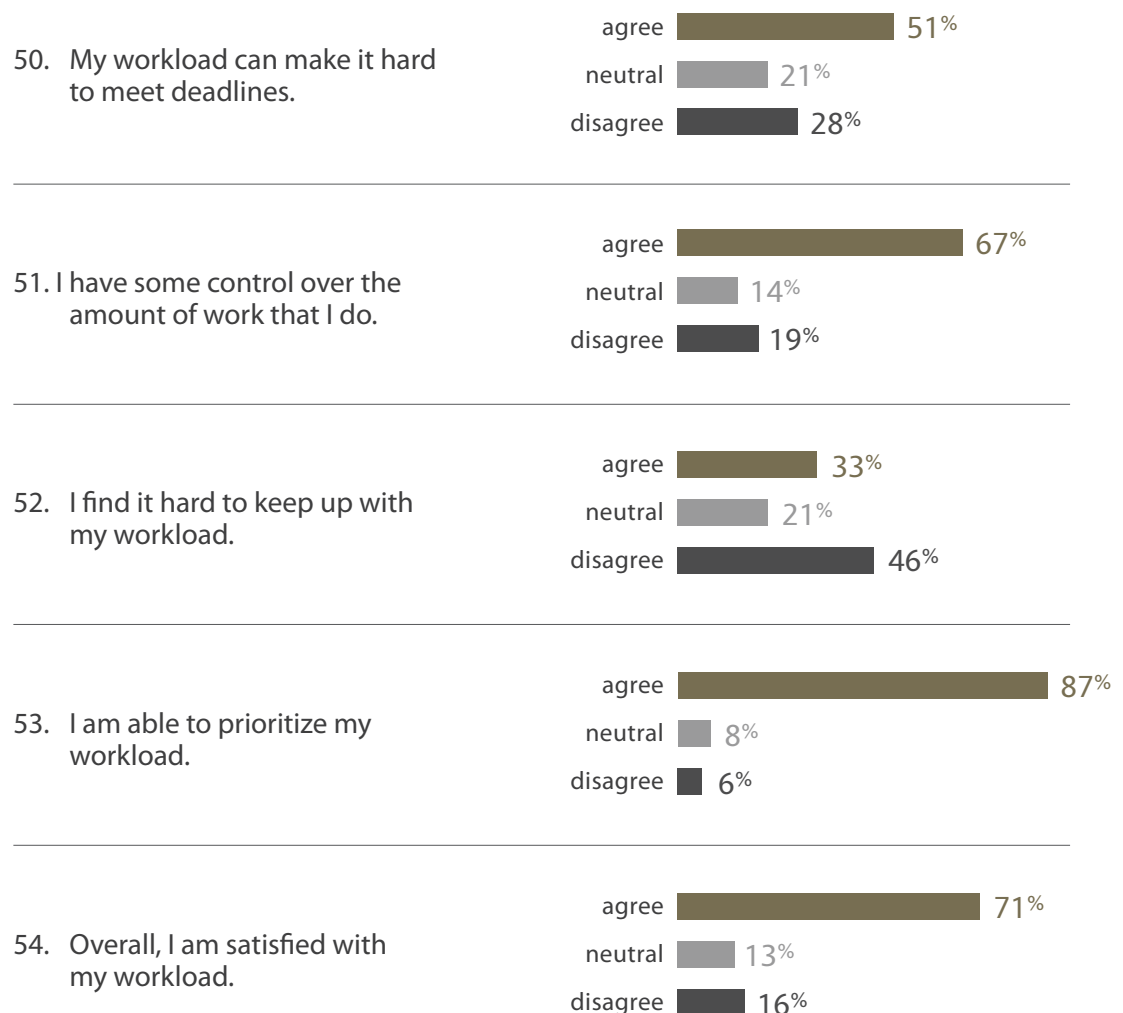
# Strategic Orientation

Government departments and central agencies are required to develop strategic plans that outline their goals and objectives for a three-year period. Strategic orientation refers to employee understanding of the organization's strategic plan. Statements in the survey focused on the link between the work of employees and their department's strategic objectives. Key aspects addressed by the survey included the link between work and organizational outcomes, communication of strategic objectives, awareness of strategic objectives and identification with a strategic plan.



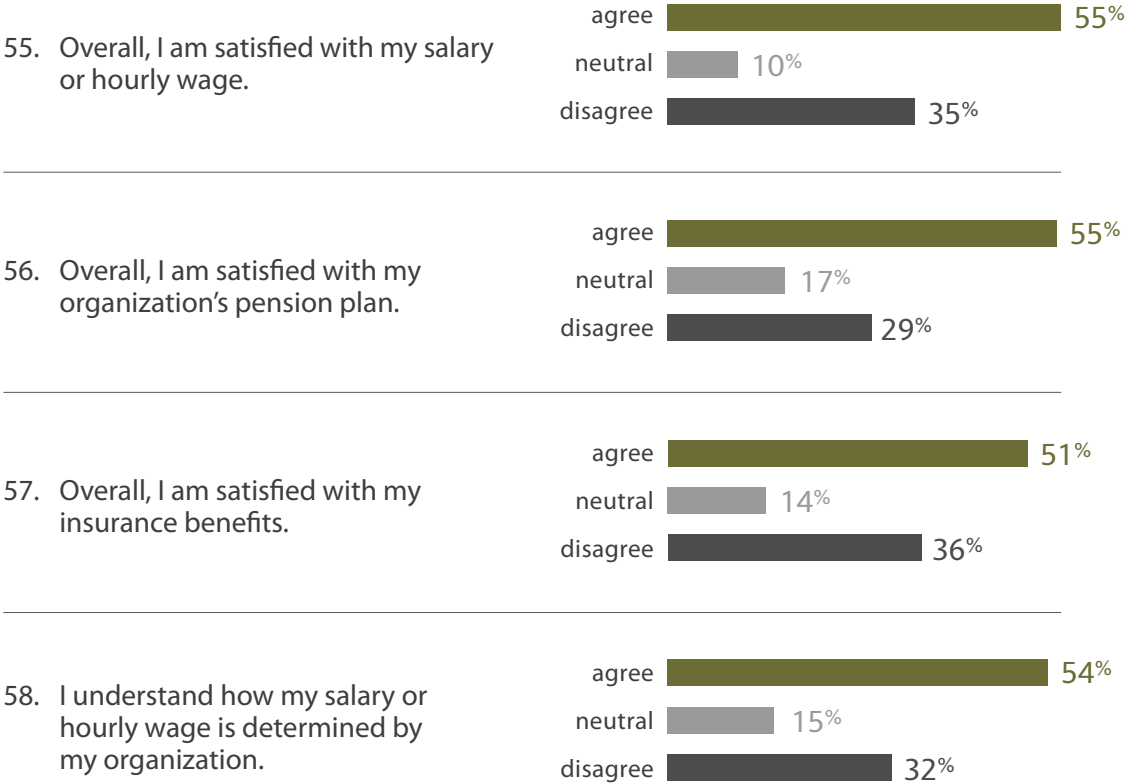
# Workload

Workload is the amount of work assigned to an employee. Some important distinctions about measuring workload include the difference between perceived and actual workload; the cyclical nature of workload (e.g., preparation of annual budgets and reports); and the difference between amount of work and level of work difficulty. The current measure of workload used by the survey does not account for all of these distinctions. Instead, the primary focus of the survey was the pace of work (i.e., meeting deadlines, keeping up) and control over workload – these indicators provide a general account of employee workload issues.



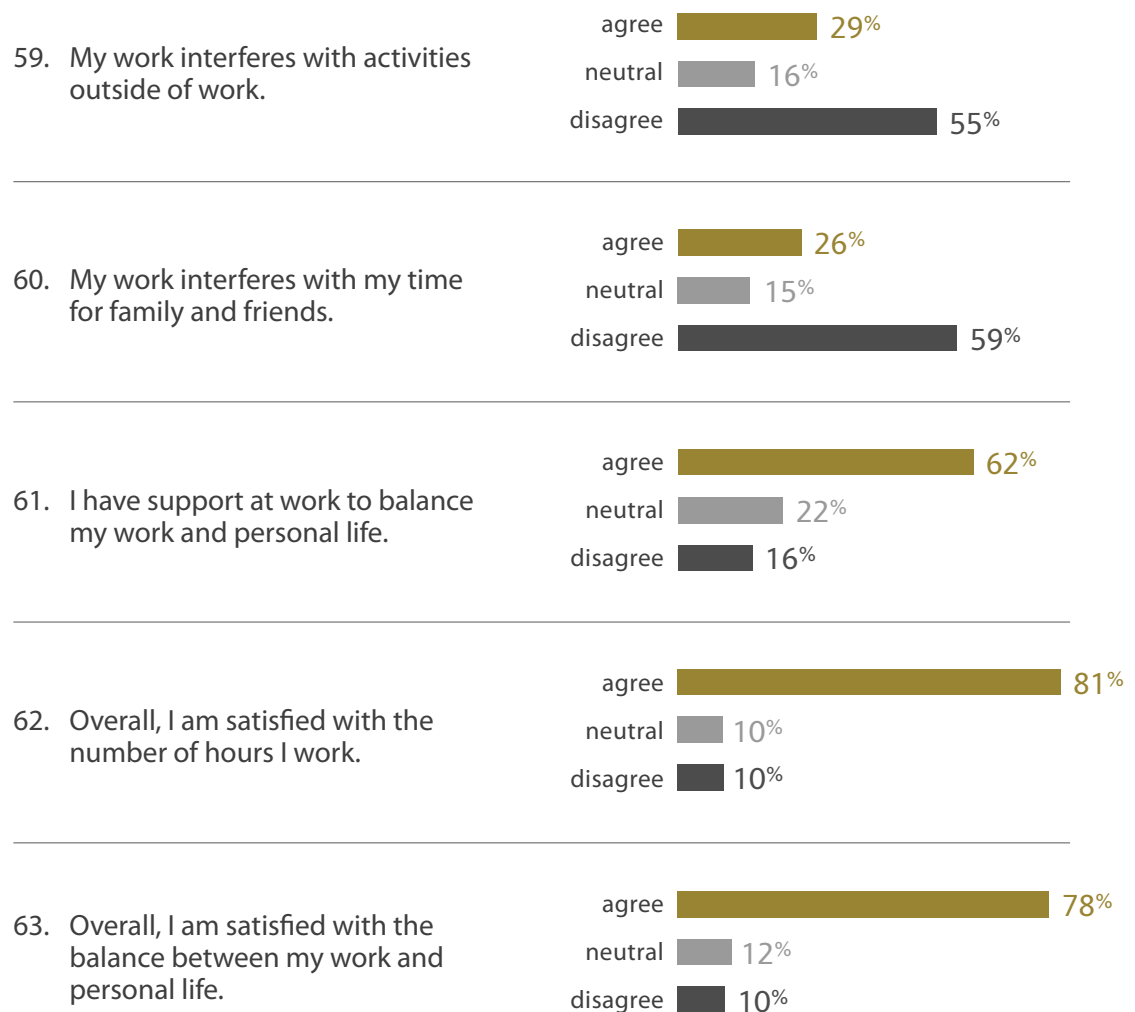
# Compensation Satisfaction

Compensation generally refers to employee salaries, benefits and wage/salary increases but it also refers to organizational policies regarding pay. The statements used for the survey reflect major aspects of compensation satisfaction such as salary, benefits (e.g., insurance and pension plans) and understanding how pay is determined.



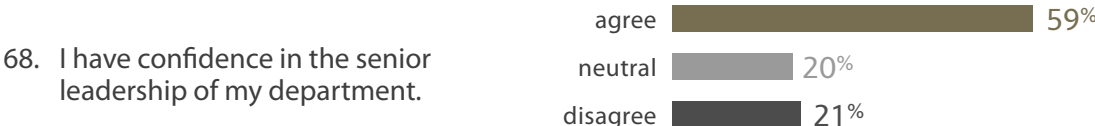
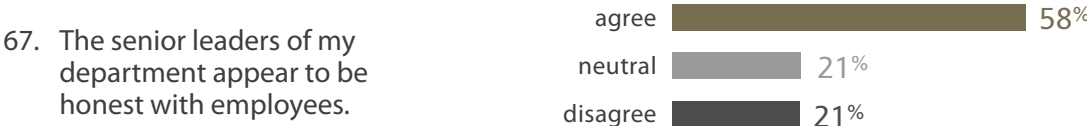
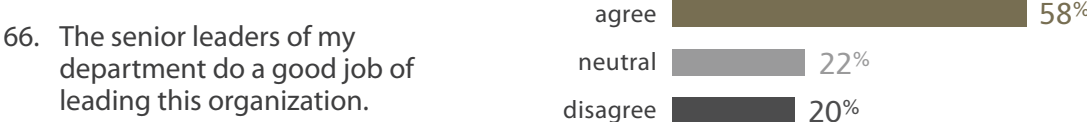
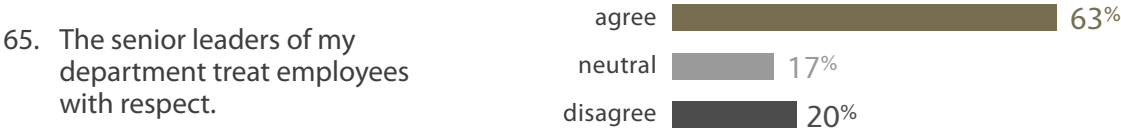
# Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance refers to the relationship between work and the lives led by employees outside of the workplace. While the term “work” is easy to define – generally, it is paid employment – there is more difficulty in defining “life”. Family-related issues are often the primary focus but life outside of work also includes areas such as leisure, community and study. Measures included in the survey focused on the conflict between work and commitments outside of the workplace (i.e., family and other activities); organizational supports for achieving work-life balance; and general indicators of satisfaction with hours of work and work-life balance.



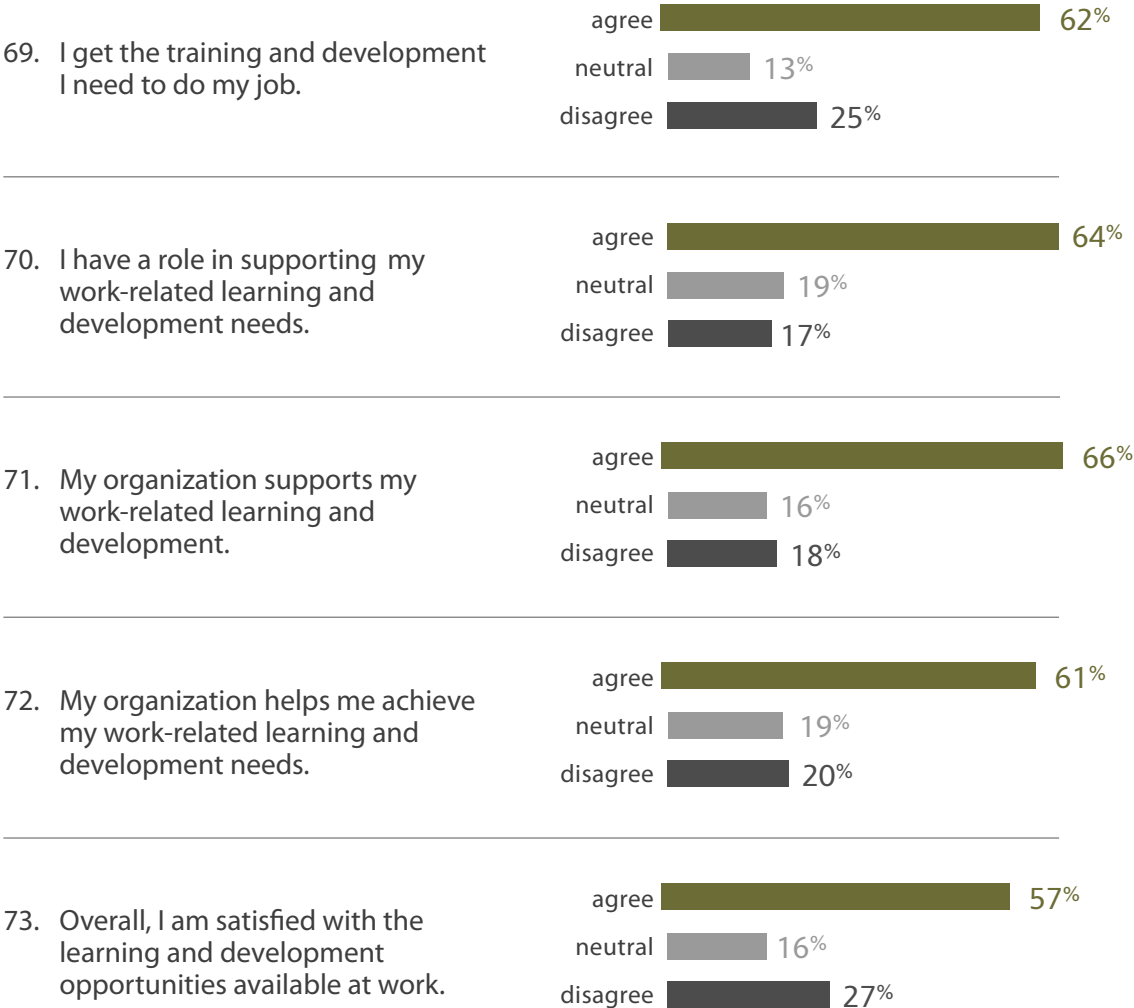
# Organizational Trust

Organizational trust is a complicated topic to discuss because it involves the thoughts and feelings of employees, the behaviours of other people and groups, as well as the qualities that describe the organization itself. Research suggests that senior leaders play an important role in shaping organizational trust. The survey focused on some of the key aspects of trust, which included confidence, honesty, concern for employee interests and respect.



# Learning & Development

Workplace learning and development is essential to building the competencies and expanding the career opportunities of employees. The survey focused on the level of support employees have to meet their work-related learning and development needs. In addition, the survey examined job-related training and the role employees have in supporting their own learning and development.



Finding quality  
through *quantity*.



## Discussion

### Organizational strengths

Overall, the 2009 survey results are positive with respect to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, quality of supervision, co-worker relationships and health and safety awareness. Job satisfaction and organizational commitment are of particular interest because research suggests they have a positive impact on job performance, retention, employee health, life satisfaction and absenteeism. The high level of agreement reported by employees for these two areas suggests that the core public service has a relatively good work environment and a stable workforce. Research also suggests that supervisors play a role in determining the level of job satisfaction and organizational commitment reported by employees. The majority of core public service employees indicated having a good relationship with their supervisor. In particular, many supervisors were described as being respectful, caring and collaborative. Employees also indicated having a good relationship with their co-workers, especially when working together as a team. Finally, most employees are aware of workplace hazards and their role in protecting themselves from harm. These areas highlight strengths of the organization and provide direction on human resource best practices.



## Emerging best practices

For some areas of the work environment, such as work-life balance, organizational trust and support for learning and development, employees reported a range of attitudes and perceptions. For example, many employees are satisfied with their work-life balance yet some also report that their job demands conflict with activities outside of work. Although relevant policies (e.g., flexible work arrangements) and programs (e.g., leadership and management development) exist to support these areas in the core public service, further research might be helpful to identify what aspects of these supports are having a positive impact on the work environment.

## Areas for improvement

Efforts in the areas of organizational communication practices, employee orientation to departmental strategic plans and workload will need to be continued. Generally speaking, these areas had lower levels of agreement reported by employees. Communication is a vital part of the relationship employees have with their work, co-workers, supervisors, leaders and the broader organization. It is especially important that leaders and supervisors establish and maintain effective communications with employees. Communication also plays an important role in orienting employees to departmental strategic plans. Though many employees indicated having some knowledge about how their work supports achieving departmental goals, about half of employees agreed they were informed about their department's strategic plan. Other aspects of the workplace, such as workload, require further research given the varied findings of the survey. For example, a number of employees reported having some difficulty with the pace of their work yet many said they were satisfied with their workload.

## Comparing the results

The 2009 questionnaire was updated from the questionnaire used in 2007. In some cases, statements were worded differently, some were dropped from the questionnaire and others were added. This means that a direct comparison to all of the survey results from 2007 is not possible. However, a sizeable comparison between the two surveys is possible since both questionnaires still used a number of statements that were the same (or similar). For the majority of these shared statements, the level of agreement in 2009 was higher than the level reported in 2007.

The following are areas where the reported level of agreement appeared to be substantially higher in 2009 compared to 2007:

- Opportunities for career growth
- Access to materials and equipment necessary to do a job
- Working relationships with supervisors and co-workers
- Recognition and feedback from supervisors
- Government as a preferred employer
- Regular staff meetings
- Satisfaction with salary or hourly wage

One area where employees were less likely to agree was with respect to strategic orientation. In 2007, about two-thirds of employees agreed they understood the goals and objectives of their department. In 2009, about half of those surveyed agreed they were familiar with their department's strategic plan. This difference may be due to the different wording of the statements; it may also be due to the fact that departments had developed their strategic plan in 2007 and communications at that time may have increased employee awareness.

Please see the Appendix for tables showing the specific comparisons that were made between the 2007 and 2009 surveys.



Moving in the  
right *direction*.

## Conclusion

### Survey results as supporting evidence

The survey provides information about strengths and areas for improvement in the core public service. Although this information can play an important role in the development of human resource programs, services and initiatives, it is necessary to understand that the survey provides only a partial view of the organization.

As such, the survey results provide evidence that can help support research and planning initiatives. Other sources of information that should be considered in addition to the survey include:

- Executive and staff meetings
- Human resource accountability reports
- Strategic plans and workforce plans
- Organizational metrics and measures
- Relevant articles and books

## Next steps

The survey results in this report provide a broad overview of the work environment in the core public service. Employees are encouraged to raise workplace issues with their supervisor. In turn, supervisors need to be equipped with the right tools to acknowledge and address workplace issues when they occur. Corporate initiatives outlined in the Human Resource Management Strategy for 2008-11, such as the development of guidelines for succession planning, employee orientation and performance enhancement, will support departments in improving their work environment. Other goals include the development of programs to support career enrichment, leadership and management development, and internal communications. Each of these initiatives will help support departments and, in some cases, will have potentially broad impacts for employees. For further information about the strategy, please visit the Public Service Secretariat's website at: [www.exec.gov.nl.ca/exec/pss](http://www.exec.gov.nl.ca/exec/pss)

## Appendix: Comparison of Survey Results

### Job Satisfaction

Comparison	Year	Statement	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1	2009	I know what is expected of me in my job.	93%	2%	5%
	2007	When I am given a task at work, I know what I am expected to achieve.	89%	6%	5%
2	2009	I have opportunities for career growth within the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.	59%	14%	27%
	2007	<i>Same statement</i>	41%	18%	41%
3	2009	My job is a good fit with my skills and interests.	85%	7%	8%
	2007	<i>Same statement</i>	85%	5%	10%
4	2009	The work that I do gives me a sense of accomplishment.	79%	9%	11%
	2007	<i>Same statement</i>	75%	10%	14%
5	2009	I am inspired to give my very best.	74%	11%	15%
	2007	<i>Same statement</i>	65%	16%	19%
6	2009	My job is challenging in a good way.	74%	14%	12%
	2007	My job is challenging.	76%	12%	12%
7	2009	Innovation is valued at my work.	58%	21%	21%
	2007	<i>Same statement</i>	52%	22%	26%
8	2009	I have the materials and equipment I need to do my job.	77%	8%	15%
	2007	<i>Same statement</i>	64%	7%	29%
9	2009	I know how my work contributes to the achievement of my department's goals.	83%	11%	6%
	2007	<i>Same statement</i>	81%	12%	7%
10	2009	I have some control over how I do my job.	89%	5%	6%
	2007	I have some freedom in how I decide to do my assigned work.	86%	6%	8%
11	2009	I have support at work to provide a high level of service.	76%	10%	13%
	2007	<i>Same statement</i>	66%	15%	19%

## Quality of Supervision

Comparison	Year	Statement	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1	2009	My immediate supervisor treats me with respect.	88%	5%	7%
	2007	"Respectful" is a word I would use to describe the relationship I have with my manager or supervisor.	78%	9%	13%
2	2009	I receive meaningful recognition for work well done.	69%	14%	17%
	2007	<i>Same statement</i>	51%	15%	34%
3	2009	My immediate supervisor seems to care about me as a person.	76%	15%	9%
	2007	My manager or supervisor seems to care about me as a person.	72%	13%	15%
4	2009	I can disagree with my immediate supervisor on work-related issues without fear of reprisal.	77%	12%	12%
	2007	I can disagree with my manager or supervisor on work-related issues without fear of reprisal.	73%	9%	18%
5	2009	My immediate supervisor assigns work fairly.	73%	15%	12%
	2007	My manager or supervisor assigns work fairly.	71%	12%	17%
6	2009	My immediate supervisor gives me useful feedback on my job performance.	63%	17%	20%
	2007	My manager or supervisor gives me useful feedback on my job performance.	55%	15%	31%
7	2009	I have opportunities to provide input into decisions that affect my work.	76%	10%	14%
	2007	<i>Same statement</i>	66%	12%	22%
8	2009	I am satisfied with the quality of supervision I receive.	75%	11%	13%
	2007	<i>Same statement</i>	73%	10%	17%

## Organizational Commitment

Comparison	Year	Statement	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1	2009	I am proud to tell people that I work for the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.	80%	15%	5%
	2007	<i>Same statement</i>	62%	18%	21%
2	2009	I would prefer to stay with the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, even if offered a similar job elsewhere.	75%	16%	10%
	2007	<i>Same statement</i>	61%	18%	21%
3	2009	Overall, I am satisfied in my work as a Government of Newfoundland and Labrador employee.	82%	10%	8%
	2007	<i>Same statement</i>	74%	9%	16%
4	2009	I would recommend the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador as a great place to work.	70%	19%	11%
	2007	<i>Same statement</i>	63%	15%	22%
5	2009	I am satisfied with my department.	68%	15%	17%
	2007	<i>Same statement</i>	63%	13%	25%

## Communication Satisfaction

Comparison	Year	Statement	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1	2009	Staff meetings are regularly scheduled in my division.	46%	14%	41%
	2007	<i>Same statement</i>	34%	14%	53%
2	2009	Essential information flows effectively from senior leadership to staff.	46%	18%	37%
	2007	<i>Same statement</i>	38%	14%	49%

## Co-Worker Relationships

Comparison	Year	Statement	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1	2009	I like to socialize with my co-workers in the workplace.	76%	15%	9%
	2007	I have opportunities to socialize with my co-workers.	77%	12%	12%
2	2009	My co-workers and I work well as a team.	86%	9%	5%
	2007	While at work, I feel like I belong to a team.	74%	8%	19%
3	2009	I have positive working relationships with my co-workers.	92%	6%	2%
	2007	<i>Same statement</i>	90%	4%	6%

## Health and Safety Awareness

Comparison	Year	Statement	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1	2009	I am aware of the risks and hazards of my work environment.	86%	9%	5%
	2007	<i>Same statement</i>	88%	8%	5%
2	2009	I am aware of my role and responsibility for protecting my personal health and safety in the workplace.	89%	6%	5%
	2007	<i>Same statement</i>	90%	7%	4%
3	2009	My department seems committed to ensuring my health and well-being.	69%	18%	13%
	2007	My department is committed to ensuring the health and safety of its employees.	70%	12%	17%



## Strategic Orientation

Comparison	Year	Statement	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1	2009	I receive regular updates on my department's strategic plan.	45%	22%	33%
	2007	<i>Same statement</i>	36%	19%	45%
2	2009	I am familiar with my department's strategic plan.	56%	16%	28%
	2007	I understand the goals and objectives of my department.	67%	12%	21%

## Workload

Comparison	Year	Statement	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1	2009	Overall, I am satisfied with my workload.	71%	13%	16%
	2007	The amount of work I am asked to do is reasonable.	67%	8%	25%

## Compensation Satisfaction

Comparison	Year	Statement	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1	2009	Overall, I am satisfied with my salary or hourly wage.	55%	10%	35%
	2007	I am satisfied with my salary or hourly wage.	33%	7%	60%
2	2009	Overall, I am satisfied with my insurance benefits.	51%	14%	36%
	2007	I am satisfied with the insurance benefits (e.g., prescription, dental, life) that I receive.	48%	10%	42%

## Work-Life Balance

Comparison	Year	Statement	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1	2009	I have support at work to balance my work and personal life.	62%	22%	16%
	2007	<i>Same statement</i>	67%	16%	18%
2	2009	Overall, I am satisfied with the number of hours I work.	81%	10%	10%
	2007	I am satisfied with my regular working hours.	81%	8%	10%

## Organizational Trust

Comparison	Year	Statement	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1	2009	The senior leaders of my department treat employees with respect.	63%	17%	20%
	2007	Overall, my organization treats me with respect.	65%	14%	21%
2	2009	I have confidence in the senior leadership of my department.	59%	20%	21%
	2007	<i>Same statement</i>	59%	12%	30%

## Learning and Development

Comparison	Year	Statement	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1	2009	I get the training and development I need to do my job.	62%	13%	25%
	2007	I get the training I need to do my job.	54%	16%	30%
2	2009	My organization supports my work-related learning and development.	66%	16%	18%
	2007	<i>Same statement</i>	60%	15%	25%