DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY
CAREER MOTIVATIONS RESEARCH LAB

NATIONAL SURVEY OF PUBLIC SERVANTS- GOVERNING IN TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY

Public service work is often viewed as stable and predictable; however, recent years have brought erratic changes to how public servants work and deliver services. These changes include the expansion then contraction of remote and hybrid work arrangements, unstructured adoption of artificial intelligence, and rapidly evolving public priorities and expectations.

In December 2025, the Career Motivation Research Lab launched a national survey to examine public sector employees' perceptions of uncertainty in today's public service environment and how these link to workplace experiences, organizational culture, motivations, and job satisfaction.

We surveyed more than 1,300 employees working across municipal, provincial, federal, Indigenous, and broader public sector organizations in Canada.

Who completed the survey?

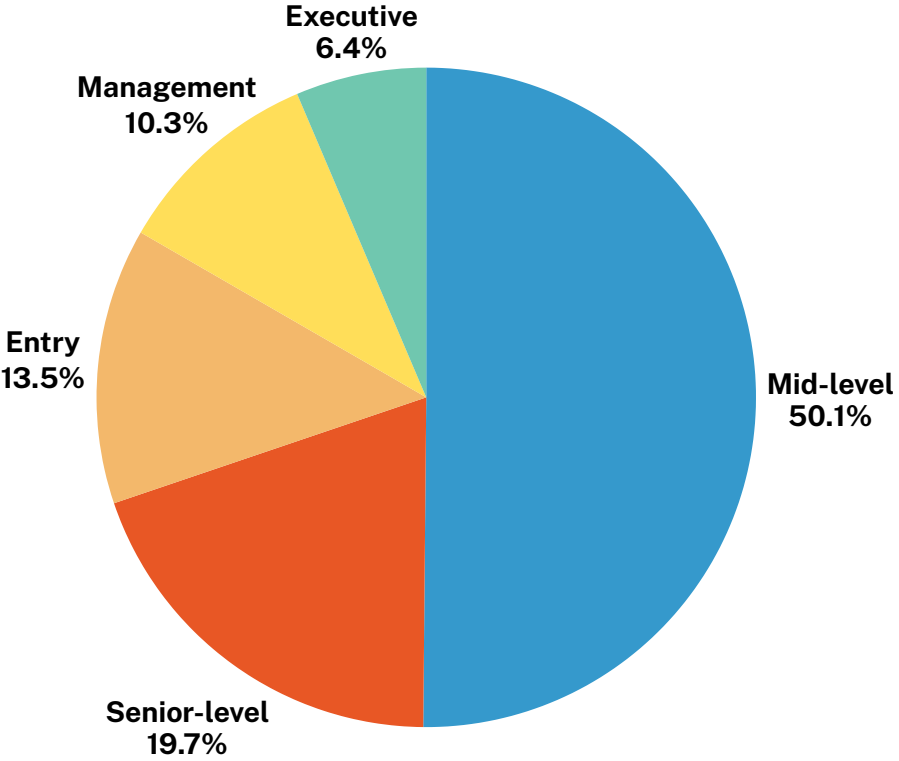
GENDER

68% WOMEN

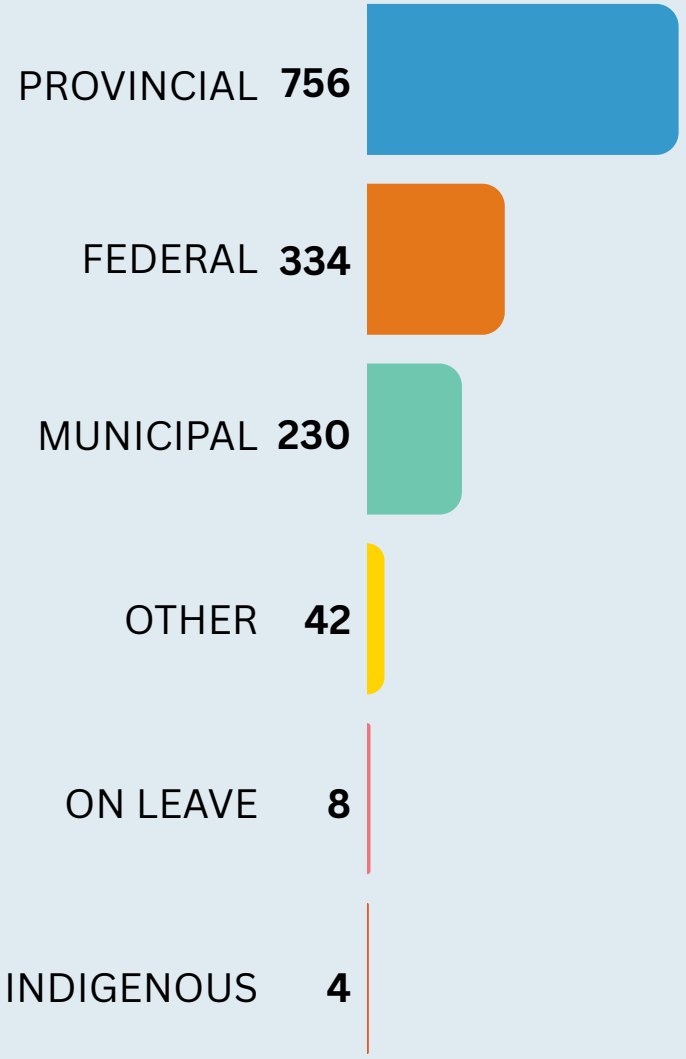
30% MEN

2% NON-BINARY

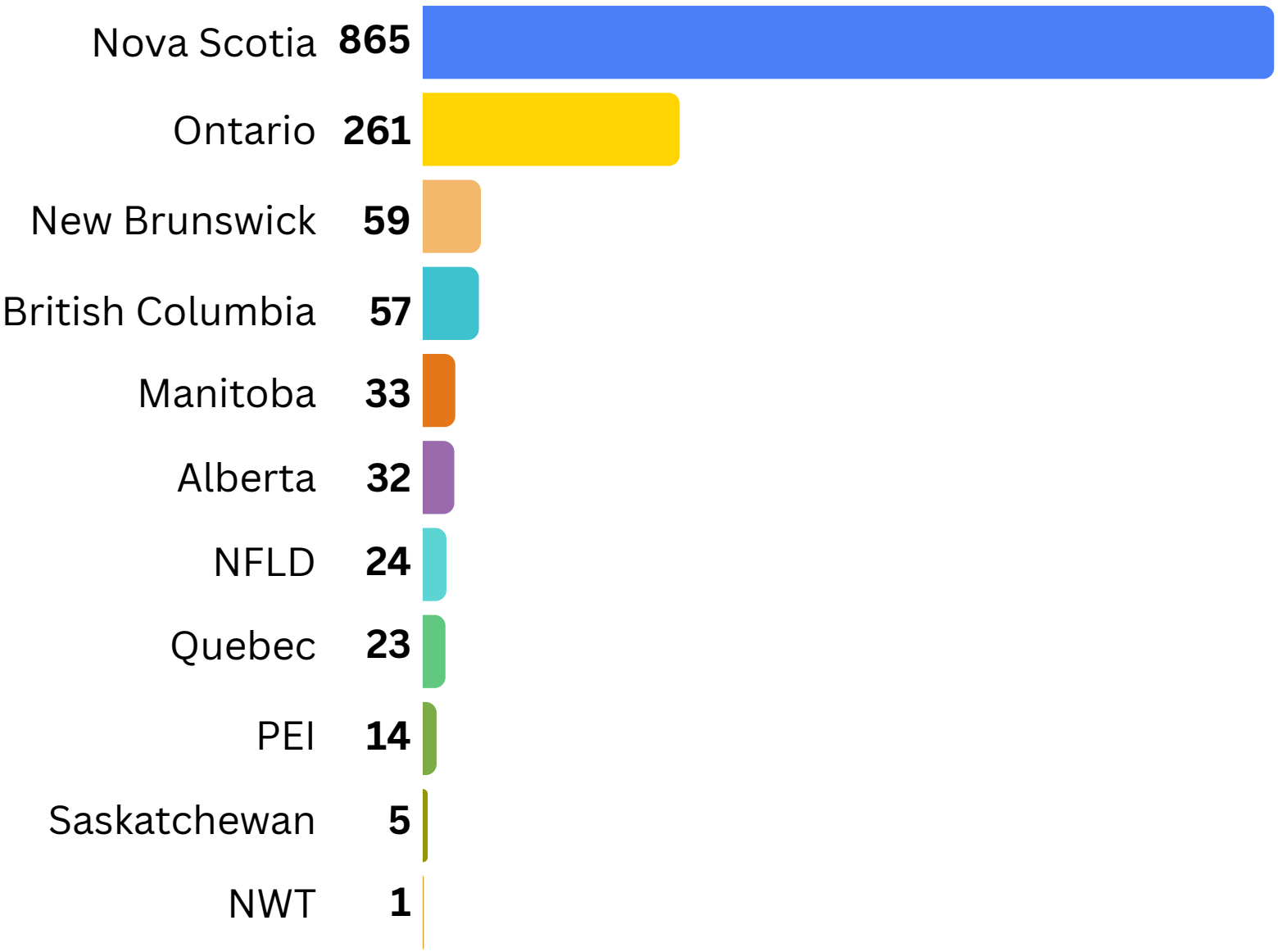
JOB LEVEL



TYPE OF GOVERNMENT



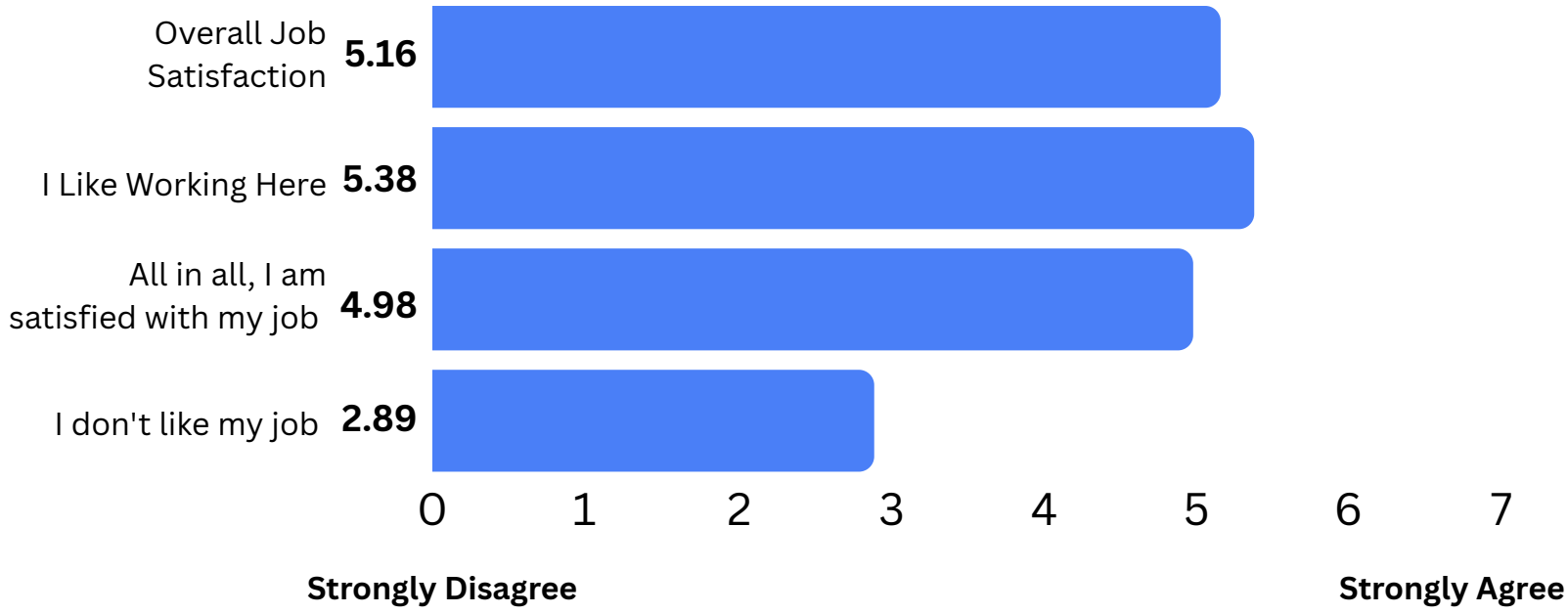
PROVINCIAL DISTRIBUTION



What did they say?

JOB SATISFACTION

Respondents reported moderately high job satisfaction, with most indicating they like working in their organization. The lowest-scoring item was “I don't like my job”, suggesting that dissatisfaction was relatively uncommon.



PUBLIC SERVICE MOTIVATION

5.53/7 ATTRACTION TO POLICY MAKING

6.31/7 COMPASSION

5.11/7 SELF SACRIFICE

5.53/7 COMMMITMENT TO PUBLIC INTEREST

Participants reported moderate perceived organizational support (avg. score of 4.08/7), suggesting that there is room for improvement in how organizations support their employees.

3.91/7

Participants reported modest alignment between espoused and enacted organizational values, suggesting a gap between stated organizational values and practice.

WHAT DID PUBLIC SERVANTS SAY ABOUT UNCERTAINTY?

5.27/7

Respondents reported relatively high levels of uncertainty in their place of work, with many agreeing that things seem unsettled, and that it is difficult to predict how events will unfold.

3.98/7

Participants reported moderate tolerance for uncertainty, suggesting mixed comfort with ambiguity and unpredictable situations.