

# Workplace Mental Health Survey 2017

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Executive Summary  
November 2018



*Mental Health*

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# Executive Summary

**PURPOSE.** This report summarizes departmental-level results of the ESDC Workplace Mental Health Survey administered to a random sample of employees between February 13th and March 28th 2017. The survey was conducted by the Human Resources Services Branch as part of ESDC's Integrated Framework on Mental Health in the Workplace. Detailed results for each Portfolio are available separately.

**SURVEY RESPONDENTS.** A random sample of 6,957 employees was invited to participate in the Workplace Mental Health Survey (WMH). A total of 3,359 employees completed the questionnaire (48%). Survey data is weighted to adjust for the differences in under- and over-representation by portfolio among survey respondents, which increases our confidence in being able to draw departmental conclusions representative of each portfolio.

**OVERALL FINDINGS.** Research shows that key factors shape how people experience the workplace, which in turn affects employees' health and well-being and the quality of their work.

*Some factors measure job demands, also known as risk factors. These are physical or emotional stressors like time pressure, heavy workload, and a stressful working environment.*

*The WMH Survey measures three job demands: Workload, Work-Family Conflict, and Job Stress.*



The majority of ESDC employees are able to **balance** work and family life (**62%**). However, a majority also experiences moderate to high challenges with respect to their **workload** (**55%**), and have moderate to high **job stress** (**73%**).



Other factors measure job resources, also known as resilience factors. These are the physical, social and organizational factors that promote goal achievement, stress reduction, learning and development, and well-being. They can protect employees from the negative effects of job demands, and reduce potential negative outcomes.

The WMH Survey measures 14 job resources, grouped as follows: Individual Resources (Meaning, Autonomy, Impact, Competence), Leader Resources (Leadership, Role Clarity, Recognition & Reward), Team Resources (Relatedness, Psychological Safety, Civility & Respect), and Organizational Resources (Supervisor Safety Behaviours and Expectations, Organizational Support, Group Culture).

### ESDC employees...

Feel <b>competent</b> in their job	85%
Feel they work in a <b>civil and respectful</b> environment	80%
Understand their <b>role</b>	75%
Find their work <b>meaningful</b>	66%
Feel <b>safe</b> to take risks and voice their opinion	64%
Feel <b>connected</b> to their colleagues	62%
Report their <b>leaders are supportive</b> and inspiring	57%
Experience low to moderate <b>team culture</b>	52%
Experience low to moderate <b>organizational support</b>	52%
Feel low to moderate <b>sense of control</b> over their work	64%
Feel a low <b>sense of impact</b> in their job	47%
Feel their work is not <b>appreciated or recognized</b>	42%

*ESDC's survey also measures important outcomes associated with employees' psychological health and safety in the workplace: Engagement, Turnover Intentions, Morale, Burnout, and Psychological Distress.*



Employees' engagement is an area of strength, with a majority reporting they are highly **engaged** in their work (**80%**). However, just over half (**56%**) **intend to stay** in the organization. Further, employees' morale, job burnout, and self-reported psychological distress are particularly concerning.

The majority of ESDC employees have low to moderate **morale** (**52%**), experience moderate to high **burnout** (**69%**), and are at moderate to high risk to meet the minimum clinical threshold of an **anxiety and/or depressive disorder** (**72%**).



## DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS



### Portfolio

Each portfolio has areas of strengths, and areas of challenge. Relative to their colleagues, Employment Social Development (ESD) employees report **lower job demands** and **higher job resources**. In some cases, this translates to **healthier well-being** outcomes (e.g. morale). By contrast, employees from **Service Canada** often have more in common with colleagues from **Labour Program**, and together **report greater job demands and fewer job resources** than those from ESD. While noted as areas of concern for the department as a whole, employees in **Service Canada** report the **highest** levels of **psychological distress** and **burnout**.



### Geographic Location

There are significant differences on all workplace measures depending on where people work. In general, the **NCR and Quebec** regions report **lower job demands** and **higher job resources**, and experience slightly better well-being outcomes. **Ontario and West and Territories** regions report the **highest job demands** and **lowest job resources**, and experience the most negative well-being outcomes. The **Atlantic** region experiences **healthier well-being outcomes** relative to colleagues in other areas.



### Supervisor/Manager vs. Other Employees

Relative to non-supervising employees, **supervisor/managers** report **higher job demands** and **higher resources**; they also have **healthier** workplace well-being outcomes.



### Citizen-facing vs. Non-Citizen-facing

**Citizen-facing employees** report **higher levels of job stress** than their colleagues. A greater proportion of citizen-facing respondents feel their work is **not appreciated or recognized**, report a **lower sense of control** over their work, and a **lower sense of impact** in their job relative to their non-citizen-facing colleagues. **Citizen-facing respondents** report **lower levels of morale** and significantly **higher levels of burnout**.





## MAIN DRIVERS OF WORKPLACE WELL-BEING OUTCOMES

While each outcome has a unique set of workplace demands and resources that act as the main drivers, two factors are most prevalent when we look at ESDC as a whole:

### ***Autonomy*** and ***Meaning***.

These findings are consistent with other research which points to the critical importance of autonomy, competence, meaning and relatedness to workplace well-being. In essence, strengthening these two workplace factors alone will improve well being outcomes.

**ENGAGEMENT** is most strongly predicted by Competence, ***Meaning*** and Group Culture



**MORALE** is most strongly predicted by ***Autonomy, Meaning*** and Org Support

**BURNOUT** is most strongly predicted by ***Autonomy, Meaning*** and Job Stress



**PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS** is most strongly predicted by ***Autonomy***, Job Stress and Relatedness

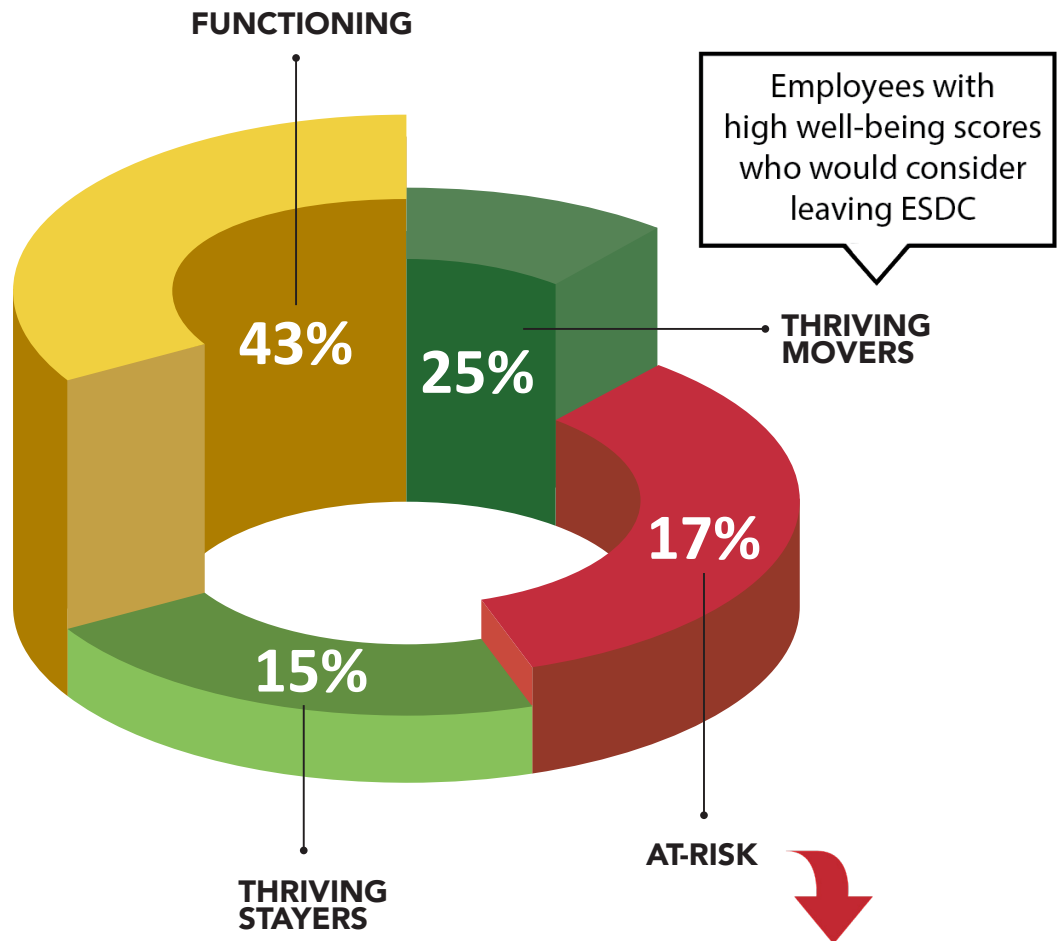


**TURNOVER INTENTIONS** are most strongly predicted by ***Autonomy, Meaning*** and Org Support



## WORKPLACE WELL-BEING GROUPS

An in-depth analysis identified four distinct respondent groups at ESDC based on their workplace well-being outcome scores: An **At-Risk** group (17%), a **Functioning** group (43%), **Thriving Movers** (25%) and **Thriving Stayers** (15%). Both groups of **thriving employees** have the **healthiest scores** on each of the five workplace well-being outcomes; where they differ is in their intentions to leave. Although their turnover intentions remain lower than average, the Thriving Movers may still be more likely to consider career opportunities outside of ESDC relative to the Thriving Stayers.



The **At-Risk** group shows the lowest levels of engagement and morale, the highest levels of burnout and psychological distress, and the greatest intentions to leave. On average, this group is at high risk for meeting the clinical threshold for an anxiety or depressive disorder. Additional analysis isolated key workplace factors correlated with membership in the At-Risk group. These employees are more likely to report: (1) lower levels of **autonomy**, (2) less **meaningfulness** at work, (3) elevated levels of **job stress**, (4) less **organizational support**, and (5) a reduced **sense of belonging**. The At-Risk group has higher proportions of employees: in **mid-career**; who are **citizen-facing**; in **non-supervisory** roles; or **younger** than 35.

## KEY AREAS OF ACTION IDENTIFIED AT THE DEPARTMENTAL LEVEL



Understanding key drivers affecting workplace well-being outcomes can assist leaders to identify more precise responses. At the same time, there may be creative ways to improve workplace well-being outcomes by strengthening workplace factors of concern that may not be key predictors. This is because the workplace is a dynamic environment, and job demands, resources and workplace well-being outcomes are all interconnected (see pg 14 of the full report for more information). Finally, sometimes the way to address an area of challenge is to leverage an area of strength. In identifying areas of action:



**Align actions to the source of the challenge:** When we think about workplace areas of concern, either job demands or resources, we need to be aware of where they 'live': are they a characteristic of individuals, teams, leaders, or the organization itself? When identifying responses to workplace challenges, match these to the source of the workplace challenge.



**Use a combined "top down" (strategic) and "Bottom up" (proactive) approach:** Strategic interventions through Human Resource Management and transformational leadership initiatives can foster employee engagement. These can have an important, system-level impact on the organization and its employees by supporting a healthy work environment. Proactive approaches encourage employees to take the initiative to develop and/or mobilize existing resources, with the result that employees are healthier and more productive.



**Remember we have a mutual responsibility to each do our part to foster a psychologically healthy and safe workplace:** Find creative ways to include a diversity of employees in developing responses to workplace mental health issues that affect them.



## NEXT STEPS

Every team within ESDC is unique, with its own strengths and challenges. The work environment is complex, and creating a psychologically healthy and safe workplace requires ongoing attention and management. Leaders at all levels are encouraged to consider these, and other survey findings, to create integrated action plans going forward. In addition to activities that target specific workplace factors, below are actions that leaders and employees at all levels of the organization can take to support a psychologically healthy and safe workplace.



### INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

- To demonstrate their commitment to action, build trust and support transparent and meaningful conversations throughout the Department at all levels, leaders are invited to share the results of the survey with all employees. Doing so acknowledges that employees have been heard, and will foster their engagement in finding solutions and being part of the change.
- Employees at all levels are encouraged to access tools and resources to manage individual workplace mental health and build resiliency.



### TEAM LEVEL

- Hold discussions with senior staff to understand the WMH survey results, and reflect on what is working and what needs improvement. Include employees in discussions about how to move forward to address areas of concern.
- Integrate information from WMH survey with findings from other surveys and data sources to create integrated action plans.



## ORGANIZATION LEVEL

- Empower and equip Workplace Mental Health Champions, representatives from various employee networks, and other enabling services to use WMH and other survey results to inform dialogue, discussion and action at multiple levels. Use communications to spark conversations and encourage involvement by sharing actions and lessons learned.
- Find concrete opportunities to support workplace mental health throughout the department. Get familiar with WMH and other survey results, and with the next Workplace Mental Health Three-Year Action Plan (2018-2021), to help identify what branches or regions can do to address identified challenges. Commit to trying something new, be it a large change or something smaller.



## LOOKING FORWARD

Thank you to the ESDC employees who generously provided their time and thoughts when completing this survey. Your contribution has established an important baseline that we will continue to learn from while working towards creating a psychologically healthy and safe workplace for all employees at ESDC. Stay tuned for the second iteration of the Workplace Mental Health Survey scheduled to launch in 2019.

For the full report, or more information on ESDC's Workplace Mental Health Survey, please go to

<http://iservice.prv/eng/hr/mhw/survey/index.shtml>,

or contact the survey team at

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