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Study of Causes and Impacts of Harassment and Discrimination of Persons with Disabilities in the Federal Public Service

Final report

Prepared for the Office of Public Service Accessibility

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Prepared for: the Office of Public Service Accessibility

Supplier: Phoenix Strategic Perspectives Inc.

Registration Number: POR 083-21

Aussi disponible en français sous le titre : Étude des causes et des répercussions du harcèlement et de la discrimination subis par les personnes en situation de handicap dans la fonction publique fédérale

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Introduction	5
Background and Objectives	5
Methodology.....	6
Use and Limitations of Qualitative Research.....	7
Note to the Reader	7
Detailed Findings	8
Section 1: Background Information.....	8
Section 2: Nature of Harassment and Discrimination	10
Section 3: Workplace Perceptions.....	21
Section 4: Impact of Harassment and Discrimination	28
Section 5: Addressing Harassment and Discrimination in the Workplace	31
Recommendations.....	40
Appendix	42
Technical Specifications	42
Research Instruments.....	44
Statement of Political Neutrality.....	69

Executive Summary

Harassment and discrimination have been identified as workplace challenges in Canada's federal public service. Results from the Public Service Employee Survey provide evidence that the public service has challenges in welcoming and including members of equity-seeking groups and that rates of harassment and discrimination remain high for persons with disabilities. Past studies such as the [2019 Benchmarking Study of Workplace Accommodations and the Joint Union/Management Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion](#) report that harassment and discrimination are identified as barriers by persons with disabilities.

The Office of Public Service Accessibility (OPSA) contracted Phoenix Strategic Perspectives (Phoenix SPI) to conduct qualitative public opinion research to explore more deeply the perspectives and work life experience of persons with disabilities in the federal public service vis-à-vis harassment and discrimination. The main objective was to gain a better understanding of the causes and impacts of harassment and discrimination for employees with disabilities. The findings are intended to help inform recommendations to address the causes and impacts of harassment and discrimination in the workplace and ensure a healthy and respectful work environment for all.

This research included 53 in-depth interviews conducted with employees of the core public administration who identify as a person with a disability who believed they personally experienced harassment or discrimination in the last three years (i.e., September 2020 through January 2023). Interviews were conducted by tele- and video-conferencing systems between November 6, 2022, and January 11, 2023.

Participants were recruited using an online screening questionnaire made available through a link in email announcements distributed by OPSA through the Persons with Disabilities Champions and Chairs Committee (PwDCCC). The PwDCCC supports public service employment equity objectives by serving as a forum for networking and sharing of employment equity best practices among departments and agencies. The PwDCCC includes more than 110 Champions for Persons with Disabilities and Employee Network Chairs from departments and agencies across the public service and is chaired by a Deputy Minister Champion for Federal Employees with Disabilities.

This public opinion research was qualitative (not quantitative). Qualitative research is designed to reveal a rich range of opinions and generate directional insights. The findings are not (nor were they intended to be) projectable to the full population of employees of the core public administration who identify as a person with a disability who has experienced harassment or discrimination in the last three years.

Presented below is a summary of key findings that participants described based on their personal experiences:

- Incidents of harassment and discrimination tend to arise from a request for accommodations.
 - Participants usually experienced incidents of harassment in the context of requested accommodations. This most often involved the attitude of superiors, and occasionally the attitudes of coworkers, regarding accommodations. Incidents of harassment also occurred routinely in the context of team meetings, work performance and productivity, formal performance evaluations, and career advancement.
 - Participants experienced incidents of discrimination most often when they had difficulties obtaining workplace accommodations. Difficulties related to the following: the level of effort required to support requested accommodations; delays in getting the accommodations; refusals of requests for accommodations; insufficient accommodations; limited or no assistance installing workplace accommodations; and removal of existing accommodations.
- Incidents of harassment and discrimination took a variety of forms.
 - Examples of harassment that participants experienced included micro-management; being given work-related tasks that are unreasonable or impossible; exclusion; refusal to take complaints about harassment seriously; public humiliation (e.g., use of derogatory terms to refer to someone based on their health condition or disability); offensive remarks (e.g., being described as a 'problem' or 'not like everyone else').
 - Typical examples of discrimination that participants experienced included the duty to accommodate not being respected or fulfilled at all or in a timely manner; excessive burden of proof required to justify requested accommodations; expressions of disbelief regarding someone's disability and requested accommodations; and the impediment of career advancement.
- Both formal and informal actions were taken in response to harassment and discrimination.
 - Most participants took some form of action in response to the harassment or discrimination they experienced. These actions were both formal and informal, with formal action often following unsuccessful informal action.
 - Informal actions most often included bringing the issue directly to the attention of superiors, speaking with colleagues on how to handle the issue, documenting the incidents, and proactively informing colleagues of one's disability or health condition.
 - Formal action most often took the following forms: contacting an Informal Conflict Management System (ICMS), a union, an ombudsperson, human

resources, the Employment Assistance Program (EAP), or filing a formal complaint.

- Lack of knowledge viewed as root cause of harassment and discrimination.
 - In trying to explain what is at the root of their personal experiences of harassment and discrimination, participants most often pointed to lack of knowledge about disabilities and persons with disabilities. This included lack of knowledge and awareness about the types of challenges faced by persons with disabilities or about the nature and impact of various disabilities, as well as assumptions or prejudices about what is and is not a disability, and about what persons with disabilities can accomplish in the workplace.
- Participants' impressions of their work environment have been negatively affected by harassment and discrimination.
 - Most participants said their overall impression of their work environment was negatively affected, at least to some extent, by their experience of harassment or discrimination, and many indicated that it was significantly affected by this experience.
 - Terms consistently used by participants to describe their feelings about their work environment included 'cynical', 'dissatisfied', 'disillusioned', 'disengaged', 'disappointed', 'demoralized', and 'frustrated'.
- Most participants said their experience has had a negative impact on their day-to-day work, their career, and their private life.
 - Examples of ways in which participants' personal experiences of harassment and discrimination negatively affected their day-to-day work included the following: lower productivity at the workplace; difficulty focussing on work; less interest in doing work well; disengagement from colleagues; greater distrust of management; and an increased use of sick days.
 - Examples of ways in which participants' personal experiences have negatively affected their career progression and prospects within the federal public service included the following: receiving negative performance evaluations; acquiring a reputation as a problem employee; not being given the training needed to advance or leadership development opportunities; inability to use a manager as a reference or a manager being unwilling to provide a reference; and apprehensiveness about applying for advancement due to uncertainty regarding their accommodations.
 - Examples of ways participants' private lives have been affected included the following: sleep deprivation, increased stress and depression, which often resulted in individuals seeking medical assistance or counselling services; and difficulties with personal relationships.

Study of Causes and Impacts of Harassment and Discrimination
of Persons with Disabilities in the Federal Public Service

- Participants collectively identified a variety of things they think need to be in place to address the causes and reduce the incidence of harassment and discrimination in the workplace towards federal public servants with a disability or health condition.
 - The most frequently identified measure was mandatory training and/or education for managers. This included training and education with an emphasis on the following: the duty to accommodate, including appropriate and inappropriate language and behaviour regarding requests for accommodations; mediation and conflict resolution; performance appraisals, and how to provide constructive feedback; diversity and inclusion to increase awareness and knowledge; better understanding of disabilities, particularly non-apparent disabilities and conditions, such as Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD); and understanding the warning signs of harassment.

The contract value was \$95,810.55 (HST included).

Introduction

Background and Objectives

The OPSA was created in 2018 to assist departments in preparing for new accessibility requirements under the *Accessible Canada Act*, and to develop a Public Service Accessibility Strategy to improve accessibility government-wide. The OPSA mandate also includes the creation and management of a Centralized Enabling Workplace Fund. The objective of the Fund is to invest in innovative and experimental ideas, research, projects, and initiatives aimed at improving workplace accommodation practices. Barriers, such as harassment and discrimination, experienced by persons with disabilities in the workplace that have negative impacts on their recruitment, retention, and promotion are of primary concern to OPSA.

Harassment and discrimination have been identified as workplace challenges in Canada's public service. Results from the Public Service Employee Survey provide evidence that the public service has challenges in welcoming and including persons with disabilities. Past studies, such as the [2019 Benchmarking Study of Workplace Accommodations and the Joint Union/Management Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion](#), report that harassment and discrimination are consistently identified as barriers by persons with disabilities. Higher incidence rates result in increased levels of stress, negative attitudes towards career prospects, and harmful impacts on both mental and physical health.

A follow up online survey to the 2019 Benchmarking Study of Workplace Accommodations showed that respondents who reported experiencing harassment in the past 12 months were more likely than not to perceive a connection with their health conditions and disability. Almost three in four respondents who had recently experienced harassment said it was strongly or somewhat related to their condition or disability. This was especially true when an accommodation request was made to address barriers related to a mental health issue (two-thirds said the harassment was strongly related to their condition). Similarly, respondents who reported experiencing discrimination in the past 12 months were likely to perceive a connection with their health conditions and disability. A large majority believed the discrimination experienced was at least partially related to their condition or disability.

The purpose of this research was to explore more deeply the perspectives and work life experience of persons with disabilities in the federal public service who have experienced harassment or discrimination. The main objectives were to better understand the following:

- the causes of harassment and discrimination towards public servants with disabilities in the workplace;

- the impacts of harassment and discrimination towards public servants with disabilities in the workplace and in their personal lives; and
- the impacts of harassment and discrimination on the recruitment, retention, and promotion of persons with disabilities.

The insights from the research will be used to help inform recommendations designed to address the causes and impacts of harassment and discrimination identified by the research. The anticipated outcome is fewer incidences of harassment and discrimination towards public servants with disabilities in the workplace and an improved work environment that has a positive impact on recruitment, retention, and promotion of persons with disabilities.

Methodology

To achieve the objectives of this research project, 53 in-depth interviews were conducted with employees of the core public administration who identify as a person with a disability who believe they personally experienced harassment or discrimination between September 2020 and January 2023. Some experienced both harassment and discrimination.

Note to reader: The participants discussed their perspectives and personal experiences of incidents they felt constituted workplace harassment and discrimination. Not all incidents, however, had been reported via a formal or informal process. In addition, not all reported incidents had been clearly determined to be founded incidents of harassment or discrimination (at the time of the interview).

The research was designed to include a sample of federal public servants that reflects the population. Efforts were taken to draw participants from across the country, from different age groups, from different departments and agencies, from management and non-management groups, as well as by type of disability, gender, and length of employment.

Participants were recruited using an online screening questionnaire made available through a link in email announcements distributed by OPSA through the assistance of the Persons with Disabilities Champions and Chairs Committee (PwDCCC). The PwDCCC supports public service employment equity objectives, by serving as a forum for networking and sharing of employment equity best practices among departments and agencies. The PwDCCC includes more than 110 Champions for Persons with Disabilities and Employee Network Chairs from departments and agencies across the public service and is chaired by a Deputy Minister Champion for Federal Employees with Disabilities.

Interviews were conducted by tele- and video-conferencing systems between November 6, 2022, and January 11, 2023. For a more complete description of the methodology, please refer to the Appendix: [Technical Specifications](#).

Use and Limitations of Qualitative Research

This public opinion research was qualitative (not quantitative). Qualitative research is designed to reveal a rich range of opinions and generate directional insights. This methodology was well-suited to the research objectives of this study because it allowed participants to share, in their own words, their perspectives and personal experiences of harassment and/or discrimination and to offer feedback on how to address the causes and reduce the incidence of harassment and/or discrimination in the workplace.

The findings are not (nor were they intended to be) projectable to the full population of employees of the core public administration who identify as a person with a disability who has experienced harassment or discrimination in the last three years. Statistics on the incidence of harassment and discrimination in the federal public service, as well as the connection to health conditions and disabilities, is well-documented (Public Service Employee Survey; Federal Public Servants with Disabilities: Follow Up Survey on Workplace Accommodations – 2019). As detailed in the [Background and Objectives](#), the purpose of this research was to explore more deeply the perspectives and experiences of harassment and/or discrimination of persons with disabilities in the federal public service.

Note to the Reader

[Appended](#) to this report are the following materials: the recruitment materials, the online screening questionnaire, and the interview guide.

Detailed Findings

Section 1: Background Information

This section of the report provides background information on participants with a focus on their employment in the federal public service, the nature of their disability or health condition, and their experiences with harassment and discrimination in the workplace in the last three years. Note to reader: For editorial ease, 'disability' and 'condition' are referred to in the singular throughout the report but many research participants reported having more than one disability or health condition.

1.1 Most participants have worked in the federal public service for at least a decade.

Research participants have been working in the federal public service varied from one year to over 30 years. Most participants have been working in the federal public service for at least 10 years, and close to half have been employed by the core public administration for at least 20 years. During their careers, many of the research participants have worked for more than one department or agency.

1.2 Participants collectively identified a variety of specific conditions when describing the nature of their disability and health conditions.

Well over half the research participants reported having more than one disability or health condition, with many describing their disability or condition as non-apparent. When it came to types of disabilities or health conditions, over half described themselves as having a physical disability, while nearly half described themselves as having a psychological disorder and/or a cognitive or learning disability. The most frequently identified cognitive or learning disability was attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), while the psychological disorders most reported were depression and anxiety. The physical disabilities identified by participants varied, from visual and hearing impairments to mobility issues and chronic pain, among others.

Note to reader: The descriptions of disabilities being used in this report are consistent with those found in the Public Service Employee Survey. Details are available in the [interview guide](#) which can be found in the Appendix.

1.3 Nearly all participants said their disability or condition is permanent.

Nearly all research participants described their disability or condition as permanent. Only a few said their disability is recurring or episodic and none described it as temporary. When asked if their disability or health condition changed since their experience of harassment and/or discrimination, some participants said it had. In all these instances, the disability or condition was described as worse or aggravated.

Most participants who said their disability or condition had worsened since their experience of harassment and/or discrimination have a psychological disorder. For these participants, their disability or condition was aggravated because of their experience of harassment or discrimination. There were also a few participants with a physical disability or health condition that has a degenerative component who specified that their disability or condition had worsened *since* their experience of harassment and/or discrimination but not because of that experience.

In addition, many participants noted later in the interview that they now experience conditions such as anxiety, depression, and sleep loss because of their experience of harassment or discrimination. Their disability or health condition has not been directly affected by the harassment and discrimination, but these negative experiences have resulted in secondary or additional conditions.

1.4 Many relate harassment and discrimination completely to their disability or health condition.

Many participants believe that the harassment and/or discrimination they experienced is completely related to their disability or health condition, while most of the rest believe it was mainly or at least partly related to this. A few participants said they believe that what they experienced is related to their disability or health condition, but that they are unsure to what extent.

Other factors believed to be informing harassment and/or discrimination were mentioned by small numbers of participants. Factors included:

- Racism
- Gender bias, and specifically against women and members of the 2SLGBTQI+ community
- Biases against younger, highly educated individuals
- Biases against older employees
- Professional jealousy
- Temperament/character
- Personality conflicts/clashes
- Systemic problems in the federal public service such as...
 - a sense of immunity and impunity, i.e., those responsible for harassment and/or discrimination are not held accountable for it,
 - poor management/lack of management skills,
 - favouritism/preferential treatment, and
 - organizational resistance to change and flexible work environments.

1.5 Approximately half said the harassment and discrimination is ongoing.

Participants were equally divided when asked if the harassment and discrimination to which they have been subjected is going on now or is something that happened in the past. The length of time the harassment and/or discrimination experienced by participants has been going on ranged from as recently as the last six months to over 20 years. In most instances, the harassment and/or discrimination was reported as having lasted between one to five years, but in some cases, it has been going on for longer than five years. When asked to describe the frequency of the harassment and/or discrimination to which they are/were subjected, many described it as continuous or regular, some as occasional, and a few as infrequent or as an isolated incident.

Section 2: Nature of Harassment and Discrimination

This section reports on the nature of the harassment and discrimination experienced by participants and the circumstances surrounding it, but it begins by presenting participants' perceptions of what constitutes harassment and discrimination in the context of the federal public service.

2.1 Participants could easily point to what constitutes 'harassment' and 'discrimination'.

Participants had no difficulty identifying what comes to mind when they think of harassment and discrimination in the context of the federal public service. Moreover, when describing these behaviours, participants usually identified similar types of characteristics, but they may have described them in different ways. In other words, differences represented variations on common themes. In the descriptions that follow, expressions commonly used by participants to describe harassment and discrimination are identified using quotation marks.

Note to reader: On an as-needed basis, definitions of harassment and discrimination from the Public Service Employee Survey could be shared with participants. No participants requested this information.

Harassment:

In describing what comes to mind when they think of harassment, participants typically mentioned some combination of the following: forms of harassment, its purpose, its impact on those subject to it, and its unethical/immoral nature.

- **Forms of harassment:** Harassment was described as 'conduct', 'behaviour' 'actions', 'speech', but also 'tone', and 'demeanor/body language' that can take the following forms:
 - Threats
 - Insults
 - Bullying

- Insinuations
- Defamatory comments
- Unreasonable monitoring/oversight
- Unreasonable work expectations
- Loss of work responsibilities
- Gaslighting
- Microaggressions
- Sharing private personal information
- Spreading rumours.

- **Purpose of harassment:** Harassment has the purpose of 'demeaning', 'diminishing', 'degrading', 'dismissing', 'embarrassing', 'humiliating' 'belittling', 'intimidating', and 'punishing' the individual subjected to it. Most participants did not specifically describe harassment as 'intentional' behaviour; however, they did attribute purpose to the harassment. This suggests that intentionality is perceived to be a characteristic of harassment.
- **Impact/effect of harassment:** Many participants emphasized the impact or effect harassment has on individuals subjected to it, with a focus on it being 'offensive', 'harmful', or 'hurtful'.
- **Unethical/immoral nature:** Many participants ascribed an ethical/moral character to harassment. This went beyond, or was in addition to, both the motive of those who perpetrate it and the way it is perceived by those subjected to it. This included describing harassment as behaviour that is 'unacceptable', 'improper', 'unjustified', 'inappropriate', or 'unwarranted'.

A few participants observed that harassment occurs in the context of a power or authority relationship, such as between a superior and a subordinate, and represents an abuse of authority or power on the part of the former.

Discrimination:

There was widespread agreement among participants that discrimination means treating people 'differently', 'unfairly', 'inequitably', or 'unequally' 'because of' or 'based on' a 'characteristic', 'who they are', or a 'prohibited ground'. Most participants also identified consequences or effects of discrimination in the federal public service, including the following:

- Denying someone work-related opportunities
- Overlooking people for promotion
- Impeding people's career advancement
- Denying accommodations/not respecting the duty to accommodate
- Judging people's disabilities instead of abilities
- Using an aspect of people's identity against them
- Being excluded from what is available to others.

In the context of the discussion about the nature of harassment and discrimination, a few participants observed that the two behaviours can be related. Specifically, harassment can be based on discrimination if someone has been singled-out for mistreatment because of a personal characteristic.

Most participants described what they personally experienced as both harassment and discrimination, with the others almost equally divided between saying they have experienced either discrimination or harassment. A few participants were unsure whether what they experienced was harassment or discrimination but felt certain that the behaviour in question was inappropriate.

2.2 Incidents of harassment and discrimination tend to arise from a request for accommodations.

Participants indicated that their personal experiences of incidents of harassment routinely occurred in the context of requested workplace accommodations. This most often involved the attitude of superiors, such as managers, team leaders, or supervisors, and occasionally the attitudes of coworkers regarding such accommodations. Examples of personal experiences of incidents of harassment also occurred in the context of the following:

- Team meetings
- Work performance evaluations
- Matters pertaining to promotion or career advancement
- Matters pertaining to work-related roles and responsibilities
- Day-to-day work-related interactions with colleagues and managers.

Circumstances in which incidents of discrimination arose most often involved difficulties or problems related to workplace accommodations and/or the duty to accommodate. Many incidents of discrimination also related to promotion, career advancement, and performance evaluations. In some instances, incidents of discrimination may have begun with matters related to accommodations and then led to matters related to promotion or performance assessments.

2.3 Harassment and discrimination took a variety of forms.

Participants indicated that their personal experiences of incidents of harassment and discrimination that occurred within these kinds of contexts took a variety of forms. Examples of experiences of harassment routinely included the following:

- Excessive control or micro-management, including ...
 - constant check-ins about work-related responsibilities, e.g., 'has this been done yet', 'when will this be done'; and

- being asked to account for one's movements, e.g., 'where were you?', 'why were you away from your desk?'
- Being given work-related tasks, including performance targets, that are unreasonable or impossible to complete.
- Exclusion, including being ignored in team meetings, having input dismissed, not responding to emails, and setting team meetings when one is not available.
- Refusal to take complaints about harassment seriously and follow-up on them, e.g., 'that's just so-and-so's way', 'don't be so sensitive', or 'you'll just have to work this out'.
- Public humiliation, including:
 - references in one's presence to 'supposed' disabilities;
 - joking about someone's condition in the presence of others;
 - using derogatory terms to refer to someone based on their health condition or disability;
 - criticism of one's clothing;
 - aggressive responses to emails as well as copying the response to others not included in the original email;
 - sighs, groans, or eye-rolling in response to one's interventions or contributions in team meetings; and
 - critical comments from co-workers about accommodations.
- Offensive remarks, including being described as 'flaky', a 'problem', 'high maintenance', 'very demanding', 'not up-to-par', 'not like everyone else', 'not management material', 'not emotionally stable enough to be an executive', 'lacking integrity', 'lacking in communication skills', and 'placing burdens on others' because of one's accommodations.

A host of other examples of personal experiences of harassment were provided, which included the following:

- Loss of work responsibilities
- Being given work outside of one's responsibilities
- Questioning the legitimacy of documentation submitted in support of accommodation requests, e.g., doctor's notes, documents from insurance company
- Intimidation, including threats of job/position loss or termination
- Aggressive behaviour, i.e., slamming hands on desk, screaming
- Spreading rumours to damage one's professional reputation
- Sharing personal information with individuals who have no right to know it

- Aggressive and intrusive questioning regarding requested accommodations
- Describing work-related accommodations as ‘special treatment’
- Being the subject of unfair, inaccurate, defamatory complaints from colleagues.
- Being made to work in an unsafe environment.

Examples of personal experiences of discrimination included the following:

- The level of effort needed to get accommodations, and specifically, the excessive burden of proof to justify the requested accommodations. This includes things like formal assessments, internal assessments, medical certificates, certificates from insurers, and the requirement to re-confirm a health condition or disability that is documented as ‘permanent’.
- Unreasonable delays in obtaining accommodations/duty to accommodate not being fulfilled in a timely manner.
- Refusal of requests for accommodations.
- Receipt of insufficient or deficient accommodations/duty to accommodate not being implemented in a complete and/or effective manner.
- Existing accommodations being removed or scaled-back.
- Pushback or resistance in response to requests for accommodation, e.g., ‘that will be expensive’, ‘that will take time’, and ‘is that really necessary?’.
- Being submitted to humiliating questioning about one’s disability or health condition, e.g., ‘We can’t approve you for work-related travel unless you can prove that you can dress yourself on your own’.
- Expressions of disbelief regarding someone’s health condition or disability or the accommodations requested, including the following:
 - Disbelief that someone has a disability or health condition, e.g., ‘You can’t get PTSD from an accident’.
 - Doubt that a condition is a ‘real’ work-related disability or health condition, e.g., ‘ADHD doesn’t really exist’, ‘That’s no excuse for not getting your work done’, ‘You can control this if you really try’, or ‘You need to get your act together’.
 - Doubt that the health condition or disability is serious enough to require the accommodation or level of accommodation requested, e.g., ‘It’s not that I don’t believe you but ...?’, ‘I know someone with the same condition, and they don’t need that’, or ‘You don’t look like you have any problems’.
- Barriers to career advancement because of one’s condition or disability, including...
 - unfair performance evaluations;
 - being denied a promotion;

- not being considered for a promotion;
- being refused a letter of recommendation;
- being actively dissuaded from applying for a promotion;
- being denied work-related advancement opportunities or responsibilities;
- lack of training and mentoring opportunities;
- lack of/insufficient accommodations on exams and in competitions;
- exclusion from work-related travel; and
- adapted exams that are more complicated than the non-adapted versions.

Additional examples of personal experiences of discrimination included the following:

- Scaling back work-related responsibilities instead of providing the accommodations needed to adequately perform these responsibilities.
- Being offered a day off work instead of being accommodated in a way that would allow attendance of a workplace function.
- Being forced to take sick leave instead of implementing work-related accommodations that would allow someone to complete their work-related responsibilities.
- Limited or no assistance with the installation of workplace accommodations.
- Poor implementation of accommodations resulting in tensions with coworkers.
- Implementing changes to the workplace without regard to the needs of persons with a disability or health condition. Examples include a person who is blind, or who has a vision impairment, being required to work in an open concept environment, mandatory participation in video-conferencing for people who are neurodivergent, and relocating work materials to areas difficult to access for a person with a mobility problem.

2.4 Superiors were more often identified as the source of harassment and discrimination.

In almost all instances, participants perceived the source of their personal experiences of harassment and discrimination to be their superiors.. Most often this included managers, supervisors, and team leaders, but in a few instances, it also involved people in director-level positions and higher. A few described the source of harassment and discrimination collectively as the 'entire chain of command' in their organization. In some instances, the source of harassment was identified as work colleagues, co-workers, and trainers.

2.5 Both informal and formal responses to harassment and discrimination.

Most participants took some form of action in response to the harassment and/or discrimination they experienced in the workplace. These actions were both informal and formal, with formal action often following unsuccessful informal action.

Informal actions most often included the following:

- Discussing the issue directly with superiors, which includes team leaders, supervisors, managers, and directors
- Speaking with colleagues and/or trusted acquaintances on how to proceed
- Documenting incidents
- Proactively informing colleagues of one's health condition or disability.

Formal action most often took the following forms:

- Contacting an Informal Conflict Management System (ICMS)
- Contacting a union
- Contacting an ombudsperson
- Contacting human resources
- Contacting the Employment Assistance Program (EAP)
- Applying for a different job
- Contacting a senior manager
- Launching a grievance or complaint
- Launching an access to information request
- Filing a human rights complaint.

2.6 Reasons for not responding to incidents of harassment and discrimination vary.

A few participants said they did not respond to the harassment and/or discrimination they experienced in the workplace. In explaining why, they identified a variety of reasons, although none of the reasons was identified by more than a few participants. Reasons include the following:

- **Apprehensions about impeding one's career progress:** A few participants said that they took no action out of fear of reprisals or because they did not want to impede their career progress, e.g., they did not want to 'make waves'. In a few instances this was described as a decision taken after speaking with colleagues or trusted acquaintances. These participants explained that they were informed by others, or intuited themselves, that responding might impede their career within the federal public service by making themselves the target of possible retaliatory action and/or being labelled as troublemakers. These were almost all participants who were at the beginning of their careers as federal public servants or who were in a probationary period or contract position. For those in non-permanent positions, fear of retribution was associated specifically with fear of job loss.

- **Apprehensiveness about the neutrality or objectivity of the resolution process:** A few participants explained that they did not take any action because this would involve dealings with members of upper management known to be acquaintances or friends of the individuals responsible for the discrimination or harassment in question. In other words, they feared (rightly or wrongly) that the process itself would be biased against them.
- **Behaviour rooted in lack of knowledge:** A few participants explained that they did not take any action because they attributed their personal experiences of discrimination or harassment to lack of knowledge and awareness not malice. Sometimes these participants added that their relationship with the individual in question is generally 'good', 'cordial', or 'collegial'.
- **Sense of guilt and stigma:** A few neurodivergent participants did not take any action because they were made to feel that they were the problem rather than the person responsible for their personal experiences of harassment and/or discrimination. In other words, they were made to feel that they were the ones who had to try harder to overcome their condition and make sure that it did not interfere with their work.
- **Being close to retirement:** In a few instances, participants noted that they are close or very close to retirement and chose to 'tough it out' until their retirement rather than invest time and energy in trying to resolve the issue.
- **Person responsible for harassment or discrimination moved on:** In a few instances, participants explained that they took no action because the person responsible for their personal experience of harassment and/or discrimination left their immediate workplace.
- **Not knowing how to proceed:** This included lack of knowledge about proper channels for reporting personal experiences of incidents of harassment and discrimination, not having a union representative to speak to, and not having an ombudsperson in their department at the time.
- **Perceived culture of favouritism:** This involved not feeling empowered to challenge discrimination related to career advancement due to a perception that there is a culture of favouritism when it comes to advancement in the federal public service. Specifically, there is no point in fighting a system in which senior management can always find ways to justify hiring who they want.
- **Bad previous experience:** Some were reluctant to act because of a prior incident which resulted in even more harassment.

2.7 Most say matters are not resolved to their satisfaction.

As noted in section [2.6 Reasons for not taking action](#), participants were almost equally divided when asked if their experience of harassment or discrimination to which they were subjected is going on at present or happened in the past. Asked explicitly if the matter has been resolved, and if so, whether it was resolved to their satisfaction, most participants

said no. Participants collectively identified numerous reasons to explain why these matters were not resolved or not resolved in a satisfactory way. These reasons are grouped into three categories based on the extent to which the matter was seen to be resolved or not resolved by the participant.

Matter not resolved:

Some participants explained that the matter was not resolved or has not yet been resolved for various reasons. Specifically,

- The accommodation needed was refused or the existing accommodation was removed or scaled back.
- The accommodation is still not in place and pursuing it has had negative impacts on one's reputation.
- Their experience of harassment or discrimination occurs less frequently but it still occurs from time to time.
- The matter has not been resolved yet—for example, it is in mediation, it is proceeding through various stages of the grievance process, or it is proceeding as a human rights complaint.
- Those responsible for the harassment and/or discrimination refused to acknowledge their actions, so the matter never progressed beyond conflicting accounts of the incidents.
- Their experience of harassment was not acknowledged for what it was, but instead it was described as a clash of personalities that must be worked out by the individuals involved.
- The matter was not resolved because the individual subjected to the harassment and/or discrimination chose to do nothing about it.
- There was insufficient evidence to convince management about the existence of harassment.
- Management refused to address the matter in a constructive way or negotiate in good faith.
- Upper management sided with the managers instead of holding them responsible or accountable.

Matter not resolved adequately or completely:

Some participants explained that the matter has not been resolved adequately or completely. Specifically,

- Their experience of harassment and/or discrimination has stopped, but only because...
 - the individual responsible moved to a new organization, or

- the individual subjected to the mistreatment changed jobs.
- Career advancement has been impeded because of their experience of harassment and discrimination, even though it has stopped.
- The management team keeps rotating and information about accommodations is not shared with incoming managers. As a result, the same kinds of problems related to accommodations recur periodically.
- The accommodations needed were obtained mostly or entirely through efforts of one's own (and costs to oneself) instead of because management respected the duty to accommodate.
- The accommodations needed were insufficient/inappropriate.
- The accommodations have been implemented in a way that creates another problem, such as physically ostracizing someone from their colleagues.
- Changes to the workplace environment continue to be implemented without regard to the needs of persons with a disability or health condition and without consulting them about such changes.
- The issues were only resolved because of the pandemic, specifically because of the introduction of work from home.
- Nothing has been done to address perceptions in the workplace that accommodations are preferential treatment.
- The matter has only been resolved because participants have taken sick leave in the face of harassment.

Matter not resolved because of the time and effort required and/or personal impact:

Some participants explained that the matter has not been resolved because of the time and/or effort required and/or the impact it has had on them. Specifically,

- The accommodations needed were finally obtained but the time and effort required to obtain them was unreasonable. It also creates cynicism and apprehensiveness about approaching management for assistance of any kind.
- The entire process was on ordeal, e.g., long, intimidating, frustrating, and has adversely affected people's health. There is a need to constantly fight to resolve these matters, which is tiring.

Those who considered the matter resolved to their satisfaction usually explained that they ultimately obtained the needed accommodations, that they left for a new job, or now work for a more understanding management team. Other reasons for satisfaction with the resolution of the matter included receiving financial compensation, obtaining sick day credits, and obtaining vacation leave credits.

2.8 Lack of knowledge viewed as roots of harassment and discrimination.

Participants most often pointed to a lack of knowledge about disabilities and persons with disabilities when trying to explain what is at the root of the harassment and/or discrimination experienced. This included lack of knowledge about the types of challenges faced by persons with disabilities and about the nature and impact of various disabilities, as well as assumptions or prejudices about what is and is not a disability, and assumptions or prejudices about what persons with disabilities can accomplish in the workplace.

Other explanations included the following:

- Lack of people management skills, especially in dealing with persons with disabilities.
- A culture in the federal public service that tolerates harassment and discrimination, i.e., those who perpetrate it do not suffer any consequences for their actions.
- Favouritism regarding promotions.
- Viewing accommodations as a problem instead of as a duty.
- ‘Careerism’/the desire to advance one’s career, resulting in an inclination to avoid, ignore or downplay issues or problems ‘on one’s watch’ in the hope that these problems will go away.
- A focus on productivity without a focus on what is needed for persons with disabilities to be productive, i.e., a focus on what people do not achieve instead of a focus on what will help them achieve.
- Lack of a clear, effective, efficient process for meeting the duty to accommodate.
- A desire to control (‘power tripping’) on the part of certain individuals.

Elements of the following were also mentioned: ableism, sexism, ageism, and racism.

2.9 Participants pointed to many things that could or should have been done differently to address matters.

Participants collectively identified several things they think could or should have been done to address the situations of harassment and discrimination. Note to reader: Participants tended to revisit these same things in greater detail later in the interview when asked about ways to counter harassment or discrimination and ensure a healthy work environment for all. To avoid repetition, specific details and concrete measures are discussed in [Section 5: Addressing Harassment and Discrimination in the Workplace.](#)

Most participants focussed on things they felt others should have done or things that should have been in place, including the following:

- Properly understanding the duty to accommodate in the federal public service, including mandatory training about it.
- Trusting employees concerning what they need in terms of accommodations.

- More willingness on the part of management to directly address issues.
- A more helpful attitude on the part of management when it comes to issues of accommodation instead of defaulting to the position 'this cannot be done'.
- Management retaining and sharing records of accommodations agreements so that everyone has a shared understanding of what is in place.
- Not having managers involved in issues related to accommodations at all/having this handled by a separate entity.
- Ensuring consequences for those responsible for harassment and discrimination.
- Putting in place an independent office/department/agent responsible for inquiring into issues of harassment and discrimination.
- Not having to revisit accommodations for conditions on record as 'permanent'.
- More understanding about non-apparent disabilities.
- Better ways of assessing the skills of persons with disabilities and accommodating them in job competitions.

Some participants focussed or also focussed on things they think they personally could or should have done differently. This most often included documenting the harassment and discrimination better and learning more about what to do when experiencing harassment or discrimination.

Other things participants think they could have done were identified by no more than a few and included the following: speaking up sooner; taking more serious action, such as filing a formal grievance or filing a human rights complaint; bringing in the union earlier; writing directly to upper management, e.g., deputy minister, ADM; and looking for another job instead of putting oneself through such an ordeal.

Section 3: Workplace Perceptions

This section reports on participants' perceptions of their workplace environment because of their experience of harassment and/or discrimination.

3.1 Most participants still work in an environment where they experienced harassment and/or discrimination.

Prior to exploring the impact of experiences of harassment and discrimination on perceptions of the workplace, participants were asked if they are currently working in the same environment in which they experienced this mistreatment. In response, most said they are still working in the same environment. Some indicated that they are no longer working in that environment, while a few specified that they are not currently in that

environment because they are on temporary assignment or secondment elsewhere, or on training, but that they will be returning to that environment.

Most participants said they are currently working remotely rather than in a Government of Canada office or facility because of the pandemic or, they work in a hybrid model which has them combining work from home with work onsite. A few said they are working remotely/via telework as the result of an agreement. Many described remote work as providing a better environment in relation to the harassment and/or discrimination they have experienced. To explain why, participants offered the following reasons:

- The ability to set up one's workstation to better accommodate oneself (presumably something that cannot be done as well in their workplace).
- No longer being subject to harassing behaviour because they are not in the physical work environment.
- No longer being subject to environmental factors related to the harassment and discrimination, e.g., ambient noise, lighting, scents, or accessibility issues.
- Remote work provides more opportunities for employment because positions are no longer limited by geography. It is possible to get a new job, away from the physical work environment in which they experienced harassment or discrimination.
- The stress of work-related harassment and discrimination is no longer compounded by other factors, such as a long commute to and from the onsite workspace.

On the other hand, some participants said that working remotely has made no real difference when it comes to the harassment and discrimination. A few said that working remotely has reproduced, and in some instances amplified, the harassment and/or discrimination experienced (or its effects). The following reasons were provided to explain why:

- **Less palpable sense of collegial support:** One thing that has helped participants cope with the harassment and discrimination experienced at work is the support or colleagues. This is less palpable now because of remote work, i.e., no longer being in the physical presence of colleagues.
- **More palpable feeling of exclusion:** The exclusion that is part of the harassment and/or discrimination experienced somehow feels more palpable when working remotely.
- **Micro-management:** The micro-management experienced at work has not changed or has increased since the move to remote work, e.g., being bombarded by emails and/or meeting requests.
- **Increased use of virtual meetings:** The requirement to take part in virtual meetings, something partly responsible for issues related to their experience of harassment and/or discrimination, has increased because of the move to remote work.

It was also suggested that a potential result of the pandemic and the move to remote work is that it is now easier for harassment to go undetected and uncorroborated by others. A few also said that they experienced problems setting themselves up at home with what was required technically to enable them to do their work properly. They did not link this to the harassment or discrimination experienced at work.

3.2 Participants' impressions of their work environment have been negatively affected by their experience of harassment and discrimination.

Most participants said their overall impression of their work environment has been negatively affected, at least to some extent, by their experience of harassment and/or discrimination. Terms routinely used by participants to describe their feelings in this regard included 'cynical', 'dissatisfied', 'disillusioned', 'disengaged', 'disappointed', 'demoralized', 'depressed', 'distrustful', and 'frustrated'. Some said they 'hate' their work environment to the point of wanting to quit if they could or wanting to change areas within their department or move outside their current department altogether.

Participants linked or attributed their negative feelings about their work environment to things that fell into four main categories, which are addressed below.

Satisfaction with job/ability to perform:

Some explained that because of their experience they no longer find their work and/or environment satisfying or are unable to function or function as well. This included,

- Frustration at not being able to do one's job to the best of one's ability because of not being properly accommodated.
- Difficulty finding satisfaction or fulfillment in one's work environment knowing that colleagues have negative impressions about you.
- The inability to find satisfaction or fulfillment in one's work, which can lead to lack of motivation, e.g., 'it is a job, not a career', 'marking time until retirement', or 'it's just a paycheque'.
- Uncertainty about wanting to work in an environment where co-workers harbour prejudices towards you based on lack of knowledge and awareness.
- Frustration and/or anger at having had to leave a job one loved or take a demotion to avoid harassment and/or discrimination.
- Difficulty coping with the work-related stress resulting from harassment and/or discrimination.
- A sense of guilt at not being able to keep up with one's work responsibilities and/or being made to feel that the problem is with oneself.
- Inability to do one's job effectively because of experiences of harassment and/or discrimination.

Apprehensions about career prospects:

This was identified by a few participants with a focus on the following,

- Impressions that there are no realistic prospects for advancement/career development because of their employer's unwillingness to accommodate.
- Apprehension about career advancement because of uncertainty regarding the fulfillment of needed accommodations.
- Impressions that pursuing issues of harassment and/or discrimination can adversely affect one's career prospects.

Realizations about one's work environment:

A few explained that, because of their experience, they have come to certain realizations about their work environment that lower it in their estimation. This included,

- Exasperation that it is so difficult to obtain work-related accommodations.
- A feeling that the duty to accommodate in the federal public service is much more talk than action.
- A feeling that one has been exposed to an ugly reality about work in the federal public service—specifically, the impression that experiences with harassment and discrimination point to wider systemic problems in the general culture of the federal public service.
- A realization that work-related satisfaction can be so precarious, i.e., one bad manager can make all the difference.

A few explained that they have become more cautious or wary about their work environment because of their experience. This included distrust of management in general and apprehension about approaching management about work-related issues as well as a distrust of some colleagues.

Participants who said that their overall impression of their work environment was not affected or influenced by their experience of harassment and/or discrimination provided the following reasons to explain why:

- The overall work environment is positive despite their experience.
- They have been supported by work colleagues throughout their experience.
- The daily work routine helped them cope with their experience.
- The experience changed their impression of themselves, not their workplace.
- The problems they experience(d) are the result of one or more specific individuals, not their work environment.

3.3 A number of things help people deal with the experience of harassment and/or discrimination.

Most participants identified something in their work environment that helps/helped them cope with their experience of harassment and/or discrimination. The most frequently identified factor was the support of colleagues. This most often included peers/co-workers, but it also included former managers. The type of support provided by colleagues included empathy, encouragement and support, advice on who to consult or how to proceed, and validation, i.e., confirmation of participants' impressions of harassment and/or discrimination. Many participants also identified remote work as providing a better environment in relation to their experiences of harassment and discrimination in the workplace.

Beyond the support of colleagues and remote work, things that help/helped participants tended to fall into two categories: workplace supports and personal strategies/efforts.

- **Workplace supports:** This included such things as the EAP, employees with disabilities networks, Persons with Disabilities champions, a union, an ombudsperson, ICMS services, and sick leave.
- **Personal strategies:** This included such things as the following: immersing oneself in one's work/serving the public, listening to music while working, trying to remain confident/not backing down, avoiding the harassers as much as possible, walking/exercising during the work day, keeping records/documenting the harassment and/or discrimination, as well as being a good advocate for oneself/making oneself knowledgeable about the duty to accommodate and the rights of federal public servants.

A few participants said that there is nothing in their work environment that helps/helped them cope or deal with their experience of harassment and/or discrimination. Sometimes these participants added that the only thing that helped was either that they left the work environment or that the person responsible for harassment and/or discrimination left. A few others specified that the only things that really helped them cope were external to the work environment, including family/spousal support, therapy and/or medical assistance.

3.4 Many things exacerbate the experience of harassment and discrimination.

Participants collectively identified many things in their work environment that make their experience of harassment and/or discrimination worse. Things identified by participants that make it more difficult to cope included the following:

- The time and energy required to resolve such matters, something even more frustrating when the issues should be relatively easy to resolve or when the same issues recur periodically (i.e., they are never resolved once and for all).
- Lack of guidance/orientation/clarity in terms of how to proceed.

- Having to revisit the experience of harassment and/or discrimination when trying to resolve it, e.g., when filing a grievance or when having to meet with individuals responsible through ICMS services.
- The sense of isolation/abandonment when dealing with such matters, e.g., the sense that one is 'not being heard', 'believed', respected/valued', and/or the feeling that one is being 'dismissed' 'marginalized', or 'ignored'.
- The need to keep working while dealing with the harassment and/or discrimination in question, including working with those responsible for it.
- The need to keep working in the absence of accommodations needed to do so effectively (and having one's performance evaluated in that context).
- A sense of despair/pessimism/frustration when dealing with such issues, including the following:
 - doubts that those responsible will face consequences;
 - fears that in trying to address the issue one's career prospects are being adversely affected by 'making waves' and/or acquiring a reputation of being a 'troublemaker' or 'problem employee';
 - frustration because information about accommodations seem to go missing among managers or is not shared when changes in management occur, resulting in having to revisit the same issues periodically without ever resolving them;
 - the sense that management's default position when faced with requests for accommodation is 'no/this can't be done';
 - the impression that what one is experiencing is symptomatic of a wider culture of harassment and discrimination, and that as a result one is likely to have to confront it again; and
 - feeling trapped, i.e., having to keep working and not being able to quit.
- The sense that one will never achieve one's full professional potential/that one's career advancement prospects are inherently limited/adversely affected.
- Widespread unfamiliarity about non-apparent disabilities, including impressions that they are not real or, if real, do not require any work-related accommodations.

The following were identified by only a few participants as things that made the harassment and discrimination worse:

- The discrepancy between the federal public service's commitment to accommodating employees with disabilities and the reality of what happens when this commitment is tested.
- Persons with disabilities are generally not consulted when it comes to renovations in public sector workspaces. This makes the experience of harassment and discrimination

worse because it suggests to persons with disabilities that they will always have fight for themselves when it comes to the duty to accommodate.

- The attempt to downplay issues of harassment and discrimination in the federal public service, e.g., using non-disclosure agreements to keep complaints from receiving publicity.
- A genuine sense of fear/feeling unsafe in one's work environment.
- Feelings of self-doubt/guilt/questioning oneself/blaming oneself.

3.5 Virtually everyone thinks there is a possibility of facing harassment/discrimination in current work environment.

Almost all participants who were asked suggested that there is at least a possibility that they will be subjected to harassment and/or discrimination in their current work situation, though few characterized this as 'likely' or 'very likely'. Note to reader: Approximately half the participants were not asked this question because they made it clear earlier in the interview that the harassment and/or discrimination they have experienced is ongoing. Consequently, it was not appropriate to ask them this question.

The most frequently given explanation for this possibility is the impression that the likelihood of being subjected to harassment and discrimination depends to a great extent on one's superiors, e.g., team leaders, managers, directors. In this regard, a few participants noted that they are currently not experiencing harassment and/or discrimination because they no longer work under those responsible for it.

Other reasons informing perceptions that experiencing harassment and/or discrimination is a possibility included the following:

- The impression that those responsible for their experience of harassment/discrimination do not face the consequences of their actions. Because it is allowed to happen with impunity, it is always possible that it will recur.
- A feeling of acquiring a reputation as a 'troublemaker' or 'problem employee'.
- The impression that management tends to push back when it comes to requests for accommodation/that its default approach is to find problems instead of finding solutions.
- The impression that there is a culture of harassment and discrimination in the federal public service.
- The widespread lack of awareness or knowledge about non-apparent disabilities that informs harassment and discrimination.
- The absence of training for managers on the duty to accommodate.

- Poor or negative performance evaluations that will limit career advancement opportunities.
- Past experiences of having been treated inequitably/unfairly denied advancement opportunities.
- Persons with disabilities are generally not consulted when it comes to renovations in federal public sector workspaces.

Few participants described themselves as unlikely to be subjected to harassment and/or discrimination in their current work environment. Those who did describe this as unlikely provided the following reasons to explain why:

- Being currently away from their substantive position/away from the environment in which harassment and/or discrimination were experienced.
- Being close to retirement.
- As a result of remote work.
- As a result of being better prepared to confront it and not letting it pass without taking some action.
- As a result of the pandemic, mental health issues have received more attention and there is less stigma attached to them and more awareness about them.
- As a result of deciding to ‘keep one’s heads down’ and ‘not make waves’ to not adversely affect career prospects.

Section 4: Impact of Harassment and Discrimination

This section reports participant’s feedback in relation to the impact or consequences of the harassment and/or discrimination they experienced related to their disability or health condition. This includes impacts on their day-to-day work, their career progression or prospects within the public service, and their personal or private life.

4.1 Most said their experience has had an impact on their day-to-day work.

Most participants felt that their experience of harassment and/or discrimination negatively impacted their day-to-day work. They identified various ways in which this has happened, with the most frequently identified ones including the following:

- Reduced productivity/inability to function to their full potential at the workplace.
- Difficulty focussing on work because of increased tension and/or anxiety—for example, less attention to detail.
- Less interest in doing work well and/or no, or limited, motivation to do more than the bare minimum, e.g., an unwillingness to work overtime.

- Hyper-vigilance/anxiety because of being micro-managed by one's supervisor.
- Greater distrust of management, e.g., being apprehensive about approaching management for any reason out of fear of meeting resistance.
- Disengagement from colleagues.
- Increased use of sick days.
- Being less inclined to report things that should be reported out of fear of reprisals.

Other impacts were mentioned less frequently and included the following:

- Having responsibilities curtailed.
- Inability to work full-time.
- Not being able to work at present, i.e., on sick leave.
- Employer refusing to accept findings about fitness for work provided appropriate accommodations are in place.
- Taking no joy in one's job anymore.
- General disengagement/just marking time until retirement.
- Work harder/working overtime to meet quotas.

In the context of this discussion, a few participants reiterated that the support of colleagues in the workplace helped them deal with the experiences of harassment and/or discrimination. Beyond this acknowledgement however, no one identified anything positive about the way in which their experience of harassment and/or discrimination impacted their day-to-day work.

Participants who said that their experience has not impacted or 'really' impacted their day-to-day work included the following:

- Those who attributed incidents of harassment and/or discrimination to lack of knowledge and understanding instead of malice.
- Those close to retirement.
- Those who described the incidents in question as infrequent or as an isolated incident.
- Those who said that the person responsible for the harassment and/or discrimination moved on, i.e., they no longer had to encounter them.

4.2 The experience of harassment and discrimination has had a negative impact on most participants' careers.

Most participants were convinced that their experience of harassment and/or discrimination has negatively impacted their career progression and prospects within the

federal public service. Numerous ways in which this has happened were identified during the interviews. These included the following, most of which were identified by a few participants:

- Receiving negative performance evaluations.
- Acquiring a reputation as a ‘troublemaker’ or a ‘problem employee’.
- Lack of experience resulting from never being considered for acting positions and other types of promotion.
- Not being given the training needed to advance and/or leadership development opportunities.
- Not being given the workplace accommodation needed to prove their potential on the job.
- Likelihood of performing poorly in competitions because of lack of accommodations.
- Inability to use a manager as a reference or the manager being unwilling to provide a reference.
- Apprehensiveness about applying for advancement due to uncertainty regarding needed accommodations.
- Disillusionment about applying for positions after being told one is not management material.
- Lack of interest in advancement due to repeated disappointments in this regard.
- Unwillingness to apply for a sought-after position because this would require working with a former manager who harassed them and/or discriminated against them.
- Being side-lined/having work responsibilities curtailed.
- Burnout because of harassment, making one unfit for promotion.
- Problem meeting productivity quotas, in part because of discrimination/harassment, which adversely affects advancement.
- Considering early retirement or leaving a job.

Some participants did not think that their experience of harassment and/or discrimination has negatively impacted their career progression and prospects or said they did not know if this had happened. These tended to be younger participants, ones who attributed incidents of harassment and/or discrimination to lack of knowledge instead of malice, and who described the incidents in question as infrequent or as an isolated incident.

4.3 Harassment/discrimination also affects participants’ private life.

In addition to the impact on their careers, most participants also identified ways in which their experience of harassment and/or discrimination has impacted their private life.

Routinely identified ways included sleep deprivation, increased stress, and depression, often resulting in individuals seeking medical assistance and/or counselling services. Additional impacts included the following:

- Some mentioned that the experience adversely affected their personal relationships with family members and partners. This included making them 'moody', 'unresponsive', 'difficult to get along with', and 'unable to fully parent'.
- Some reported that their experiences adversely affected their sense of self-worth and their self-confidence.
- A few reported that the experience of harassment and/or discrimination caused additional health problems, both physical and mental, i.e., in addition to pre-existing health conditions and disabilities.
- A few reported a greater sensitivity to criticism and/or a desire to avoid 'conflict' or 'adversarial' situations such as arguments and heated discussions.

As was the case when it came to career impact, participants who said that their experience of harassment and/or discrimination has not impacted their private life tended to be ones who attributed incidents of harassment and/or discrimination to lack of knowledge and awareness instead of malice and who described the incidents in question as infrequent or as an isolated incident.

Section 5: Addressing Harassment and Discrimination in the Workplace

This section focusses on participants' views and perspectives about ways of countering harassment and/or discrimination in the workplace.

5.1 A variety of things were considered effective in dealing with workplace harassment and discrimination.

Reflecting on their own experience, most participants identified something that they considered effective in dealing with the harassment and/or discrimination they experienced. Two things, however, were identified most often as effective in this regard: work colleagues and employee support networks for persons with disabilities. Other things identified fell into the several categories, discussed below.

Workplace supports:

This included a union, an ombudsperson, EAP, and Employment Equity Diversity and Inclusion teams/committees. It usually involved consulting or turning to such resources for assistance, but it also included joining them, e.g., becoming a union representative or becoming active on committees.

Particular strategies/measures:

This included the following:

- Keeping detailed records related to one's experience.
- Being knowledgeable about the duty to accommodate and issues related to discrimination and harassment.
- Understanding the channels available to help address harassment and discrimination in the workplace, e.g., ICMS services, filing a grievance with a union, filing a human rights complaint.
- Being firm/not backing down in the face of harassment/discrimination.
- Not blaming oneself for the harassment/discrimination experienced in the workplace.
- Acknowledging and naming harassment, e.g., harassment is not a 'misunderstanding'.
- Being open to reasonable solutions to the Duty to Accommodate.

Particular strategies/measures were typically described as effective because they helped participants become good advocates for themselves and helped them make their case more effectively.

Outside of work supports:

This most often included friends and family members, but also professional assistance from physicians and psychologists/counsellors.

Participants routinely described work colleagues, employee support networks for persons with disabilities, and workplace supports as effective because they provide such things as moral support, encouragement, advice/guidance, validation, and advocacy on their behalf. A few participants emphasized that support from employee support networks for persons with disabilities was also effective or helpful because senior personnel were members of the network, which in their opinion invested it with some authority and indicated to them that there is awareness of problems of harassment and discrimination among upper management.

Outside of work supports, such as friends and family members, were described as helpful because they provided moral support, and a 'refuge' or a 'safe space' away from harassment and/or discrimination occurring in the workplace. For their part, outside of work supports, such as physicians and psychologists/counsellors, provided care as well as evidence in support of participants' requests for accommodations and/or of the negative effects of harassment and/or discrimination.

Some participants said that nothing really helped them deal with the harassment and/or discrimination, or that the only way to deal with it was to distance oneself from it. This

included changing jobs, taking sick leave, being sent on assignment/secondment or training, and the individual(s) in question being transferred.

5.2 A variety of things were viewed as less effective in dealing with their experience of harassment or discrimination.

Just as most participants were able to identify something effective in dealing with the harassment and/or discrimination they experienced, so were most able to identify something that was least effective or not effective in this regard. In doing so, participants often re-emphasized or re-iterated things in their work environment that made their experience of harassment and/or discrimination more difficult to cope/deal with. To avoid repetition, readers are referred to the feedback in [3.4. Many different things exacerbate the experience of harassment and/or discrimination](#).

When it came to concrete things participants did or measures/actions they took or participated in, each of the following was described as ineffective or least effective by at least a few participants.

- Speaking to the person(s) responsible for their experience of harassment and/or discrimination in the hope that this would lead to a resolution of the problem. Various reasons were given to explain the ineffectiveness of this approach including the following:
 - unwillingness on the part of the individual(s) in question to discuss the issue;
 - unwillingness on the part of the individual(s) in question to acknowledge that there is an issue, including unwillingness to acknowledge that harassment and/or discrimination occurred;
 - inability to find common ground/a basis for resolving the matter;
 - misrepresentation of facts on the part of the person(s) responsible for the harassment and/or discrimination;
 - the person(s) responsible for the experience of harassment and/or discrimination engaging in unacceptable behaviour, e.g., excluding the individual in the workplace, tarnishing their character, micro-managing, and trying to access information they have no right to; and
 - it was naïve to think that discussion would resolve the issue.
- Proceeding through formal channels, including a union, ICMS services, Human Resources, Labour Relations, and EAP, with a focus on the following:
 - proceeding through the union was described as ineffective because its focus was on avoiding conflict by making concessions;
 - proceeding through ICMS services was described as ineffective because it was impossible to establish any agreement about the matter in question, and because such a resolution approach cannot work unless the issue is between

peers, i.e., it does not work well when there is conflict between a manager and an employee;

- proceeding through Human Resources/Labour Relations Boards was described as ineffective because their main purpose is viewed as supporting management; and
- proceeding through EAP was described as ineffective because it provides general advice and has no genuine expertise in duty to accommodate issues and issues of harassment and discrimination.
- Filing a complaint/grievance was described as ineffective because the burden of proof is entirely on the complainant, because of the enormous amount of time it takes for such claims to be processed/reviewed through the chain of command (while in the meantime nothing gets resolved), and because at the end of it all nothing is done to address the issue.

5.3 Advice for dealing with workplace harassment/discrimination was varied.

Most participants had some kind of advice or recommendation to offer to someone dealing with an experience of harassment and/or discrimination in the workplace, though no single piece of advice was offered by more than a few participants. Pieces of advice that were offered included the following, each of which was identified by a few participants.

- Do not do nothing and suffer in silence.
- Act promptly, including calling out harassment and discrimination in real time and reporting incidents without delay.
- Find someone safe to talk to/someone you trust, ideally someone with experience about such matters.
- Try to find out if others have experienced something similar/find allies/support.
- Bring the matter to the attention of a disability champion if possible.
- Familiarize yourself with existing official channels/processes/mechanisms, e.g., going to a union, ICMS, filing a grievance, filing a human rights complaint.
- Take advantage of available resources, such as the EAP and employee networks.
- Know your rights and understand obligations associated with the duty to accommodate.
- Make detailed notes and document as much as possible, including emails and transcripts of MS Teams meetings.
- Be concrete, specific, and detailed in what you say.
- Try not to react emotionally to the inevitable frustrations, setbacks, and obstacles you are likely to encounter.

- Do not settle for half-way measures/solutions.
- Do not accept no for an answer, e.g., 'we can't do this'/'this is not possible'.
- Be prepared for a lengthy and frustrating process.
- Do not feel guilty about filing a grievance or a human rights complaint.
- Be attentive to your physical and mental health and seek professional help as needed, i.e., physicians, counsellors/therapists.
- Keep union involvement private as long as possible to protect oneself from further harassment/discomfort in the workplace.
- Communicate openly and honestly with management about harassment and discrimination.

A few participants said that they had no general or specific advice to provide because any meaningful recommendation would depend on the circumstances in question.

5.4 Mandatory training is the most common suggestion for addressing the causes and reducing the incidence of workplace harassment/discrimination.

Participants collectively identified a variety of things they think need to be in place to address the causes and reduce the incidence of harassment and/or discrimination in the workplace towards federal public servants with a disability or health condition. The most frequently identified measure, however, was mandatory training and/or education for managers. This included training and education with an emphasis on the following:

- The duty to accommodate, including understanding that accommodations are not special treatment.
- Mediation and conflict resolution.
- Performance appraisals, and how to provide constructive feedback.
- Diversity and inclusion to increase awareness and knowledge.
- Understanding disabilities, particularly non-apparent disabilities and conditions, such as neurodivergence.
- Understanding the warning signs of harassment and/or discrimination, e.g., increased use of sick leave, requests for transfers, sudden changes in performance evaluations.
- Appropriate and inappropriate language and behaviour regarding requests for accommodations.
- Various forms that reprisal/retribution can take.
- Forms of micro-aggressions.
- Ensuring that people who are managers have the social and interpersonal skills required to deal with 'people' issues.

When focusing on the need for training and education for managers, participants occasionally emphasized that this should be in-depth or specialized training as opposed to completing online modules or taking a workshop. While the focus when it came to education and training was primarily on managers, a few participants said that what is also needed is better in-depth mandatory training at all levels. This included incorporating education and training on harassment and discrimination into employees' individual learning plans as well as in Labour Relations units.

In addition to training and education, other frequently identified measures included the following:

- Having real consequences for failing to meet the duty to accommodate, e.g., disciplinary action, loss of pay/bonuses.
- Including more persons with disabilities in management and upper management positions.
- Having a dedicated/separate/central agency or department of disability management instead of having to go through managers for accommodations. It was noted in this regard that persons responsible for managing someone's work should not be responsible for getting them accommodations, and that such a system would be less prone to becoming an adversarial process.
- Providing opportunities for anonymous evaluations of managers, identified as a '360 evaluation process'.
- Having more involvement/engagement of upper management, e.g., directors and directors general checking in periodically with staff directly instead of relying on the chain of command. This includes members of senior management being present when employees share stories of their experiences with harassment and discrimination based on their disabilities and health conditions.
- Having better orientation/guidance/support for employees experiencing harassment and/or discrimination, including access to resources and networks. It was observed in this regard that the 'landscape' in terms of how to proceed can be very confusing and complicated, and that people who are dealing with harassment and/or discrimination may not be in the best frame of mind to find what they need when they need it.
- Having a better/improved system/process for looking into claims of harassment and discrimination. Note to reader: This was also identified in [5.6 Two key supports suggested to support federal public servants faced with harassment and discrimination](#) as a way to support federal public servants when they are faced with harassment and/or discrimination as a result of a health condition or disability.
- Greater awareness building about non-apparent disabilities, e.g., workshops, keynote speakers, testimonials.
- Trying to change the culture of the federal public service, with a focus on the following:

- changing the ‘protect the manager at all cost’ mindset of the federal public service;
- changing the culture in which labour relations supports management not employees;
- applying accessibility considerations to everyone in the federal public service and everything in the workplace so this is not associated exclusively with persons with disabilities; and
- moving away from the medical model when it comes to accommodating persons with disabilities and trusting them to know what they need.

The following measures were identified by a few participants:

- Creating an environment in which people feel confident speaking out about harassment and/or discrimination instead of suffering in silence. This was seen to include actively encouraging discussions in which public servants who have experienced harassment and discrimination are invited to share their experiences with members of the upper echelons.
- Reassessing performance bonuses, for example by eliminating bonuses for ‘tick box’ contributions, such as work on committees, and linking bonuses in part to making progress on accessibility and duty to accommodate issues.
- Creating a champion for persons with disabilities position within organizations. This person would focus efforts on advocating for persons with disabilities and improving the workplace with positive change.
- Fully implement provisions of the Government of Canada Workplace Accessibility Passport.
- Promoting and rewarding people who speak out about harassment and discrimination.

5.6 Two key supports suggested to support federal public servants faced with harassment and discrimination.

When it came to concrete actions or measures that need to be in place to support federal public servants faced with harassment and/or discrimination because of a health condition or disability, many participants focussed on one or both of two issues: better guidance and support for public servants, and an improved system/process for investigating and resolving claims of harassment and discrimination.

Better guidance and support for public servants faced with harassment or discrimination:

Concrete measures associated with this included the following:

- Access to clear information about what constitutes harassment and discrimination in the federal public service, as well as official mechanisms open to those who are subject to harassment and discrimination.

**Study of Causes and Impacts of Harassment and Discrimination
of Persons with Disabilities in the Federal Public Service**

- Access to individuals and networks with expertise regarding harassment and/or discrimination, where individuals can feel safe expressing themselves and asking questions, and where peers can provide guidance on matters such as how to proceed, what to expect, 'dos and don'ts', acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, and available support services.
- Access to similar employee services across all federal public service, including employment assistance programs and an ombudsperson.
- An improved employment assistance program with a focus on the following:
 - access to more than the current maximum number of sessions;
 - hiring counsellors with expertise in the area of harassment and discrimination;
 - hiring counsellors with expertise in dealing with persons with a disability; and
 - physically locating such services in areas easily accessible.
- Union staff/personnel knowledgeable of issues of harassment and discrimination.

Better/improved system/process for investigating and resolving claims of harassment and discrimination.

Concrete measures associated with this included the following:

- Quicker/more immediate intervention in such cases to help move things forward.
- Independent investigations of claims and use of mediators independent of government.
- A system with clear, real, and well publicized consequences for discrimination and harassment, so that those responsible for it know that they will be held accountable for it.
- A requirement that persons on familiar terms with someone accused of harassment and/or discrimination recuse themselves from the process to instill trust and confidence in the system.
- Guaranteed protection of anonymity and protection against reprisals when reporting harassment and discrimination.
- Allowing public disclosure of the identity of harassers so they face some form of consequences for their actions.

5.7 A variety of suggestions offered to mitigate or minimize the negative impacts of harassment and discrimination on career progression.

Concrete actions and measures proposed by participants to mitigate or minimize the negative impacts that harassment and/or discrimination have on the career progression of federal public servants with disabilities or health conditions included the following:

- Restricting or minimizing the amount of discretionary hiring from within, i.e., at the discretion of management.

- Providing more professional development opportunities for persons with disabilities, and onboarding support for new employees with disabilities.
- Revising assessments of competencies of persons with disabilities. It was noted that people with ADHD learn by 'doing', but that skills assessments are based mainly on testing first (e.g., reading, taking notes, taking quizzes), then doing.
- Providing dedicated training to facilitate persons with disabilities migrating into management positions.
- Monitoring the career progression (and impairment) of persons with disabilities within the public service through an independent agency.
- Ensuring that required accommodations follow persons with disabilities as they progress in their careers.
- Reviewing internal human resources policies and processes, in consultation with employees with disabilities, to identify how they could be more accessible and inclusive.
- Identifying targets for recruitment and promotion of persons with disabilities.
- Enhancing departmental development programs to focus more on persons with disabilities.
- Offering compensation packages for public servants whose career progression has been impeded by harassment and/or discrimination.
- Ensuring there is severe disciplinary action for anyone proven to have impeded the career progression of persons with a disability through harassment or discrimination.
- Making information on policies and processes easily accessible for employees, such as through online resources.
- Having greater transparency in the hiring process, including why someone was rejected for a promotion.

Recommendations

The findings from this research suggest that there is an urgent need to make changes to address experiences of harassment and discrimination of persons with disabilities in the federal public service. Based on the insights generated from the research, we offer the following recommendations for OPSA's consideration. It is understood that some of these actions may already have been undertaken by the Government of Canada. Recommendations include:

- Ensure a welcoming and inclusive work environment, access to a support network, and availability of supports from the Government of Canada, including employee assistance programs, employees with disabilities networks, conflict resolution services, and ombudspersons.
- Provide better guidance and support for public servants faced with harassment or discrimination. For example, information about what constitutes harassment and discrimination in the federal public service and access to people and networks with expertise regarding harassment and/or discrimination where individuals can get advice on these matters.
- Improve employee assistance programs by increasing the maximum number of sessions available, hiring counsellors with expertise in workplace harassment and discrimination and persons with a disability, and ensuring these services are in areas accessible to persons with a disability.
- Continue work on the [Government of Canada Workplace Accessibility Passport](#), including encouraging organizations to adopt the Passport, to promote its use within the organization, and integrate it into organizational workplace accommodation processes. The Passport is a tool that can facilitate recruitment, retention, and career advancement for persons with disabilities. The Passport keeps employees from having to renegotiate tools or support measures when they change organizations, teams or managers.
- Consider mandatory training on accessibility and inclusion for all federal public servants in management or team leadership positions (as opposed to voluntary events, courses, or job aids) such as the ones offered by the Canada School of Public Service. Consider in-person sessions or real-time webinars for managers' training to improve their understanding of lived experiences of federal public servants with disabilities.
- Consider mandatory education and training on harassment and discrimination for all federal public service employees. This may help to raise awareness and understanding of the experiences of persons with disabilities in the federal public service and reduce the lack of knowledge that leads to stereotyping, harassment, and discrimination in the workplace.

**Study of Causes and Impacts of Harassment and Discrimination
of Persons with Disabilities in the Federal Public Service**

- Ensure all exams used for assessing promotions and job competitions within the Government of Canada are accessible to employees with disabilities. Similarly, ensure appropriate accommodations are available for all aspects, and stages, of job competitions, from exams to interviews.
- Require departments/agencies to review their internal harassment and discrimination policies and processes with the involvement of persons with disabilities and members of other equity-seeking groups.
- Consider having a centralized agency that would be responsible for accommodation requests across the Government of Canada. This group would be experts in accessibility and the adaptive tools and resources required to support persons with disabilities. Their mandate would be to set up employees with disabilities with customized workstations—provide them with the tools and equipment needed to perform their duties.

This is not intended as an exhaustive list of recommendations. Instead, the focus is on a small number of suggestions related to key insights from the research, which include: the need for a culture change to minimize the incidence of harassment and discrimination of persons with disabilities in the federal public service; accessing accommodations is difficult and time-consuming for persons with disabilities; and without appropriate tools and resources persons with disabilities experience stress and anxiety and cannot perform to their full potential.

Appendix

Technical Specifications

A set of 53 in-depth interviews were conducted between November 6, 2022, and January 11, 2023, with employees of the core public administration who identify as a person with a disability who has experienced harassment and/or discrimination in the last three years (i.e., September 2020, when recruitment began, through January 2023). The interviews were conducted by tele- and video-conferencing systems. An advisory group of persons with lived experience of disability provided advice on the study's communication and research products, and related activities.

The following specifications applied:

- The interviews averaged 60 minutes to complete, although some took interviews between 90 minutes and two hours. Almost all interviews were conducted during one session, but a few interviews took place over more than one session.
- Participants had the choice of being interviewed in English or French and accommodations were implemented upon request.
- Efforts were taken to ensure that research participants reflected, as much as possible, an appropriate cross-section of the workforce. To this end, a sampling frame was developed to identify the target number of interviews to be completed with participants representing different segments of the population. For example, different age groups, genders, years of service, positions, regions of employment, departments or agencies, as well as disability types. The final target of 75 interviews took into consideration the population, the budget, the study timeline, regional representation, and the number of different segments of the population from which feedback was sought.
- In the end, 53 interviews were completed. While this fell short of the target, it is a sufficient sample size to reflect the experiences of employees at the national level—across the departments and agencies of the core public administration represented by participants. What cannot be done, is provide any discussion of opinions and directional insights from a regional perspective or based on type of disability or health condition.
- Of the 53 participants, five were under the age of 35, 22 were aged 35 to 49, and 26 were aged 50 and older. Forty identified as female and the rest as male or gender diverse. In total, ten participants work in the Atlantic region, 19 in the National Capital Region (NCR), 15 in Ontario or Quebec outside the NCR, and nine in the Western region. Twenty-four participants have a cognitive or learning disability, 33 have a physical disability, and 26 have a psychological disorder. Over half of the research participants (33 people) have more than one disability.

**Study of Causes and Impacts of Harassment and Discrimination
of Persons with Disabilities in the Federal Public Service**

- Recruitment was undertaken through the assistance of the PwDCCC. Specifically, the PwDCCC promoted the study through its network by sending an email notification with a link to complete the online recruitment screener. Those interested in participating completed the online recruitment screener or alternate version available upon request (an electronic fillable document and a large print electronic fillable document). The screener was also administered by telephone upon request.
- The online recruitment screener was accessed by 648 employees. In total, 455 closed the online screener without completing it; 30 were screened out of the research because they did not provide the requested information; and 89 were screened out because the quota for employees from these segments of the population were already met.
- Employees who completed the screening questionnaire and met the study eligibility requirements were contacted by Phoenix SPI (either by telephone or email based on employee preference, which was collected as part of the screening questionnaire) to undertake the following: 1) reconfirm eligibility; 2) determine availability to participate; 3) share information about the interviews, including how to participate and when to expect to receive participation information; and 4) remind them that they should not fear any reprisals resulting from their participation.
- Interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants. At the start of each interview, participants were asked to provide their explicit informed consent to the recording of the session. If a participant declined to provide consent, the interview went ahead with the interviewer taking handwritten notes.
- All research participants were informed of the Employee Assistance Program at the beginning of the interview and given the opportunity to follow up with the interviewer and provide additional information.

Research Instruments

1. Recruitment Invitation

Would you like to participate in a study on harassment and discrimination in the workplace?

The Office of Public Service Accessibility (OPSA) has commissioned an independent Canadian research firm, [Phoenix Strategic Perspectives Inc \(Phoenix SPI\)](#), to explore the perspectives and experiences of persons with disabilities in the federal public service who have experienced harassment and/or discrimination in the workplace. The findings from this research will be used to help counter harassment and discrimination and ensure a healthy work environment for all.

Who can participate?

We are seeking participation from 75 people who:

- identify as a person with one or more disabilities and have experienced harassment and/or discrimination in the last three years (2019 to present);
- are employed in the [core public administration](#) as defined in the [Public Service Employment Act](#); and
- are willing to complete a screening questionnaire to determine their eligibility for the study.

How will the research be conducted?

- If selected to participate, you will be invited to take part in a 60-minute one-on-one interview with a senior researcher from Phoenix SPI.
- The interview will be conducted over the telephone or online depending on your preference and accessibility needs.
- The interview will be scheduled at a time that is convenient for you and will be conducted in the official language of your choice.
- All interviews will take place from November 2022 through January 2023.

What else should I know?

- Your participation in this research is completely voluntary and anonymous.
- You should not fear any reprisals because of your participation or non-participation in the study. Only Phoenix SPI, an independent third-party research firm, will know who participates in the research study.
- Your feedback will be used for research purposes only and will not be attributed to individuals in the research report.
- Your feedback will be kept private and protected under the *Privacy Act*, the *Access to Information Act*, and any other pertinent legislation.

**Study of Causes and Impacts of Harassment and Discrimination
of Persons with Disabilities in the Federal Public Service**

- Phoenix SPI is interested in learning about participants' opinions and experiences only. No attempt will be made to change your point of view or to try to sell you anything. Your feedback will be used for research and information gathering purposes only.

I am interested! What do I need to do?

- To determine your eligibility for the study, please complete the online screening questionnaire <LINK>.
- It may take approximately 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire.
- To complete the screening questionnaire over the telephone, request an accessible Word format or for any other accessibility needs, please contact Phoenix SPI by email at research@phoenixspi.ca or by telephone at 613-260-1700, ext. 222 or at 866-260-1708, ext. 222. Please provide your name, phone number, the best time of day to reach you, the official language in which official language you would like to be contacted, and a member of Phoenix research team will get back to you in a timely manner.
- Should you have any questions about this research, please contact the Office of Public Service Accessibility through our generic mailbox at Accessibility.accessibilite@tbs-sct.gc.ca.

We hope that you will consider participating in this research study. Sharing your experience could help ensure a healthy work environment for all.

2. Recruitment Questionnaire

Landing Page

Thank you for your interest in this study commissioned to Phoenix Strategic Perspectives (Phoenix SPI) – an independent Canadian public opinion research firm – by the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS), Office of Public Service Accessibility (OPSA). To confirm the eligibility of individuals interested in participating in this research, a questionnaire is being administered using the third-party online survey platform [Voxco](#). This online questionnaire will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. For information on how Voxco stores and protects information, please refer to their [Privacy Policy](#).

Completion of this questionnaire is voluntary, and by participating, you indicate your acknowledgement and acceptance of this **Privacy Notice Statement**.

Privacy Notice Statement

Any personal information you provide is collected under the authority of the [Financial Administration Act](#) (FAA). Personal information collected through this questionnaire will be kept confidential and will only be used to determine eligibility of participants. Should you decide not to provide the information requested in this questionnaire, you might not be eligible to participate in the study.

Your personal information will not be shared with TBS, OPSA nor any other third-parties. Personal information collected will be protected, used and disclosed in accordance with the [Privacy Act](#) and as described in the Standard Personal Information Banks entitled [Public Communications \(PSU 914\)](#) and [Outreach Activities \(PSU 938\)](#), which can be found in the publication, [Sources of Federal Government and Employee Information](#).

Under the *Privacy Act*, you have the right to the protection of, correction of, and access to your personal information. For inquiries concerning access to or the correction of your personal information, or if you have any questions, comments, concerns or complaints regarding this Privacy Notice, and your privacy rights under the *Privacy Act*, you may direct them to the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat's Access to Information and Privacy Coordinator by email at atip.aiprp@tbs-sct.gc.ca or by calling 1-866-312-1511. If you are not satisfied with the department's response to your privacy concern, you may wish to contact the [Office of the Privacy Commissioner](#) by email at info@priv.gc.ca or by telephone at 1-800-282-1376.

Background information

- The study is designed to explore the experience of persons with disabilities in the core public administration who have experienced harassment and/or discrimination on the job in the last three years (2019 to present).
- The findings from this research will be used to help counter harassment and discrimination and ensure a healthy work environment for all.

- We are interested in learning about your opinions and experiences only; no attempt will be made to change your point of view or to try to sell you anything.

About the study

- The study involves a set of 75 one-on-one interviews which are being conducted from November 2022 through January 2023.
- Interviews will last up to 60 minutes. Should you feel that you're unable to complete the interview in one session for reasons such as discomfort, exhaustion, or another reason, you will be offered the opportunity to complete the interview at a time in the future that is convenient for you (and within the research period).
- Participants for these interviews are being selected based on a number of eligibility requirements such as region of employment, age, gender, and type of disability, etc. This will ensure we hear from people with different experiences.
- Your decision to complete the questionnaire and to participate in the study is completely voluntary and your responses will be anonymous. If at any time, or for any reason, you feel unable to proceed, you can withdraw from the study.
- You should not fear any reprisals as a result of your participation or non-participation in the study. Only Phoenix SPI, an independent third-party research firm, will know who participates in the research. Feedback provided by participants during the interviews will not be attributed to individuals and will be used for research purposes.
- Personal information collected through this form will be kept confidential and will only be used to determine eligibility of participants.

What about your personal information?

- Your personal information will be collected by Phoenix SPI in accordance with the [Privacy Act](#), the [Access to Information Act](#), and any other pertinent legislation.
- Phoenix SPI supports and strictly adheres to the Standards for the Conduct of Government of Canada Public Opinion Research, industry standards and guidelines for Internet and other types of research.
- To view [Phoenix SPI's privacy policy](#).

Need to contact us?

For more information about this study, to request to complete the questionnaire by phone or in accessible Word format, or should you encounter any issues completing this questionnaire, please contact Phoenix SPI by email at research@phoenixspi.ca or by telephone at 613-260-1700 extension 222 or at 866-260-1708 extension 222. Please provide your name, phone number, the best time of day to reach you, the official language in which you would like to be contacted, and a member of our research team will get back to you in a timely manner. You can also contact us by writing to:

Phoenix SPI
1678 Bank Street, Ste. 2
Ottawa, ON K1V 7Y6

www.phoenixspi.ca

Question 1: Do you identify as a person with one or more disabilities?

A disability means any impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment – or a functional limitation – whether permanent, temporary or episodic in nature, or evident or not, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person's full and equal participation in society. A barrier means anything – including anything physical, architectural, technological or attitudinal, anything that is based on information or communications or anything that is the result of a policy or a practice – that hinders the full and equal participation in society of persons with an impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment or a functional limitation. Source: [Accessible Canada Act](#); 2020 Public Service Employee Survey.

Please select from the options.

Option 1: Yes

Option 2: No

Option 3: Prefer not to answer

Question 2: To ensure we hear from people with different experiences, will you please identify which of the following apply to you?

Select all options that apply.

Source: As described in the 2020 Public Service Employee Survey.

Option 1: A seeing disability (affects vision, including total blindness, partial sight and visual distortion)

Option 2: A hearing disability (affects ability to hear, including being hard of hearing, deafness or acoustic distortion)

Option 3: A mobility issue (affects ability to move your body, including the required use of a wheelchair or a cane, or other issues impacting your mobility)

Option 4: An issue with flexibility or dexterity (affects ability to move joints or perform motor tasks, especially with your hands)

Option 5: A mental health issue (affects psychology or behaviour, such as anxiety, depression or social/compulsive disorder or phobia or psychiatric illness)

Option 6: A sensory/environmental disability (affects sensitivity to light, sounds or other distractions, as well as allergens and other environmental sensitivities)

Option 7: A chronic health condition or pain (affects ability to function on a regular or episodic basis due to migraines, Crohn's disease, colitis, and other disabilities or health conditions)

Option 8: A cognitive disability (affects ability to carry out tasks involving executive functioning, such as planning and organization, learning information, communication and memory, including autism or Asperger's syndrome, attention deficit disorder, and learning disabilities)

Option 9: An intellectual disability (affects your ability to learn and to adapt behaviour to different situations)

Option 10: Other disability (including: learning disabilities, developmental disabilities and all other types of disabilities). Specify.

Option 11: Prefer not to answer

Question 3: Have you experienced harassment on the job in the past three years?

Harassment is normally a series of incidents, but it can be one severe incident that has a lasting impact on the individual. Harassment is any improper conduct by an individual that is directed at and offensive to another individual in the workplace, including at any event or any location related to work, and that the individual knew or ought reasonably to have known would cause offence or harm. It comprises objectionable act(s), comment(s) or display(s) that demean, belittle, or cause personal humiliation or embarrassment, and any act of intimidation or threat. It also includes harassment within the meaning of the [Canadian Human Rights Act](#) (i.e., based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex (including pregnancy and childbirth), sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, family status, genetic characteristics (including a requirement to undergo a genetic test, or disclose the results of a genetic test), disability or conviction for an offence for which a pardon has been granted or in respect of which a record suspension has been ordered). Source: 2020 Public Service Employee Survey.

Please select from the options.

Option 1: Yes

Option 2: No

Option 3: Prefer not to answer

Question 4: Have you experienced discrimination on the job in the past three years?

Discrimination means treating someone differently or unfairly because of a personal characteristic or distinction, which, whether intentional or not, has an effect that imposes disadvantages not imposed on others or that withholds or limits access that is given to others. There are 13 prohibited grounds of discrimination under the [Canadian Human Rights Act](#) (i.e., based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex (including pregnancy and childbirth), sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, family status, genetic characteristics (including a requirement to undergo a genetic test, or disclose the results of a genetic test), disability or conviction for an offence for which a pardon has been granted or in respect of which a record suspension has been ordered)

Source: 2020 Public Service Employee Survey.

Please select from the options.

Option 1: Yes

Option 2: No

Option 3: Prefer not to answer

Question 5: Which department or agency do you currently work for?

Please type or select from the drop-down list the name of the federal department or agency you work for. If you cannot find the name, please type or select “None of these” or “Prefer not to answer”.

Select an option or type in your response.

Question 6: In which province or territory is your current job posting based? Due to remote work arrangements, this may not be the same province or territory in which you are physically working. For example, if your job is based out the National Capital Region, but you are currently working in another region of the country, your response would be “National Capital Region”.

Please select from the options.

Option 1: Atlantic Canada (Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick)

Option 2: National Capital Region

Option 3: Central Canada (Ontario, Quebec excluding the National Capital Region)

Option 4: Prairie Provinces (Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba)

Option 5: West Coast (British Columbia)

Option 6: Northern Territories (Nunavut, Northwest Territories, Yukon Territory)

Option 7: Prefer not to answer

The following questions are asked to determine your eligibility to the study. Your personal information will remain anonymous.

Question 7: In which of the following age categories do you belong?

Please select from the options.

Option 1: Under 35 years

Option 2: 35 to 49 years

Option 3: 50 years and over

Option 4: Prefer not to answer

Question 8: Which best describes your gender?

Please select from the options.

Option 1: Female

Option 2: Male

Option 3: Prefer to self-describe. Feel free to use the space provided to describe your gender:

Option 4: Prefer not to answer

Question 9: What is your first official language?

Please select from the options.

Option 1: English

Option 2: French

Option 3: Prefer not to answer

Question 10: Do you identify as an Indigenous person? (An Indigenous person is a member of a First Nation, a Métis or an Inuk (Inuit). First Nations (North American Indians) include Status and Non-Status Indians.)

Please select from the options.

Option 1: Yes

Option 2: No

Option 3: Prefer not to answer

If OPTION 2 (No) or OPTION 3 (Prefer not to answer) are selected for QUESTION 10, answer QUESTION 11: Do you identify as a member of a visible minority group?

A member of a visible minority in Canada may be defined as someone (other than an Aboriginal person) who is non-white in colour or race, regardless of place of birth. For example: Black, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, South Asian or East Indian, Southeast Asian, non-white West Asian, North African or Arab, non-white Latin American, person of mixed origin (with one parent in one of the visible minority groups in this list), or other visible minority group. Source: 2020 Public Service Employee Survey.

Please select from the options.

Option 1: Yes

Option 2: No

Option 3: Prefer not to answer

Question 12: In total, how many years have you been working in the federal public service? Please include the time in your current position as well as any previous positions.

Please select from the options.

Option 1: Less than 3 years

Option 2: 3 to 10 years

Option 3: 11 to 20 years

Option 4: More than 20 years

Option 5: Prefer not to answer

Question 13: Are you?

Please select from the options.

Option 1: A manager

Option 2: A supervisor or team leader

Option 3: An executive

Option 4: None of the above

Option 5: Prefer not to answer

Question 14: Which of the following best describes your current work situation?

Please select from the options.

Option 1: Working on site (permanent or regular workplace). Example: In a Government of Canada facility such as an office, laboratory, field site, etc.

Option 2: Working remotely. Example: Employees asked by their employer to perform their duties in another location other than their permanent or regular workplace for health, safety, or other reasons (e.g., COVID-19 pandemic).

Option 3: Teleworking. Example: When an employee performs work in a different location other than their permanent or regular workplace by choice (e.g., telework agreement).

Option 4: A combination of working on site and working remotely or teleworking

Option 5: Prefer not to answer

Consent

Question 15: The one-on-one interview will be audio recorded. These recordings are used by the research team to help with analyzing the findings and writing the report—specifically, they are used to ensure that participants' feedback is accurately reflected in the report findings. Please be assured that the results from the interviews will be grouped together in the research report, which means that individuals will not be identified in any way. These recordings will not be shared outside of Phoenix SPI and they will be destroyed upon completion of the study. Do you consent to being recorded?

Please select from the options.

Option 1: Yes

Option 2: No

If OPTION 2 (No) is selected for QUESTION 15, answer QUESTION 16: As an alternative to audio recording, the interviewer could only take handwritten notes. The notes will be used to help analyze the findings and write the report. Please be assured that the results from the interviews will be grouped together in the research report, which means that individuals will not be identified in any way. Do you consent to the interviewer taking notes as an alternative to recording the interview?

Please select from the options.

Option 1: Yes

Option 2: No

Question 17: How would you prefer to be contacted to confirm your eligibility to the study?

Please select from the options.

Option 1: Telephone

Option 2: Email

Option 3: By telephone and email

Question 18: May we have your contact information so that we can confirm your eligibility to the study? You can provide the telephone number and/or email address of your choosing (home or work) depending on your answer to QUESTION 17.

Please provide the following information:

Field 1: First name:

Field 2: Last Name:

Field 3: Telephone number:

Field 4: Email:

Question 19: Do you consent to a researcher from Phoenix SPI contacting you to confirm your eligibility to the study?

Please select from the options.

Option 1: Yes

Option 2: No

Question 20: The interviews will be conducted by telephone or using a videoconference platform. What is your preference? If you consented to the recording of the interview, we would like to remind you that the interview will just be audio recorded, whether it is conducted by telephone or videoconference. If you did not consent to the interview being audio recorded, rest assured that the interviewer will only take handwritten notes.

Option 1: Telephone

Option 2: Videoconference

Question 21: What accessibility accommodations, if any, will be needed to best support your participation in this research?

Please use the text box below to let us know how to support your participation, and please do not provide any additional personal identifiers about yourself or others in your response.

[OPEN BOX]

Question 22: Finally, in which official language would you like the one-on-one interview to be conducted?

Option 1: English

Option 2: French

Thank you very much for your time and willingness to participate in this study. A member of Phoenix SPI's research team will contact you in the coming weeks to schedule the one-on-one interview.

3. Interview Advance Information

Information for Interview Participants

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study being conducted for the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS), Office of Public Service Accessibility (OPSA). In advance of the interview, we kindly ask that you review the information below and have this document accessible during the interview.

Your Participation

Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. By participating, you indicate your acknowledgement and acceptance of this Privacy Notice Statement.

Privacy Notice Statement

Any personal information you provide is collected under the authority of the [Financial Administration Act](#) (FAA). Personal information collected through this questionnaire will be kept confidential and will only be used for research purposes.

Your personal information will not be shared with TBS, OPSA nor any other third parties. Personal information collected will be protected, used and disclosed in accordance with the [Privacy Act](#) and as described in the Standard Personal Information Banks entitled [Public Communications \(PSU 914\)](#) and [Outreach Activities \(PSU 938\)](#), which can be found in the publication, [Sources of Federal Government and Employee Information](#).

Under the [Privacy Act](#), you have the right to the protection of, correction and access to your personal information, for inquiries concerning access to or the correction of your personal information, or if you have any questions, comments, concerns or complaints regarding this Privacy Notice, and your privacy rights under the [Privacy Act](#), you may direct them to the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat's Access to Information and Privacy Coordinator by email at atip.aiprp@tbs-sct.gc.ca or by calling 1-866-312-1511. If you are not satisfied with the department's response to your privacy concern, you may wish to contact the [Office of the Privacy Commissioner](#) by email at info@priv.gc.ca or by telephone at 1-800-282-1376.

Confidentiality

Your responses during the interview will be kept confidential. The feedback you provide will be used for research purposes only and will not be attributed to you personally in the report resulting from this study per the Privacy Notice Statement. Further, please make sure that in the course of sharing your experiences, you do not identify any third parties by name or include any personal information related to a third party. It is important to maintain the anonymity of others.

Risks of Participating

You do need not fear any reprisals because of your participation in this study. No-one from the Government of Canada is observing the interview and your identity will remain confidential.

During the Interview

Please let the interviewer know if:

- You prefer not to answer a question; the interviewer will continue to the next question.
- You need to take a short recess during the interview. The interview will be paused and restarted when you are ready to continue.
- You wish to revise an answer to a previous question. Your response will be revised accordingly before the interview continues.
- You are unable to complete the interview in one sitting. The interviewer will schedule a time in the future that is convenient to complete the interview with you.

Resources Available

Revisiting experiences of harassment and discrimination can call to mind painful and disturbing events. As you may be aware, a confidential Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is made available to employees in federal departments and agencies in the core public administration. The program offers free short-term counselling for personal or work-related problems as well as crisis counselling. You may contact EAP:

- By phone: 1-800-268-7708, or 1-800-567-5803 (digital service for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing)
- By chat: Access the [EAP Chat](#) (new). The Chat service is available Monday to Friday, 8:00 am to 7:30 pm (EST), excluding statutory holidays.

If you are concerned about immediate harm to yourself or others, please call 911.

We look forward to speaking with you at the scheduled interview time.

Study of Causes and Impacts of Harassment and Discrimination
of Persons with Disabilities in the Federal Public Service

4. Interview Guide

Introduction

Interviewer:

Date:

Participant Code:

Note taking consent Received:

Audio-recording consent Received:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study being conducted for the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS), Office of Public Service Accessibility (OPSA). This interview will take approximately 60 minutes to complete but additional time is available if you need more time to share your experiences. [FOR VIDEO-CONFERENCE INTERVIEWS, READ: As you know, we are using the third-party online communication platform [Microsoft Teams](#). Information on how Microsoft stores and protects information can be found in the company's [Privacy Statement](#). The link was shared with you as part of the Information Document you received in advance of this interview.]

- A. Introduce interviewer and Phoenix SPI (independent Canadian research firm).
- B. Thank you for agreeing to share your experience(s).
- C. Value your participation/looking for candid feedback/no right or wrong answers.
- D. Confirm sound/video quality and any accessibility accommodations required for the interview, for example, real-time transcription. Offer technical support information as appropriate.
- E. Inform/remind them that we are interested in learning about their opinions and experiences only; no attempt will be made to change their point of view or to try to sell them anything.
- F. Inform/remind them that the purpose of this study is to explore the perspectives and work life experience of persons with disabilities in the federal public service vis-à-vis harassment and discrimination and the impact of those in their personal life. The findings from this research will be used to help counter harassment and discrimination and ensure a healthy work environment for all.
- G. Remind them that their participation in this interview is voluntary, and their responses are anonymous and will not be attributed to them as individuals: *Your responses during the interview will be kept confidential. The feedback you provide will be used for*

research purposes only and will not be attributed to you personally in the report resulting from this study. Further, what is discussed today will be protected under the [Privacy Act](#), the [Access to Information Act](#), and any other pertinent legislation. Do you have any questions?

- H. Remind them that they need not fear any reprisals as a result of their participation in this study/that there is no-one observing the interview/that their identity will remain confidential (unless explicit, written consent to disclose personal information has been provided).
- I. Remind them that it is important to maintain the anonymity of others: *Please make sure that in the course of sharing your experiences, you do not identify any third parties by name or include any personal information related to a third party.*
- J. Inform participants that they may follow up with us by email should they wish to receive a copy of the audio recording of their interview. IF REQUESTED, COPY OF HANDWRITTEN NOTES CAN BE PROVIDED.
- K. Inform them as well that should they be unable to complete the interview in one sitting, they will be offered the opportunity to complete it at a time in the future that is convenient for them.
- L. Inform them that given the sensitivity and personal nature of the subject matter, their willingness to share details of their experience should be gauged by their own level of comfort, and should they prefer not to answer a question, they need only say so.
- M. Inform them of the Employee Assistance Program by reading the following information: *Revisiting experiences of harassment and discrimination can call to mind painful and disturbing events. As you may be aware, a confidential Employee Assistance Program is made available to employees in federal departments and agencies in the core public administration. The program offers free short-term counselling for personal or work-related problems as well as crisis counselling. If you are concerned about immediate harm to yourself or others, please call 9-1-1. SEE APPENDIX - 1 FOR INFORMATION.*
- N. [IF PARTICIPANT CONSENTS TO AUDIO-RECORD THE INTERVIEW OR TO THE INTERVIEWER TAKING HANDWRITTEN NOTES, READ THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION:]
 - a. Recording: *The recording is to accurately document the information you provide and will be used to write the report only. It will not be shared outside the research team and will be destroyed upon completion of the study. Do I have your permission to record this interview? IF CONSENT IS GRANTED INDICATE THE START OF THE RECORDING: With your permission, I'll start recording the interview now.*

b. Handwritten notes: *Notes are being taken to accurately document the information you provide and will be used to write the report only. It will not be shared outside the research team and will be destroyed upon completion of the study. Do I have your permission to take notes during this interview? IF CONSENT IS GRANTED INDICATE THE START OF THE NOTETAKING: With your permission, I'll start taking notes.*

Interview Questions

Contextual questions [10 minutes]

I would like to begin by asking you a few background questions.

Question 1: How long have you been working in the federal public service?

Question 2: In the course of your career in the federal public service, have you worked for more than one department or agency? NOTE TO THE INTERVIEWER: IF THE PARTICIPANT SAYS 'YES', DO NOT ASK HOW MANY DEPARTMENTS OR AGENCIES THEY HAVE WORKED FOR; ALLOW THE PARTICIPANT TO VOLUNTEER THIS INFORMATION IF THEY CHOOSE TO SHARE THIS.

When you were recruited for this study, you identified yourself as a person with a disability who has experienced harassment and/or discrimination related to your disability(ies) or health condition(s) in the last three years.

Question 3: May I confirm the nature of your disability(ies) or health condition(s)? NOTE TO THE INTERVIEWER: RECORD THE DISABILITY(IES) OR HEALTH CONDITION(S) AS REPORTED IN THE RECRUITMENT SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE. KEEP AS BRIEF AS POSSIBLE. THE FOCUS HERE IS ON THE TYPE OF DISABILITY(IES) OR HEALTH CONDITION(S). ON AN AS-NEEDED BASIS, SHARE THE DEFINITION OF DISABILITY AS ARTICULATED IN THE ACCESSIBLE CANADA ACT OF 2019 (SEE APPENDIX).

Question 4: What was the status of your disability(ies) or health condition(s) at the time you experienced harassment and/or discrimination? Was it temporary, recurring/episodic, permanent? Since you have experienced the harassment and/or discrimination, has your disability(ies) or health condition(s) changed in any way? If so, how?

Question 5: To what extent would you say the harassment and/or discrimination you experienced was related to your disability(ies) or health condition(s)? Probe completely, mainly, partly

NOTE TO THE INTERVIEWER: IF THE HARASSMENT AND/OR DISCRIMINATION EXPERIENCE IS NOT "COMPLETELY" RELATED TO THE PERSON'S DISABILITY(IES) OR HEALTH CONDITION(S), ASK THE PARTICIPANT QUESTION 6:

Question 6: In addition to your disability(ies) or health condition(s), what additional factors impacted the harassment and/or discrimination you experienced?

Question 7: Is the harassment and/or discrimination to which you were subjected going on at present or did it happen in the past? NOTE TO THE INTERVIEWER: THE FOCUS HERE IS NOT ON THE IMPACT OR EFFECTS OF THE HARASSMENT AND/OR DISCRIMINATION BUT ON WHETHER OR NOT IT IS ACTUAL OR ONGOING.

ADJUST LANGUAGE (I.E. VERB TENSE) IN SUBSEQUENT QUESTIONS BASED ON WHETHER THE HARASSMENT AND/OR DISCRIMINATION ARE/IS ACTUAL/ONGOING OR IN THE PAST.

Question 8: How long [did/has] the harassment and/or discrimination to which you [were/have been] subjected [last/ been going on]?

Question 9: How would you describe the frequency of the harassment and/or discrimination to which you [were/are] subjected? Probe: continuous/constant, periodic/occasional, infrequent/rare, one incident

Nature of harassment/discrimination [15 minutes]

Let's turn to the nature of the harassment and/or discrimination you [experienced/are experiencing] and the circumstances surrounding it.

Question 10: Before discussing your own experience, what comes to mind when you think of harassment in the context of the federal public service? How would you describe it or what it comprises? And what about discrimination? NOTE TO THE INTERVIEWER: RECORD TOP-OF-MIND FEEDBACK. ON AN AS-NEEDED BASIS, SHARE THE DEFINITIONS OF HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION FROM PSES 2020 SURVEY (SEE APPENDIX).

Question 11: Would you describe what you have experienced as harassment, discrimination, or both?

NOTE TO THE INTERVIEWER: FOR ALL SUBSEQUENT QUESTIONS, DISTINGUISH BETWEEN CASES OF HARASSMENT AND CASES OF DISCRIMINATION OR BOTH.

Question 12: Could you please describe the circumstances in which the incident(s) of harassment and/or discrimination arose? NOTE TO THE INTERVIEWER: THE FOCUS HERE IS ON THE CONTEXT, NOT THE NATURE OF THE HARASSMENT AND/OR DISCRIMINATION. PROBE AS NEED FOR CLARIFICATION, E.G. RELATED TO WORKPLACE ACCOMMODATIONS, PROMOTION, PERFORMANCE EVALUATION, ETC.

IF RELATED TO ACCOMMODATIONS, EXPLORE:

- i. The reason for the accommodation request

ii. What the harassment and/or discrimination was related to:

- Requirement to provide a medical certificate or other evidence
- Request for a formal assessment
- Approval/refusal of request for workplace accommodation
- Delivery/installation of workplace accommodations
- Attitude of coworkers regarding your workplace accommodation
- Attitude of manager/supervisor regarding your workplace accommodation
- Other, please specify

iii. Level of comfort requesting workplace accommodation measures from immediate supervisor

Question 13: Could you please describe the nature of the harassment and/or discrimination you [were/are] subjected to? How [did/does] it manifests itself or what form [did/does] it take? NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: PROBE AS NEED FOR CLARIFICATION, E.G. IF HARASSMENT: AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR, EXCESSIVE CONTROL, BEING EXCLUDED OR BEING IGNORED, HUMILIATION, OFFENSIVE REMARK, ETC. IF DISCRIMINATION: RACE, RELIGION, AGE, GENDER, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, ETC.

Question 14: What [was/is] the source of the harassment and/or discrimination? In other words, who [was/is] responsible for it or involved in it? NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: PROBE AS NEED FOR CLARIFICATION, E.G. CO-WORKERS, INDIVIDUALS IN AUTHORITY POSITIONS, MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC, ETC.

Question 15: How did you respond to the harassment and/or discrimination? What action(s) if any did you take and why? Did you feel empowered to take any action at the time? NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: PROBE AS NEED FOR CLARIFICATION, E.G. DISCUSSED MATTER WITH SUPERIOR/MANAGER, OMBUDSPERSON OFFICE, CONTACTED UNION REPRESENTATIVE, DEALT WITH INFORMALLY ON ONE'S OWN, ETC.

IF NO ACTION TAKEN, ASK QUESTION 16:

Question 16: What was the reason or reasons for responding this way? NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: PROBE AS NEED FOR CLARIFICATION, E.G. FEAR OF REPRISAL, STIGMA, GAG ORDER, ETC. Did your response(s) change over time? If so, in what way(s)?

Question 17: Was the matter resolved, and if so, was it resolved to your satisfaction? If so, why? If not, why not? NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: IN TERMS OF RESOLUTION OF THE MATTER THE FOCUS IS NOT ONLY ON THE OUTCOME BUT THE PROCESS, E.G. DID THEY FEEL SUPPORTED DURING THE RESOLUTION PROCESS, WERE THEY TAKEN SERIOUSLY, ETC.

Question 18: Earlier you described the circumstances in which the incident(s) of harassment and/or discrimination arose. But what in your opinion explains the harassment and/or discrimination? Why did it arise or what is at the root of it?

Question 19: What (more) do you think could or should [have been/be] done to address the situation? In retrospect, what do you think could or should [have been/be] done differently to address the situation...by others and why? By you and why?

Harassment/discrimination and perceptions of workplace/workplace culture [10 minutes]

I would now like to ask you about your perceptions of your workplace environment as a result of your experience.

Question 20: To begin with, are you currently working in the same environment in which you experienced harassment and/or discrimination? IF NEEDED: Are you currently working in a Government of Canada facility, remotely, or teleworking? NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: NOTE REMOTE/TELEWORK VERSUS ON SITE ENVIRONMENT. PROBE AS NEED FOR CLARIFICATION, WORKING ON SITE = PERMANENT OR REGULAR WORKPLACE, WORKING FROM A GOVERNMENT OF CANADA FACILITY SUCH AS AN OFFICE, LABORATORY, FIELD SITE, ETC. WORKING REMOTELY = EMPLOYEES ASKED BY THEIR EMPLOYER TO PERFORM THEIR DUTIES IN ANOTHER LOCATION OTHER THAN THEIR PERMANENT OR REGULAR WORKPLACE FOR HEALTH, SAFETY, OR OTHER REASONS (E.G., COVID-19 PANDEMIC). TELEWORKING = EMPLOYEES PERFORM WORK IN A DIFFERENT LOCATION THAN THEIR PERMANENT OR REGULAR WORKPLACE BY CHOICE (E.G., TELEWORK AGREEMENT).

Probe as applicable: differences in experience with harassment and/or discrimination by work environment (on site versus remote/telework)

Question 21: To what extent (not at all, slightly, moderately, significantly) [is/was] your overall impression of your work environment affected or influenced by your experience of harassment and/or discrimination? Please explain. Probe: feelings towards, satisfaction with

Question 22: What, if anything, in your work environment [helped/helps] you cope/deal with the experience of harassment and/or discrimination? Probe: support from colleagues / co-workers/supervisors, supports (e.g., EAP), services, support from employee networks, etc.

Question 23: And what, if anything, in your work environment [exacerbated/exacerbates] the experience of harassment and/or discrimination or [made/makes] it more difficult to cope/deal with?

Question 24: How likely do you think it is that you might again be subjected to harassment and/or discrimination in your current work environment/situation? Please explain.

Impacts of harassment/discrimination [10 minutes]

Can we discuss the impact or consequences of the harassment and/or discrimination you experienced related to your disability(ies) or health condition(s)? NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: MAKE SURE PARTICIPANT IS COMFORTABLE BEFORE PROCEEDING. Please remember that you are free to answer or not answer any of the questions. Just let me know. And, if at any point you wish to take a break or continue the discussion at a later date, we can do so. REFER TO THE EAP AS/IF NEEDED.

Question 25: In what way(s), if any, do you feel your experience of harassment and/or discrimination has impacted your day-to-day work, for example your relationship with co-workers and/or supervisors, your productivity?

Question 26: In what way(s), if any, do you feel your experience of harassment and/or discrimination has impacted your career progression/prospects in the public service? How do you feel about your career prospects within the federal public service within the next five years or so? Probe: Did you voluntarily leave a job? Were you encouraged to quit your job or change departments? Are you changing jobs in the same organization? Were you discouraged from looking for other opportunities? Did you refuse interview or a job? Did you refuse a promotion? Are you considering early retirement? Were your job references and/or performance assessments affected?

Question 27: In what way(s), if any, do you feel your experience of harassment and/or discrimination has impacted your personal/private life? Probe: family life; health or mental health; sense of self?

NOTE TO THE INTERVIEWER: IF NOT ALREADY ADDRESSED IN ANSWERS TO PREVIOUS QUESTIONS, ASK QUESTION 28:

Question 28: Has the harassment and/or discrimination you experienced exacerbated your disability(ies) or health condition(s) in any way? If so, please explain.

Recommendations/future directions [15 minutes]

The last topic I would like to discuss with you concerns ways of countering harassment and/or discrimination and ensuring a healthy work environment for all.

Question 29: When you reflect on your own experience, what, if anything, was most effective in dealing with the harassment and/or discrimination you experienced? Why is that?

Question 30: And what, if anything, was least effective in dealing with the harassment and/or discrimination you experienced? Why is that?

Question 31: If asked for advice by someone you know, such as a co-worker, friend or family member, who is dealing with harassment and/or discrimination in the workplace, what would you recommend...what would you say to this person?

Question 32: What do you think needs to be in place to address the causes and reduce the incidence of harassment and/or discrimination in the workplace towards federal public servants with disability(ies) or health condition(s)?

Question 33: What kind of concrete actions/measures do you think need to be in place to support federal public servants when they are faced with harassment and/or discrimination as a result of a health condition or disability?

Question 34: What kind of concrete actions/measures do you think need to be in place to mitigate or minimize the negative impacts that harassment and/or discrimination has on the career progression of federal public servants with disabilities or health condition(s)?

NOTE TO THE INTERVIEWER: IF NOT ALREADY ADDRESSED IN ANSWERS TO PREVIOUS QUESTIONS, ASK QUESTION 35:

Question 35: What (more) needs to be done to improve workplace culture/environment so as to enable federal public servants with disabilities to contribute to their full potential and to improve the recruitment, retention, and promotion of persons with disabilities or health condition(s)?

Conclusion

Question 36: Is there anything that has not been discussed/asked that you would like to share or is important to consider as part of the experience of public servants with disabilities or health condition(s) who are/have been subjected to harassment and/or discrimination? If yes, please explain.

Thank you for participating in this study and being willing to share your experience with us.

NOTE TO THE INTERVIEWER: Inform participants: that the anonymized final report will be published on Library and Archives Canada website and that they may follow up with us by email should they wish to add or amend any feedback.

APPENDIX – 1

To contact Employee Assistance Program (EAP):

- By phone: 1-800-268-7708, or 1-800-567-5803 (digital service for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing)
- By chat: [Access the EAP Chat \(new\)](#)

The Chat service is available Monday to Friday, 8:00 am to 7:30 pm (ET), excluding statutory holidays.

APPENDIX - 2

Disability

A disability means any impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment — or a functional limitation — whether permanent, temporary or episodic in nature, or evident or not, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person's full and equal participation in society. A barrier means anything — including anything physical, architectural, technological or attitudinal, anything that is based on information or communications or anything that is the result of a policy or a practice — that hinders the full and equal participation in society of persons with an impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment or a functional limitation.

Harassment

Harassment is normally a series of incidents, but it can be one severe incident that has a lasting impact on the individual. Harassment is any improper conduct by an individual that is directed at and offensive to another individual in the workplace, including at any event or any location related to work, and that the individual knew or ought reasonably to have known would cause offence or harm. It comprises objectionable act(s), comment(s) or display(s) that demean, belittle, or cause personal humiliation or embarrassment, and any act of intimidation or threat. It also includes harassment within the meaning of the [Canadian Human Rights Act](#) (i.e., based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex (including pregnancy and childbirth), sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, family status, genetic characteristics (including a requirement to undergo a genetic test, or disclose the results of a genetic test), disability or conviction for an offense for which a pardon has been granted or in respect of which a record suspension has been ordered).

Discrimination

Discrimination means treating someone differently or unfairly because of a personal characteristic or distinction, which, whether intentional or not, has an effect that imposes disadvantages not imposed on others or that withholds or limits access that is given to others. There are 13 prohibited grounds of discrimination under the [Canadian Human Rights Act](#) (i.e., based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex (including

Study of Causes and Impacts of Harassment and Discrimination
of Persons with Disabilities in the Federal Public Service

pregnancy and childbirth), sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, family status, genetic characteristics (including a requirement to undergo a genetic test, or disclose the results of a genetic test), disability or conviction for an offence for which a pardon has been granted or in respect of which a record suspension has been ordered).

Duty to accommodate

The duty to accommodate refers to the employer's obligation to eliminate disadvantages to employees, prospective employees or clients that result from a rule, practice or physical barrier that has or that may have an adverse impact on individuals or groups protected under the [Canadian Human Rights Act](#) or identified as a designated group under the [Employment Equity Act](#). It applies to all grounds of discrimination covered by the [Canadian Human Rights Act](#) (i.e., race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex (including pregnancy and childbirth), sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, family status, genetic characteristics (including a requirement to undergo a genetic test, or disclose the results of a genetic test), disability or conviction for an offence for which a pardon has been granted or in respect of which a record suspension has been ordered). Employers must provide accommodation up to the point of undue hardship, taking into account essential job requirements.

Questions about duty to accommodate do not apply to employees who asked for office equipment to work remotely, unless their requests pertain to specific accommodation measures that help to reduce barriers to work, as per the [Canadian Human Rights Act](#).

Statement of Political Neutrality

I hereby certify as a Senior Officer of Phoenix Strategic Perspectives that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the *Communications Policy* of the Government of Canada and Procedures for Planning and Contracting Public Opinion Research. Specifically, the deliverables do not contain any reference to electoral voting intentions, political party preferences, standings with the electorate, or ratings of the performance of a political party or its leader.

Alethea Woods

Alethea Woods
President
Phoenix Strategic Perspectives Inc.