Uncovering the human experiences behind the numbers

Deep dive into diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging at Shared Services Canada

June 2023

Office of the Ombuds
Shared Services Canada

Giving a voice,
empowering people

Government Gouvernement
of Canada du Canada

Canada

"It is not just the system, it is also the people in the system."

- a participant

Ottawa, April 2023

Sony Perron
President

Scott Jones
Executive Vice-President

Mr. Perron and Mr. Jones,

I am pleased to present this Special Ombuds Report, entitled Uncovering the human experiences behind the numbers - Deep Dive into Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging at Shared Services Canada.

There are many reports, questionnaires and surveys that provide statistical data and metrics about the public service in terms of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB). What we are missing is the qualitative data; the human experiences that are behind these metrics and survey results. The challenge is to bring to light what happened, what the impact was and what we can do. This report seeks to provide such insight in a manner that is clear, relatable and, hopefully, impactful.

My team's research project went beyond the available data and sought to understand the stories of employees who are members of equity-seeking groups (ESG). We wanted to better understand the depth of the diversity at Shared Services Canada (SSC). What we heard ranged from positive and uplifting to outright hurtful and unacceptable.

The objective of this report is to share these stories to:

- acknowledge and honour the lived experiences of our colleagues
- increase our collective cultural literacy
- spark dialogue across the organization to support the shift toward a safe and inclusive culture
- inform future initiatives, priorities, plans and policies so they better consider the DEIB lens

More than 1160 participants shared their stories - highlighting inclusive practices, raising their concerns and making recommendations. Participants were very courageous in telling their stories. I invite you and everyone in the organization to show the same courage. Let's receive those stories and adjust how we approach DEIB at SSC.

Sincerely,

Alexandre St-Jean

Ombuds

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First off, I give a big shout-out to the Research and Analysis Team of the Office of the Ombuds (OO). They have put in a lot of effort to ensure the success of this initiative. Their dedication gave participants a safe space to be vulnerable and share their story, and honoured the experiences they shared.

We embarked on this journey following various conversations we had with employee networks. We quickly realized that we did not have access to many of their stories. People had a variety of experiences but did not reach out to our office to seek support. When engaging in dialogues with network members, we noticed that only a few of them spoke. Most remained silent.

So we asked ourselves:

- What is the story behind the silence?
- What have they experienced?
- Are they silent because their experience is positive, neutral, or they don't feel it is safe to share it?

We decided to offer various ways for people to anonymously share their experiences with DEIB.

When we announced this research project, we often heard that people were tired of surveys; we should not expect much participation. On the contrary, we heard from many participants, including more than 1060 people who responded to our anonymous online questionnaire. Our discussion groups revealed a strong feeling of inaction fatigue: stop asking the same questions when we haven't seen any changes on issues we have already raised many times.

We heard from many participants who expressed appreciation for SSC's continued efforts to move forward on all aspects of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging. SSC has already adopted the right policies and has clearly expressed its commitment by launching and supporting many positive initiatives.

This report presents positive experiences and inclusive practices. It also reports on experiences of exclusion, discrimination and harassment. It presents many sides of a narrative that quantitative surveys do not capture.

It presents the stories of people who:

- do not fit into the narrative of the majority
- face barriers in a system that was built for others and where they, as the person they are, are often seen as the problem

What makes us the same?

We work within the federal government to serve Canadians. Through the Values and Ethics Code for the Public Sector, the government has set values and ethical parameters we are all bound to meet. Beyond that, we are all different. We are meant to reflect Canadian society and work as multicultural colleagues who respect and are mindful of one another. We are required to provide a workplace that is psychologically safe and free from discrimination and harassment. It's not just about getting results; it's also about how we get those results.

I invite you, the reader, to receive and honour the stories we've included in this report. They represent the reality of many of our colleagues. Take the time to look at the suggestions in the What can we do? section and see what **you** can do to foster an inclusive workplace for all.

For my team and I, this has been a life-altering project. Not because we believe what we write will fix everything, but because we were entrusted with the pride, pain and openness of those people who shared their stories with us.

For those who participated in our project, we acknowledge that you chose to trust us and gave much of yourselves along the way.

For those of you whose wounds and memories of difficult experiences were re-opened, we are sorry you had to relive the pain. We remain hopeful that others will not have to live the same things you did.

The road to inclusion is a journey of 10,000 steps. Every action, word, gesture and consideration is a step toward or away from the objective. Let's take this journey together toward a better tomorrow, today.

Important note to the reader

About the information and findings in this report

This report is mostly influenced and informed by what we read and heard as part of this project. Statistics we use in this report reflect what we obtained in this research plus some comparative data for context and comparison. These include human resources statistics and the Public Service Employee Survey (PSES) results.

We do not mean for the findings and information in this report to be conclusions on the state of the department. Our aim is to elevate the lived experiences of the participants who shared their stories with our office.

Participants and employees

You will find the terms 'participant' and 'employee' used throughout this report. In this context, they are not interchangeable.

Information about or from participants applies to those people who provided written or oral submissions within the framework of this research study.

Information about or from SSC employees at large goes beyond the scope of the project. For instance, there may be 100 employees of a specific group in the department, but only 40 of them were participants in the study.

Honouring the experience of those who participated

The issues ESG employees experience is not new. It has been noted in previous OO reports. As a way to honour those who used our services, it is fitting that some of our comments and observations include past stories where they remain relevant.

This document is brief compared to the more than 1160 submissions we received and discussions we heard. We have summarized and paraphrased common points in the contextual portions of the report to protect participant anonymity. We have also included a number of supporting participant comments or direct quotes. We have done our best to reflect what we heard.

Please accept that what you read is what colleagues live and feel. To someone who has lived a situation, their experience is their reality.

If you contributed to this research and find that we have not quoted what you said, we hope you will find the spirit and intent of your words reflected in the narrative.

We have chosen to deliberately minimize the use of statistics and focus on qualitative information. Knowing the percentage of a group who report being harassed doesn't give us much insight into the issue. Our aim is for SSC employees of all levels to acknowledge and receive the stories behind the numbers - with humility and curiosity.

Context

The issue of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB) is quite present in the Canadian and public service context. We must consider it within the present Canadian and employment context.

History has led us to where:

- Canada has enacted laws seeking to make this country more accepting and inclusive

- the Public Service of Canada has developed a series of policies and concepts to guide the way

- Shared Services Canada (SSC) has further expanded these tools

We must all consider the experience of SSC employees within that context while asking this question: **Can we do better?**

Advocates for persons with disabilities have created the model quote, "Nothing about us without us". We applied this principle of engagement throughout this research project.

Canadian society and the federal public service

Events over the past few years have made it impossible for the status quo to continue. These include the murder of George Floyd, the discovery of burial sites of Indigenous children, the rise of Islamophobia, anti-Asian racism fueled by the COVID 19 pandemic, continuing gender discrimination and other growing social concerns. Greater awareness led to expressions of support for members of equity-seeking groups.

The federal public service responded with a commitment to create a workplace culture that is diverse, inclusive and free from racism, discrimination and harassment - a workforce that represents Canada's diversity at all levels of our organization. The Clerk of the Privy Council issued the Call to Action on Anti-Racism, Equity, and Inclusion in the Federal Public Service to bring meaningful actions to build a diverse, equitable and inclusive public service. SSC's senior leadership collectively signed a "Leadership Pledge" to address issues of racism and discrimination.

You can find more information and resources by visiting Diversity and inclusion in the public service.

Legal framework

The Canadian legal framework requires SSC and all public servants to create and maintain a safe and equitable workplace free of harassment and discrimination.

These laws and regulations include:

Accessible Canada Act

This Act aims to ensure a barrier-free Canada by 2040 with a focus on the following 8 areas: employment; the built environment; information and communication technologies; communication; the procurement of goods, services and facilities; the design and delivery of programs and services; transportation; and areas designated under regulations made under paragraph 117(1)(b).

Canadian Human Rights Act

This Act makes it illegal for federally regulated employers and service providers to discriminate against people or treat them unfairly, based on the following grounds: race; national or ethnic origin; colour; religion; age; sex; sexual orientation; marital status; family status; disability; a conviction for which they have been granted a pardon.

Employment Equity Act

This Act requires that employers take actions to ensure the full representation of members of 4 designated groups within their organizations: women; Indigenous peoples; persons with disabilities; and members of visible minorities.

Official Languages Act

This Act ensures that all Canadians, including employees of the public service, have a right to work and communicate in their official language of choice: English or French.

Public Service Employment Act

This Act allows hiring managers the option to use "best fit" when seeking to fill positions. A broader definition of merit allows a manager to hire a candidate who not only meets the essential qualifications of the job but also the operational requirements or current or future needs that the organization or employer has identified beforehand.

Work Place Harassment and Violence Prevention Regulations

These regulations seek to prevent and resolve situations of harassment and violence in the workplace. They require organizations to have a policy in place.

SSC Workplace Harassment and Violence Prevention Policy

This policy aims to prevent incidents of harassment and violence from occurring; quickly and effectively deal with any incident that may occur; provide affected employees with information about support services.

The values of SSC

SSC has identified 3 values that guide the way we do our work:

- **we pursue excellence**
- **we build our relationships based on inclusion, trust and respect**
- **we act with integrity and accountability**

This is demonstrated through the expected behaviours we have identified for each of these values.

The behaviours during the pursuit of excellence are:

- **we take ownership**
- **we give feedback**
- **we support each other**

The behaviours while building our relationships on inclusion, trust and respect are:

- **we are inclusive**
- **we practice empathy and care**
- **we seek opportunities to learn**

The behaviours for acting with integrity and accountability are:

- **we act as one SSC**
- **we show courage**
- **we honour our commitments**

These are all relevant to DEIB. We invite you to keep these values and laws in mind as you read this report and reflect on how we can each incorporate them into our day to day work life.

The profile of equity-seeking groups at SSC

This section presents a profile of the equity seeking group (ESG) communities at SSC. We used 2 baseline dates for the study: January 1, 2020, and January 1, 2023. This 3 year spread is long enough for trends to appear.

An ESG is a group of people who are disadvantaged on the basis of one or more prohibited grounds of discrimination within the meaning of the Canadian Human Rights Act. These grounds are: race; national or ethnic origin; colour; religion; age; sex; sexual orientation; marital status; family status; disability; a conviction for which they have been granted a pardon.

Note on self-identification

We've based the figures on ESG employees on self-identification. This is the term the Public Service Commission uses to collect employment equity information that applicants voluntarily provided in appointment processes.

In its commitment to employment equity and a representative workforce, the Government of Canada (GC) encourages employees to self-identify. Since self identification is voluntary, it provides data that can only be representative of what has been self-declared.

The GC's objective with self-identification is to enhance career opportunities based on fairness and to support the goal of a representative workforce.

Our office has heard that some people do not self-identify for a number of reasons, ranging from distrust in the confidentiality of the data collected to a worry that the data could lead to discrimination.

Number of employees self-identifying as a member of an equity-seeking group

SSC had 8315 (indeterminate and term) employees on January 1, 2023. The following table provides an overview of the numbers of identified employees per group. No statistics are available for the 2SLGBTQI+, Jewish or Muslim communities. We did, however, include them in our engagement and consultation efforts.

All numbers in this table reflect the reality on January 1, 2020, and on January 1, 2023.

January 1, 2020 — January 1, 2023

of employees (Jan 1, 2020) / # of employees (Jan 1, 2023)

Group	Jan 1, 2020	Jan 1, 2023
SSC total employees	6947	8315
Women	2286	2938
Visible Minorities	1165	1610
Persons with Disabilities	358	516
West Asian, North African or Arab	251	313
Black	240	354
Indigenous	198	233
South Asian/East Indian	192	282
Southeast/East Asian	74	88
Latin American (non-white)	54	70

% of SSC's overall population

Women
- 33% (2020)
- 35.33% (2023)

Visible Minorities
- 17% (2020)
- 19.36% (2023)

Persons with Disabilities
- 5.15% (2020)
- 6.21% (2023)

West Asian, North African or Arab
- 4% (2020)
- 3.76% (2023)

Black
- 3% (2020)
- 4.26% (2023)

Indigenous
- 2.85% (2020)
- 2.80% (2023)

South Asian/ East Indian
- 3% (2020)
- 3.39% (2023)

Southeast/ East Asian
- 1% (2020)
- 1.06% (2023)

Latin American (non-white)
- 1% (2020)
- 0.84% (2023)

● 2020   ● 2023

The tables above illustrate the relative growth of each group over the 3-year period. They present them in both net numbers and as percentages of SSC's overall population.

- **All groups have seen a net gain in overall numbers**
- **The percentage of Black, persons with disabilities, Southeast/ East Asian, South Asian/East Indian, visible minorities, and women employees at SSC increased over the 3 years**
- **The percentage of Indigenous, Latin American, and West Asian, North African or Arab employees at SSC decreased over the 3 years**
- **Overall, SSC has grown by 19.7%**

Notes:
- Source: Employment equity public service representation for women by department/ agency with departmental workforce availability estimates
- Internal representation for Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and members of visible minorities is based on those who have voluntarily chosen to self-identify in one of the respective employment equity groups
- The data in these tables cover employees identified for the purpose of employment equity in the regulations of the Employment Equity Act

Data on harassment and discrimination from the Public Service Employee Survey (PSES)

The Public Service Employee Survey collects data, measures and reports on the experiences of public servants through a quantitative survey. The survey asks questions on many subjects, including equity and inclusion.

In the most recent survey year, 2020, SSC had a population of 6,947. The results of the Public Service Employee Survey by theme for Shared Services Canada reported that:

6%
of 4075

respondents at Shared Services Canada indicated having been the victim of discrimination on the job in the past 12 months.

2019 (6%); 2018 (6%)

9%
of 4082

respondents reported having been the victim of harassment on the job in the past 12 months.

2019 (10%); 2018 (10%)

17%
of 4045

respondents indicated that harassment or discrimination caused them stress at work.

2019 (19%); 2018 (22%)

This is a large number when you convert these percentages to number of employees. When we apply the above percentages to SSC's population on January 1, 2020, the numbers of affected people translates to:

416
(discrimination, 6%)

625
(harassment, 9%)

1180
(stress at work due to harassment or discrimination, 17%)

This means that nearly 1200 colleagues say harassment or discrimination caused them stress at work. This is an important signal that indicates a need for a deeper analysis.

It is important to go beyond the numbers as the story behind these statistics remained a mystery.

The Office of the Ombuds (OO) wanted to find a way to complement these statistics in order to:

- understand the stories behind the statistics

- raise SSC's cultural literacy about its own diversity

- spark a dialogue on the topic

- support micro-shifts toward an equitable and inclusive culture

The impact of employee networks at SSC

Shared Services Canada (SSC) has 6 employee-led diversity networks: Black Employee Network (BEN); Indigenous Circle; Persons with Disabilities (PWD) Network; Pride Network; Visible Minorities Network; Women's Network. Each network is supported by champions from the senior management rank. They are all part of the Diversity Council, the governing space where employees can provide concrete direction for SSC's senior management on DEIB related matters.

Participants continually praised the diversity networks and, in some cases, indicated an interest in having more networks to represent different groups. People spoke of how the networks:

- help them to connect with people who have similar experiences and form strong bonds

- provide role models and allow for establishing mentoring relationships

- give members a sense of community and support on how to navigate areas such as career development and workplace challenges

"The networks provide members with a safe place to connect, discuss common issues, exchange information and voice concerns."

(Source: Diversity Networks).
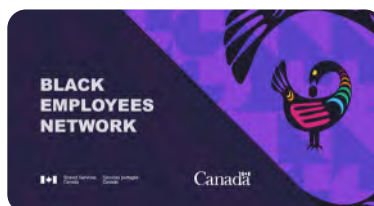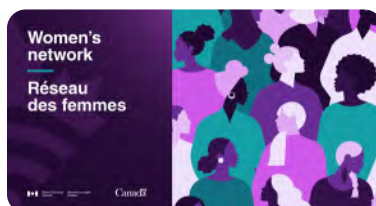
Our approach:
Research based on community engagement

This research was conducted with the principle of using an approach based on engagement. It was important to us to co-develop this approach with those directly touched by it. We also realized early in the process that we needed to engage in a series of dialogues to ensure the purpose of this initiative was well understood, to listen to the views and concerns of members of ESGs, and to make the necessary adjustments to ensure this initiative was safe and meaningful.

In conducting the research, we took the following steps:

1. Engaging the diversity employee networks

The aim of the engagement phase was to lay the foundation to do work "with" and not "on behalf of" equity-seeking groups within SSC. It was therefore important that the OO consult with the 6 diversity networks. Their generosity allowed us to gather invaluable feedback and deep-reaching insight. This helped the research project grow into a final product that truly reflects the needs and preferences of SSC's diversity employee networks and their members.

2. Validating the need for this research

The idea for this research came following a group dialogue with members of the Black Employee Network (BEN). We then engaged with the network steering committee to establish whether this type of research was actually needed. We knew that many ESG employees within SSC felt consultation fatigue from diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging initiatives.

It was important to ensure this would not be another survey asking for their input with no outcome. BEN confirmed the value of the OO's proposed project. They felt the independent and neutral OO could provide the safety people needed to participate and the clout to elevate their voices.

Members then supported our office in reviewing questionnaire drafts and proposing inclusive wording and questions that held value.

3. Engaging employees from ESGs

When we finished developing the questionnaire, we trialed it with BEN members. The outcome was a low response rate. We learned a lesson about the importance of agility and flexibility in our approach. We realized we needed to put more effort into building trust, engaging employees and socializing the project. This led the OO to:

- present to diversity network members at 17 engagement sessions
- meet with each diversity network's champions and chairs

These activities allowed us to introduce the project, answer questions and seek feedback. We also determined there were other ESGs outside of the formal networks that wanted to be engaged. They include Jewish employees and the neuro-diverse subset of the Persons with Disabilities (PWD) Network.

The feedback received from all networks during the engagement sessions helped shape the content and conduct of the questionnaire and discussion sessions.

4. Conducting a secondary reference review

We conducted a secondary reference review of various articles, governmental reports and policies, as much had already been said on this topic. Some networks also sent us additional references to read.

This review helped our team:

- capture themes, which gave us a basic understanding of what ESG employees might say
- create the content for the phase 1 questionnaire and phase 2 discussion sessions. (See Annex B: Secondary research references for a list of references we used)

5. Launching the anonymous online questionnaire

We then launched the department-wide anonymous online questionnaire to capture participants' stories on diversity and inclusion with a focus on ESG experiences. The response was astonishing -1,065 responses or 13% of all SSC employees! We feel this was a direct result of our engagement efforts.

We analyzed the questionnaire responses and were able to identify many common themes. We had identified some of these themes through our review of secondary references and some were new to us.

It is important to note that we received hundreds of submissions from participants who did not identify in any of the ESGs but still wanted to share their experience with DEIB.

6. Facilitating deep dive group discussions

To do a deep dive into the themes identified in online responses, we launched phase 2 of the research.

Employees could choose to:

- join us in one of 47 discussion sessions
- have one-on-one virtual conversations with us
- send us an email with their written stories

Over 100 employees participated and offered the most honest and detailed stories of the research project. To note: We may have double counted participants, as some chose to join more than one discussion group. This speaks to intersectionality and the complex nature of people's experiences.

For more information, refer to: Annex C: How we conducted the research, including how we completed the analysis.

What is intersectionality?

This term refers to when someone falls into more than one equity-seeking group (ESG) category (race, gender, class, sexuality, disability, nationality, or other social categories) (Source: What Is Intersectionality and Why Is It Important?).

For instance:

- a Black woman falls into 2 categories
- a Latino man with disabilities who is also queer falls into 3 categories

The diversity, equity and inclusion networks at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) have adapted a tool entitled the Wheel of Privilege and Power that can be used to identify intersectional locations of power. Developed by Sylvia Duckworth, the wheel illustrates how intersectionalities affect a person's level of privilege and power in Canadian society. The closer someone is to the centre of the wheel, the more privilege and power (or less barriers) that person has. Identifying the forms power takes allows us to design systems in different ways to correct power imbalance or to level the proverbial playing field.

Participants shared many examples of intersectionality. It is clear that they face more barriers in both their personal and work lives than those who identify in only one ESG. We found it impossible to completely lay out all the various forms of intersectionality at SSC. We also know that we cannot completely segregate findings and assign them to a single ESG situation.

"There is a social bias and lack of respect for women, especially minority group women, in the technical field jobs at SSC."

(intersectionalities: gender, race)

"When I am turned down for an acting or a promotion, was it because of me? Was it my work? My gender, my colour?"

WHEEL OF PRIVILEGE AND POWER

(the closer you are to the centre, the more privilege you have)
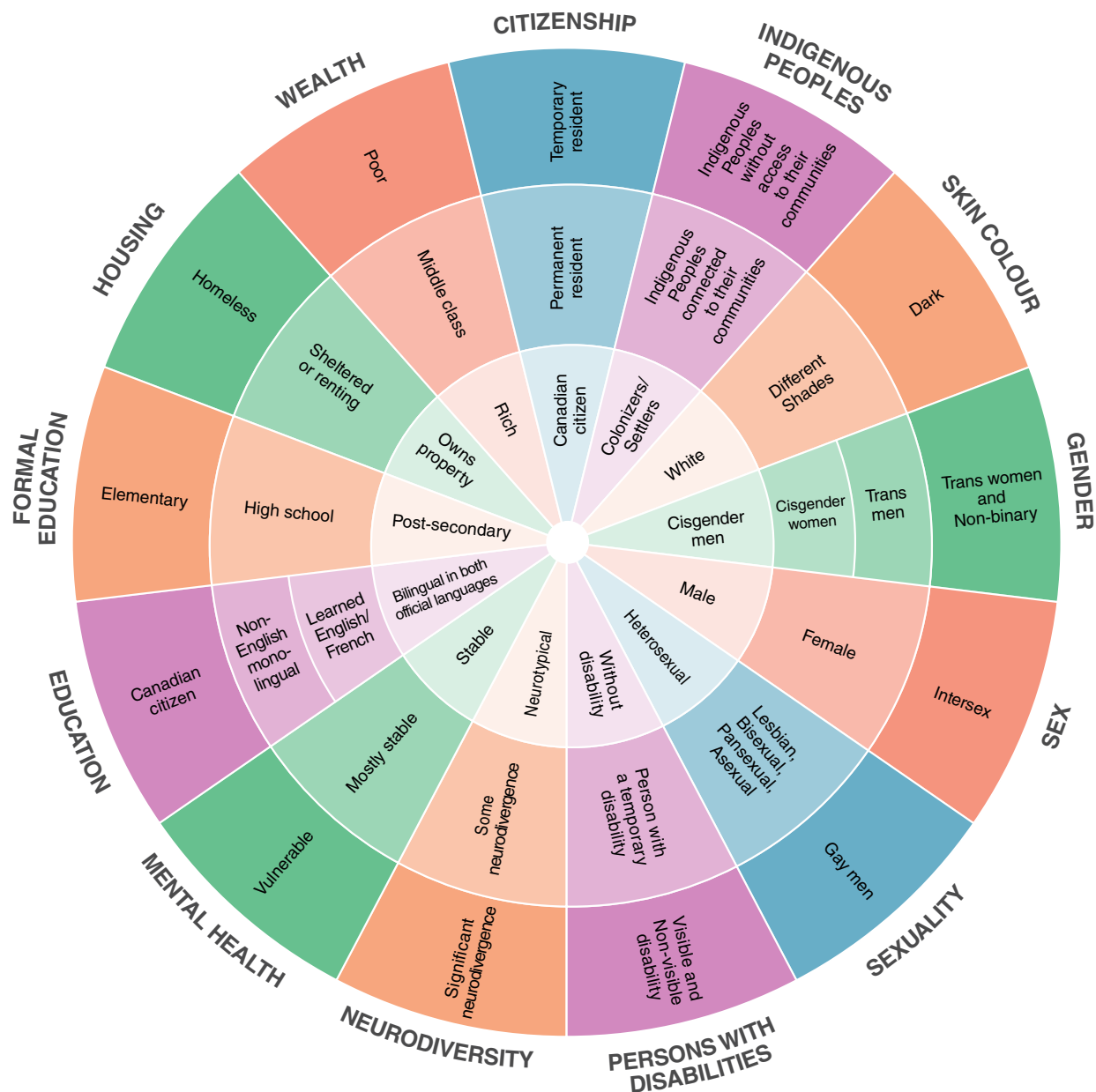
Note: the categories within this wheel are only examples in the Canadian context, and we should not limit ourselves to them. Intersectionality is a broad concept, and this tool is only a beginning point.

(Source: Canada.ca)

For a long description of this image, refer to Annex D: Long description of Wheel of Privilege and Power.

The combined impact of multiple intersectionality categories for one person can be exponential. Being Asian is one thing and being neurodiverse is another, but to be Asian and neurodiverse takes the potential impact to a new level. It's a matter of one plus one equals more than two.
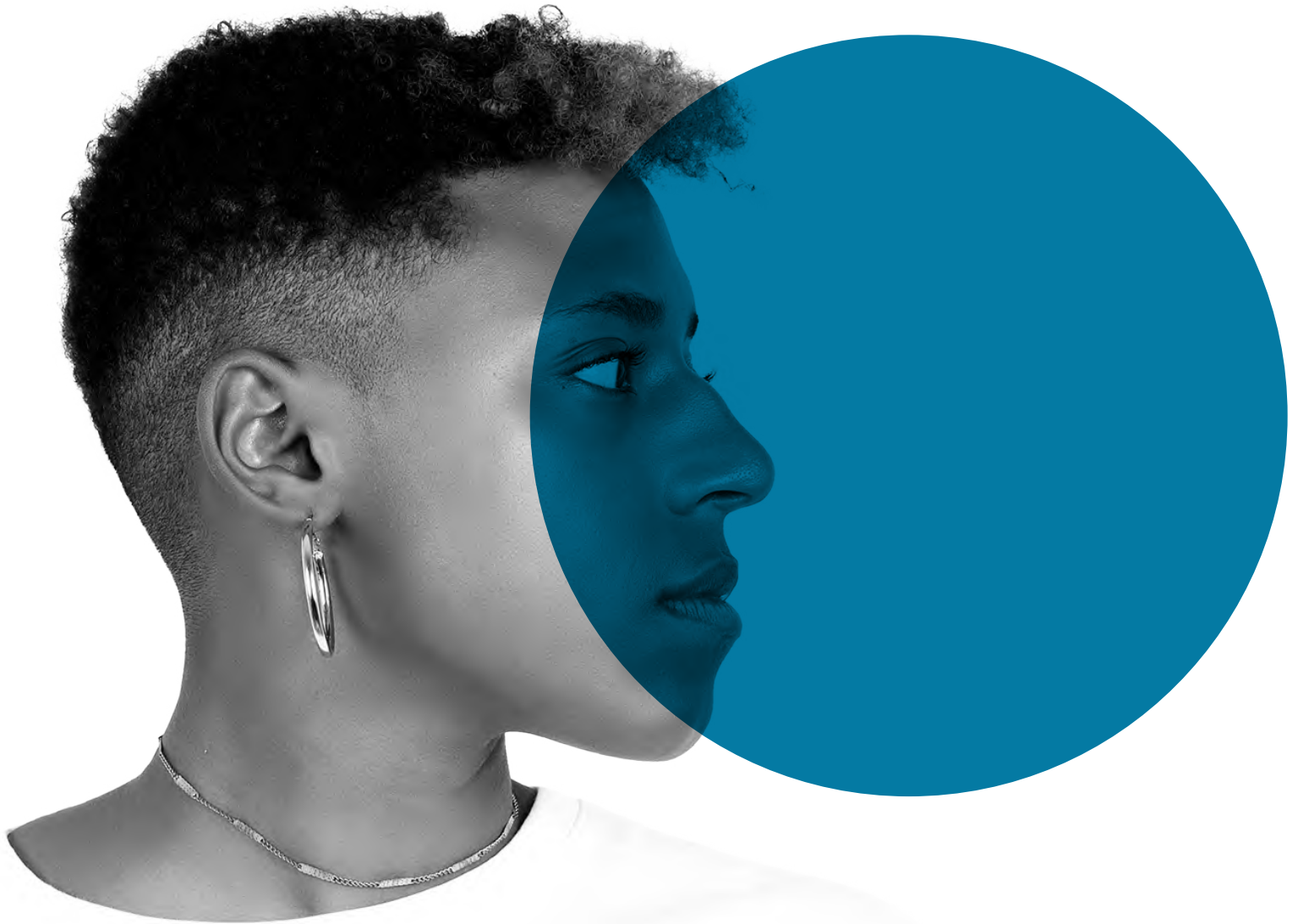
"I never even got to address my disability status because the issues I had as a trans person took all of my energy and I felt bad bringing up even more since I feel less important as a casual employee."

(intersectionalities: disability, gender, class)

Applying the diversity lens

People come to SSC with their personal core beliefs, their attitudes, their cultural background, and their own particular history. They form part of the culture of the organization. SSC provides a desired cultural framework of policies, practices and expectations that, if respected, will allow employees to bring the best of themselves to our workplace. There is no single "model" public servant nor is there one way of doing things.

What was clear throughout the project was the significant number of common issues ESG participants faced. For instance, all groups aired similar views regarding a lack of fairness in the staffing process. What differed is why they felt they and their group were being left behind. For historical and social reasons, their "lens" is different and their interpretation of why something is happening varies sharply.

Managing and working with people within this context means we have to do our best to understand where people are coming from when we interact with them. There are many factors that make up a person's story. Many may be totally invisible to you, but very real to them.

We may see someone's colour, but we cannot see the multi-generational harm that makes them feel lesser than those they work with. We may see someone's clothing and not understand why they choose to dress that way. We may hear someone's accent and not feel the embarrassment they feel when someone imitates it as a joke.

We cannot feel the stress someone feels trying to prove that they are just as good as the other person. We may see the person's behaviour or their reactions, but not the suffering underneath the surface.

Applying the diversity lens means demonstrating very important cultural skills:

- **Cultural curiosity:** a desire to learn and understand more about people whose cultural backgrounds, experiences and perspectives are different from your own

- **Cultural empathy:** having an appreciation and consideration of the differences and similarities of another culture

- **Cultural humility:** a commitment to self-evaluation and self-critique of one's own beliefs and cultural identities

Without this critical thinking skill and application, we tend to only see one-size-fits-all solutions. They may be simpler, but may create issues we will have to resolve later. It can also lead to the loss of engagement of those whose cultural differences were ignored or downplayed.

"It is one thing to talk about Diversity & Inclusion and another to put your time where you are talking. The deliverables at SSC are important but culture is more important – happy people are productive people. Where they feel seen they will be productive."

- An executive

Intention versus impact

Something we hear within the OO is the idea that, when a colleague has offended or injured another colleague, 'their intention was never to hurt someone'. In this way, their reasoning excuses them from the impact their action has made.

The intention-action-impact model is a framework that can help you evaluate the impact of your actions on others, especially in the context of DEIB. In the graphic below, two columns are shown, the left side labelled "Unseen" and the right side "Seen". On the Unseen side, the word "Intent" and "Effect" (impact) are written underneath. On the Seen side, the word "Action" is written underneath. A blue arrow points from Intent to Action to Effect.

"And although I am certain that this has nothing to do with the manager actually being racist or discriminatory – that's not how [the employee] is perceiving things – and who am I to tell him how he feels? That's not my place. I can only work with him to get him to a safer place."

Unseen   **Seen**

Intent
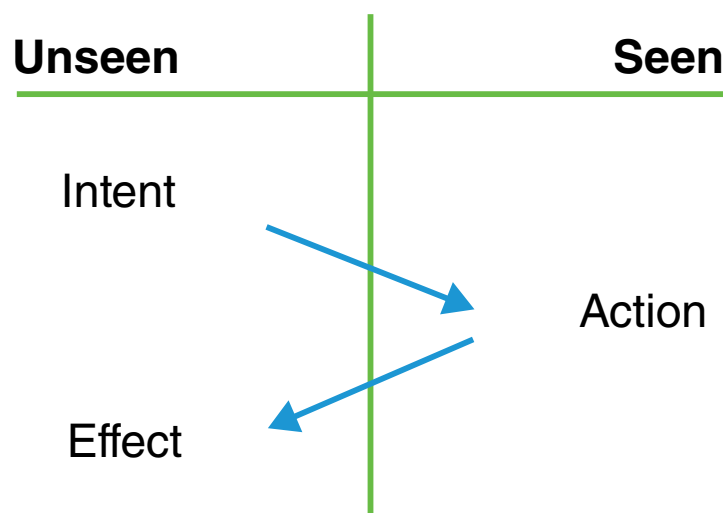
Action

Effect

(Source: Ripple Effect Education).

This model recognizes that, despite having good intentions, your actions can still have unintended negative consequences. It suggests that you should be intentional and evaluate the potential impact your actions may have on others and whether they align with your intended goal. You can work toward creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for everyone by using this model to evaluate your actions and decisions. As you read through the next section of this report, "What we heard", keep in mind the idea that even when the intention of a colleague was not to hurt a member of an ESG, their actions may still have made a harmful impact.

What we heard

This section is a summary of some of the many stories participants shared. It seeks to give a voice to the experience and makeup of ESG participants. We have grouped them into different themes.

You will see the many factors that influence a person's experience. They include culture, language, colour, gender, origin, preferences, education and expression. For ESG participants, these can range from the facets of who they are, to obstacles and sources of pain others inflict on them.

Organizational commitment is well demonstrated

Participants expressed that SSC has been making efforts to create a culture of safety and fairness. Many shared how much more positive their time here has been compared to their time at other federal departments and agencies. There is a general feeling that significant progress is being made.

For many, SSC and the public service are considered havens where they are accepted as they are and are judged based on their character and performance.

Participants seem to believe that SSC is on the right path and that, with dedicated efforts from their colleagues, managers and leadership, our department can truly be a place of diversity and inclusion. Change takes time and, while this is a source of frustration, it was also accepted as an inevitable reality.

2SLGBTQI+ participants do see progress in the department in the form of the recent upgrade on MS Teams that allows for displaying a person's gender next to their name.

Note: The Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat has updated its directive on signature blocks to permit employees to identify their pronouns.

Most ESG participants who responded to our questionnaire told us that their experience working at SSC has been positive overall. When asked:

How would you rate your work experiences as an SSC employee?

62.42%
responded Positive/Very Positive

15.79%
responded Neutral

Have you experienced any obstacles in your work environment as a member of an equity-seeking group?

72.95%
of respondents answered No

"**Before joining the GC, I was skeptical because of discrimination I faced elsewhere when I was told,** "**You took my job because you are an immigrant.**" **Here at SSC, I feel accepted, I felt like I am able to be myself straight away and be my true self at work.**"

"**I believe SSC is on the right path right now. Our leaders clearly want this organization to be a true example of inclusion within the public service. I truly believe we need to hold more dialogues such as design jams and do other experience sharing activities to create more cohesion between equity-seeking groups and the rest of SSC.**"

"I am part of an amazing team, have amazing peers/colleagues, and have been welcomed and respected for my skills and talents. SSC is one of the more forward thinking departments when it comes to diversity, and is making a very conscious effort to ensure they are walking the walk and not just talking the talk."

Microaggressions are the most prevalent form of discrimination

Microaggressions are defined as the everyday, subtle, intentional - and oftentimes unintentional - interactions or behaviours that communicate some sort of bias toward historically marginalized groups.

While a majority of ESG participants reported they had encountered few issues while working at SSC, a good number did mention and downplayed some of the less positive events they experienced. What they told us often falls in the category of microaggressions.

It should be made quite clear that participants say it is not necessarily employees who are not part of ESGs who are responsible for all the issues raised. ESG participants report being subjects of negative behaviours just as much from other ESG employees.

What was never acceptable but is tolerated

Microaggressions may seem small, such as a comment on someone's appearance or a "harmless" joke, but they add up. They destroy self-esteem and wear down those who are targeted. You will find examples of microaggressions below, some of which may seem trivial. Others will appear to be outright aggressions.

Keep in mind that their impact will vary from person to person and group to group. Participants share that their colleagues defend themselves by saying their comment was just "a joke" or they "didn't realize it was offensive".

Racist or homophobic jokes, laughing at accents or comments of a sexualized nature cause harm to people and to relationships.

So why do we continue to see this behaviour?

- Words that were once accepted are offensive today. Using them inadvertently or out of ignorance does not make them less harmful.

- Belittling of women and their contributions is hurtful and unfair.

- The old boys clubs or "locker room talk" are harmful.

We've come a long way but not everyone is travelling at the same speed and the rules of the road keep changing. One thing is certain: we all need to do our part to move forward.

"I was treated as if I lacked intelligence. It was subtle; I was given administrative support duties while I was an advisor."

"My team goes to lunch and does not invite me."

"The only time being a member of an ESG was given any type of attention is when individuals would tell jokes (that they would later apologize for)."

"A manager was surprised I could speak French because I am South Asian."

"Women have most of the caregiving roles in the family. There is difficulty when asking for family-related leave; I get questioned about the leave categories on PeopleSoft. I feel like I need to justify every time – the type of leave and the reason why."

"I saw microaggressions from the beginning, slights, where for example my manager said 'that North African guy only got that promotion because of the race card' and then adding so as not to offend me 'but you aren't like them [North Africans]; you are different.'"

Gender identity and expression

Some gender-diverse participants in the 2SLGBTQI+ community said they face unique barriers due to their gender expression. Issues related to gender seem to be on a different level than those related to sexual orientation, such as having to pick a gender on new hire forms, changes due to transitioning at work, changing their name (without having to legally do so), and the most often-heard issue: mis-gendering.

Intersectionality at play

Most visible minority women shared that they feel there are few people who look like them in this department. They also have the sense they are not taken as seriously on their team when compared to white women and/or male visible minorities. We also learned that there is a racist myth that Black women are more promiscuous and that this further stigmatizes and isolates them in the workplace. This also speaks to hesitation about the return to the worksite on the part of visible minorities.

"If this occurs [mis-gendering], just apologize, use the correct pronoun and move on. No need to make a big fuss. It is so emotionally draining for me to have to console you because you feel bad."

"I am a female visible minority executive. One time I arrived at a management meeting early and sat down at the table to wait for others to arrive.

A person came into the room and asked me:

Person: Are you lost?

Me: No.

Person: What room are you looking for?

Me: None.

Person: You'll have to leave, this room is booked for a meeting.

This tells me that executives do not look like me, and I do not look like an executive."

Giving the same space for different sacred days

It would be difficult to imagine an all-staff meeting on Christmas Day or Good Friday. While these Christian sacred days have been included as statuary holidays, other religions don't benefit from the same privilege.

Jewish and Muslim participants shared that they often have to miss out on important meetings because no consideration is given to blocking out their religious holidays on the Outlook calendar (e.g., Passover). Secondly, it can be tiring having to continually explain and justify their religious practices (e.g., special time for prayer or fasting).

"As a Muslim employee, some of the cultural practices [...] that often lead to difficulties interacting with others in the workplace is [...] when I explain that I consume zero alcohol or that I eat no pork at all, in accordance with my religious beliefs. Many [...] express difficulty in understanding why I am 'putting myself through fasting/depriving myself' [...] It gets so old and exhausting to explain over and over again about my beliefs and then hear these types of comments."

Concerns over hybrid work

The return to the office has had a significant impact on everyone over the past year. This is experienced at a different level for many ESG participants. Many report having experienced fewer microaggressions in the remote environment and expressed a real concern, even fear, of going back into the workplace. Statements such as, "I've had three years of good work; now it's back to what I hoped to avoid," speak volumes.

Women in particular expressed the safety they felt not being "ogled" or put down. Others expressed the additional challenge of family responsibilities that comes with the return to the office.

Some 2SLGBTQI+ participants, specifically transgender employees, feel safer working in a virtual environment and some were able to transition during the pandemic.

"In discussing hybrid work, there was no discussion about those with medical disabilities. It can be very stressful to feel like we have to go back to an unsafe work environment. Especially when the directive on masking is, 'Do what you are comfortable with'."

"Virtual, remote working is better than the office environment. It is nice to not have to deal with looks and snide comments from others and just do my work."

"With pressure to return to the office (adding long commute times and taking into account an environment that doesn't support recharging), as an employee with a disability, it's only a matter of time before I burn out. I feel cast aside as an employment equity group employee."

How ESG members react to microaggressions

Most ESG members who spoke of microaggressions seemed to be quite forgiving of what they labelled as "minor" or "innocent" transgressions. They are not looking for punishment; they simply want it to stop.

They report that their reactions can go in 3 ways:

1. "calling in" others by raising the issue through a lens of curiosity and openness to dialogue

2. "calling out" others and putting a stop to the behaviour through frustration and righteous anger

3. taking the hit and suffering in silence because of the fatigue of constantly having to work toward respect and fairness

Note: While participants stated they had downplayed instances of microaggressions, in hindsight, they did come to believe that the occurrences were, in fact, more serious and fall into the category of unacceptable.

The impact of such behaviours in the workplace can have serious results. Relationships are a key enabler for smooth operations. If employees receive negative treatment, they will disengage. We heard many instances of participants at all levels ending up on stress leave, which is sometimes reported as a physical ailment to avoid being stigmatized. Mental health suffers, as do operations and talent retention.

"I feel that being a strong woman is not always accepted. If you are a sugar and spice woman who lets the guys lead, that is fine; otherwise, you are treated poorly."

Experiences with racism and sexism

Some stories went beyond examples of microaggressions.

Examples of racism and sexism, which were experienced by participants regardless of their classification or level within SSC, were:

- using the 'N word' in front of several Black participants

- calling an East Indian participant a 'Paki' several times

- placing a banana on the desk of a Black participant as a joke

We cannot include one of the worst participant experiences we heard, as it may be too easy to identify the people involved. Those involved held senior positions and it is assumed they had taken all the mandated training. Their actions were deliberate and demonstrated sexism, racism and ageism all at once. What happened breached ethical and possible legal boundaries. There can be no acceptable explanation for their actions. The victim chose to do nothing and held the moral high ground but was deeply hurt.

Stop and ask yourself:

- What environment is present when someone feels they cannot address such serious transgressions without fear of reprisal?

- What conditions are in place that a manager believes it's okay to treat an employee this way?

Participants told us that these behaviours are unacceptable. The actors have gotten away with it and were not held accountable for their actions. This will contribute to perpetuating the cycle of racism and sexism.

Examples of racism

What participants felt and experienced includes racist biases and statements, such as that Black people and visible minorities:

- do not have the same capacity

- are incompetent, unqualified or were only hired or promoted in order to meet Employment Equity (EE) numbers

Some non-ESG participants were said to believe that efforts to hire EE and ESG employees was leading to a drop in standards.

After hearing their stories, it is saddening to conclude that, for too many, the darker your skin, the harder your experience in life and at work will be.

We also heard that Black and visible minority participants feel a greater need to "blend in" and to assimilate. This includes letting go of important parts of their culture, from appearance to food to language to work habits. They become hyperaware of interactions because they do not want to be misunderstood or stereotyped.

This takes a toll.

Anyone at any level can be subjected to racism. In response to an article that discussed racism in Canada, federal Deputy Minister Daniel Quan-Watson responded with a powerful letter where he laid out how, his whole life, he has been subjected to racist behaviour. If a very senior public servant can be treated inappropriately, anyone can. We invite you to read: An Answer to Rex Murphy's Questions on Racism in Canada by Deputy Minister Daniel Quan-Watson.

"There are good things but there are also bad experiences. As a person of colour, there is a perception that Black people don't have the same capacity as others. I have had that feeling many times. It sounds like there is something wrong with people of colour. I feel it almost every day even in conversations with my colleagues. My friend who is White once told me that working with Black people has changed the way she knew them before [for the better]. There are many labels/stereotypes associated with [us]."

"You have a Black employee who is a manager or team lead and others try to undermine them to make them look unqualified or claim they shouldn't be there. Despite the fact very often these Black employees are qualified and often overqualified."

"Don't bring ethnic food to work because it stinks."

"Accents are mocked or laughed at and if you have an accent, you're probably not as smart."

"I believe I am currently accepted because I've assimilated. However, if I were to adopt more culturally based hair styles and wardrobe, I know my coworkers would treat me differently. I've seen them do it to others."

"Why do I have to prove myself worthy every single day?"

Examples of sexism

Women in IT remain a minority and report greater career challenges and face unacceptable behaviour. There appears to be a culture that makes women more self conscious. Women who don't make it to more senior levels can feel they have been rejected for who they are.

"If I object to something being said to me I'm told, 'don't be so sensitive' or 'you're over-reacting'. If I speak forcefully I am told that I am abrasive whereas a man would not be told that."

"During a meeting I was told to get back into the kitchen."

"I have been excluded from opportunities for events (i.e. conferences or training) because my male boss assumed I would not be interested 'because it would be very technical' (which can be code for female...)"

"I was promoted and then asked by male colleagues: Who did you have to blow to get that?"

"During a meeting I was called a pussy cat. When asked to repeat the comment, the man looked embarrassed and did not repeat it."

"Their strengths are perceived as negatives and weaknesses. A woman who is direct and speaks up is often seen in a negative light but a man acting in the same way is considered a strong, assertive leader. This puts women in a position where they are damned if they do and damned if they don't."

Career progression is hindered by barriers

Participants raised 3 main areas of concern about career progression:

- developmental or promotional opportunities
- systemic barriers to career progression
- ESGs must work harder

These echo previous studies and Ombuds reporting.

Developmental or promotional opportunities

When participants shared experiences of being discriminated against when trying to advance in their career:

- some felt it was because of unconscious bias on the part of their manager
- others shared it seemed to be deliberate

Several participants expressed concern that they might have been subjected to discriminatory practices when first applying. We heard this mostly from those with unfamiliar sounding names, persons of colour and women.

Some participants from all groups said they did not see themselves reflected in senior management and that they are not moving up the management ladder, either individually or as a group. While this is problematic, not all ESGs exhibit a visible indicator so it is impossible to "see" the representation. In addition, not everyone up the management chain wants to disclose that they are members of an ESG. This is the case with some Indigenous participants we spoke to.

Several participants reported a broadly-held perception that employees who are not part of ESGs believe that there are quotas or hiring preferences based on employment equity and other policies. Too many hear or are told that ESG employees only got their jobs or were promoted because of their ESG status.

This basic prejudice has extremely perverse effects. It fails to acknowledge and respect the historic wrongs that need to be righted as well as the legitimacy of public service hiring. More importantly, it fails to recognize the qualifications of ESG employees.

"As a visible minority regardless of performing at higher level than my counterparts, I was never given the opportunity to try assignments in one of my previous teams. Even though I met all the requirements, I was never considered for a 4-month developmental acting."

"I was brought onto the current team because I was told that I would be considered for the acting CS-04. I am the expert on the team, fully bilingual. But then they were going to bring someone from outside to fill the CS-04. Because I 'do not have experience in managing'. I talked to [another]….manager at SSC. He agreed he is learning new things each day as a manager and he has been one for 4 years. He did not have the prior experience but was still offered the role. I am only acting now because they knew I would have a grievance to file."

"I was in a CS-04 interview. The male executive on the panel gave low marks on everything, the two women gave high marks in the same categories."

"How can we have leaders committed to equity when the leaders themselves are majority White?"

What is truly striking is how publicly
and vocally some people comment on
why someone was promoted or not.

It is not uncommon to hear people say:

- Women were promoted due to quotas

- Black and Indigenous employees are being favoured
  despite not being as well qualified

- Anglophones need not apply

Some of these appear to be broad beliefs shared by certain groups. Managers have been heard to say that managing Persons with Disabilities (PWD) is too demanding and they don't have time for it. Neurodiverse employees are branded as being troublesome and unreliable. There is also a perception that rules are bent more often for men than for women.

A number of women indicated they still see SSC's senior leadership as male-dominated and an old boys club. This perception has been in place for several years and effort must be made to address the situation.

The online questionnaire revealed that some participants who identified as white, male, cisgender, heterosexual and able-bodied believe that their own career opportunities are hindered by efforts to support ESG employees in their quest for equitable treatment. We heard observations such as "they are taking our jobs" or "white men need not apply". This is reflective of a broader societal myth of "white replacement" and reinforces the fact that SSC is a reflection of the larger Canadian context.

The statistics found at Annex E: Comparative tables regarding the progression of those ESGs that are tracked for managerial and IT-5/EX levels do not reveal any evidence to support the above notion.

These misconceptions may exist because of the visibility of SSC's support to ESG employees and the general observation that staffing and promotions are not clear or broadly communicated except for very senior management. These internal factors are reinforced by external factors beyond the control of SSC but that still influence the workforce.

"Inaction regarding career advancement: SSC has regressed with female representation as there were previously more women in senior leadership but now there seems less."

"The new EVP [Executive Vice President] chosen was not a woman – why?"

"I have been at SSC for 5 years, won a public service award and demonstrated my competency but have never been offered an acting position."

"I am the only woman on my team and feel that my voice does not matter. I need to work harder to seem qualified on my team and this is a big mental load."

"As a woman, it's really hard watching so many people float upwards with almost no experience but who are bilingual, male, chummy with higher ups, etc."

"The perception is that the first choice for opportunities are given to someone without a disability."

"The reality (is) lower level roles are filled with women and upper level roles are filled with men. I had applied for a promotion and was turned down based on merit criteria. But when I looked at the organizational chart for that branch, I realized all the directors and managers were male. So I was curious here, if I been selected for that promotion I would have been the first women holding a management position. Was there an unconscious push back to not have a woman there?"

"There are still some aspects of my life that I suspect would not be accepted. I've been told by white people more times than I can count, in reference to another BIPOC [Black, Indigenous, or Person of Colour] or woman in a higher up position, that they obviously got the job due to their race/sex and not on merit. These comments are common unfortunately and send a message to all BIPOC and women – that even if we make it, we won't be accepted/respected."

Systemic barrier to career progression

Some participants expressed that they don't fully trust the system, either stemming from:

- lived experiences, such as a lack of access to training opportunities

- biases in promotions and inflexible work arrangements

- stories they encountered during their career:
  - a person who continually gets denied second official language training will face barriers to getting promoted
  - a person who requires an alternative work arrangement will not be given a priority in promotional opportunities

They have lived or heard of bad experiences and are subjected to real or perceived prejudices. Whether real or perceived, the impact on the person is the same. Moreover, the number of people sharing similar experiences cannot simply be a coincidence.

Participants shared they don't fully believe they can reach the highest levels and tell us they don't see people that look like them in senior management.

They are reluctant or afraid to speak for themselves.

"I do not feel that I can compete with colleagues for advancement because of my accent: I do not sound like them or look like them – managers. Even though I have top education and a high passion for my work, I still experience barriers."

"I was the first woman on my team. Now, I have hired 4 more women as well as men. This was a total coincidence – not looking out for woman but judging based on their competencies. Question: if there was a bias before, how many women in IT are not being given a chance because they are women?"

"I am always told I do not meet the criteria or I am not ready yet. And yet, a man who also doesn't have that same experience is still offered the same opportunities."

ESGs must work harder

A common element and stressor for ESG participants is a general belief that they must work twice as hard as others and that their performance is judged more harshly. We heard many instances that illustrate this.

Women broadly report they need to work harder than men to be recognized and rewarded while being provided fewer opportunities than their male colleagues. While this is also reported across all ESGs, women comprise the largest group in SSC and intersectionality is often a factor.

"I have experienced a lack of respect for my abilities in comparison to my male counterparts despite nearly identical work experience."

"There is a bias against members of employment equity groups, especially when there is intersectionality. Members of employment equity groups have to work twice as hard to prove themselves compared to non-employment equity employees."

"Even though I do my research before speaking to my supervisor and offer options that are being studied, I am asked to go back and do research a second time, which confirms that my options were good for a second time – waste of time. I feel that I am questioned and not believed."

People feel discouraged to raise issues

Participants shared many reasons why they felt discouraged to raise the issue of DEIB.

People get labelled

Raising an issue can be risky. Women who speak up to defend themselves tell us they are often categorized as being irritable, not tough enough or that they are 'bitchy'. Participants say that those men who are called out for their behaviour don't often take the time to reflect, offer an honest apology and change their attitude. They often just put it behind them and carry on as if nothing happened.

People fear reprisal

A common theme we often heard (not just during this research but also as a constant from visitors to the OO) is a genuine fear of reprisal for reporting or addressing wrongdoing.

Retribution can be extremely subtle, long-lasting and harmful to the individual and their career. A missed opportunity for an acting position, being moved to another team, being ostracized or ignored, can sometimes be rationalized or explained away by managers. There are countless ways to get even and few ways to prove wrongdoing.

Microaggressions of a sexualized nature seem to be fairly common and women have often learned to live with it. We heard of some instances of sexualized conversations and behaviours despite their obvious inappropriateness. Worse is when these occurrences take place in front of other people and nobody steps in to stop it. We heard from a senior female manager that she felt guilty because she had failed to take action when another woman (junior to her) was harassed in a meeting. She told us this was because the behaviour was so out of place and surprising that she froze.

Additionally, none of the male leadership present stepped up either. **The fear of retribution exists at all levels.**

"There are expectations that women are meek, so when we speak up we are labelled as difficult."

"How do I self-identify my disability? What are the steps? I'm stressed that I will be stigmatized once I do."

"I fear reprisal or being categorized as whining, over emotional, or over reacting for bringing something up to my manager."

"Despite receiving 'Succeeded Plus' two years in a row [on my performance measurement assessment] and being marked as ready for advancement, I am clearly told to compete while I see others being appointed to positions in non-advertised promotional appointments. Of those appointed in this manner, it does not seem to include representation of visible minorities. I have also been told that raising the issue would have me identified as a problem and I would face penalty as my judgement would be questioned."
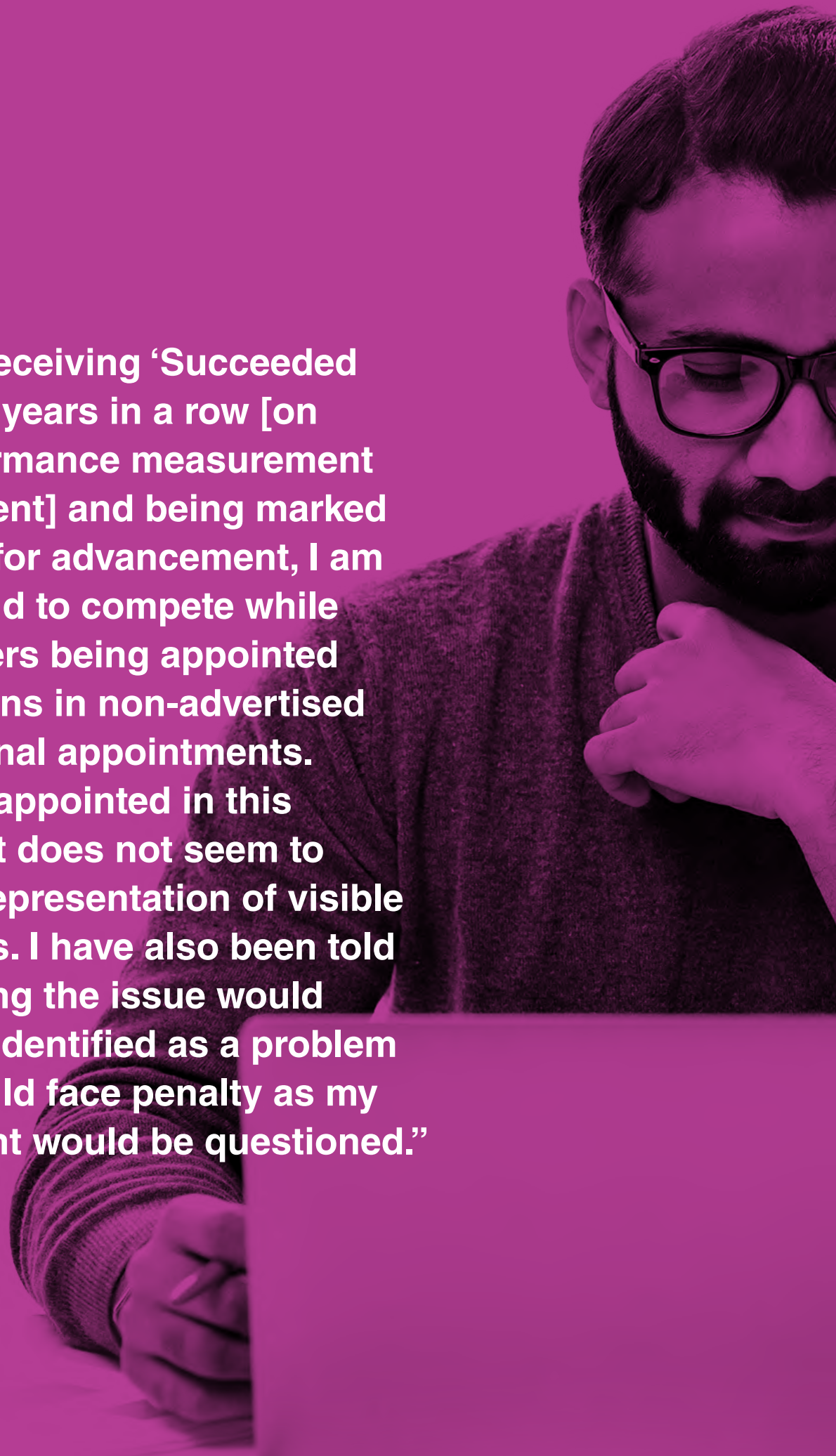
Lack of options triggers defence mechanisms

When someone feels triggered or threatened, be it personally or in their career, three basic choices come into play: fight, flee, or freeze. Fighting to be accepted, respected and treated equitably is hard and takes a toll. It can lead to arguments, challenging authority and conflicts. ESG employees who defend themselves and advocate for their rights are sometimes seen as being abrasive, conflictual or hostile. In some cases, this leads them to think they are at fault, a burden and a problem.

The second option available is flight. This can mean that people suffer in silence until they decide to give up and leave the situation. Some of those whose experiences have been especially challenging at SSC have decided to leave; some stay but become disengaged or end up on sick leave. Even those who reported having had a generally positive experience still reported some negative instances.

The last option is to freeze. In these cases, employees may want to say something when they or others are faced with discrimination but, in the moment, they do not know how. They are so shocked that the words or the courage to say something do not come.

"I am capable and competent – in my 40s. But my manager asked me to do admin work for one of my colleagues. When asked why, the response was that 'males in the IT environment are not good with communication'. I spoke out that I felt disrespected and that was not okay but my response was invalidated and my manager said he still felt it was legitimate. I was seen as 'too sensitive' because I cared."

"I no longer want to be included. It's not a club for me; it's a paycheck now."

"I feel unsafe, there is no one to complain to because managers are men."

Victim's account gets challenged or discounted

Participants raised different instances of harassment. In the experiences they shared with us, victims faced:

- being left in the same environment while management considered what to do

- instances where many people end up knowing the details of their situation

- being challenged

- having their credibility questioned

- seeing actions taken without their consent

We were made aware of more than one situation in which the victim was moved to another team. This is particularly true of instances of alleged sexual harassment. One recent case of sexual assault led to the victim leaving SSC. These kinds of experiences tend to revictimize and point toward a lack of skills to handle instances of harassment.

"Those who raise issues are not taken seriously and their concerns are invalidated; they are told they are being hysterical."

"I have learned to keep my mouth shut about how I am different and when I do that, I am accepted. When I speak as a person of colour or express an opinion that is not shared with those who are not racialized, I am met with disbelief and told that it is important to temper these opinions as they are anecdotal. If everyone who has these experiences is told that their experience is anecdotal, then so it shall be – because we never have the opportunity to express them without penalty."

"Members of the ESG groups are villainized and told 'you want to make everything about race and equity' when they bring up concerns like representation in EX."

Consequences are not visible

There were many reasons why some participants chose not to report their experience of discrimination, harassment, sexism or racism.

Other participants chose to report their experience to their manager or someone at a more senior level. While they may have felt heard, some shared that the response from leadership fell short by not making corrective or disciplinary consequence to the actor visible. For them, it seemed like the actor 'got away with it.' For example, the individual was moved from the team - but in a way that seemed like they were being promoted to another role or for career development.

Need for more accountability

A common theme we heard was that there was little (to no) accountability for those who committed such acts.

Justice and fairness must be real and victims must see them as credible. Justice serves to recognize the hurt of the victims, change (or punish) the behaviour of the actor, and serve as a deterrent to others.

This is not evident at SSC. Those who report unacceptable behaviour or patterns of discrimination often claim to be dismissed. In other instances, when their point is taken seriously, they are rarely made aware of the resolution - even less so for restitution.

Leaders may have addressed the issue with the actor, but the equity-seeking victim has no idea what was said. And where is the heartfelt apology? They are not told that someone has been removed or punished for their actions or attitude.

This lack of accountability for behaviour was reported to us by all levels of SSC. Too many transgressions continue to be brushed off and complainants considered to be the squeaky wheel or thin-skinned. Victims, up to and including executives, told us of unacceptable behaviour. What was remarkable was that even senior employees reported being intimidated, feared retribution and let the incidents slide. If they cannot defend themselves due to culture, how can a junior staffer do so?

While the above spans across the ESG spectrum, it was particularly felt by women. They were made to feel inferior and invalidated. That vulnerability shows that this can affect everyone at SSC: If they can treat my director that way, what would happen to me?

"Can no longer say 'managers do not have the EQ' [Emotional Quotient or Intelligence], i.e. 'they are a nice person and sometimes they just say inappropriate things like that.' Managers and employees should know better. It is not a question of 'do they have bad intentions' – there needs to be accountability of actions in order for the culture to shift."

"If I reported discrimination before and nothing happened, why should I bother reporting it [now] since nothing will happen?"

"It's hard to try and explain this to a supervisor that doesn't see any issue and that doesn't actually listen to the words that are coming out of my mouth."

Corrective actions are not seen

Simply put, those we spoke to see no concrete consequences, which can:

- cause loss of trust and confidence in senior management

- have a negative impact on the morale of those wronged (sometimes entire groups)

- discredit any communication that says, "You can come to us; it's safe and we want to hear from you," or "We have zero tolerance".

We cannot expect employees to engage in social change if they don't see concrete action and accountability.

As the Ombuds' staff, we are aware of many instances where corrective action was taken with real consequence. We recognize and understand the limitations regarding privacy. Can those limitations be further explored to protect the individual and, at the same time, satisfy the need for justice and fairness?

For example, a manager may be moved to another part of SSC as a result of unacceptable behaviour and may well have been subject to disciplinary, corrective or administrative measures. However, to the victim who is left ignorant of that information, the manager "got away with it" and has a new group of potential victims.

A large number of victims express coming forward for 2 basic reasons. The first is to try and find a way to stop the offending behaviour or correct a wrong. The second is to avoid the issue happening to anyone else. Rarely, if ever, did we see a desire for punishment or retribution. However, they do want to see and know what is being done about the situation.

Some of the unacceptable behaviors we've heard of go beyond what we believe awareness building and training can correct. Leadership should deal with repeated sexual or harassing incidents and possibly illegal occurrences in a manner that demonstrates commitment to the victims.

"Complained to management – nothing happened."

"My manager should have had a conversation with the client to raise awareness on this topic [discriminatory behaviour] or explain that it is not acceptable to judge an employee of his team based on his background: the Clerk said there is a ZERO TOLERANCE policy when it comes to this!!"

"I am concerned that my former manager in another department is now an executive at SSC and I worry she continues to bully and abuse others."

"I've had sexual harassment, I've been on the other side of sexual comments, touching, etc. I did not have anyone to complain to. I had to grin and bear it and hear the comments. Sometimes there needs to be real consequences for discrimination."

"Why should I report inappropriate behaviour? They keep doing it and nobody stops them."

The frameworks are in place but not leveraged

During this research, we reviewed applicable laws and policies; we discussed issues with the ESG networks; we analyzed all that we heard from participants; and we looked at ongoing departmental initiatives.

We observed that the tools for supporting DEIB within SSC are in place, clear, actionable and broadly supported.

As we examined questionnaire responses and discussed key findings with the discussion groups, common issues became obvious. One example is that all groups distrust the staffing process and sometimes they used personal observations to illustrate its unfairness.

The same applies to the challenges of accommodation requests. ESG employees reported feeling that the process is burdensome and unfair. It is a process that is meant to be collaborative but that feels formal and confrontational for many who have gone through it.

What was made very clear across all groups and from previous OO experience is that using the policies and processes in place, such as the employment equity provision and the accommodation process, can be complex and at times unclear.

This is intensified when leadership does not know that the relevant policies or processes exist and/or when managers do not know how to action them or take advantage of the flexibility they offer. Another irritant raised is when one leader interprets or implements a policy differently than their peers. Participants shared that this leads to feelings of unfairness and frustration at not seeing their needs and rights met.

Some participants said their leadership went above and beyond to support them in navigating these processes and using them to promote equity in the workplace. Others are frustrated that they had to navigate the system themselves to find solutions to their barriers without any leadership support.

"There are onerous steps to apply for accommodation, costly doctor's notes, documents in PDF are not accessible, no support from SSC. SSC relies on [the Accessibility, Accommodation and Adaptive Computer Technology Team] AAACT to be [the sole] resource."

"I am discouraged from attending medical appointments that are required by my disability due to my team lead not understanding the policy re: medical and sick leave."

"When I moved to a new team, my team lead went above and beyond to make it work that so my non-legal name could be used on official documents."

"My manager would have advocated for anyone on his team – he is a good guy."

Progress on diversity, but much work needed on inclusion

Participants generally report seeing progress at SSC and say the department enjoys a positive reputation across government regarding ESG members. This is encouraging and highlights SSC's efforts, coupled with employee engagement. Some told us they have been able to recruit ESG employees to SSC based on this reputation. Data shows that progress has been made in terms of representation, and representation matters a great deal.

The general observation is that SSC is good at diversity but needs to keep working on inclusion. Once people get here, the experience does not always live up to expectations.

Many spoke of being accepted, mentored and fully included within their work team and it is encouraging to determine that this was fairly broad. We also heard stories where participants were impacted in a way that was hurtful and were made to feel invalidated or excluded. This strikes at the person's self-esteem and worsens the feeling of isolation at work.

"When I first joined SSC I did not feel there was awareness in [Diversity and Inclusion] D&I – but now that I am getting involved in D&I initiatives, I realize that the department does take D&I seriously – not perfect and still work to do, but they are making the effort."

"In my team, colleagues are truly interested in understanding my cultural practices to better interact with me. I truly feel my supervisors take the necessary time to listen to me and actually adapt their actions based on what they have learned about me."

"Diversity' is easy – we can see whether we are getting it right by just the numbers, we can fix it. What is harder is inclusion – we are driven by a desire to be included. Inclusion is dangerous because it creates exclusion – some will feel they are not in the club. It is complex – I could have the executive title but since I do not see many others like me, so I still feel excluded."

Recognizing different realities

Immigrants often fall into one of the ESG communities and they reflect Canada's growth. They sometimes face additional hurdles of language, culture and working in a whole new environment. This requires remarkable levels of energy and effort. Their skills, education and competencies can be misunderstood or not fully valued. It takes time to become engaged and build relationships with colleagues.

Women are often caught in a dilemma of speaking up or remaining silent, where remaining silent erodes their sense of belonging, but speaking up gets them labelled as aggressive. This is a loss for their team and SSC as a whole since we are discounting a valuable resource and an alternate perspective.

An Indigenous participant expressed frustration that they were hired on the basis of their identity, then joined a team that showed little interest in learning more about that aspect of them. While other ESG employees may not want to be identified, there is an opportunity for sharing and learning when someone joins a team that is open to discussion and discovery. At the same time, the team must be conscious and respectful of the degree to which an ESG person is willing to share.

"**I've been told I need to be more assertive (that I am too polite) but this is not part of my culture [or upbringing]."**

– a female participant

"**I lack the opportunity to grow because I don't have Canadian schooling. And this would take time and money. I can maybe advance up to AS-03. But after that I hit a glass ceiling because my certifications and schooling from my country are not valued.**"

"**As a woman, I have been made to feel like I am not a "natural" woman by my senior director as I am strong and not submissive to the men on the team. When I stick up for myself (and peers) and the public service rules (like in contracting), I am treated as difficult and problematic for respecting the rules.**"

"**People talk down to you because they have pre-conceived ideas of your people... stereotypes.**"

On accommodations and accessibility

For persons with disabilities

Most persons with disabilities who participated in the study shared concerns that:

- disabilities are still seen as the issue instead of the issue being the barriers society needs to remove

- the accommodation process sometimes make participants feel like they are asking for a favour rather than exercising a right

- having to self-identify to each new manager or justify their requirements with the same medical evidence is burdensome, tiring and belittling

Participants shared that they are the expert on their own reality, so having to produce a doctor's note can be frustrating. They ask: Why is it difficult for managers to fulfill employee requests, especially if there is little to no cost?

Participants also struggled with the mindset that "all people with a similar diagnosis need the same support/accommodation". For example, we learned about managers assuming to be experts in a person's needs because their child has the same diagnosis. This does not leave room for individual experiences and employees being asked, "What works for you?". Instead, managers are telling them what works.

The workplace can be very challenging and demanding for those with physical disabilities. While we heard that many current practices and technological solutions are improving, there are still systemic issues. There also remain instances where accommodation needs are an afterthought. Participants did note that managers seem to be getting better at identifying these requirements and pushing to meet them.

Accessibility is an area that appears to be improving and this was noted. There remains frustration that it is not automatically offered. For instance, distributing a PowerPoint deck in advance so neurodiverse or attendees who have a visual impairment can:

- review the material beforehand; or

- follow along on their own device during the presentation

We heard positive comments about AAACT team efforts. They are seen as supportive, available and a helpful resource for both:

- participants with disabilities

- leaders who manage employees with disabilities

"What helped? Not the paperwork or the functional abilities form or the accessibility passport – but my team lead. They were able to accommodate me in more ways than an 'official process' could do. The best thing my team lead did was to start an MS Teams call and ask me what I needed and what I thought."

"The team at AAACT have been amazing at helping with software and hardware – excellent support in that space."

"The culture is that they (employees without a disability) don't have time for PWD and their accommodations needs. Very tiring to always be hearing this."

"Colleagues assume that it takes a lot of time to make things accessible. And they do not have time to figure it out."

"Before a Teams meeting, it only takes 30 extra seconds to share a PowerPoint in an accessible format."

"After an injury, I was progressively returning to work. The problem was, even with clear medical documents from professionals and clear recommended accommodations, my manager refused to support the accommodation – even with 3 months' notice. This ballooned into a labour relations issue."
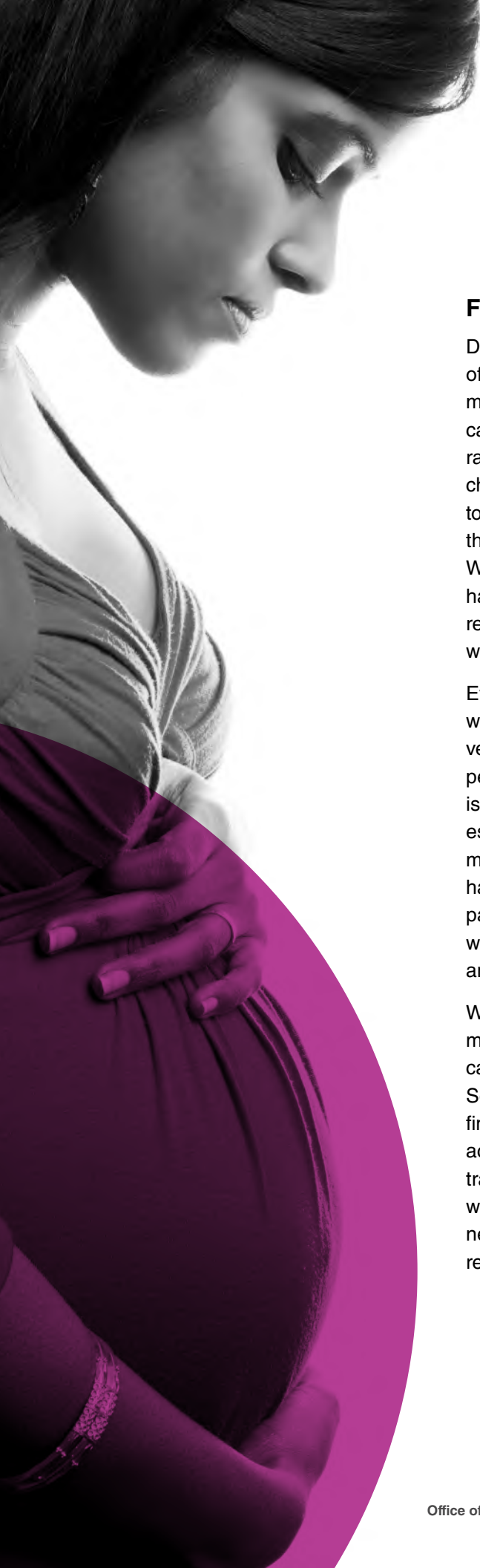
For women

Despite advances in the role of women in the workplace, most remain the primary caregivers in families. This raises inequities and unique challenges when it comes to accommodation requests that involve sensitive topics. Women find it difficult to have to justify every leave request related to family and women's health issues.

Even in a trusting relationship with a manager, it can be very hard to open up about personal and emotional issues. COVID has been especially demanding for many women, and their fatigue has been noted. Women participants indicated that it was difficult to juggle work and personal priorities.

While family-related issues mostly impact women, they can apply to men as well. Some male participants find it difficult to seek an accommodation for issues traditionally associated with women. One example is needing time for children-related obligations.

"Some of my kids have learning disabilities – so you feel put on the spot to share information you don't want to share."

"It raises concerns that it may work against you in your career advancement when taking leave (even when you are entitled to that leave)."

"It is awkward having to explain female health issues with a male supervisor."

"As a younger woman, I am concerned about maternity leave and how this will impact my career because of the "gap year(s)" seen in my CV."

"I feel my maternity leaves and now being the primary caregiver for children has been used against me. I have 2 degrees and my [second language] levels but I am still not advancing – or being given opportunities to – like my male colleagues. My work and performance has never been impacted but yet I remain at the same place."

Equity needs are not always visible

There are also "invisible" minorities that are ESGs. Jewish people are not members of a formal ESG within SSC, but their unique historical experience and the continued antisemitism in society sets them apart. We added discussion groups for Jewish people as a result of engagement with Jewish employees and what we heard in the online questionnaire. Much like members of the 2SLGBTQI+, they don't necessarily look different.

Responses from the online questionnaire put a spotlight on a large, emerging subgroup: neurodiverse employees. This group is mostly invisible but represents a significant and growing number of employees. This is because more people:

- receive a diagnosis after a lifetime and career of sometimes being made to feel slow, stupid and antisocial
    - For example, one participant was treated like a "class dummy" and told they "should think about leaving the public service" earlier in their career. Yet we know that many members of this group have a higher than average intellect
- feel more confident to self-identify, as the stigma of mental health and neurodiversity slowly lifts

Some participants said they struggle to succeed because their work challenges directly relate to their diagnosis - that their brain works differently. Many neurodiverse participants thrived during the pandemic lockdowns. Remote work gave them the ability to control their environment and manage distractions. In fact, one participant earned 2 promotions and became a trusted advisor, blossoming over the last 3 years.

This is not surprising since many neurodiverse employees are gifted in terms of intellect. They are highly intelligent individuals working in an environment built for the 'typical employee'. When asked about the pressure of returning to the workplace, an individual shared they had resigned themselves to regressing to avoid the stigma of asking for a telework accommodation for their condition.

Some managers don't understand that taking longer to complete a task or using different communication styles does not mean an inferior result. Supervisors and colleagues can become impatient when neurodiverse employees ask for an accommodation.

Many employees struggle with conditions that are invisible or misunderstood. They also don't easily fall into one of the common ESG designations. This is broadly the case for many neurodiverse situations.

These "invisible" groups have their own needs and expectations of fairness that are often unmet in the workplace. Members expressed frustration and fatigue from having to be more forceful when airing their accommodation needs than the more obvious ESG conditions. They often gave up and live with the fact they may not be as fully engaged and productive as others.

Managers must become more adept at speaking with employees to determine if they have legitimate accommodation needs that can be met without making the employee feel uncomfortable.

Ultimately, the desire is for managers to ask their employee, "What can I do?" instead of, "What do I have to do?".

"I was doing better at working from home. I had energy for hobbies and a social life. Prior to COVID, I did not have energy outside of my job. I realized it was because being at work takes so much emotional energy – masking, watching facial expressions, having to hide stimming (repetitive motions) and because there was a lot of sensory elements that I could not control."

"I often hear people say things about Jews because they do not know that a Jew is present."

"I'm nervous about it because I hear others talking about it and the stigma is still real, especially if you don't have a visible disability. If you explain your disability, they nod 'yes,' but then act as if you never had the conversation."

Official languages are a barrier for members of ESGs

One of the topics participants kept bringing up was the second language requirement for advancement.

This was covered in the OO's report on Official Languages. Some ESG-specific concerns are new. Participants feel that:

- all of the benefits and work toward inclusion and diversity is made useless as soon as language enters into the equation
- bilingualism is a glass ceiling

Many participants see language policy as an additional barrier rather than a career step. Reaching higher levels of second language skills is a real challenge for those who are already working in a second or third language. Language training is geared for those going from one official language to the other. For instance, if an employee's mother tongue is Spanish, they would most likely benefit learning French from Spanish rather than from English. While government language training practice is geared toward Canada's 2 official languages, this may be a self-limiting approach to the mastery of a second official language.

It is also worth noting that women who carry the load of family obligations, as well as single parents of either gender, find it extremely hard to manage the extra workloads associated with second language training.

Persons with disabilities report having limited success getting language training that includes accommodation for their particular disability. It appears that commercial and government language training institutions have set teaching methods that make it very hard for some, particularly those who fall into the neurodiverse category. The lack of second language ability is a career stopper that creates another barrier to those who are already seeking equity and accommodations. It's another way the system caters to the majority while the minority remains at a disadvantage.

"I consider myself a very capable professional. My limitation is the [second official] language. I feel I won't be able to achieve the career progression I want. I see that I can't compete with Canadians born here that had a better opportunity of bilingualism."

"My second official language is my fourth language and I have to work harder to learn this than my other colleagues."

"There is a pattern of seeing very few visible minorities approved for anything more than very basic support for second language training. I think it is directly linked to these employees not being seen by management as 'leadership material.'"

"My parents knew [the] French language in Ottawa was important and so put their kids in that schooling. I [now] feel I had to sacrifice my ability to speak my maternal tongue to speak French… Yes, I have progressed in my career but did I sacrifice my culture and identity for $20-$30k-plus a year? It took a lot of sacrifice to get here and others don't even realize it. People don't understand what I and my family had to do to get here."

"There is very little ability to advance in your career as the majority of opportunities within SSC are tied to a linguistic profile. For people with a diagnosed disability specifying that your disability makes achieving that linguistic level impossible, there is no opportunity for career advancement."

"The training from [the language training provider] has not been accessible to me – It is more geared towards auditory and reading based learning – and [the language training provider] was not open to accommodation. I need more hands on and tactile learning. I have always learnt better when I can see it and reinforce the learning that way, otherwise it does not stick. [The language training provider] has not been consistent."

"I have not received accommodations from the French schools. SSC has tried to get the accommodation for me but the school will not work with us. I cannot advance in my career because I can only apply to English essential positions."

Effects of past pain and barriers

For some groups, the harm and pain are multi-generational. This is especially the case for Black and Indigenous employees. While they may not have been personally touched by slavery, the residential school system, the "Sixties Scoop," head taxes and other historical wrongs, many live with its consequences. Centuries of telling a people they are less worthy leads to a loss of self-worth.

The systemic exclusionary or discriminatory practices of government and social policies take generations to right. Trust needs to be rebuilt and it will take time.

Indigenous participants shared the feeling of having to work harder to be where they are today due to the impacts of colonization on individuals, families and communities. Participants also shared a desire for their colleagues to ask them and to learn more about their culture - not only on National Indigenous Peoples Day. The reality of working in a colonial system, with the standards of colonial approaches, can make it difficult for Indigenous employees to feel like they fit in.

Indigenous peoples are now experiencing pride and healing amid a cultural revitalization, even though the legacy and reality of colonization is still present in Canadian society. Government and much of society seems to set the tone that 'it is their moment'. Expectations of change are high. This also translates to the workplace.

We were struck by the number of Visible Minority participants, including Black participants, who told us they were raised and warned by their parents to not complain because "it could be a lot worse." These employees carry that concern with them even as adults. Members of ESGs have often grown up in an environment that makes them feel lesser and more vulnerable. It doesn't start when they walk in the SSC door and, for many, it doesn't stop there either.

What is important to note is that their frustration may not be simply based on what is happening in the moment. Hearing a sexist or racist joke is one thing. Hearing it repeatedly since youth and then still hearing it throughout your career is another.

This ties into mental health. While we did not examine mental health as a separate element of this research, the mental health impact of the workplace, society and other factors appears to have been significantly higher for some of the ESG participants.

Managers and colleagues must be considerate of the lived experiences of employees through the lens of each person and do their best to understand longstanding suffering.

"I overcame a lot of background to be where I am today (residential school, Indian Act), I had to work a lot harder to achieve what I have now."

"Issues can only be addressed when they are known. This was all very powerful to hear other people's lived experiences, some of which I've seen a parent experience. We have to keep being the squeaky wheels to see action, which is against how I was raised (never complain, never explain)."

"People do not realize how much we have to sacrifice and give up to blend in in order to be successful as a government employee."

"Although I have not overtly been treated "less than" in some situations it is in a more subtle way. Others may not realize it is occurring, however dealing with a lifetime of these has left me sensitive to their occurrences."

It's not consultation fatigue, it's inaction fatigue

When we approached the <u>diversity networks</u> to engage members in this research, employees said they were weary of being consulted and seeing little improvement.

They were disappointed that providing their feedback has not led to concrete changes on issues such as:

- the lack of transparency in career advancement
- the fear of retribution when speaking out about discrimination

Participants agreed to share their stories with us to make it better for others now and for the next generation of colleagues. They understand that systemic change takes time, but there are little-known examples of success, such as the increase of ESG members in many mid to senior positions. This is an improvement and demonstrates action -but it seems to be invisible. Progress must be real, visible and timely.

"It will not happen through these means [your questionnaire], people do not want to relive their bad experiences for your purposes. We have seen so many of these attempts and they are exhausting for us, doing this shows me you don't really understand that the majority of people coming into the workforce are not immigrants but are treated as such because of their appearance. None of us wants to talk about this anymore because we know that it is an exercise to make the people at the top feel better about what they are doing. No one believes that anything has changed in terms of equitable hiring practices nor being able to bring forward issues in this area. Two things will happen if anyone pointed out that there is little diversity nor inclusion in our department. 1. It will have to be addressed, and 2. The person who brings it up can consider it as the end of their career."

"I feel I have been having to ask over and over for changes and still not seeing action with that. New reports, events, etc. do not produce the intended results."

"There appears to still be complacency in place as related to some of the diversity groups where we are allowed to speak freely. Our truth, experiences, suggestions and recommendations are heard and then not actioned or moved forward."

What can we do?

We have shaped this section of the report from participants' ideas and suggestions. Every one of us plays a role in bringing about positive change. As you read this section, we invite you to reflect on what you can do to foster an inclusive workplace.

What we learned during this research is that, while the lens of each equity-seeking group (ESG) and employee may be different, most of the issues are common to each group and individual, and most solutions can benefit everyone. Thank you to those who took the time to offer a way forward.

Support colleagues facing racism, discrimination or harassment

Many participants who recounted experiences of racism, discrimination and/or harassment also shared feeling very alone and vulnerable. Some told of being in a room full of people when comments were made and no one stood up for them or addressed the comments. They then had 2 options: defend themselves on the spot or have a conversation with the actor after the event.

While the concept of calling in and calling out was not explicitly named by participants, their suggestions and approaches to addressing hurtful and inappropriate practices closely mirrored this practice.

Calling in versus calling out:

There are 2 different ways to deal with inappropriate words or behaviours, depending on the situation.

- **Calling in:** An invitation to a one-on-one or small group conversation to bring attention to an individual or group's harmful words or behaviour, including bias, prejudice, microaggressions and discrimination.

- **Calling out:** Bringing public attention to an individual, group or organization's harmful words or behaviour.

Generally speaking, the first is more effective. However, there may be instances where the behaviour is so shameful that it warrants calling out.

(Source: Calling In and Calling Out Guide)

"I'm usually the only person of colour in meetings and when something racist (minor or otherwise) is said, I have never had a White person in the group call attention to it or check on me. These experiences are not rare and have caused me a lot of stress over the years."

"My approach is: 1) Not to look at the hurtful comment from him as a racist but as a human being. 2) Talk to the employee in a friendly way, to prompt and ask why he would say that."

"I was having a discussion with someone who is black, and I am white. I was told, "Spoken like a true white person". I am still not sure what I said wrong and worry about it. The person would not explain what I did wrong so how can I learn if I'm not aware of what I did incorrectly."

Going beyond mandatory training

There is a tendency to fix problems with another awareness session, a new click through training module, a program or a policy. While all of these can help, and some are required learning, some of the available training:

- may not fully address an issue
- allows learners to simply click through without being invested

This may indicate that we need complementary tools or approaches.

Hearing a story from a colleague can be an impactful way of developing cultural curiosity, cultural empathy and cultural humility. SSC employees need to invest in their own cultural education instead of waiting for mandatory training or someone else to educate them. Ultimately, they can learn through both formal training and listening to their colleagues to develop their cultural skills and emotional intelligence. They can then become an ally for the person sitting next to them.

Investing in cultural education can lead to a more inclusive work environment and benefit both people and organizations. It also promotes personal growth by broadening perspectives and enhancing empathy. Developing cultural curiosity, empathy and humility leads to better employees and people, creating a more inclusive and respectful workplace culture.

Change happens with a series of micro-movements, one individual at a time, and one team at a time. During the discussion groups, an executive shared that she and her staff share their lived experiences with each other once a month. This activity helps promote an experience of inclusion and safety on her team.

An hour is set aside and a new staff member has a turn to share their experience in whatever way they identify – through their culture, traditions, gender, family-dynamics, or any other way.

We will never fully understand those who live different experiences from us. We may not know how to best to support them when they experience discrimination in the workplace either. However, there are other resources available to these ESG employees. The Office of the Ombuds and the Employee Assistance Program are good starting points.

As well, SSC's diversity networks are places where employees can find others who understand their reality a bit better because they live similar experiences. They may be able to provide a different perspective or guidance. At the very least, the diversity networks provide a space where employees are accepted.

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"**It made me realize just what a long way we have to go to make people not just culturally aware but also socially aware. No amount of training can help a person with emotional intelligence if some things are ingrained in them. Change has to come from within the individual. It begins with self-awareness.**"

"Have the leaders (managers, directors, and higher) provide ways for employees to share with the rest of the Division/ Directorate/Branch stories of their diverse experiences with explanations about it so that it can increase peoples' knowledge and comfort with the differences of their colleagues."

"People need to overcome the myths about disabilities, there is not enough awareness, there are misconceptions."

"We need to continue making others aware of the situation – to understand the experience of the "other," the discrimination "others" face."

"I have worked with several employees in teams where diversity and inclusion are high priorities, but they don't seem to actually agree with being inclusive of everyone. I have witnessed and experienced micro aggressions and ignorant behaviour/comments that can be offensive to many. I do not feel like I fully belong, just the way I am. I hold back to minimize others' misjudgments."

Recommendations from participants

SSC work teams can create a culture of inclusion by sharing with each other about their lives, backgrounds and traditions.

- If someone is willing to discuss their story and share about their identity and lived experience, listen with an open heart and mind. On the other hand, if someone feels the need to 'blend in' and does not want to share, the team can accept and respect that choice.

- The harassment or assault report processes could be more victim-centric and supportive. There are instances where the impact on the victim is not sufficiently considered. Is it right for the victim to be the one to change jobs or departments?

- We can empower people to stand up and do the right thing, especially when the occurrence is blatant. Leaders at all levels need to have the courage to defend or protect the vulnerable and the victims.

- SSC can develop a culture of trust and 'calling in' so employees feel safe talking through conflict with their colleagues. While at times formal measures are needed, we can start from a place of curiosity and have conversations to better understand those with whom we work.

- There are times to consider forceful career or disciplinary actions. At what point is supposedly unacceptable behaviour truly not accepted?

The importance of the role of managers

Each of us has a past that we carry. For some ESG employees, this past can be painful and can affect every aspect of their being. Because we don't share their past, we may not understand - or we may even pass judgement on - the way they experience situations at work.

This is why it is important for managers at all levels to:

- be aware of the potential obstacles to communication that may exist with their employees

- do all they can to work through these obstacles in order to really hear what their employees are saying

Nearly all participants who shared positive experiences said their manager or other leader made the difference. Examples ranged from simple advice to help with career advancement to supporting an accommodation need or addressing discrimination. This speaks to leadership. It's the human aspect that wins over humans.

This experience of leadership was spoken of in very warm terms. Many spoke of changing jobs to follow such a leader. A number told us they came to SSC because of the positive influence of individual leaders. Others left SSC because they didn't have a manager who understood them and offered the leadership they sought.

We heard of managers who had been called out (or in), who sincerely regretted their action and changed both their behaviour and their attitude. Participants shared that this response spoke of emotional intelligence, maturity and positive leadership traits.

SSC's character based approach to leadership selection and management has the potential to continue to improve this situation.

"My manager intentionally creates and puts effort into maintaining a safe and inclusive environment for all the team members. I feel my rights as a human being are protected by my supervisor, and I feel able to be open and vulnerable with some of my co-workers. We are supportive of each other's work. Others have stepped in when I have been sick, or offered help if I felt overwhelmed. I don't feel like I will be blamed or shamed if I made a mistake or stupid if I ask questions. We really celebrate our differences and emphasize the value and importance of inclusion. Nobody gets left behind, and we are better together."

Recommendations from participants

- SSC can leverage character-based leadership when selecting and promoting managers in this department.

- SSC can require that leadership performance measurement assessments include asking how they promoted DEIB on their team.

- Employees can be given opportunities to provide upward feedback on how their manager is doing when it comes to interpersonal skills, diversity and inclusion.

"I had a really great manager who hired me to work at SSC. He was really inclusive and really compassionate. I didn't feel shy or hesitant to approach him for anything or to raise any concerns or thoughts. Since he left, it's been less than ideal for me. Subsequent managers cared less about such aspects of work life and despite efforts from my end, it's been a general deterioration of the situation for me."

"I thought I plateaued at a certain level, then poof, a manager believed in me. I rise to the challenges and I go up in my career again. It is not the system; it is the people in the system."

"If ESG employees collectively report that the secret to success is caring and understanding leaders, why would this not be of great benefit to all?"

"I appreciate the new EVP comments about striving to have an environment where people can fit in as they are (not try to be someone else or different to fit in)."

Consider ways to improve fairness and transparency in staffing processes

When public servants join the Government of Canada (GC), they come with expectations of being able to advance in their career and benefit from different opportunities - just like everyone else.

The reality is that some ESG participants hit a glass ceiling. They believe they are held back from advancing and achieving their full potential due to unconscious biases, deliberate discriminatory practices, and real or perceived prejudices. Many feel they have to work twice as hard as their colleagues in order to get ahead.

Recommendations from participants

- SSC can consider as many anonymous (also known as blind) staffing practices as possible without lengthening the processes for new and current employees.

  - Anonymous staffing is a practice where personal and demographic information is removed from the staffing process so managers assess candidates based on ability alone. Anonymous staffing aims to produce a more diverse workforce and reduce the impact of unconscious bias.

- To increase transparency in hiring, SSC can develop a process to proactively offer post interview debriefs to unsuccessful candidates, rather than hiring managers waiting for the candidate themselves to request it. This should include a clear explanation as to why the successful candidate's selection was the best.

- SSC can socialize its Mentorship Plus Program to support the advancement of ESG employees in their careers. SSC can also consider expanding the Program to potential mentors who do not belong to an ESG.

"Hiring/promoting strategy is neither consistent nor transparent, I did not know there' was an acting opportunity until the person started acting."
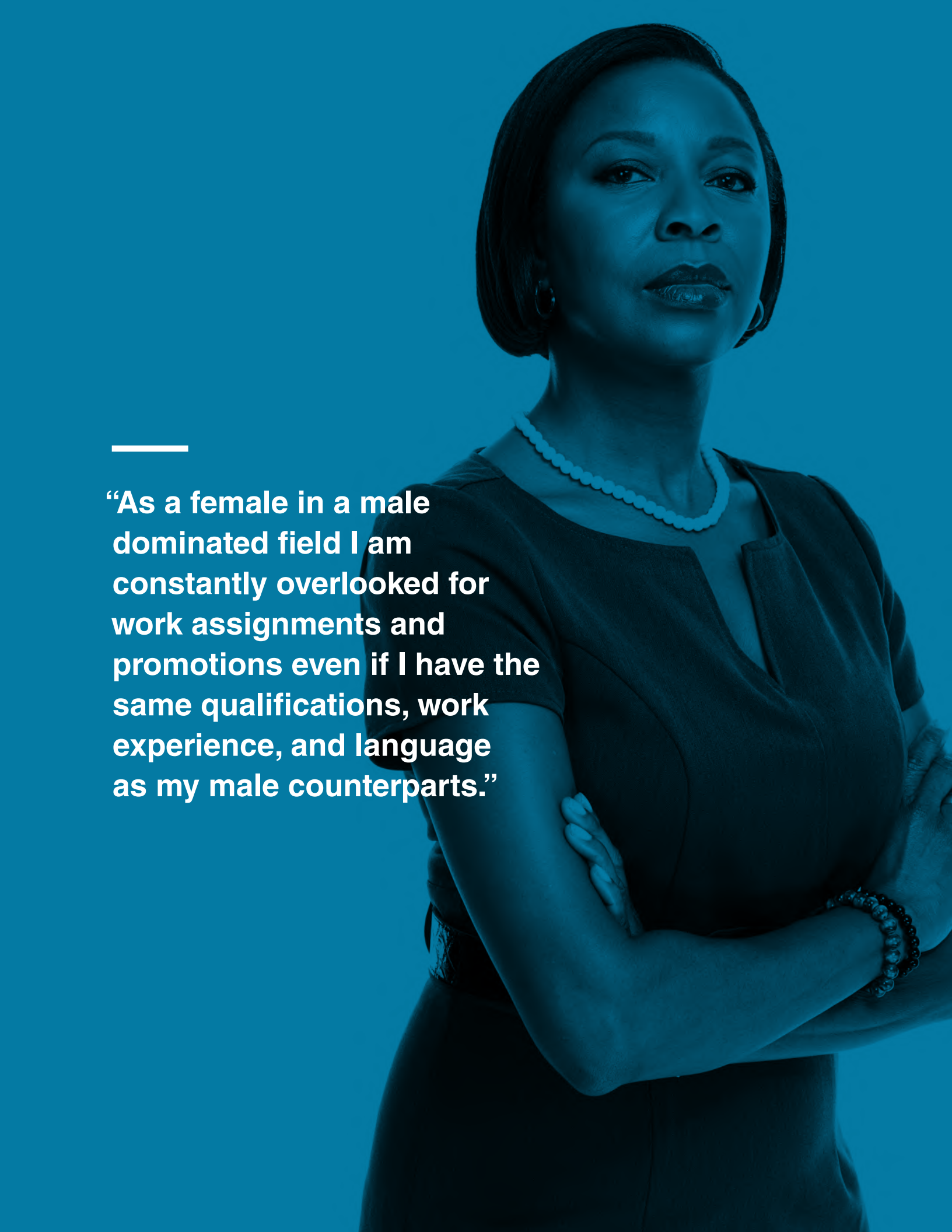
"Talent management opportunities are dependent on who your manager is and how loud of a voice they have at the senior management table. These are generally a preference-based nomination and not necessarily a skill/knowledge/experience/contribution-based rating."

"Skills, experience or expertise don't seem to be as important as who you know in senior management. I question the impartiality of the selection processes and the quality of the selection of those promoted."

"[Need to] prioritize the hiring and promoting of diversity candidates to help break the 'glass ceiling' and ensure that all viewpoints are available at the senior governance tables at SSC."

"As a female in a male dominated field I am constantly overlooked for work assignments and promotions even if I have the same qualifications, work experience, and language as my male counterparts."

Need for more mentoring

All groups expressed the need for career help in the form of mentoring or coaching. While the two are different, in essence employees want people who are like them or who understand them to guide them in their career.

SSC's networks provide an environment where employees at different stages in their career journey can meet and develop a mentoring relationship. However, this informal mentoring is not usually available to those who prefer not to join a network. In addition, not everyone can be an effective mentor.

We heard that this should be in addition to and not instead of the person's chain of command. We also heard that many managers have stepped up and are providing informal mentoring (and coaching) to their ESG employees. The problem with that model is that every time someone changes jobs, they lose that relationship.

The recently launched Mentorship Plus Program should address this concern. Promoting this initiative, along with seeking and integrating feedback from participants, will be key to maximizing its impact on people who face barriers to career progression. This is a great step in a positive direction for SSC, a move that says that SSC values its employees and is investing in their future careers.

"Lack of mentors for women. Being asked to do administrative tasks that is not in my job responsibility – men are not."

"I feel like there should be more [People of Colour] POC in leadership roles. As a POC it would be good to have role models to look up to. I would REALLY like to see a program or event where there are members of different equity groups where leaders can become mentors. I know I have a lot of questions on how to navigate the GC, and how to advance my career. Sadly sometimes it feels like you are just filling a quota."

Communicating progress is important

The OO research team saw many signs of greater awareness and engagement, effort and even concrete results within SSC. Of particular note is the increase in the numbers of ESG employees in positions of leadership at many levels.

Internal SSC statistics indicate that things are improving for ESG employees. This information is available and, while they may be shared with SSC employees, participants were not aware of them. In Annex E: Comparative tables, a table is included that illustrates the progress of ESG employees from 2020 to 2023.

"I was provided coaching when I needed it and have since achieved my goal of becoming a director."

What is missing is visibility. Successes are not always seen, and we don't share the stories of people who have moved up. The result is that participants expressed that progress was too slow even though the data on representation shows a different story.

The need and desire to show progress and representation in leadership must be balanced against the right and desire of someone to not be tokenized. Somehow, SSC needs to celebrate progress in a visible manner to provide hope and build confidence in its commitment to advance on the ESG front.

Recommendations from participants

- The numbers tell us SSC is doing well when it comes to diversity of staff in senior leadership positions - but many employees still do not feel they see anyone who 'looks like them' in leadership. SSC could better socialize the progress it has made to its employees.

- SSC can de-mystify the collection and use of self-identification data to increase trust and participation.

- SSC can better track groups not presently identified, such as members of the 2SLGBTQI+ community.

Favour informal ways to accommodate employees

We heard about the need for accommodation from many participants with disabilities, people who are neurodiverse, women, single parents, as well as for reasons related to faith and religion and others. We also heard about accommodation relating to women's health, concerns around the return to the worksite, family responsibilities, mental and physical health, and days of special observance.

Employees request accommodation for a variety of reasons, some that would not be covered by a doctor's report. In many cases, the actual accommodation can also look different from one employee to the next, regardless of common reasons for making the request. Some need multiple accommodations when their situation is more complex.

With accessibility requirements

Some PWD participants shared that:

- they self-limit their careers because they find it challenging to change organizations or teams and then have to repeatedly discuss their needs

- they dislike having to justify or argue their need for a simple workplace accommodation that often costs nothing more than consideration

- they felt fixes, including dedicated and quiet spaces, adequate lighting and stable routines, should be simple enough

For others, however, the need is complex and involves interaction with colleagues who may not understand or know how to interact with their difference. This leads to conflict, degraded performance and disengagement.

Some of our participants and OO visitors talked of severe mental health impacts, including suicidal thoughts.

Managers, and in some cases HR staff, need a greater understanding of the accommodation needs of PWD. For employees, each situation is different. Getting proper medical diagnoses can be costly and, in some cases, it takes too long and can also be extremely stressful.

Managers often seem to have insufficient knowledge regarding options available to address accommodation needs. SSC needs to bridge that gap.

Participants also indicate that a manager's response to an accommodation or accessibility request is to interpret "duty to accommodate" as, 'What is the minimum I have to do?'.

Managers should switch from a "duty to accommodate" mindset to one of a "desire to accommodate" that anticipates and provides the employee with the maximum support that will allow them to thrive.

"Managers think they need to go straight to duty to accommodate versus being able to have a conversation and decide the accommodations that work for their team."

"I've heard managers say, "I don't have time for that" [to hire a person with a disability] because that person requires more hand holding and it will take up my time."

"I have been offered accommodation at each step and used it when required."

"Don't try to integrate me, include me."

Recommendations from participants

- Regarding the 'return to the worksite' policy and process, SSC can engage and consult with ESG employees to:
  - understand the pressures and anxiety they may face;
  - consider the impact this policy and its implementation measures have now and will continue to have on this group.

- SSC managers can engage with neurodiverse employees to better understand:
  - their accommodation needs;
  - how the work environment may push them out of the mainstream and stifle their ability to ask for and receive help;
  - what barriers exist in the activity based workplace.

- SSC can make the process to request accommodations clearer and socialize it more intentionally to both managers and employees.

- Managers can and should use all the options, flexibilities and solutions available to accommodate ESG employees.

"Neurodiverse employees should be accepted as they are and not be forced to be like everyone else. They often have tremendous skills and potential that should be exploited, not stifled."

On different religious practices

Jewish and Muslim participants noted that managers planned meetings on days important to their religious observance because the managers were not aware or did not consider that members of their team might want to participate.

Those who discussed a solution to this issue did not ask for extra time off or a new holiday; they sought ways to be able to participate in events dear to them without having to explain or being made to feel like they were asking for a favour.

Recommendations from participants

- SSC could implement a department-wide calendar of important religious and cultural days or events so employees can avoid scheduling meetings on certain dates. SSC can socialize this calendar so employees know about it, and have it built into Outlook to automatically highlight those days. For instance, SSC could ensure calendars were left clear for Eid or Rosh Hashanah.

- SSC could create a guiding calendar that would break out days or events in 4 categories: noting, marking, promoting or celebrating. For instance, we do not celebrate Remembrance Day, we mark it. In Newfoundland and Labrador, July 1 is both Beaumont Hamel Memorial Day, a day of commemoration, and also Canada Day.

Continue improving support to diversity networks

One of many positive things we heard from participants was their gratitude for the employee networks. The networks are a safe and welcoming space for sharing personal experiences, networking and being guided to resources.

Some participants said they had reached out to the Persons with Disabilities Network with questions about requesting workplace accommodations and discovered a wealth of knowledge. Others commented on how they felt a sense of belonging in this department since joining the Black Employee Network and were able to get involved in initiatives to move DEIB forward. The Indigenous Circle, its co-chairs and champion, have made Indigenous employees feel more included in SSC.

However, we also heard that some members and allies are being questioned if they spend too much time doing network work and not enough on their own tasks, even though many networks are doing these outside of their work hours. To change such attitudes may require courage and commitment from more senior ESG employees to join diversity networks and to lead by example. Work done on diversity networks could also be recognized as part of the performance management exercise. If an employee is advancing a departmental priority, it should be recognized as part of their contribution at work.

Recommendations from participants

- With the return to the office, SSC can implement the "Positive Space Initiative" to support those in the 2SLGBTQI+ community and to make them feel safer in the workplace.

- As the membership of many diversity networks remains small, SSC can support these networks by increasing their reach so that ESG employees and their needs can be heard more clearly.

- SSC managers should encourage their staff and provide time for them to participate in the diversity networks and their events. Support for these networks could be added to performance management agreements.

"The first several years at SSC I felt like just a check mark. The past couple of years have improved with a more involved Indigenous Circle and having the current champion has really improved opportunities and events for Indigenous employees."

"Initiatives like the Women's Network and a recognition by my senior (male) leaders that there is an issue with sexism at SSC goes a long way to improving my experience at SSC."

Current SSC DEIB initiatives

During the research phase of the project, we looked at the current departmental context and initiatives. In some cases, participants made recommendations that were already in place. This signals that the initiatives need to be better communicated or that they are not meeting their intended impact.

This part of the report highlights current SSC DEIB initiatives.

1. Regular reporting on diversity staffing targets and results

Regular reports are being issued to communicate progress on diversity staffing targets and results. These reports provide an overview of the steps taken to foster a diverse workforce and highlight achievements in this area.

2. Diversity Council promotes greater accountability

SSC has established a dedicated diversity forum to strengthen accountability and drive results. This forum serves as a platform for open discussions and collaboration on diversity-related matters. It brings together leaders and employees from various backgrounds to exchange ideas, share best practices and jointly address challenges.

3. Gender parity in senior management

SSC has achieved gender parity in the composition of direct reports to the President, many of whom are Executive Oversight Board members, the most senior management table at SSC. This demonstrates a commitment to equal representation and ensures diverse perspectives are represented at senior levels within the organization.

4. Renewed diversity and inclusion pledge by senior management

SSC recently reaffirmed its commitment to diversity and inclusion by renewing the organization's diversity and inclusion pledge. This pledge outlines specific goals, actions and timelines to drive continuous improvement in creating an inclusive workplace where everyone feels valued and respected.

5. Budget allocation for network activities

For the first time, SSC has allocated a budget to support network activities. This recognizes the importance of employee networks in fostering inclusivity and will enable these networks to organize events, initiatives and programs that promote diversity, employee engagement and professional development.

6. Collaboration with Indigenous Circle to rename main boardroom at 99 Metcalfe

A departmental boardroom has been named Kidikidowininàn, based on the recommendation of the Indigenous Circle, as a means of education and recognition of the Indigenous presence within SSC. Kidikidowininàn is an Algonquin word that can be translated into 'our words' or 'our voices' depending on who is saying it and how it is being used. This action underscores SSC's commitment to acknowledging and respecting Indigenous culture and contributions.

The boardroom was inaugurated on March 20, 2023.

7. The GC Workplace Accessibility Passport

SSC was an early adopter of Treasury Board's Accessibility Passport initiative. This is a tool for employees to describe the barriers they may face at work and the adaptive tools and support measures they need to succeed. Employees changing positions or other participating departments will be able to use the passport to make the process simpler and avoid having to start from scratch each time.

8. Duty to Accommodate Centre of Expertise

SSC has put in place a Duty to Accommodate Centre of Expertise (DTA CoE). It is the point of contact for all things related to duty to accommodate. This CoE will help employees and managers remove barriers in the workplace and offer guidance and DTA expertise for situations where the need arises.

Looking
to the future

Over the past 6 months, our office has been honoured by the trust participants have shown us as they shared their stories and experiences as members of equity seeking groups in our department. We have shared these stories in this report.

Most employees who participated in the questionnaire are satisfied with their experience at SSC. However, there remains a significant number of participants who have struggled in the past and continue to face barriers.

The role of leaders

Without a doubt, managers, team leads and leadership can either be a support or a hindrance to ESG employees. Employees are asking those in leadership positions to instigate check-ins, to listen more and to be curious when an employee is sharing an experience or issue that the manager themselves may never have personally experienced before.

Let's reconsider what is "normal" and instead let us be curious, learn and appreciate differences. In the race for talent, ESGs are an untapped gold mine that can contribute to the success of the organization.

Continue to build momentum on representation

We saw that a majority still feel positive about their experience at SSC. It is encouraging to see that many find allies and believe the climate is improving. We saw a sense of pride, of community and a strong desire to succeed and prove themselves. At the same time, the ignorance and unacceptable behaviour to which they are sometimes subjected is a real barrier to true inclusion.

Overall, the department is doing well with diversity numbers (the amount of ESGs hired). Sustained efforts are required to keep up with the changing demographics and to ensure ESGs are represented at all levels of the organization. SSC would benefit from communicating its successes in terms of representation to its employees.

Bringing sustainable change

In his book, From Good to Great, Jim Collins presents the concept of the Flywheel effect and tells us that change does not suddenly occur after only one big push (one big initiative, policy or speech). Rather, "the process [of change] resembles relentlessly pushing a giant, heavy flywheel, turn upon turn, building momentum until a point of breakthrough, and beyond." This report is one of those pushes and we wish to contribute to the momentum of change in SSC when it comes to diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging.

We hope this report will spark a series of constructive, healing and productive conversations. We believe open - and maybe tough - conversations are the way to evolve our thoughts, our perceptions, our hearts, our beliefs, our words, our actions and, ultimately, move us toward a greater culture of inclusion.

We recognize that personal and professional growth often requires taking risks and stepping out of our comfort zones. This is because our comfort zones are defined by the boundaries of our current abilities, experiences, and knowledge. There is no growth in the comfort zone, and no comfort in the growth zone.

Change will come through a series of micro shifts with every conversation, gesture and action.

When employees feel supported and invested in, their productivity increases. When the barriers of ESGs are addressed, the benefits of fairness extend to all staff.

We wish everyone a positive journey toward greater diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging.

Contact the Ombuds Team

📞 Toll-free 1 833 626 3421

✉️ ombuds@ssc-spc.gc.ca

🕐 8:30 a.m. — 5:00 p.m. (Eastern Time)

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Annex A: Glossary and acronyms

Glossary

Below is a glossary of some terminology used in this report in the context of this research project.

2SLGBTQI+: The acronym used by the Government of Canada to refer to the Canadian community. "2S": recognizes two-spirit people as the first 2SLGBTQI+ communities; "L": lesbian; "G": gay; "B": bisexual; "T": transgender; "Q": queer; "I": intersex, considers sex characteristics beyond sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression; "+": is inclusive of people who identify as part of sexual and gender diverse communities, who use additional terminologies. (Source: Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat)

Discrimination: 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* (that is, based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, 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: Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat)

Diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging:

- **Diversity:** Is about all the ways we are different (both visible and invisible) and promoting a wide range of different people and perspectives

- **Equity:** Is about recognizing that each person has different circumstances and may need different resources and opportunities to reach an equal outcome.

- **Inclusion:** Is about valuing people's unique ideas and lived experiences and ensuring they feel involved, respected, connected and have their voice heard.

- **Belonging:** Is about creating a culture where people can be themselves, have psychological safety, appreciate each other, and feel part of something bigger.

(Source: Action For Happiness)

Employee: Refers to any SSC employee, whether or not they participated in this research project.

Equity-seeking group (ESG): A group of persons who are disadvantaged on the basis of one or more prohibited grounds of discrimination within the meaning of the Canadian Human Rights Act. (Source: Justice Laws website)

Glass ceiling: A limit that is placed on either women or minorities, who are unable to advance in the workplace due to their gender and/or race.

(Source: Legal Dictionary)

Intersectionality: Describes the multiplicity and interconnectedness of various types of discrimination and how these relate to domination and oppression, i.e., the exploitation of one social group by another.

(Source: The Canadian Encyclopedia)

Microaggressions: The everyday, subtle, intentional - and oftentimes unintentional - interactions or behaviours that communicate some sort of bias toward historically marginalized groups.

(Source: Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat)

Participant: Refers to SSC employees who participated in any phase of this research project.

Self-identification: Employees providing employment equity information for statistical purposes in analyzing and monitoring the progress of employment equity groups in the federal public service and for reporting on workforce representation.

(Source: Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat)

Visible minority: A person in a visible minority group is someone (other than an Indigenous person[…]) who is non-white in colour/race, regardless of place of birth. The visible minority group includes: Black, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, South Asian-East Indian (including Indian from India; Bangladeshi; Pakistani; East Indian from Guyana, Trinidad, East Africa), Southeast Asian (including Burmese; Cambodian; Laotian; Thai; Vietnamese) non-white West Asian, North African or Arab (including Egyptian; Libyan; Lebanese), non-white Latin American (including Indigenous persons from Central and South America), person of mixed origin (with one parent in one of the visible minority groups listed above), other visible minority group.

(Source: Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat)

- The use of the term "visible minority" in this report is in keeping with the language that is currently in use by the Government of Canada, although the terms "people of colour" and "racialized people" are also in use today. As a participant noted, "we are no longer a minority in the world," but that is perhaps another conversation for another day. In the meantime, we will continue to use the term "visible minority."

- The Government of Canada acknowledges that the terminology is outdated and revisions are under way:

- Although the terms "members of visible minorities" and "visible minorities" are used in legal and statistical contexts in Canada, they are considered outdated and can be inaccurate in a general context as they do not always reflect provincial, territorial or other regional demographic compositions in Canada. Also, the word "visible" suggests that being white is the standard and the word "minority" limits the concept to numbers, when it is, in fact, more often about the power that is held by a dominant group. In general contexts, it is preferable to use the term "racialized group."

- It is widely recognized that certain terms used in the Employment Equity Act are outdated. The Act is currently under modernization review by the Employment Equity Act Review Task Force.

(Source: Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat)

Workforce availability: For the core public administration, refers to the estimated availability of people in designated groups as a percentage of the workforce population. For the core public administration, workforce availability is based on the population of Canadian citizens who: are active in the workforce; work in those occupations that correspond to the occupations in the core public administration.

- Availability is estimated from 2011 Census data. Estimates for persons with disabilities are derived from data, also collected by Statistics Canada, in the 2012 Canadian Survey on Disability.

(Source: Glossary - Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada - Canada.ca)

Acronyms

AAACT: Accessibility, Accommodation and Adaptive technology

ASL: American Sign Language

BIPOC: Black, Indigenous, People of Colour

BEN: Black Employee Network

DEIB: diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging

D&I: diversity & inclusion

EE: Employment Equity

EQ: emotional quotient (emotional intelligence)

ESG: equity-seeking group

EVP: Executive Vice-President

GC: Government of Canada

IRCC: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

LSQ: Langue des signes québécoise

OO: Office of the Ombuds

PSES: Public Service Employee Survey

PWD: Persons with disabilities

SSC: Shared Services Canada

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Annex C: How we conducted the research

Operating principles for this research

The Office of the Ombuds followed its 4 standards of practice during this research:

Confidential: We did not attach names to any of the information we gathered in the questionnaire, and quotes in this report are anonymous. Some stories cannot be told in their entirety, as that would mean identifying those involved.

Informal: While the discussion sessions were organized by equity-seeking group (ESG), sessions were open to anyone interested. We had a set of prepared questions to initiate dialogue, however, there was no set agenda and attendees could take the conversation in whichever direction they felt most comfortable.

Neutral/impartial: This report provides a neutral and unbiased account of what we heard. The Office did not seek to educate, inform or defend any diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB) policies and practices. Our aim for this research is to:

- continue the momentum on DEIB initiatives at SSC
- elevate the voices of ESGs
- spark action and change

Independent: The independence of the Office and the "safe space" approach created an environment where employees could freely share their stories.

Project planning phase

The preliminary phase of the research project consisted of a literature review of secondary references related to DEIB in a government and/or workplace setting. The literature steered us toward potential stories and experiences that we might hear from participants. It also helped us craft the questions to dive deeper into these themes during Phase 2 of this project (refer to Annex A for a list of secondary references).

We developed the questionnaire questions with the Black Employee Network (BEN). Before the official launch, we held a trial run of the questionnaire with BEN to help test the questionnaire and troubleshoot any issues before involving all SSC employees. The SSC Communications Branch reviewed the questionnaire for plain language and for accessibility on the Survey Monkey platform.

Following the successful trial run, we set out to engage the diversity networks and their membership in this research by holding a total of 14 engagement sessions (i.e., "info sessions") to share the focus of our research and our goals, as well as to explain how employees would be able to participate. We offered sessions in both French and English. American Sign Language (ASL) and Langue des signes québécoise (LSQ) were available at all 14 sessions. Approximately 150 employees attended these engagement sessions.

Phase 1: Questionnaire

We launched the anonymous and confidential questionnaire toward the end of November 2022 on the Survey Monkey platform.

Over 14 days, 1065 employees participated in the questionnaire - which is approximately 13% of the SSC workforce. Of these 1065 participants, more than 800 people filled out the demographics section. The responses that contained demographic information were particularly useful for identifying intersectionality and for filtering out themes in preparation for the Phase 2 discussion sessions.

Note: As participants may have selected more than one way to self-identify, the numbers below exceed the total participant count.

Participant breakdown by category:

13 Jewish

19 Pride

44 Indigenous

56 Black

57 EX/IT-05

125 Male, cisgender, heterosexual, white, able-bodied

125 Visible minorities

166 Persons with disabilities

362 No demographic data provided

326 Women

Phase 2: Discussion series

Phase 2 consisted of 3 different options for SSC employees to dive deeper with us into the themes that emerged from the secondary references review and the questionnaire responses. We held Phase 2 information-gathering sessions from mid-January to mid February 2023.

Option 1: Discussion groups

The goal was to provide a safe space where groups of up to 15 employees could offer their thoughts and freely discuss their own experiences. 87 SSC employees participated in the discussion groups.

We held the discussion groups online through MS Teams in 1 hour sessions. We planned a total of 47 sessions (in both French and English), based on estimated group size and time zone differences. We cancelled several due to low registration rates. We also combined some of the small groups. We organized the sessions as follows:

Target audience	Planned sessions	Actual sessions	Total participants
Black	4	3	7
Indigenous	4	1	1
Jewish	2	1	6
Muslim	2	1	3
Neurodiverse	2	1	6
Non-white Latin American	2	1	1
Non-white West Asian, North African or Arab	2	1	3
Pride	3	2	4
Persons with disabilities	2	2	8
South Asian/East Indian	2	1	1
Southeast/East Asian	2	1	2
Visible minorities	2	1	7
Women	4	4	20
Executives	2	1	5
Managers	2	1	1
Intersectionality	6	2	3
Open to all	4	1	6
Spare	5	0	0
Total	**52**	**25**	**87**

We offered American Sign Language (ASL) and the Langue des signes québécoise (LSQ) at the PWD, neurodiverse and all-employee sessions. We also reminded SSC employees that they could let our office know of any accommodations needed prior to these sessions.

We developed original questions for each discussion group based on themes that emerged during the secondary references review and the questionnaire. We decided to organize discussion groups based on ESG to provide a safe space for participants who had similar experiences to share with each other. The responses provided in the questionnaire and conversations with diversity networks and participant indicated a need to refine our sub-list of discussion groups. By comparing feedback from participants and consulting SSC workforce statistics, we:

- included separate sessions for Jewish employees, Muslim employees and neurodiverse employees

- divided the visible minorities group into 4 sub-groups

- provided separate sessions for managers and executives

We noticed that the visible minorities group also includes employees who identify as members of the Black Employee Network. While this may yield double-counting of people, the stories remain valid and important.

Sessions for managers and executives were important as they were meant to hear about the successes and challenges of managing with diversity and inclusion in mind. While it is unfortunate so few participated in these sessions, we did see some managers/executives participate in other ESG-specific discussion groups.

We were aware that during any discussion group, participants would come with their own intersecting identities and that a topic or lived experience could surface. This is why we decided to offer a total of 6 sessions specifically related to discussing intersectionality.

Through feedback from the diversity networks, our team purposely included a registered and trained social worker (and member of the OO) in each discussion group. They were prepared to offer emotional support if participants needed it during discussion groups. At the end of each discussion group, we shared contact information for the Employee Assistance Program and for Indigenous specific resources as needed.

Option 2: One-on-one conversations

Our office set aside 4 Thursdays from 10 am to noon and 1 to 3 pm ET to speak one on one with participants on their own experiences with diversity and inclusion at SSC. Employees were asked to email an Office of the Ombud's team member to schedule a 30-minute conversation, either on the phone or through MS Teams. Employees were assured that the conversation would remain anonymous, with their original email double deleted from Outlook once the appointment was complete, and that any notes taken during the meeting would not contain personal or identifying information. Thirteen SSC employees participated in the one on one conversations.

Option 3: Written submissions

In addition to discussion groups and one-on-one conversations, employees were also offered the option to submit their experiences through an email to the Office of the Ombuds. Once we receive an email, we copied text-only into a Word document and deleted the email to preserve anonymity. Employees were asked to include how they identify as a member of an equity-deserving group for analysis purposes. Two SSC employees sent in written submissions.

How we analyzed what we heard

The original purpose of the questionnaire was to find the most commonly raised issues and use them as conversation starters during the discussion series. While we expected modest returns, a whopping 1065 participants responded to the questionnaire. This provided us a windfall of information. We therefore decided to change our approach from using the questionnaire data as a simple design element to fully analyzing what we had.

We used Survey Monkey filtering tools to analyze the questionnaire. This approach brought a sharper focus to the lived experiences and the commonalities of each ESG. The responses also:

- indicated that many participants belonged to more than one ESG

- described how their intersectionality can lead to more negative experiences

In addition to filtering by ESG, we also filtered data according to categories that emerged or were otherwise identified as being of interest. For instance, we also considered Jewish and Muslim employees and the 2SLGBTQI+ community.

The research team analyzed and collated the information to determine what each ESG said and then identified commonalities and differences among the groups. At the same time, we made a list of the most frequently shared experiences and divided them into themes. From this, we created an list of anticipated themes that guided the discussion groups.

After each session, the research team met to share notes, themes that stood out, quotes to highlight, and commonalities and differences with other discussion groups that had already occurred.

A note-taking, coding and analyzing process happened for each one-on-one conversation and for the written submissions. Each team member spent over 60 hours in this Phase 2 analysis.

After completing Phase 2, the research team went back to the analysis notes taken for the questionnaire themes and quotes, discussion groups, one-on-one conversations, written submission themes and quotes.

This analysis revealed many strong themes - too many to explore in-depth in this report. The team organized the main themes into 14 sections. The data was analyzed with these themes in mind, which guided the writing of this report.

Annex D: Long description of wheel of privilege and power

The following is a long description of the <u>Wheel of Privilege and Power.</u>

A circle is presented showing 13 categories which describe an individual's identity. In each category, there are 3 to 4 classifications described – with the classification on the outer most circle being the least privileged and those in the inner circle the most privileged.

A comment is given below the circle: Note: the categories within this wheel are only examples in the Canadian context, and we should not limit ourselves to them. Intersectionality is a broad concept, and this tool is only a beginning point.

The categories described and their different classification are as follows. Note, each classification below will be presented from least privileged to most privileged.

1. **Citizenship:** from Temporary resident to Permanent resident to Canadian citizen

2. **Indigenous Peoples:** from Indigenous Peoples without access to their communities to Indigenous Peoples connected to their communities to Colonizers/Settlers

3. **Skin colour:** from Dark to Different shades to White

4. **Gender:** from Trans women and Non-binary to Trans Men to Cisgender women to Cisgender men

5. **Sex:** from Intersex to Female to Male

6. **Sexuality:** from Lesbian, Bisexual, Pansexual, Asexual to Gay men to Heterosexual

7. **Persons with disabilities:** from Visible and Non-visible disability to Person with a temporary disability to Without disability

8. **Neurodiversity:** from Significant neurodivergence to Some neurodivergence to Neurotypical

9. **Mental health:** from Vulnerable to Mostly Stable to Stable

10. **Language:** from Non-English monolingual to Learned English/French to Fluent in one official language to Bilingual in both official languages

11. **Formal education:** from Elementary to High School to Post secondary

12. **Housing:** Homeless to Sheltered or renting to Owns property

13. **Wealth:** Poor to Middle Class to Rich

This wheel of privilege and power shows that we will always identify in more than one category and so our identities are intersecting. Though the classifications of white and male are both closest to the centre of the wheel – meaning the most privileged – if the same person identifies as poor, homeless with vulnerable mental health and has completed up to high school education– their privilege and power in society will be less than another white male who is rich, owns property, has stable mental health and has completed up to post-secondary education.

To hyperlink back to where you left off in the report click on the following link: <u>What is intersectionality?</u>

Annex E: Comparative tables

ESG supervisor progression

The following tables compare the number of ESG employees within SSC in supervisory positions on 2 different dates - January 1, 2020, and January 1, 2023. It indicates the percentage increase or decrease for those ESGs where statistics exist.

For example, in the first ESG row, there were 39 Black employees at the supervisory level on January 1, 2020, representing 2% of all supervisors on that date. On January 1, 2023, they were 68, representing 3.21% of all supervisors on that date. Over that 3-year period, the number of Black supervisors increased by 74.36%.

ESG supervisor progression by group

Equity-seeking group	Number of supervisors 2020*	Percentage of supervisors 2020*	Number of supervisors 2023**	Percentage of supervisors 2023**	Percentage increase or decrease comparing 2020 to 2023
Black	39	2	68	3.21	74.36
Indigenous	51	3.13	69	3.26	35.29
Latin American	5	0	11	0.52	120.0
Persons With Disabilities	65	4	116	5.48	78.46
South Asian/East Indian	38	2	50	2.36	31.58
Southeast/East Asian	17	1	16	0.76	-5.88
Visible Minorities	232	14	339	16.01	46.12
West Asian/North African/Arab	62	4	110	5.2	43.64
Women	540	33	788	37.22	45.93

Notes:

*2020 represents the total number on January 1, 2020
**2023 represents the number on January 1, 2023
Source: PeopleSoft statistics provided by SSC Human Resources

ESG supervisor progression comparison

By group	Number 2020*	Number 2023**	Net gain	Percentage increase
ESG supervisors	1049	1567	518	49.38
Total SSC supervisors	**1627**	**2117**	**490**	**30.12**

IT management and executive progression

The following tables compare the number of ESG employees within SSC in management (IT-5) and executive (EX) positions on 2 different dates - January 1, 2020, and January 1, 2023 - as well as the percentage increase or decrease during that period for each ESG.

For example, in the first ESG row, there were 6 Black employees at the IT-5/EX level on January 1, 2020, representing 2% of all IT-5/EXs on that date. On January 1, 2023, there were 11 Black employees at the IT-5/EX level, representing 2.7% of all IT-5/EXs on that date. Over that 3-year period, the number of Black IT-5/EXs increased by 83.33%.

Although the numbers are small, the South Asian/East Indian IT-5/EX population has experienced a slight drop of 3 people.

ESG IT-5/EX progression by group

Equity-seeking group	Number of IT-5/EX 2020*	Percentage of IT-5/EX 2020*	Number of IT-5/EX in 2023**	Percentage of IT-5/EX in 2023**	Percentage increase or decrease comparing 2020 to 2023
Black	6	2	11	2.7	83.33
Indigenous	10	2.86	11	2.7	10
Latin American	0	0	1	0.25	100
Persons With Disabilities	13	3.71	30	7.35	130.77
South Asian/East Indian	21	6	18	4.41	-14.29
Southeast/East Asian	3	1	3	0.74	0
Visible Minorities	59	17	68	16.67	15.25
West Asian/North African/ Arab	20	6	20	4.9	0
Women	123	35	143	35.05	16.26

Notes:

*2020 represents the number taken on January 1, 2020
**2023 represents the number taken on January 1, 2023
Source: PeopleSoft statistics provided by SSC Human Resources

ESG IT-5/EX progression comparison

By group	Number 2020*	Number 2023**	Net gain	Percentage increase
ESG IT-5/EX	255	305	50	19.61
Total SSC IT 5/EX	**350**	**408**	**58**	**16.57**