

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

### 1. Why was the survey conducted?

- APEX conducts a survey on the health of executives every 5 years. The 2012 survey is the 4<sup>th</sup> in the series.
- The first APEX survey was conducted in 1997, in response to concerns about the health of executives in the wake of significant organizational change and downsizing of the public service.
- APEX is recognized as an important contributor to the body of research on workplace health. Its studies have been cited in World Health Organization reports on the determinants of health.

### 2. Who conducted the survey?

- The survey was developed and conducted by the Group for the Analysis of Psycho-Social Health Research Unit (GAP-Santé) of the Institute of Population Health at the University of Ottawa.
- All 4 surveys have been conducted by GAP-Santé.

### 3. When was the survey conducted?

- The survey was conducted between October 2012 and January 2013.

### 4. Who was surveyed?

- The survey was sent to executives in all departments, agencies, crown corporations and special operating agencies.

### 5. How many executives completed the survey?

- The survey was completed by 2,314 executives (35% of the executive population).
- At the time of the survey, there were 6,702 executives working for the federal government.

### 6. How reliable are the results?

- The results are extremely reliable. They are accurate 99 times out of 100, with a margin of error of  $\pm 1.6\%$ . The survey uses well established instruments and scales as well as state of the art methods.

### 7. Do the results apply to all executives?

- Yes, the results can be generalized with confidence to all executives because the survey sample was both large enough and representative of the executive community across all demographic factors, including age, level, gender, language and region.

## **8. What did the survey look at?**

- The survey included questions on:
  - 1) Work characteristics (e.g. hours worked, workload, access to resources)
  - 2) The social and interpersonal work environment (support from supervisors and colleagues, perceptions of fairness, verbal harassment and incivility in the workplace)
  - 3) Individual health, both physical and psychological
  - 4) Organizational health (e.g. job satisfaction, engagement and absenteeism).

## **9. What are the key findings of the survey?**

- Although gains have been made in some areas, the survey reveals that overall, the health of executives has declined. More executives report that they are in “fair” or “poor” health and fewer executives report that they are in “good” or “excellent” health. Self-rated health status has been found to be one of the best predictors of downstream health outcomes.
- The survey identifies a link between individual health outcomes and workplace factors. The top drivers of health are:
  - 1) Respect in the workplace
  - 2) Recognition (balance between effort and reward)
  - 3) Job control (sense of control individuals feel they have over their job)
  - 4) Social support, particularly from direct supervisors.
- Systematically addressing these 4 factors would result in significantly improved individual health and well-being and have a considerable impact on productivity and other organizational outcomes.

## **10. How do the results of the 2012 survey compare with those of the 2007 survey?**

- Although gains have been made in some areas, the survey reveals that overall, executive health has declined since 2007.
- On the positive side, fewer executives are smoking, drinking heavily, and suffering from respiratory diseases. Executives are also seeking professional counselling for work-related issues in greater numbers.
- On the negative side, more executives have been diagnosed with depression, anxiety and musculoskeletal conditions. Obesity rates have increased significantly, as has the use of psychotropic medication.

## **11. How healthy is the federal workplace?**

- Executives are working slightly fewer hours, taking slightly more vacation leave and are generally satisfied with their work.
- Although absenteeism rates have increased slightly, executives take fewer sick days than allowed. They also come to work sick several days a year (“presenteeism”).
- Engagement and commitment levels remain high, but have fallen since 2007. Almost 1/3 of executives report being actively disengaged.

- More executives report being verbally harassed and say that their workplace lacks respect and civility.
- One in 4 executives reports symptoms of severe burnout.

**12. How do the results of the survey compare with the findings of the Public Sector Employee Survey (PSES)?**

- The results of the 2012 survey cannot be compared to those of the PSES. Survey questions were different and the two surveys were conducted in different years. The two surveys also used different methodologies.
- However, the results of the two surveys reveal similar trends in some areas.

**13. How do the results of the survey compare with those of the private sector or other governments?**

- At this time, the results of the survey have not been compared to data on the health of executives in the private sector or other governments. APEX will conduct research in the months ahead to determine if private sector organizations or other governments have conducted similar studies and if the findings of these studies can be compared with those of the APEX survey.

**14. What will APEX do now that the results have been released?**

- The health and well-being of executives will continue to be a key priority for APEX in the months ahead.
- It will provide as much information and support as possible to help individuals and organizations improve executive health and well-being.
- APEX will encourage departments and agencies of a certain size to obtain a tailored report comparing their results with those of the general EX population. As a mark of its deep commitment to the health and well-being of executives, the Board of Directors has decided to cover 50% of the cost of producing these reports.
- Information sessions and learning events will be offered by APEX to help executives better understand the factors that have an impact on health and the actions they can take to improve workplace health.
- APEX has established a working group composed of members from across the Public Service to develop and oversee the implementation of an action plan in response to the results of the survey.