

Backgrounder : **Citizens First Research Findings**

(Disponible en français)

Citizens First 5 (CF5) is the latest in a series of leading edge initiatives launched by the Institute for Citizen-Centred Service (ICCS). This pan-Canadian research informs service managers with client-centred results. These lay the foundation for improving three critical citizen needs: access to services, service delivery and the services themselves. The ICCS selected ERIN Research to design and conduct the national survey in 2007 - 2008.

6,700 Canadians in every province and territory had a voice in *Citizens First 5* regarding government service. Does service matter? The answer from citizens is absolutely yes! The survey tells us that not only do citizens want and care about good service from their governments; they say that good service contributes to their confidence in government and in the public service.

CF5 highlights include:

Five drivers reveal the secret of citizen satisfaction with service

Why are some people satisfied with the service they get, while others are not? Five drivers of satisfaction are primarily responsible:

- **Timeliness** - the single most important driver of satisfaction across all services and all levels of government
- **Staff** - customers appreciate knowledgeable staff who treat them fairly, "go the extra mile" and make that extra effort
- **Positive outcome** - "I got what I needed"
- **Ease of access**
- **Citizens' recent experiences with services**

For routine services, citizens say...

Citizens say that timeliness for routine services in government offices, on the telephone, and in electronic communications is their number one priority.

Citizens' expectations in most areas remain stable: 2 people is the maximum number that citizens want to deal with, either in a government office or on the telephone. 5-9 minutes is the maximum length of any queue. One area has shown a steady and dramatic shift over time: citizens now want much faster turnaround in mail services – their expectation is just one to two weeks.

The problems of the telephone, "the citizens' channel", continue to need focus

The phone remains the most commonly used channel in government services. Government offices and the Internet rate high, while the telephone, as in the past, rates considerably lower. Citizens have more access problems on the phone than in any other channel. Busy lines, difficulty finding the right number, trouble with automated phone systems, difficulty understanding the person at the other end, and waiting on hold, all contribute to citizens' frustration.

Solving phone problems is essential, because access difficulties manifest themselves in lower overall satisfaction ratings.

The Internet has "come of age"

The initial *Citizens First* study in 1998 did not ask a single question about Internet use – government services were barely visible online. Today, Internet use is practically on a par with visits to government offices and telephone use. The Internet, however, is not displacing traditional channels. Citizens use the Internet as a complement to, rather than as a replacement for, other channels.

Citizens increasingly use multiple channels to access government

In CF5, 59 percent of respondents used more than one channel to address their needs. This is a significant jump from the 50 percent who reported using multiple channels in CF3 in 2002.

Persons with disabilities require services that meet their needs and lead to a positive outcomes

Seven percent of CF5 respondents reported they have a disability. People with disabilities rate the broad spectrum of government services lower than persons without disabilities. The difference in ratings averages 4 or 5 points out of 100.

A major reason is that people with disabilities get less often a "positive outcome" – one of the key drivers of citizen satisfaction.

Service quality ratings rise over 10 years of tracking

Each of the 5 *Citizens First* studies has tracked citizens' ratings of a basket of municipal, provincial/territorial and federal services. Averaging across all services, there has been a significant upward trend.

The average score for the 26 services that have appeared in all five waves of *Citizens First* has risen from 64 out of 100 in 1998 to 72 today – a 8 percent increase.

37 services are trending up, 31 show no statistically significant change, and 2 have declined. Of those that did not change, 15 have appeared in just the last two waves of *Citizens First*, so the time frame is relatively short.

Roots of confidence in government and the public service are uncovered

Confidence in government is, in fact, rooted both in good service and in confidence in the public service.

Confidence in the public service, in turn, rests on competent management and the perception that the public service is fair, honest, and in touch with the community

CF5 was released in Toronto on September 5, 2008 and is available for order on the ICCS website.

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