



## Top 8 Highlights

Citizens First 5 (CF5) is the latest in this series of world-class initiatives by the ICCS. (CF5) continues the tradition of citizen-centred research that began in Canada in 1998. Under the co-ordination of the Institute of Citizen-centred Service, 18 municipal, regional, provincial, territorial and federal partners sponsored the CF5 national survey.

The random-sample survey of 6,700 Canadians was conducted by ERIN Research using the mail and Internet in equal proportions from October to December 2007. The response rate was 13 percent in each medium, which is excellent for a lengthy public survey.

### ***1 Five drivers reveal the secrets 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 across all services, all governments)
- **Staff** (Critical dimensions are knowledgeable staff who treat customers fairly and "go the extra mile", make that extra effort)
- **Positive outcome**: "I got what I needed"
- **Ease of access**
- **Citizens' recent experiences** with services.

### ***2 The problems of the telephone, the citizens' channel, continue to need focus***

The telephone remains the most commonly used channel in government services. Still, satisfaction ratings for the telephone are lower than for other major channels such as government offices and the Internet.

Part of the explanation is that citizens experience more access problems on the phone than in other major channels. 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 frustration.

### ***3 The Internet has "come of age"***

One of the most interesting findings of Citizens First 5 is the “coming of age” of Internet use. The initial Citizens First study in 1998 did not ask one 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.

Surprisingly, however, the Internet is not displacing traditional channels. Citizens see the Internet as a complement to, rather than as a replacement for, other channels.

#### ***4 Citizens increasingly use multiple channels to access government***

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

#### ***5 For routine services, citizens say...***

Since 1998, 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 certain 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.
- 30 seconds is the acceptable time to wait on hold on the phone before you speak to a person.
- The same day is when citizens expect a reply to a voice mail or email, if the message is left by 10:00 am.

One area has shown a steady and dramatic shift over time: citizens now expect a much faster turnaround of mail services - their expectation is just one to two weeks from the time they mail in a request until they receive the response.

## ***6 Persons with disabilities require services to meet their needs and lead to positive outcomes***

In CF5, 7% of respondents reported they had a visual, auditory, motor or other disability that made it difficult for them to access government services.

Persons with disabilities rate the broad spectrum of government services lower than do persons without disabilities. The difference in ratings averages 4 or 5 points out of 100.

A major reason is that persons with disabilities less often get a positive outcome – one of the key drivers of citizens' satisfaction.

## ***7 Service quality ratings rise over 10 years of tracking***

Each of the five 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 studies of Citizens First has risen from 64 in 1998 to 72 in 2008 – an 8 point 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 studies of Citizens First, so the time frame is relatively short.

## ***8 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.

## **The forward path**

At a high level, action in three areas is paramount to successfully achieving a truly citizen-centred public service that delivers services responsively and responsibly.

- 1 Service:** Implement the drivers of satisfaction and confidence in public institutions.
- 2 Research:** Build empirically-grounded service improvement strategies and continue the Citizens First and Taking Care of Business research initiatives.
- 3 Training and communications:** Governments should develop talented and responsive public service providers through quality training and communications, and should ensure leadership and commitment to training. Distribution of the new CF5 Insights publication will do much to advance knowledge and focused action from the front line to the executive areas of the public service.