



Correctional Service
Canada

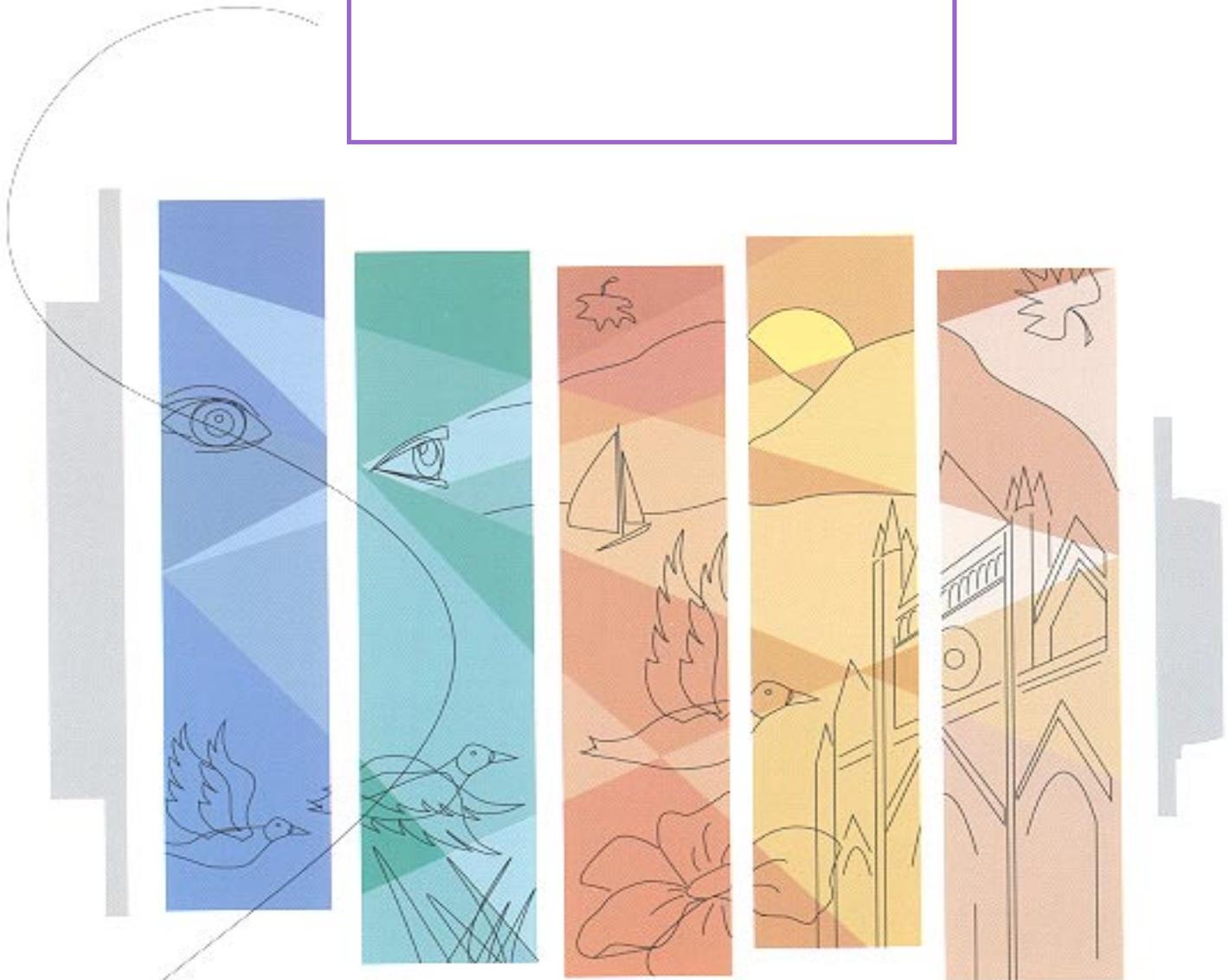
Service correctionnel
Canada



Research Branch
Direction de la recherche

Corporate Development
Développement organisationnel

**Staff Commitment in the
Correctional Service of Canada**



Staff Commitment in the Correctional Service of Canada

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Staff Commitment in the Correctional Service of Canada

The Staff Commitment Study was a major national research undertaking conducted during July and August 1991. The project was designed to provide a better understanding of the factors which affect staff commitment in the Correctional Service of Canada. It was intended that the knowledge gained from the study would contribute to our ability to enhance the commitment and motivation of our staff to pursue the challenging objectives of the Service¹.

This national study follows an earlier pilot project conducted by the Research and Statistics Branch in which three regions participated. The pilot was used to test the research measuring instruments and to gauge the receptivity of staff to this type of research. A consulting firm² was contracted to collect the data across all regions of the Service.

Staff participants were randomly selected and the sample was designed to represent all five regions and national headquarters³. Although senior managers were excluded, the sample was constructed to represent the major occupational groupings within the service. Staff were included from institutional, community, and headquarter operations. A total of 684 staff participated in the study by completing group administered questionnaires and being personally interviewed. Staff who participated in the study were very receptive to the goals of the study and the research assistants who collected the data were very well-received in all CSC sites. The high level of interest and openness to the study is indicated by a refusal rate of less than 1 0% among staff who were approached to participate.

¹ **Note:** For a discussion of the purpose of the study and a description of the measuring instruments see Robinson, D., Simourd, L., and Porporino, F. (1992). Background to the Staff Commitment Research Project. Ottawa: Research and Statistics Branch, Correctional Service of Canada.

² The Ottawa-based consulting firm, Goss, Gilroy & Associates conducted the data collection phase of the project.

³ See Appendix A for a description of the sampling procedures and a breakdown of study participants by region and occupational group.

The random sampling method, use of group-administered rather than mailed questionnaires, the conduct of personal interviews with staff members, and the high rate of consent to participate are major strengths of the study.

This report provides a first glimpse at the national data from the Staff Commitment study. We examine the levels of commitment among staff in the Correctional Service of Canada. More importantly, we also report on a series of analyses that were designed to help understand the factors which appear to influence the commitment of our staff.

What are committed staff members?

Staff commitment has been the subject of much interest among researchers who study work organisations. Organisational specialists use the term "commitment" to refer to the strength of an individual's identification with his or her work organisation⁴. According to researchers, committed staff members share a number of important characteristics:

- Feel loyalty and pride toward their work organisation
- believe in the organisation's goals and values
- willing to exert effort on behalf of their work organisation
- desire to maintain membership in their work organisation

Levels of Commitment in the Correctional Service of Canada

Staff who participated in the study were asked to indicate their levels of agreement toward a series of 15 statements about commitment to work organisations⁵. This approach to measuring commitment, the Organisational Commitment Questionnaire, has been used extensively in research on commitment within other types of work organisations'. For each of the statements, commitment is rated on a scale of 1 to 7, with ratings of 1 representing the lowest commitment rating and 7 representing the highest commitment rating.

Figure 1 shows the levels of commitment of CSC staff when the ratings for the 15 "commitment" statements are combined into average scores. According to the scale, only a small minority of staff fell within the extremes of "low" commitment. Overall, the average ratings show that CSC staff "lean" toward the positive end of the commitment scale.

⁴ Mowday, T. T., Steers, R. M., and Porter, L. (1979). The measurement of organizational commitment. Journal of Vocational Behaviour, 14, 224-247.

⁵ Porter, I.W., Steers, R. M., Mowday, T. T., and Boulian, P. B. (1974). Organizational commitment, job satisfaction and turnover among psychiatric technicians. Journal of applied Psychology, 59, 603-609.

Table 1
Response to the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire

	AGREE	NEITHER	DISAGREE
I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected in order to help this organization be successful.	75.9%	9.0%	15.1%
I talk up this organization to my friends as a great organization to work for.	40.2%	27.2%	32.6%
I feel very little loyalty to this organization.	20.6%	13.2%	66.2%
I would accept almost any type of job assignment in order to keep working for this organization.	23.0%	13.4%	63.6%
I find that my values and the organization's values are very similar.	39.9%	18.8%	41.2%
I am proud to tell others that I am part of this organization.	53.7%	23.5%	22.8%
I could just as well be working for a different organization as long as the type of work was similar.	59.6%	16.7%	23.6%
This organization really inspires the very best in me in the way of job performance.	36.7%	15.6%	47.7%
It would take very little change in my present circumstances to cause me to leave this organization.	25.4%	17.9%	56.7%

I am extremely glad that I chose this organization to work for over others I was considering at the time I joined.

43.2% 29.2% 27.6%

There's not too much to be gained by sticking with this organization indefinitely.

29.1% 14.3% 56.7%

Often, I find it difficult to agree with this, organization's policies on important matters relating to its employees.

64.2% 11.8% 24.1%

I really care about the fate of this organization.

66.6% 18.8% 14.5%

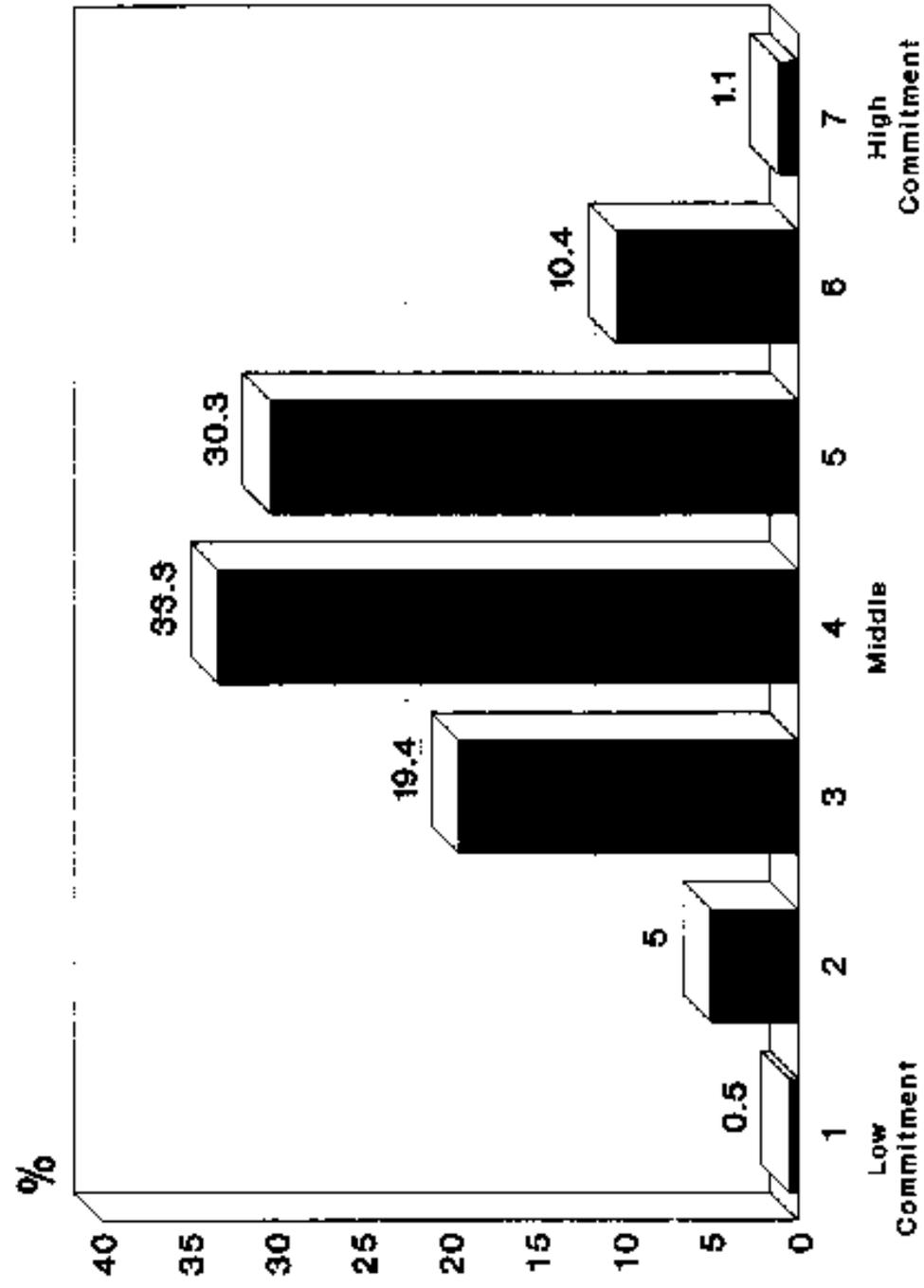
For me this is the best of all possible organizations for which to work.

28.6% 22.0% 49.3%

Deciding to work for this organization was a definite mistake on my part.

9.6% 14.2% 76.2%

Figure 1
Average Commitment Scores of CSC Staff



Why is Staff Commitment Important to an Organisation?

Organisational experts believe that staff commitment is an important ingredient to organisational success'. In past research R has been found that highly committed staff possess a variety of desirable characteristics - characteristics which serve to enhance the organisation's ability to achieve Rs goals. For example, highly committed staff were high performers, were more involved in their jobs, were less likely to want to leave their work organisations for new jobs, exhibited less absenteeism, possessed high motivation to perform at their work, and expressed high job satisfaction.

In our study, staff who displayed strong commitment to the Correctional Service of Canada were different from staff who expressed less commitment on a number of these characteristics. Below are some examples of how more highly committed staff differed from less committed staff:

Job Seeking - More committed staff members were not as likely as the less committed staff to have applied for jobs outside of the Service in the six months preceding the study.

Desire to Leave the Organisation - The more committed group was less likely than the less committed to say they frequently think of quitting.

Job Satisfaction - The more highly committed staff members in the survey were also more satisfied with their jobs, although a high degree of satisfaction was expressed by both groups.

Job Involvement - High commitment was also associated with the tendency to become involved in one's work.

Job Performance - Immediate supervisors assigned better performance ratings to highly committed staff than they assigned to less committed staff. The supervisors used a special research instrument for measuring performance that was designed for this study. The more committed staff also received higher global performance ratings on their yearly performance appraisals.

Agreement with the Mission of the CSC - Highly committed staff were also more positive than the less committed staff in their views toward the Mission. See Figure 2.

Factors that may Influence Staff Commitment

The results of the study provide a measure of the levels of commitment within the Service, and demonstrate that commitment is a desirable characteristic to encourage in our staff. However, it is also important to explore what accounts for varying levels of commitment among our staff. In other words, what factors explain why some staff members are committed and others are not. We found that the following factors were significantly related to commitment

Type of Job - Our analyses indicated that staff commitment varies across different occupational categories within the Service. Specifically, Correctional Officers and Case Management Officers (both in institutions and community settings) show the least level of staff commitment, while middle managers and administrative personnel show the highest levels of commitment (See Figure 3).

Work Site - Not surprisingly, there were differences in levels of commitment across the three types of work sites in the Correctional Service of Canada: headquarters, institutions and community. There was a higher level of commitment among headquarters staff in comparison to operational settings. These differences also reflect the differences in commitment levels across occupational groups (e.g., correctional officers versus administrators). There is less variation when one examines levels of commitment across different institutions. As Figure 4 illustrates, there are no institutions which appear to be suffering from extremely low levels of commitment. However, it is notable that a number of institutions show commitment levels that are well above the national average.

Region - There were some regional differences in overall levels of commitment. Staff from the Pacific and Prairie Regions had the highest levels of staff commitment. In addition, NHQ staff showed higher levels of commitment than staff from the regions (See Figure 5).

Length of Service - Newer recruits tended to exhibit higher levels of commitment than staff who had been with the Service for longer periods.

Gender - Female staff members were more likely than male staff members to fall within the more "highly" committed group.

Figure 2
Attitudes Toward the CSC Mission
by Level of Staff Commitment

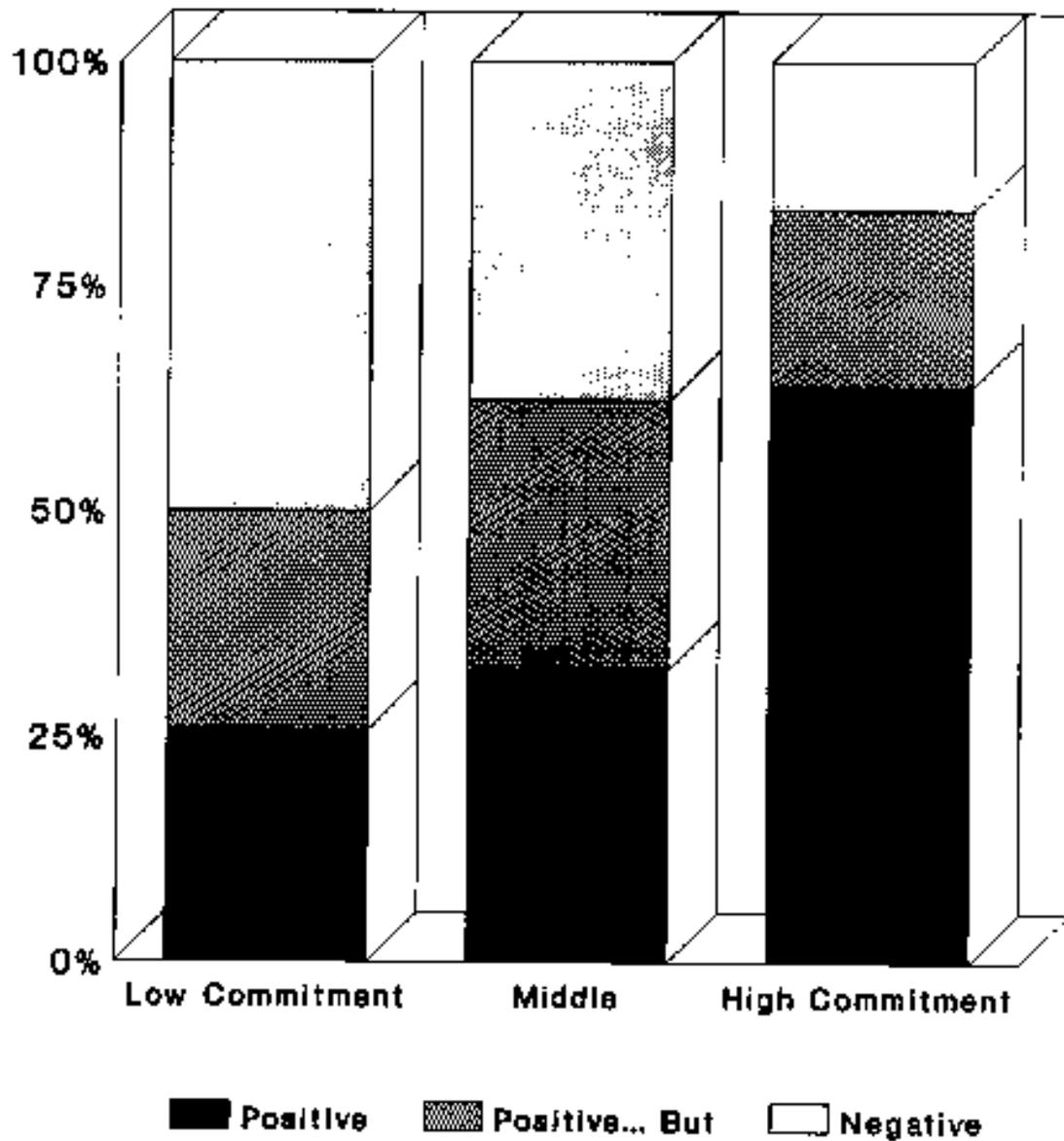
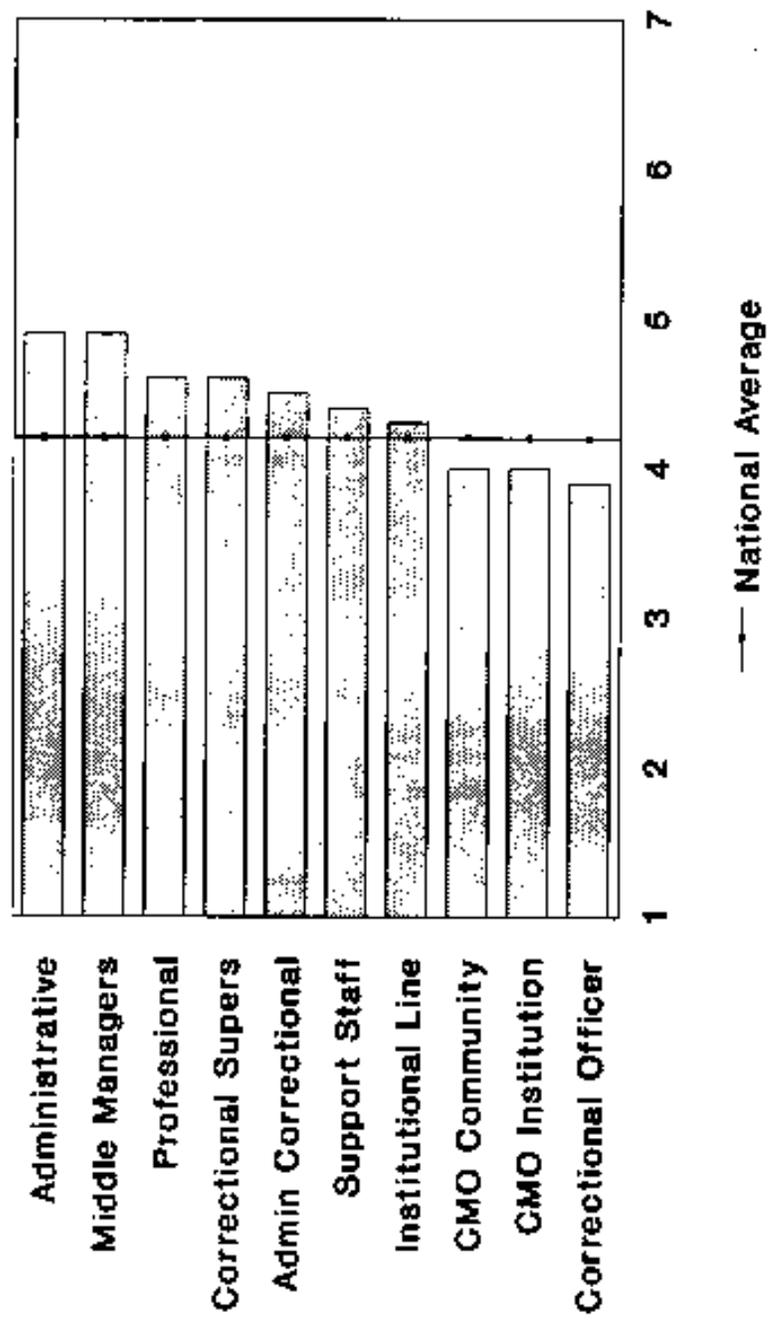
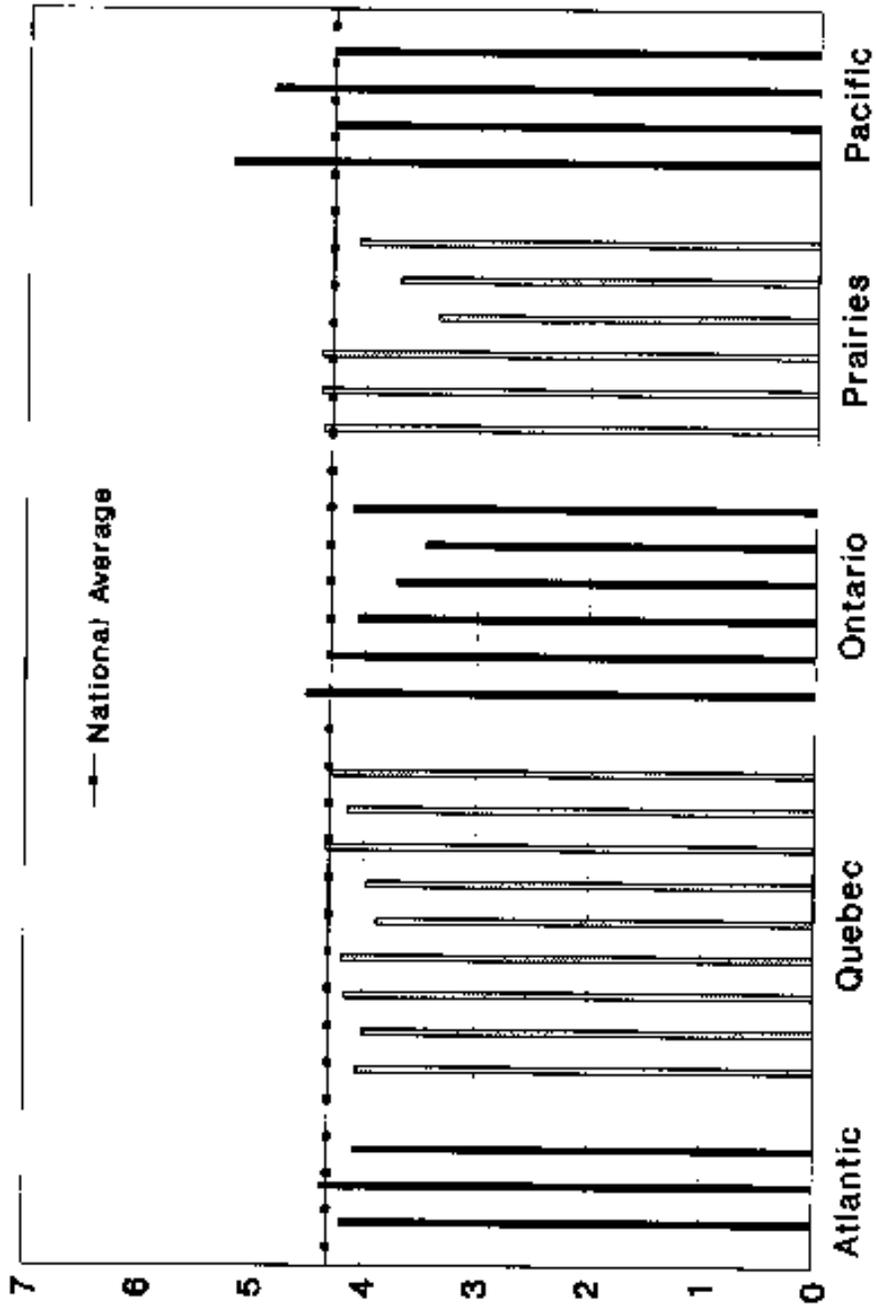


Figure 3
Average "Commitment" Scores
By Job Categories



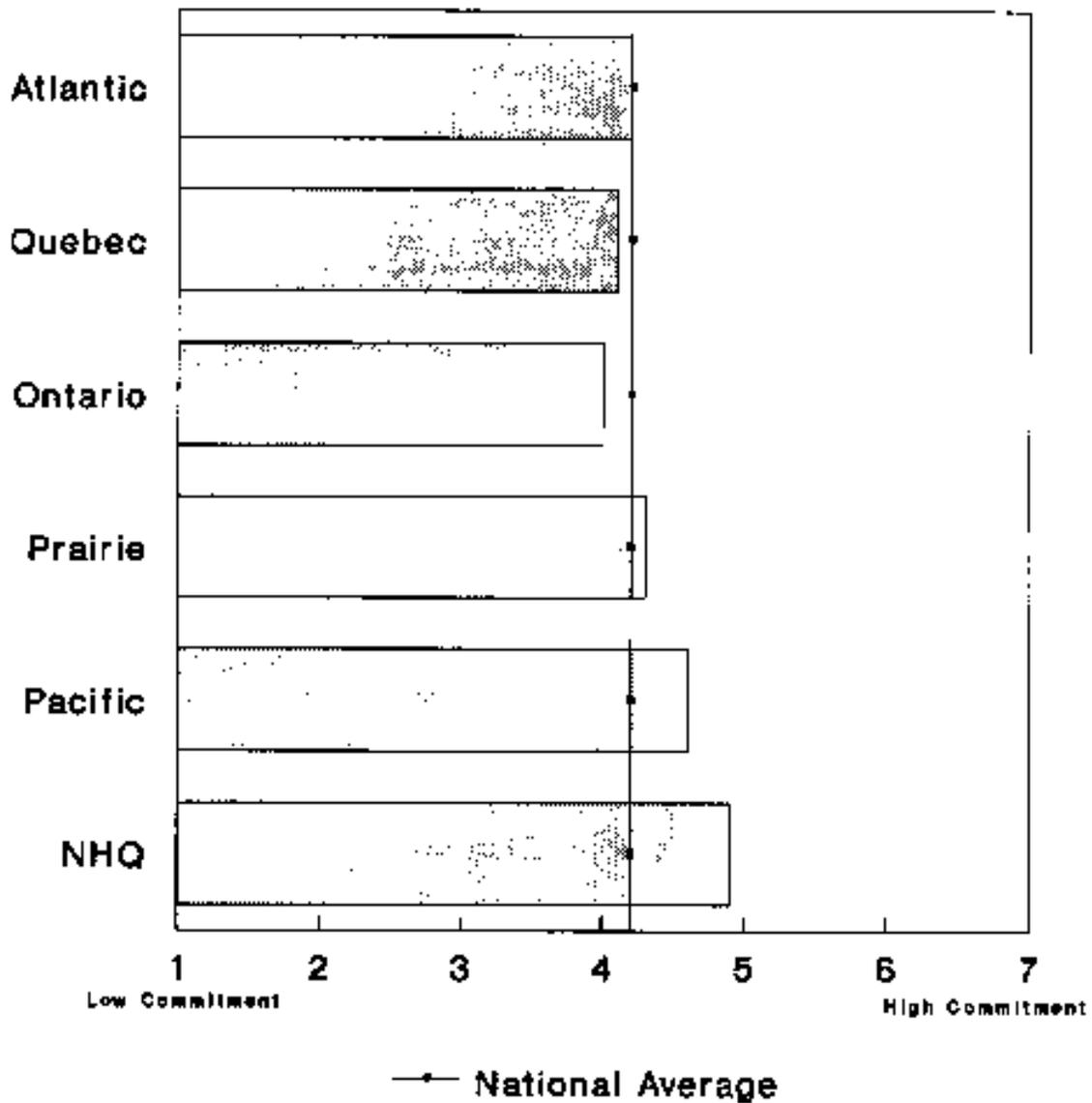
Professional - Nursing Staff, Teachers, Psychologists, Engineers
 Correctional Supers - Area Managers, Deputy Wardens, Unit Managers, Correctional Supervisors
 Institutional Line - Food Service, Maintenance, Shop Instructors

Figure 4
Average Commitment Scores by Institution



Only institutions with 6 or more participants in the study are included.

Figure 5
Average Organizational Commitment Scores
By Region and NHQ



Attitudes Towards Corrections - People who view the field of corrections in a positive light are much more likely to be committed to the Service than staff members who feel negative towards corrections. High levels of commitment were exhibited by staff who said that:

- there were more good things than bad things about working in corrections
- they would re-enter corrections if they had to choose again
- working with inmates was an important reason why they chose a career in corrections

Attitudes Toward Correctional Rehabilitation - Endorsement of pro-rehabilitation ideals was also associated with higher levels of staff commitment.

Human Service Orientation - A desire to work with people, or a "helping" orientation was also related to staff commitment.

Openness to Change - Individuals who were open to the idea of change and innovation in our workplace were more likely to be highly committed.

Openness of the Organisation - Staff who saw the Correctional Service of Canada as an organisation that was open to doing things in new and better ways showed higher levels of commitment than staff who felt the organisation was rigid and closed to new ideas.

Career Development Orientation - Staff who have a strong interest in career development (e.g., planning and thinking about career choices, attaching importance to career choices) were more committed than staff who were less concerned about such issues.

Job Stress - People who felt a great deal of stress in their work were less likely to be committed than people who reported lower levels of work stress.

Staff who participated in the study identified a number of sources of stress in their work: management, fears related to personal security in correctional settings, workload, inmates, lack of communication and trust in the organisation, supervisors, lack of resources, staffing practices, opportunity for promotions, co-workers, the pace of organisational change, and paperwork. However, only two of these stressors appeared to be linked to varying levels of commitment.

Staff who complained that "management" (in the generic sense) was a source of stress (e.g., disagreement with policies set by management, complaints about lack of direction from management, perception that management does not listen to staff) were less likely to fall within the "committed" group than staff who did not perceive "management" as a source of stress.

The other stressor that was associated with commitment concerned inmates (e.g., the feeling that inmates were a source of annoyance or irritation). Staff who did not feel that inmates caused them stress were more likely to be "committed" than staff who viewed inmates as stressful.

Factors Unrelated to Commitment - We also found that some demographic factors were unrelated to levels of commitment. This was an interesting finding because many people believe that factors such as age and education have an important bearing on how staff view work organisations.

Age - Age was not related to levels of staff commitment - older staff were just as likely as younger staff members to be committed to the CSC.

Education - It is also noteworthy that educational achievement was not associated with staff commitment. Staff with higher levels of formal education were no more likely than staff with lower levels of education to be committed to the Service.

What Factors Were Most Important?

The above results suggest that a number of factors influence commitment among Correctional Service of Canada staff. Obviously, some of the factors are very important, while others will have only a weak influence on commitment. In an effort to better understand the relationship between staff characteristics and staff commitment, we conducted a series of statistical analysis aimed at identifying the most salient factors (Multiple regressions were performed to determine the relative importance of the various factors mentioned above).

Attitudes Towards Corrections: Our analyses indicated that "attitudes towards corrections" was the factor most strongly related to staff commitment. Holding positive views about the field of corrections appeared to be fundamental to being committed to the Correctional Service of Canada. In fact, this factor was much more important than any of the other factors we measured in the study.

It is interesting to note that having positive attitudes toward corrections was also associated with a number of other factors in the study:

- endorsement of rehabilitation ideals
- being open to change
- having a human service orientation ,
- viewing the organisation as open and flexible
- The absence of high work stress
- working directly with offenders

The last factor is interesting - we found that staff who worked directly with inmates (i.e., correctional officers and case management officers), were less likely than other staff to possess positive views toward the field of corrections. This may account, at least in part, for why staff who worked with inmates reported lower levels of commitment toward the Service.

Other Important Factors: Although positive attitudes towards corrections was the most important "commitment factor", there were a number of other salient factors in our analyses. In order of importance, these factors were:

- viewing the Service as open and flexible
- having a career development orientation
- reporting lower levels of work stress

Each of these factors made independent contributions to explaining the varying levels of commitment among our staff, even after the influence of positive attitudes toward corrections had been taken into account.

Differences between Occupational Groups

We also examined how the factors influencing commitment might vary by occupational groups. Because correctional officers and case management officers were found to differ on commitment, we looked at what "commitment factors" were most important for these groups. For both correctional officers and case management officers, positive attitudes towards the field of corrections was the most important factor. As described above, this factor was the most important when we looked at the full sample of staff.

We looked at the results for Correctional Officers and Case Management Officers separately.

Correctional Officers - After positive attitudes towards corrections, the next most important factor for correctional officers, was positive attitudes towards rehabilitation. The third most important "commitment factor" for correctional officers concerned complaints about management. Correctional Officers who complained about "management" were less committed. Hence, beliefs about rehabilitation and perceptions about management as a source of stress, were more important for correctional officers than for other correctional staff.

Case Management Officers - For case management officers, positive attitudes towards corrections was also the most important "commitment factor". However, the next most important factor was career development orientation. This suggests that case management officers who have a high degree of interest in developing their careers are more committed to the Service. The third most important factor for this group was the perception of the Service as open and flexible.

The analyses by occupational category confirmed that attitudes towards corrections is a major factor across the full range of our occupational groups. The results also suggest some interesting differences among major groupings of our staff members. These differences provide knowledge relevant to the development of staff programs and recruitment policy for different categories of staff.

Enhancing Staff Commitment

There are a number of strategies that organisations might pursue in enhancing the level of commitment of their staff. An obvious point of departure in searching for strategies to promote commitment is to take account of the factors that appear to be related to commitment. As the data from our study of CSC staff suggest, a number of factors (e.g., type of work, attitudes toward corrections, attitudes toward management, etc.) predict variations in commitment among our staff. These predictive factors provide clues as to how we might focus our efforts to enhance levels of commitment. The strategies will need to focus, first of all, on the particular staff groups that are identified as less committed. Secondly, the strategies should attend to some of the attitudinal predictors and situational predictors of commitment which might be amenable to change through planned interventions.

The research literature on organisational commitment provides additional clues which may be of assistance in formulating plans for increasing commitment among CSC staff. Most researchers (See for example, DeCotiis, T. A., and Summers, T. P. (1987). A path analysis of a model of the antecedents and consequences of organisational commitment. Human Relations, 40, 445-470.), agree that there are two main avenues of influence on organisational commitment: personal characteristics of staff and work characteristics. Personal characteristics include many of the factors we have studied including beliefs, personality attributes, career ambitions, attitudes toward work, demographic factors, and length of service. Work situation include attributes such as organisational climate, perceptions about work roles, and processes used for decision-making in organisations. Work situation variables measured in the current study include perceptions about the level of openness of the organisation to receiving new ideas, experience of work stress, and perceptions about the roles of management and supervisors.

In developing methods for enhancing commitment, a focus on the influence of personal characteristics may be particularly relevant to the recruitment process. In other words, the strategy would involve attracting the appropriate types of individuals who will have the characteristics necessary to "fit-in" and become committed to our correctional work settings. For example, the results of the study suggest that individuals possessing positive attitudes toward the field of corrections, pro-rehabilitation attitudes, and strong career development orientations, make committed employees in our organisation.

The other lever of influence, as mentioned above, is to identify existing groups of staff who need to be re-engaged or re-energised because their level of commitment is low. An obvious target group, according to the results of the study, is staff who work directly with offenders.

Situational factors are also a major focus for interventions aimed at increasing staff commitment. In fact, some research suggests that this domain of influence is the most important (e.g., DeCotiis and Summers). As a strategy for enhancing commitment a focus on situational factors is important when it is considered that many personal characteristics that are associated with commitment (e.g., career orientation, attitudes towards corrections) may be somewhat resistant to change. The situational factors refer to changes the organisation can introduce to alter how staff do their work on a daily basis.

Mowday, Porter and Steers, who have made major contributions to the study of organisational commitment, propose a number of relevant targets on which organisations can concentrate to bring about positive change. Among them are job scope, supervision practices, work group cohesiveness, and organisational dependability. Studies have demonstrated that employees who occupy positions with high job scope, including such attributes as variety, autonomy, challenge, and feedback, show high levels of commitment. In addition, supervision practices which are not overly "light" or "close" are associated with greater commitment. With respect to cohesiveness, several studies have demonstrated that staff become more committed as the level of social involvement and the formation of group attitudes and norms increase. Mowday, Porter and Steers also point to studies which show that commitment increases as a function of staff perceptions that their work organisations have been dependable over time. The latter factor requires little explanation employees who feel well taken care of will assume an attitude of reciprocity toward their organisations.

A target area which integrates many of the situational factors discussed above is staff participation in organisational decision-making. Salancik has elaborated on the potency of participation in strengthening the commitment of staff (e.g. Salancik, G. R. (1977). Commitment and the control of organisational behaviour and belief. In B. M. Staw and G. R. Salancik (Eds.), New Directions in Organizational Behaviour. Chicago: St. Clair Press.). When staff participate in decision-making on matters that impact upon them, their involvement will likely result in greater levels of commitment to the organisation. For example, studies have shown that when staff are involved in designing their own incentive programs, for example, managers are more likely to reap the benefits of the program. Indeed, the notion that positive outcomes result from "involving" staff in matters that affect them has a great deal of intuitive appeal. Most managers realise that they will have greater success in implementing new procedures and policies when such conditions are respected. However, it does appear that this area can become a more integral component of our relationships with staff. It seems obvious that the strategy of involving staff in decision-making will have the greatest payoffs for staff who feel they are not consulted. The strategy may be particularly useful in working with groups of staff who show the least levels of commitment. The results of the research suggest that commitment is related to the perception that the organisation is open and willing to listen to new ideas.

This finding may indicate the desire on the part of staff to gain greater participation in decision-making.

In summary, there are a number of strategies available for enhancing the commitment levels of staff. The examples given above may have particular application for an organisation such as the Correctional Service of Canada. However, there is a wealth of literature on enhancing organisational effectiveness which may have an important contribution to make to our efforts to enhance the commitment of our staff. The results from the current research project provide a sound knowledge base for selecting the most appropriate commitment enhancement strategies. Further discussion and planning among various groups of staff in the Correctional Service of Canada will be helpful in generating additional strategies.

Appendix A: Sampling Design

The sampling methodology for the Staff Commitment project was designed by Dr. Sanping Chen of the Statistical Consultation Centre of Carleton University. In designing the sample, Dr. Chen took into account the number of staff working in each region, the number of staff in each of the 10 occupational groups, and the results of the pilot study.

The sampling design was based on the population of staff in the Correctional Service of Canada who were actively employed as of May 1991. The total number of staff at that time was 10,780, excluding senior managers. In addition, we excluded all staff members who occupied classifications for which there were 5 or fewer staff members occupying the same classification (e.g. ES-06). This resulted in the elimination of a total of 216 staff from the sampling frame. The latter condition was imposed in order to protect the confidentiality of respondents, assuming that individuals within relatively specific occupational classifications might be inadvertently identified through data analyses.

The maximum sample size was set at 800 respondents. The sampling designer provided sampling quotas for each occupational group within each region (e.g., 55 correctional officers from the Prairie Region). The following procedure was followed for selecting respondents.

1. A list of all 10,564 staff members in the Service was drawn up.
2. Staff members were chosen by computer-generated random selection (using SAS software) to fill the quotas for each of the regional occupational categories.
3. The sampling design provided for a 50% "back-up" list for each of the quotas (e.g., 82 correctional officers from the Prairie Region) to allow for replacements of respondents who would be unavailable or refused to participate in the study.
4. For each of the quota lists, research assistants chose the first staff member on the list and subsequent participants were drawn from the list sequentially until the quota was filled (using back-ups if necessary).
5. Potential respondents were asked to be available for participation at Correctional Service of Canada work sites on pre-scheduled days. If the respondent was not available, the next staff member on the random list was invited to participate in the study.
6. Research assistants made personal contact with selected participants in order to solicit their participation and schedule questionnaire administrations and personal interviews. Where personal contact prior to the site visit was not possible, research assistants relied upon site contacts to schedule participants.

7. Remote sites (e.g., parole offices where less than 3 staff were randomly selected) were offered telephone interviews and returned the questionnaire by mail.

A total of 1069 randomly selected staff were approached to participate in the study. Of this number, 759 were available to participate at the time the data were being collected. Only 66 or 8.6% of potentially available participants refused to become involved in the study. An additional 35 participants, or 4.6% did not attend on the day they were scheduled to participate. In total, this left a sample of 658 participants for which data were available. Table A-1 gives a breakdown of the number of selected staff including participants and non-participants.

There were some cases for which questionnaires were completed without the accompanying interview, mostly due to scheduling difficulties. For similar reasons a few respondents completed only the interview. Of the 658, 654 staff completed questionnaires and 619 completed interviews. Ninety-three percent of the total sample (615) completed both questionnaire and interview,

It should be noted that the total sample of 658 respondents falls short of the 800 target and represents an 82.2% rate of achievement. The percent of completion by region and occupational groups are displayed in Table A-2 and A-3. It was not possible to gain a complete sample because of "no-shows" and logistical problems related to site scheduling on pre-set dates. Although the target could have been achieved through an extension of the data collection phase, disadvantages associated with additional scheduling with operational units and increased costs outweighed the potential benefits that might result from an extension of the sample.

Table A-4 provides a demographic description of the sample.

Table A-1: Participation Status of Randomly Selected Staff

Unavailable for participation	310
Retiring	4
Transferring to New Job Site	11
Extended Leave	31
AnnualLeave	211
Midnight Shift	19
Off Shift	23
Unable to Contact	5
Other	6
Refusals	66
No Shows	35
<u>Participated</u>	658
Total Selected	1069

Table A-2: Number of Respondents by Occupational Categories

	Target	Actual Sample	% of Target	% of Sample
Administrative	38	37	97.4	5.7
Administrative Correctional	28	21	75.0	3.2
Scientific/ Professional	52	37	71.1	5.6
Case Management Officers - Community	72	54	75.0	8.2
Case Managers Officers - Institutions	72	60	83.3	9.1
Support Staff	115	100	86.9	15.2
Institutional Line Staff	78	64	82.9	9.7
Correctional Officers	270	218	80.7	33.1
Correctional Supervisory Staff	54	43	79.6	6.5
Middle Managers	23	23	100.0	3.5

Table A-3: Number of Respondents by Region

	Target	Actual Sample	% of Target	% of Sample
Atlantic	91	78	85.7	11.8
Quebec	228	182	79.8	27.6
Ontario	150	180	83.3	22.8
Prairies	154	126	81.8	19.1
Pacific	117	88	75.2	13.4
National Headquarters	34	34	100.0	5.2

Table A-4: Description of the Sample (n=658)

Mean Age	40.2
Length of Service	
5 Years or less	25.3
+ 5 Years and < 10	49.5
10 Years or More	25.2
Gender (%) -	
Males	63.9
Females	36.1
Language (%)	
French	67.5
English	32.5
Education (%)	
High School or Less	33.6
Community College	27.9
Some University	8.6
Bachelor's Degree	23.4
Graduate Degree	6.5