

Conclusion

The objective of the survey was to quantify the factors that contribute to an employee's decision to stay with or leave a career with the Foreign Service. The selection of factors to test covered a spectrum of the employment relationship. These factors originated from anecdotal evidence gathered by the department, in addition to feedback from FS who participated in the survey pre-testing focus groups.

At a high level, the survey data reveals a number of significant factors impacting retention in the Foreign Service, including:

- Gaps between FS expectations and experience with respect to work that provides a sense of accomplishment and makes good use of the employee's skills and abilities
- Dissatisfaction with career path and personal growth opportunities, particularly related to processes for promotions, assignments and available training
- Spousal/partner considerations and work/life balance issues with respect to accepting assignments abroad
- Perception that compensation packages are not market competitive
- Inconsistent performance management practices
- Low confidence in the department's system for handling employee's problems and complaints
- The data supports the need for adaptation in several areas of the employment relationship. In fact, a holistic approach to improving retention should be considered, given the number and significance of unfavourable retention factors identified.