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du Canada

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Study on mobility of public servants

A report by the
Public Service Commission of Canada

October 2008

Canada 

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Highlights

In its 2006-2007 Annual Report, the Public Service Commission (PSC) identified the level of movement within the federal public service as a challenge. The PSC undertook the Study on Mobility of Public Servants to better understand recent movement trends.

The objectives of the study are to describe the nature and level of appointments leading to movement in the federal government, examine factors influencing that movement, and identify lessons learned. The study examined employee movement over 11 years (from 1997-1998 to 2007-2008). It is based on statistical information and interviews with senior officials in eight departments and agencies.

Mobility, if well-managed, can make a positive contribution both departmentally and government-wide. It introduces new ideas, supports employee development and career advancement. However, significantly high or low mobility can lead to negative impacts, including operational inefficiencies.

Public service mobility over the study period varied from a low of 28% in 1997-1998 to a high of 43% in 2001-2002. Mobility in the last four years increased from 30% in 2004-2005 to 42% in 2007-2008. A combination of increases in internal promotions and lateral movements¹ contributed to this trend. In absolute terms, there were more indeterminate appointments (67 287)² in 2007-2008 than at any other time in the study period.

Both public service growth and retirements over the past 11 years influenced movement patterns. The overall indeterminate workforce grew by 36% (between March 1999 and March 2008) to reach 161 998 in March 2008. At the same time, retirements almost quadrupled over the study period. A total of 34 647 public servants retired over the last 11 years. About 68% of these employees retired in the last five years.

Mobility in some occupational groups is especially high. The Personnel Administration Group (PE), the Economics, Sociology and Statistics Group (ES) and the Executive Group reached 74%, 71%, and 55% mobility rates respectively in 2007-2008. Influencing factors such as growth, retirement and resignation differed by occupational group. In addition, types of movement (promotions, lateral movements, acting appointments and intake: external recruitment and term-to-indeterminate appointments) also varied by occupational group. The number of years employees stayed at level before promotion declined for some occupational groups, creating a less experienced workforce. The PE group experienced the most significant decline in years at level of all groups examined.

¹ Lateral movements combine lateral transfers and deployments. As no appointment process is available on the pay system, it is not possible to differentiate between lateral transfers and deployments.

² The Mobility study is based on departments and agencies which were under the *Public Service Employment Act* for the past 11 years, which means that appointments and population numbers for Canada Border Services Agency and several small agencies are not included in these numbers.

The National Capital Region consistently had a higher rate of employee movement than the regions. We observed little movement between the National Capital Region and the other regions over the study period.

With the exception of central agencies, we noted little movement between departments and agencies. Small and medium-sized organizations demonstrated higher interorganizational movement than their larger counterparts. Some high-movement occupational groups are increasingly moving between departments and agencies.

This study reinforces the need for human resources planning to take into account the nature and scope of employee movement in each organization. It underlines the importance of recruitment, retention and succession strategies for specific occupational groups. A good example is the PE community. In this community, the increase in staffing volume due to employee movement affects the workloads of those involved in human resources, a group already experiencing high movement.

Introduction

About the Public Service Commission

The Public Service Commission (PSC) is an independent agency reporting to Parliament, mandated to safeguard the integrity of the public service staffing system and the political neutrality of the public service. In addition, the PSC recruits qualified Canadians from across the country. The PSC develops policies and guidelines to ensure that appointments are made according to the principle of merit and that they respect the staffing values. The PSC conducts evaluations, audits, studies and investigations to confirm the effectiveness of the staffing system and to make improvements when necessary. The PSC also provides staffing and assessment services to departments and agencies on a discretionary basis.

Issue of study

In its 2006-2007 Annual Report, the PSC identified the level of movement within the federal public service as a challenge. Based on preliminary analyses in the 2006-2007 Annual Report, employee movement was estimated at 40%, up from 35% the year before and 30% the year before that.

The Annual Report noted that employee movement varied across occupational groups. The Personnel Administration Group (PE) was most mobile, followed by the Economics, Sociology and Statistics Group (ES). The Executive Group (EX) also had a high movement rate.

In the 2006-2007 Annual Report, we expressed concerns that these levels of movement translate into a large proportion of public servants being new to their jobs. This could result in challenges, including the need for adequate recruitment, succession planning and proper training for those who may be new to their jobs.

Study objectives

The study had the following three objectives:

- a) describe the nature and level of appointments leading to movement in the federal government;
- b) examine the factors influencing movement trends; and
- c) identify lessons learned.

Methodology

The study combined quantitative and qualitative methods to identify and analyze mobility trends. A statistical component detailed the nature and level of appointments contributing to employee movement in the public service. Key informant interviews with 42 individuals across eight departments and agencies explored why employees moved and identified lessons learned. See **Appendix 1** for further methodology details.

The study is based on departments and agencies which were under the *Public Service Employment Act* for the past 11 years, which means that appointments and population numbers for Canada Border Services Agency and several small agencies are not included in these numbers.

Setting the context

Defining and studying employee mobility

What is employee mobility?

Employee mobility is defined as “the patterns of intra- and interorganizational transitions over the course of a person’s work life.”³ The phenomenon is characterized by both upward movement (promotion) and lateral movement (expanded career experience not resulting in promotion).

Employee mobility in the Canadian Public Service context includes the following (see **figure 1**):

- **intake:** recruitment (from outside the public service⁴) and term-to-indeterminate appointments;
- **internal movement:** appointments associated with movement within the public service, such as lateral and downward movement, acting appointments and promotions; and
- **separations:** departures from the public service, including retirements, voluntary departures (e.g. resignations), involuntary departures (e.g. layoffs) and death. (Separations were examined as a factor contributing to movement but were not included in movement rates as we only measured those new to their jobs.)

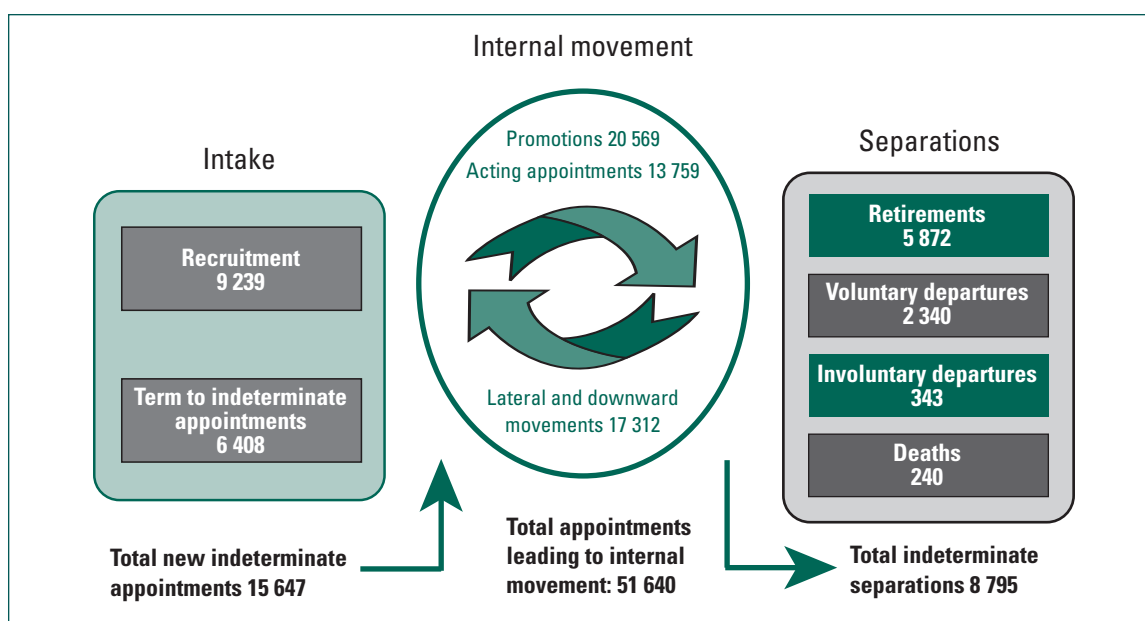
Employee mobility within the Canadian public service can be examined from the following perspectives:

³ Cited in Ng, et al. “Determinants of job mobility: A theoretical integration and extension.” *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* 2007, 80, (363-386).

⁴ For the purpose of this study, the public service is defined as those organizations whose appointments are made pursuant to the *Public Service Employment Act*.

- **occupational movement:** appointments leading to movement within the occupational group (promotion, lateral and downward movement)⁵ as well as across occupational groups (e.g. from PE to ES). Employees may move from one group to another to expand their skills or to pursue a different career path;
- **interorganizational movement:** appointments leading to movement of employees from one organization to another (may be a lateral and downward movement or a promotion); and
- **geographic movement:** appointments leading to movement of employees between the National Capital Region and the other regions.

Figure 1: Appointments and separations contributing to movement of indeterminate employees, 2007-2008



Source: Job-Based Analytical Information System (JAIS)

Employee “churn”

Mobility, if well managed, can make a positive contribution both organizationally and government-wide. It introduces new ideas and supports employee development and career advancement. However, significantly high or low mobility can lead to negative impacts, including operational inefficiencies. “Churn” (i.e. excessive employee movement) is evidenced by the following:

- employee mobility so high that it threatens organizational performance and/or the quality of employees’ work life;

⁵ Lateral and downward movements combine lateral or downward transfers and deployments. As no appointment process is available on the pay system, it is not possible to differentiate between lateral transfers and deployments. There are few cases of downward movement.

- mobility rates significantly higher than the average; or
- movement influenced by fast-track promotions whereby employees do not spend sufficient time at level to learn the skills required for the job.

Research has not identified an optimal employee mobility rate. This depends on the organizational context. For example, central agencies, by the nature of their business, tend to experience higher mobility rates than do line organizations. According to a paper published by the State Services Commission of New Zealand, “there is no single “right” level of turnover that can be applied to all organizations, because each has a different strategy and many state sector organizations interact with different parts of the labour market.”⁶

⁶ State Services Commission. Measuring Human Resource Capability in the Public Service. New Zealand: Author, August 1999, page 12.

Study findings

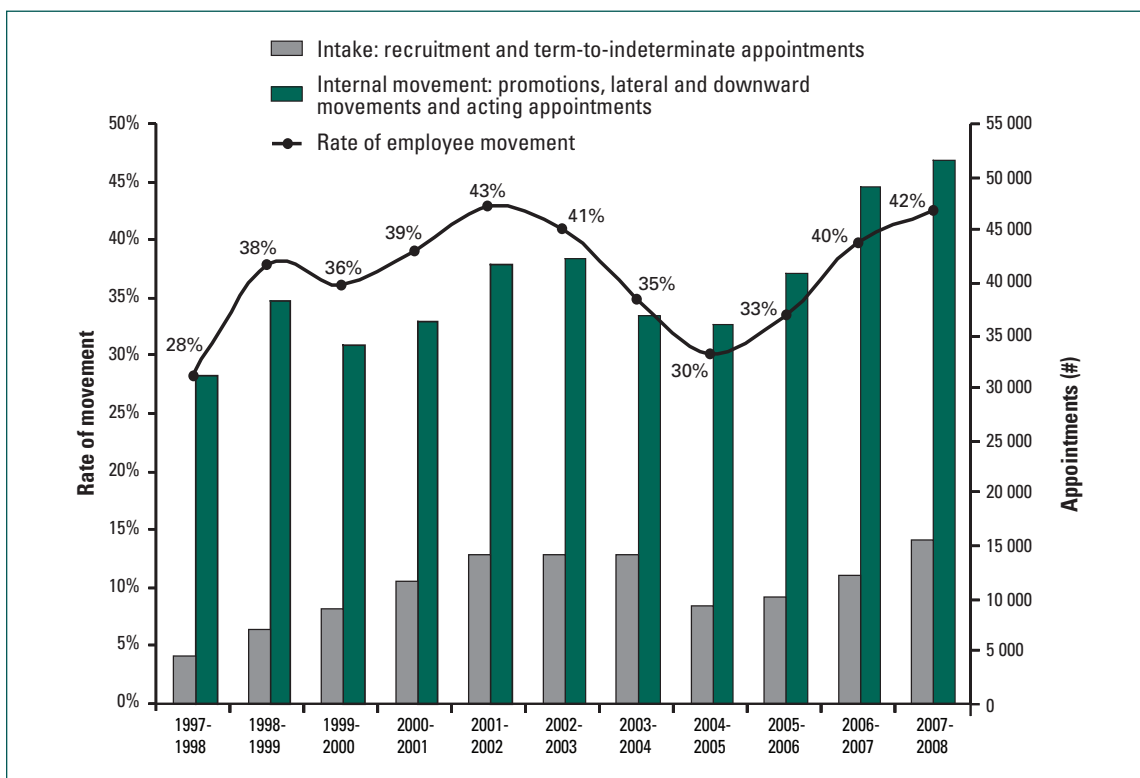
Government-wide movement of public servants

Overall movement varied over the study period but increased in recent years

The 11 year average mobility rate into and within the public service was 37%. The rate of employee movement fluctuated from a low of 28% in 1997-1998 to a high of 43% in 2001-2002 (see **figure 2**). In the last four years, the relative rate of movement has increased to reach a high of 42% in 2007-2008. In absolute terms, the number of indeterminate appointments (intake, internal movements) reached 67 287 in 2007-2008, the highest level over the study period.

Internal movement has increased in the last four years from 35 962 in 2004-2005 to 51 640 in 2007-2008, the highest level observed over the study period.

Figure 2: Trends in overall rate of movement



Source: PSC appointment and population files

Major fluctuations seemed to follow the introduction of hiring controls. Movement increased in 2000-2001, the period following program review, and again in 2005-2006. A sizeable proportion of interviewees mentioned the legacy of the 1990s program review as contributing to the movement patterns seen in the public service.

We examined types of movements over the 11-year period (see **Appendix 2, figure 20**). Throughout the study period, internal promotions and lateral/downward movement accounted for most public service movement.

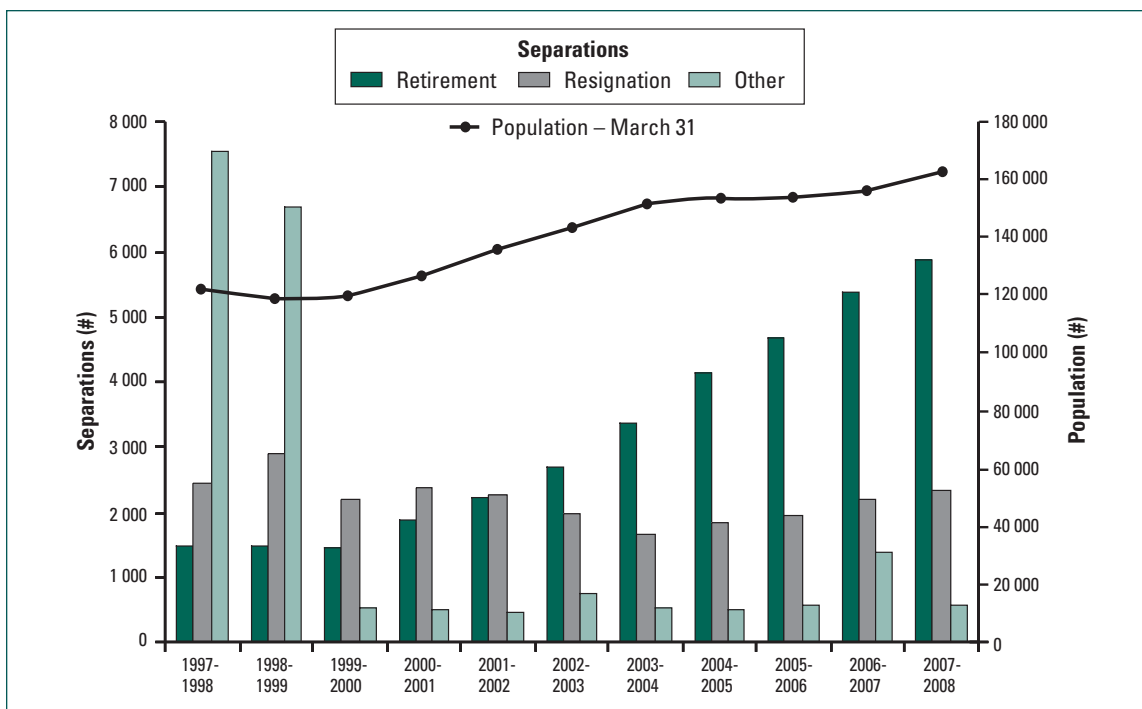
Over the past 11 years, most of employees who changed jobs made only one internal move in a given year (see **Appendix 2, figure 21**).

Growth and retirements influenced movement trends in the public service

Both public service growth and retirements influenced movement patterns in the following ways:

- As illustrated by **figure 3**, the number of indeterminate employees has steadily increased over the study period. The overall indeterminate workforce increased by 36% since March, 1999 to 161 998 as at March 31, 2008.
- Retirements have almost quadrupled over the last 11 years, increasing by 211% (5 872) from 2000-2001 to 2007-2008. Over the study period, 34 647 public servants retired. About 68% of these retirements occurred in the last five years.

Figure 3: Overall public service growth *versus* separations



Source: PSC appointment and population files

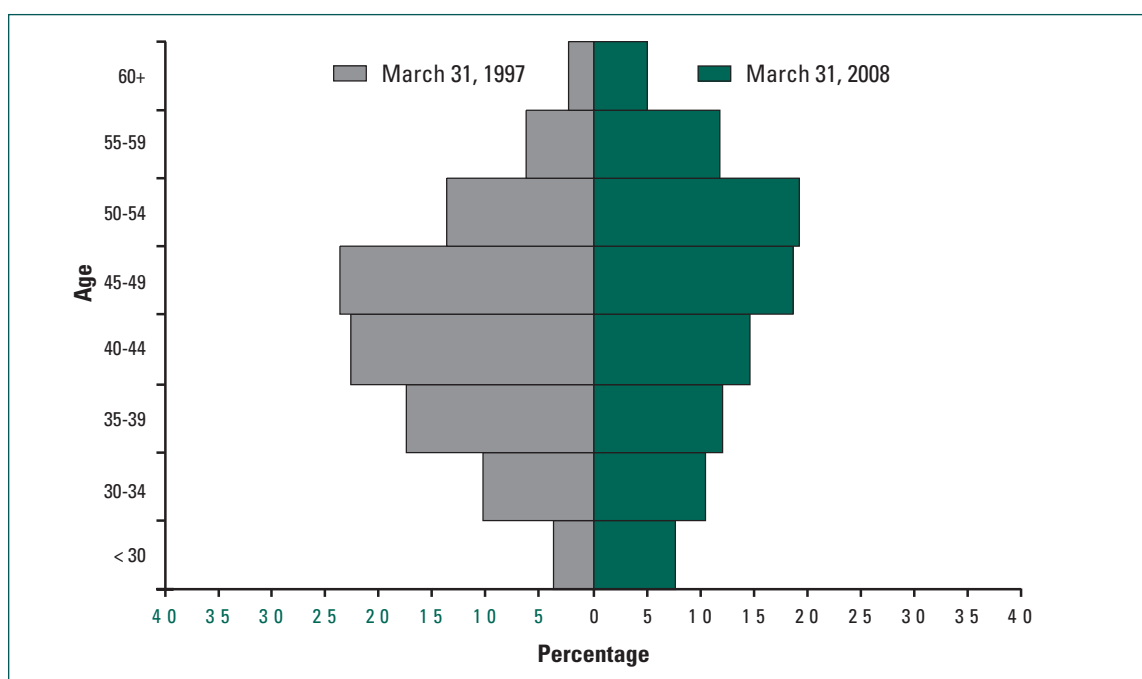
Almost two thirds of interviewees reported that retirements were an important factor in movement patterns. Over half of interviewees indicated that retirements and the aging workforce were generating many vacancies across the public service resulting in a tight labour market where demand exceeded supply.

Changing workforce also contributed to the movement patterns seen in the public service today

The age distribution of public servants provides insight into future mobility trends. It also helps anticipate future challenges associated with recruitment and succession planning as more public servants become eligible to retire.

The age distribution of the public service workforce changed over the study period. As illustrated by **figure 4**, the proportion of mid-aged employees (between 35 and 49) decreased from 64% in 1997-1998 to 45% in 2007-2008. Conversely, the proportion of younger employees and the pre-retirement group increased. According to interviewees, program review influenced the age distribution of public servants.

Figure 4: Age distribution of public servants – 1997-1998 *versus* 2007-2008



Source: PSC appointment and population files

Age shows a relationship to movement mainly because it serves as a marker for employees' career stages and life course. Quantitative data shows that younger employees move more; mobility decreases in the middle working years and again when employees approach retirement (see **Appendix 2, figure 22** for trends). The average rate of internal movement for employees less than 35 years old is 49%; it is 33% for those 35-44 years old and only 20% once employees are 45 or older. Interviewees indicated that new recruits were more willing than previous generations to move when work environments did not meet their expectations. Employee work attitudes and career interests were mentioned frequently as factors influencing movement, particularly in the context of lateral opportunities or in the context of moves to find developmental programs with “faster” advancement tracks.

Movement in occupational groups

We noted significant levels of movement for some occupational groups. The Economics, Sociology and Statistics Group (ES) and the Personnel Administration Group (PE) had the highest 11-year average rates of movement. The Information Services (IS), Administrative Services (AS), Financial Management (FI) and Executive (EX) groups also experienced high rates of movement (see **Appendix 2, figure 23**). As illustrated by **figure 5**, these six groups together consistently experienced higher rates of movement than the rest of the public service throughout the study period.

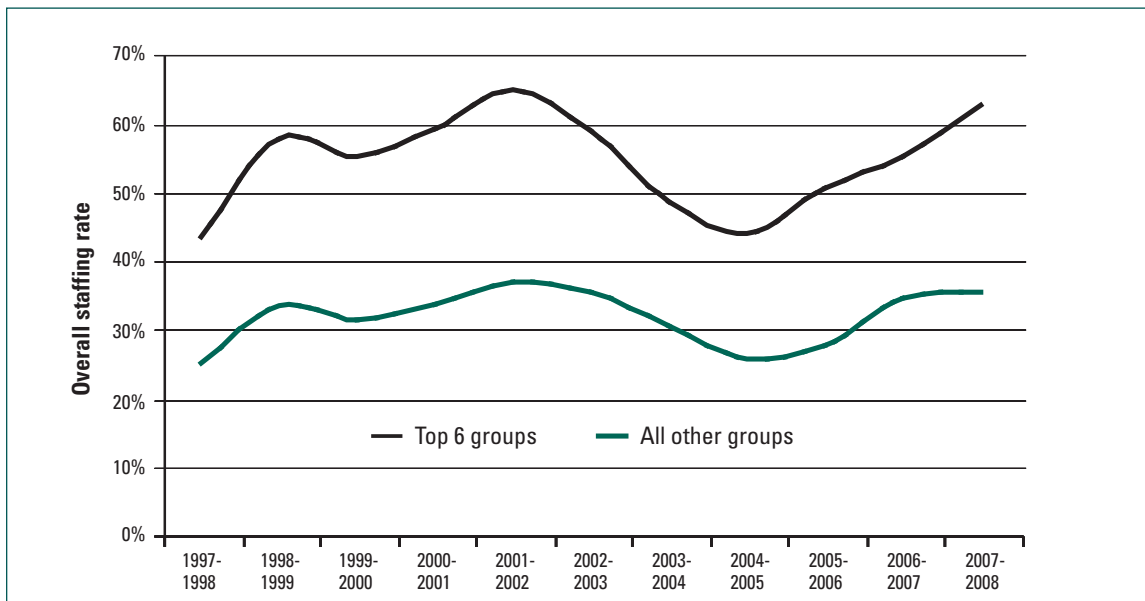
We examined these high-movement groups more closely. Analysis revealed that they shared some characteristics, which made them more prone to movement. Employees in these groups had transferable skills and tended to be in tight labour markets, where demand exceeded supply.

However, the magnitude and the nature of factors influencing their movement differed.

- Growth was a key factor contributing to movement. Even though all six groups grew over the study period, the ES and IS groups had much higher growth rates than the other four groups.
- Retirement was another key factor contributing to movement in the public service. While retirements increased for all groups, they were more pronounced in the PE, AS and EX groups. Retirements accounted for most separations in the PE, AS and EX groups. Conversely, resignations accounted for most separations in the ES and IS groups for the majority of the study period.
- Workforce age distribution – an indicator of who is on the move – also differed. The ES, IS and FI groups had a relatively younger workforce, and one more likely to be on the move. On the other hand, the PE group had an age gap, with a sizeable proportion of the workforce close to retirement. The EX group also had a high proportion of its workforce close to retirement, creating opportunities for feeder groups such as ESs.

The following sections examine each group separately.

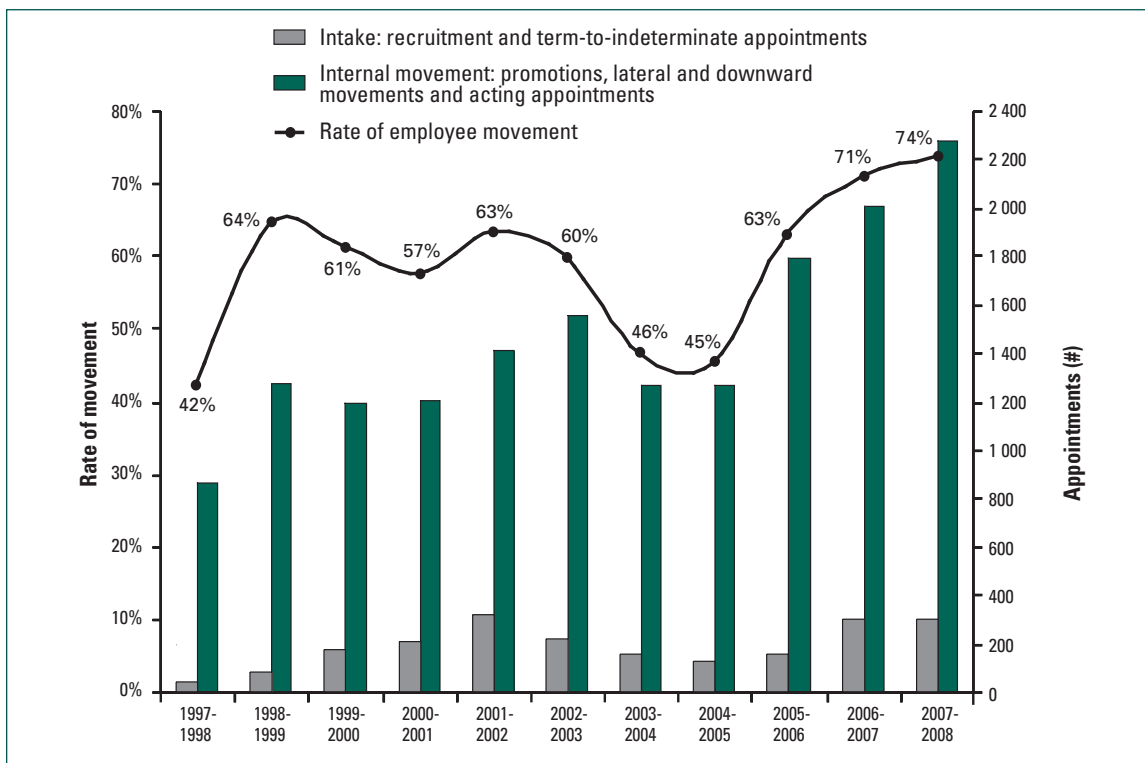
Figure 5: Top six moving occupational groups *versus* the rest of the public service



Source: PSC appointment and population files

Movement in the Personnel Administration group

Figure 6: Overall rate of movement – PE group



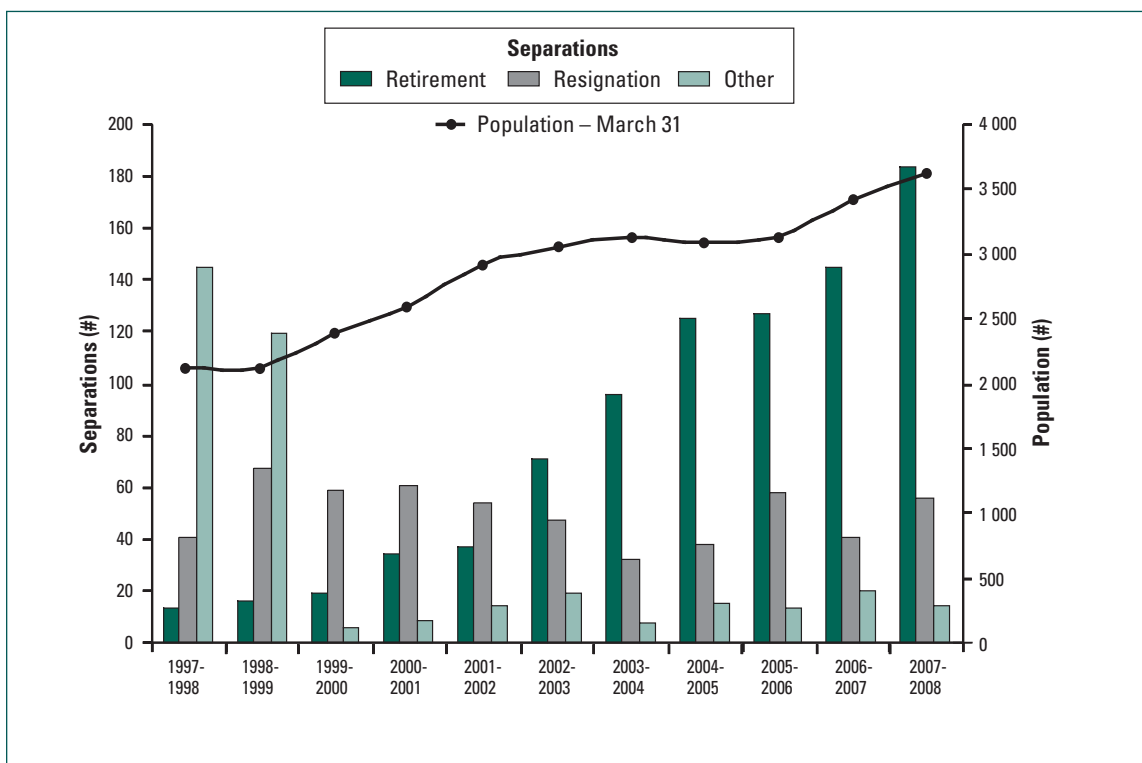
Source: PSC appointment and population files

The overall rate of movement of PEs varied over the study period. Those variations were steeper than those experienced by the rest of the public service. The rate of movement has increased over the past four years to reach 74% in 2007-2008. This was the highest rate of movement observed over the 11-year period. Internal movements almost tripled over the study period. In 2007-2008, internal movement reached 2 276, also the highest level experienced over the 11 years.

Promotions accounted for most PE movement during the study period. However, the proportion of lateral/downward movements increased from 2002-2003 to 2005-2006 and were almost equal to promotions in 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 (see **Appendix 2, figure 24**).

Retirements coupled with a mid-age gap in the PE workforce influenced movement in this group

Figure 7: Growth and separations in the PE group



Source: PSC appointment and population files

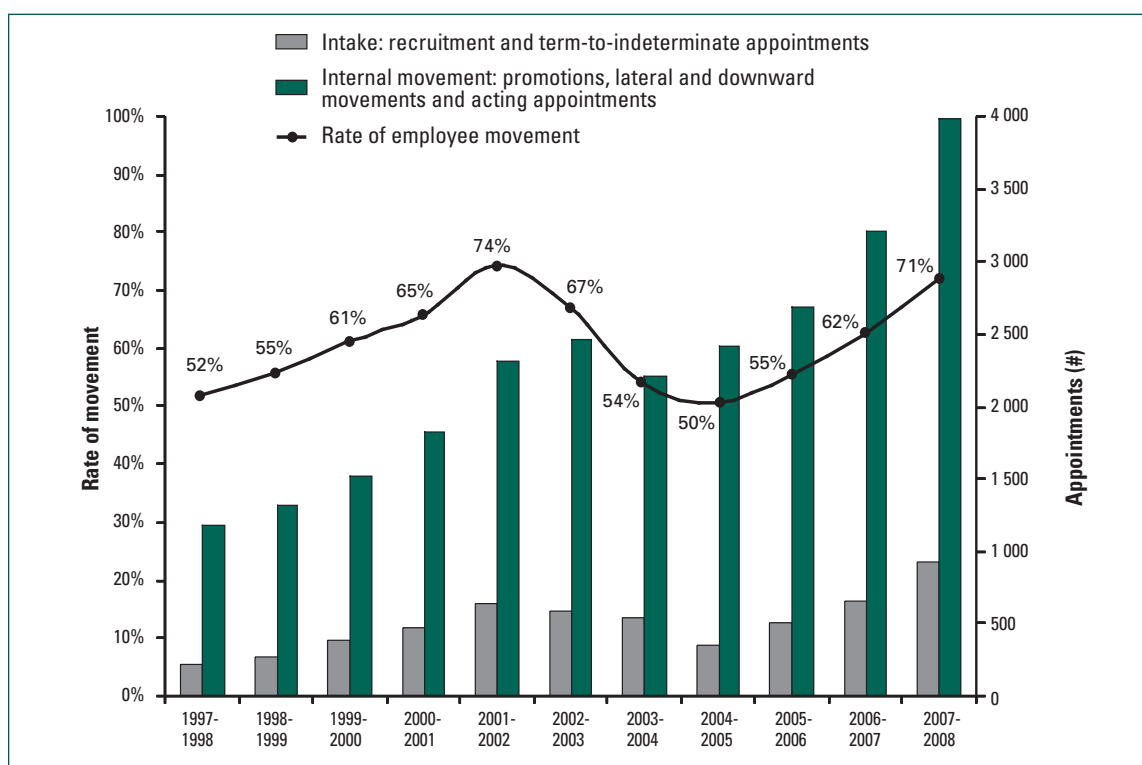
Retirements have increased significantly, from 13 retirements in 1997-1998 to 184 in 2007-2008 – a total of 867 retirements in 11 years. Over 78% of these retirements occurred over the last five years.

As for the rest of the public service, the age distribution of PEs changed over the study period. However, these changes were more pronounced for the PE group, which made large gains between 1997-1998 and 2007-2008 in the proportion of employees younger than 35 years and older than 49. Simultaneously, the proportion of PEs aged 35 to 49 years declined from 74% to 40% (see **Appendix 2, figure 25**). Interviewees reported that the age-experience bubble is particularly prevalent in the PE group. Interviewees also confirmed that workforce demography (including retirement) was an important factor contributing to the movement of PEs.

The proportion of interorganizational movement of PEs has been on the rise. It increased from 16% in 1997-1998 to 32% in 2007-2008, evidence of competition between departments and agencies for PEs (see **Appendix 2, figure 26**). Interviewees commonly cited competition between departments and agencies as a contributing factor for high PE movement. PEs' highly transferable skills facilitate movement across organizations. PEs therefore had many opportunities to move to find more meaningful work, work-life integration, career broadening experiences or a better "job fit." It was also noted that workloads differed throughout departments and agencies. Thus, in a tight labour market, PEs can move around until they find a work environment that suits them.

Movement in the Economics, Sociology and Statistics group

Figure 8: Overall rate of movement – ES group



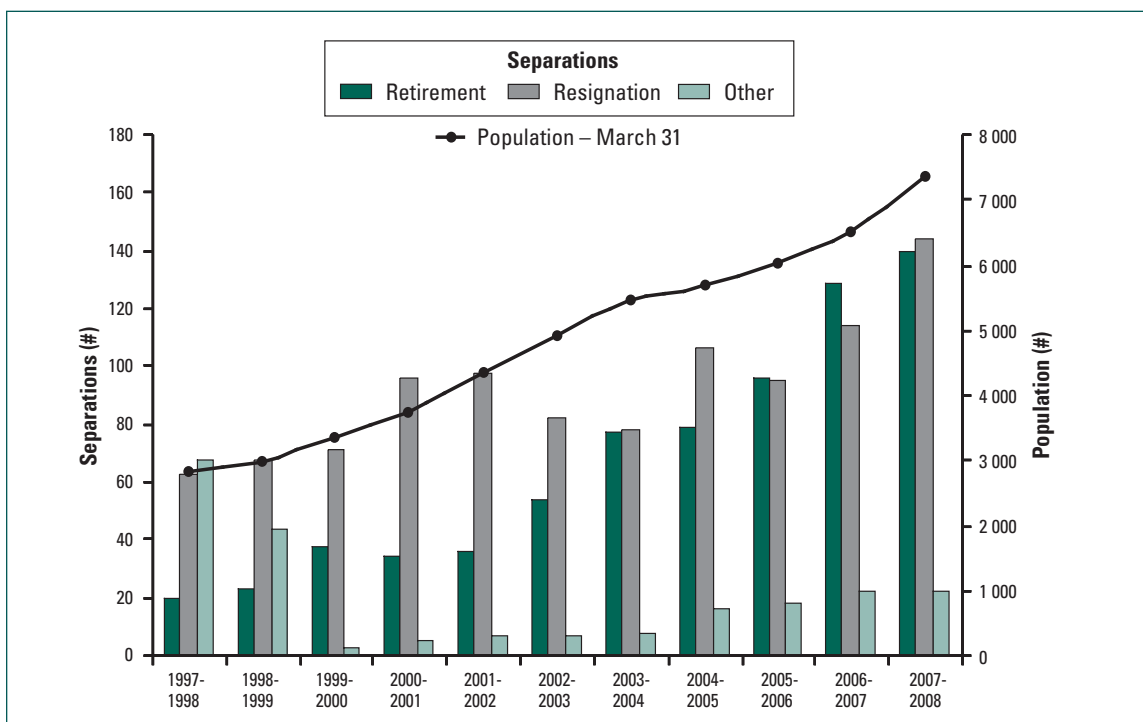
Source: PSC appointment and population files

Movement in the ES group had two periods of increased movement and a period of decline between 2001-2002 and 2004-2005. We observed a trend similar to the rest of the public service: an increase both in overall movement and in internal movement in the last four years.

Promotions accounted for most ES movement during the study period. However, the proportion of lateral/downward movement has been on the rise and was equal to that of promotions in 2006-2007. This was followed by an increase in the proportion of promotions in 2007-2008 (see **Appendix 2, figure 28**).

Growth in the ES Group and increasing demand for ESs, combined with a younger workforce, contributed to high movement in this group

Figure 9: Growth and separations in the ES group



Source: PSC appointment and population files

The ES group has grown by 149% since March, 1999. This is the highest growth rate among occupational groups examined in this report.

Converse to other occupational groups, ES resignations exceeded retirements for the majority of the study period.

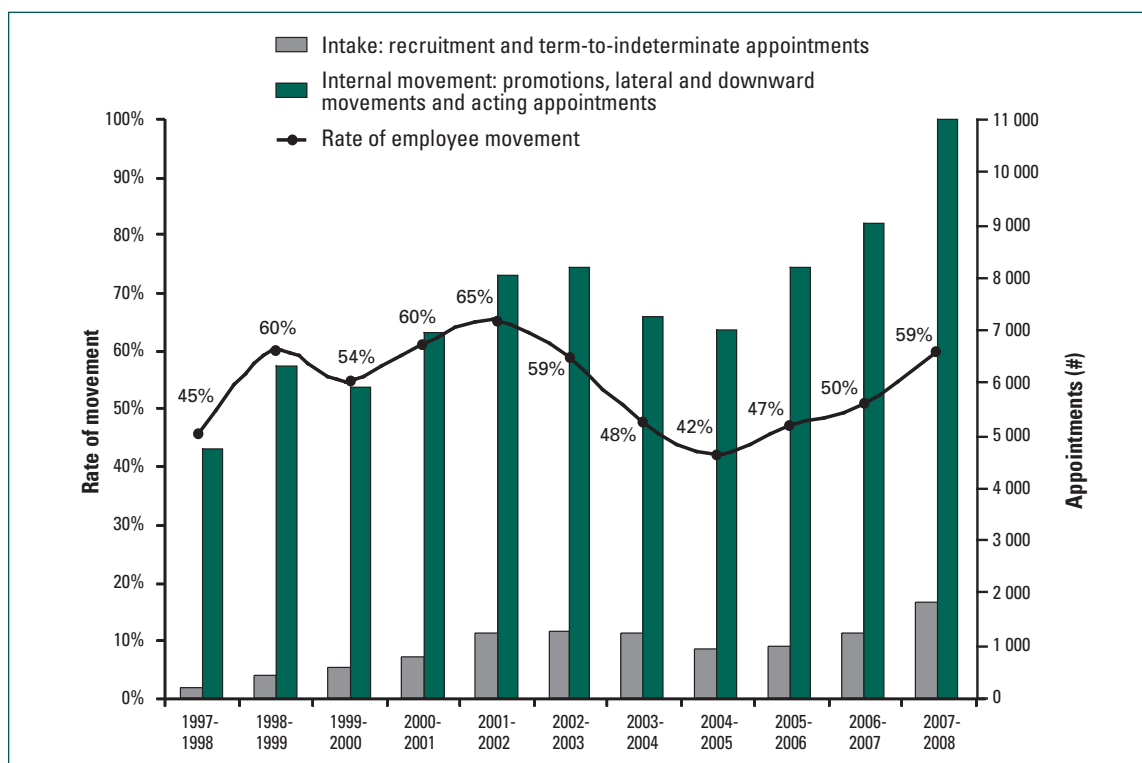
In absolute terms, resignations doubled over the study period from 63 in 1997-1998 to 144 in 2007-2008. However, given the growth in the ES population, the rate of resignations decreased over the same period, from 2.3% in 1997-1998 to 2.1% in 2007-2008.

The ES group age distribution also changed. The percentage of employees aged 55 and older and those 34 and younger increased between March 1997 and March 2008, while the percentage of those 35-49 decreased. It is noteworthy that employees 34 years and younger constituted about one-third of the ES group as of March 2008 (see **Appendix 2, figure 29**).

The ES group experienced an increase in the proportion of interorganizational movements from 11% in 1997-1998 to 21% in 2007-2008 (see **Appendix 2, figure 30**). Some interviewees indicated that movement between organizations was an important factor influencing the high movement of ESs. They indicated that there was a high demand and short supply of ESs, creating a tight labour market for this group. Specifically, it was mentioned that experience gained through central agencies was also contributing to the movement of ESs. This is not surprising, as the ES group made up 27% of the total combined workforce of the Department of Finance, the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat and the Privy Council Office.

Movement in the Administrative Services group

Figure 10: Overall rate of movement – AS group



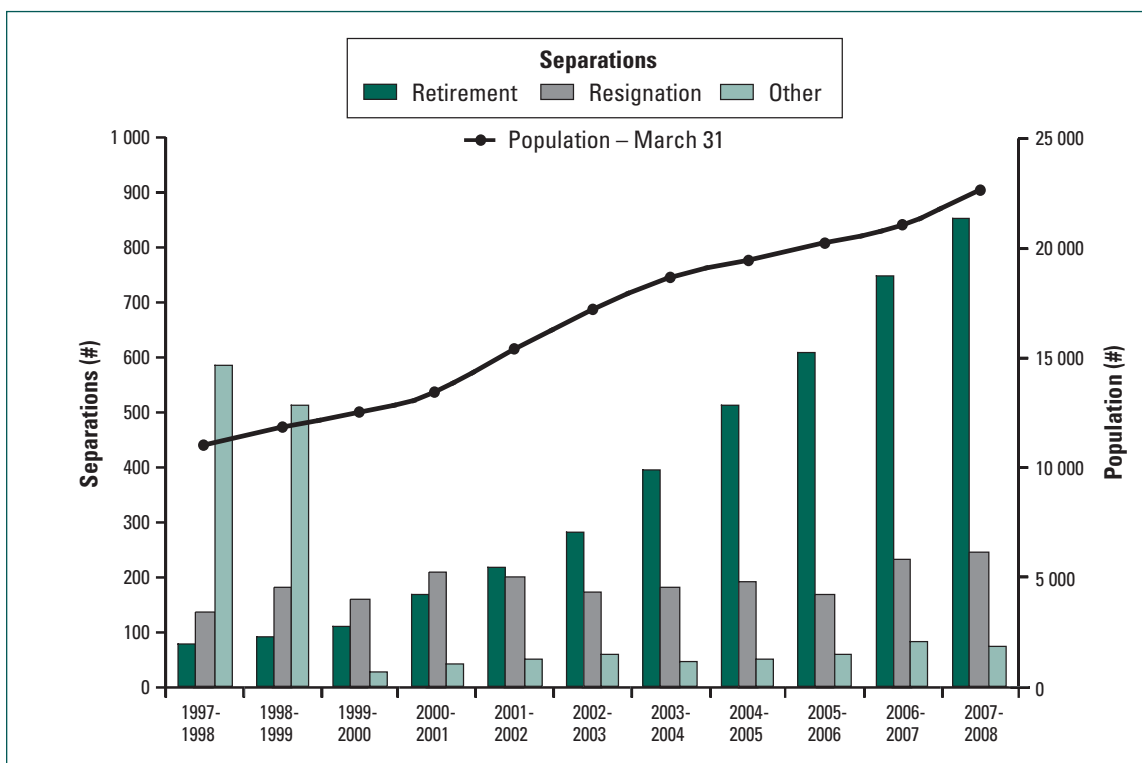
Source: PSC appointment and population files

Overall movement of the AS group varied between 42% and 65% over the study period and it has been increasing in the last four years. The number of internal movements more than doubled over the study period, increasing from 4 753 in 1997-1998 to 11 008 in 2007-2008.

Promotions and acting appointments accounted for over 60% of AS movements in 2007-2008. However, the proportion of lateral/downward movement and new indeterminate hires was on the rise (see **Appendix 2, figure 32**).

Growth influenced movement in the AS group and recent increases in retirements further contributed to this movement

Figure 11: Growth and separations in the AS group



Source: PSC appointment and population files

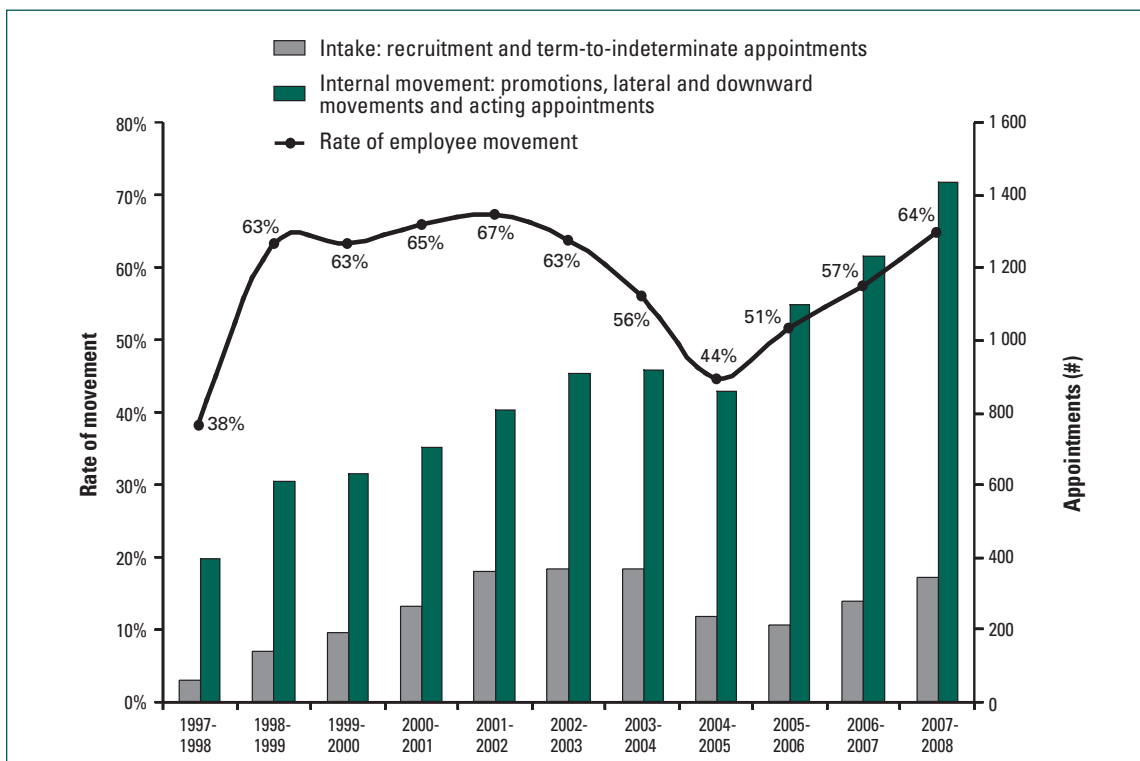
The AS group has seen a large increase in retirements over the course of the reporting period, with numbers rising from less than 100 in 1997-1998 to well over 800 in 2007-2008. Resignation numbers have been fairly consistent, remaining between 150 and 250 each year. The AS group also had a high rate of growth at 92% since March, 1999 – about 75% of these new positions were at the AS-1 to AS-3 levels.

The age distribution of the AS group mirrored that of the overall public service (see **figure 4, page 11** and **Appendix 2, figure 33**).

Most movement of the AS group occurred within the same organization; however, the proportion of interorganizational movement increased from 6% in 1997-1998 to 15% in 2007-2008 (see **Appendix 2, figure 34**).

Movement in the Information Services group

Figure 12: Overall rate of movement – IS group



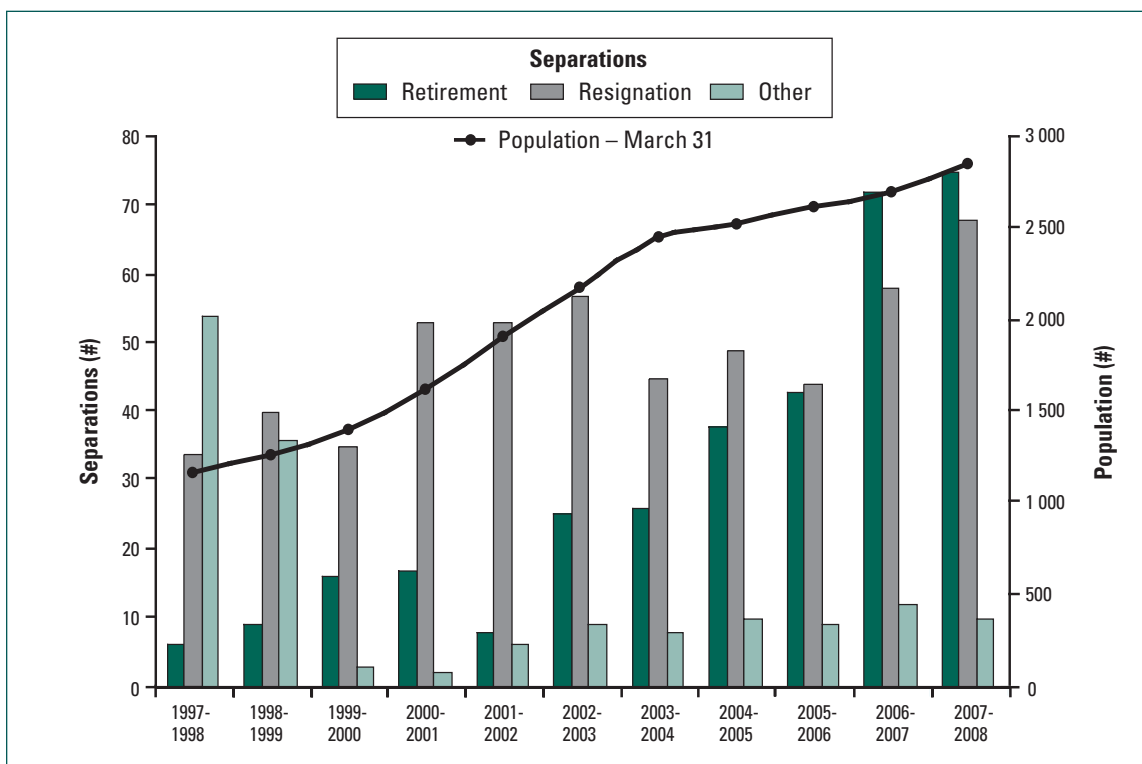
Source: PSC appointment and population files

In the last four years, the overall rate of movement within the IS group increased sharply from 44% to 64%. The number of internal movements also increased in the last four years.

IS movement remained fairly consistent across all types during the reporting period. From 2002-2003 to 2006-2007, there was a decrease in promotions; acting appointments and lateral/downward movements accounted for most movement for this group. This was followed by an increase in the proportion of promotions in 2007-2008, which was equal to lateral/downward movements (see **Appendix 2, figure 36**).

Growth coupled with increasing demand for ISs and a younger workforce influenced movement in the IS group

Figure 13: Growth and separations in the IS group



Source: PSC appointment and population files

We observed similarities between the IS group and the ES group in terms of growth and separations. Like the ES group, the IS group had high growth. Growth for the IS group since March, 1999 was second only to the ES group at 129%.

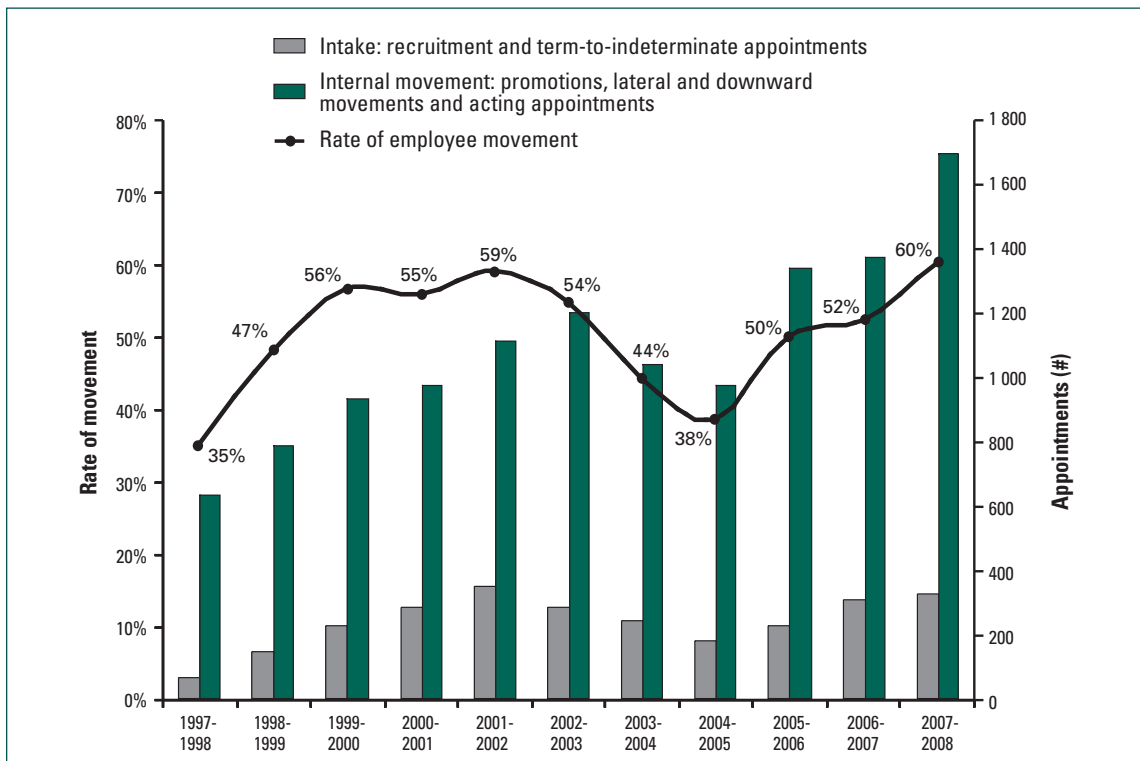
Similar to the ES group, the IS group separations were predominantly resignations. However, these were overtaken by retirements in 2006-2007, which continued to rise into 2007-2008.

The proportion of employees less than 35 years of age and that over 49 doubled between March 1997 and March 2008. Of note, the proportion of IS employees under the age of 35 made-up almost one third of the IS group, another similarity with the ES group (see **Appendix 2, figure 37**).

While most IS movement occurred within the same organization, the proportion of interorganizational movement increased from 18% in 1997-1998 to 26% in 2007-2008 (see **Appendix 2, figure 38**). Some interviewees suggested that interorganizational competition for ISs contributed to IS movement.

Movement in the Financial Management group

Figure 14: Overall rate of movement – FI group



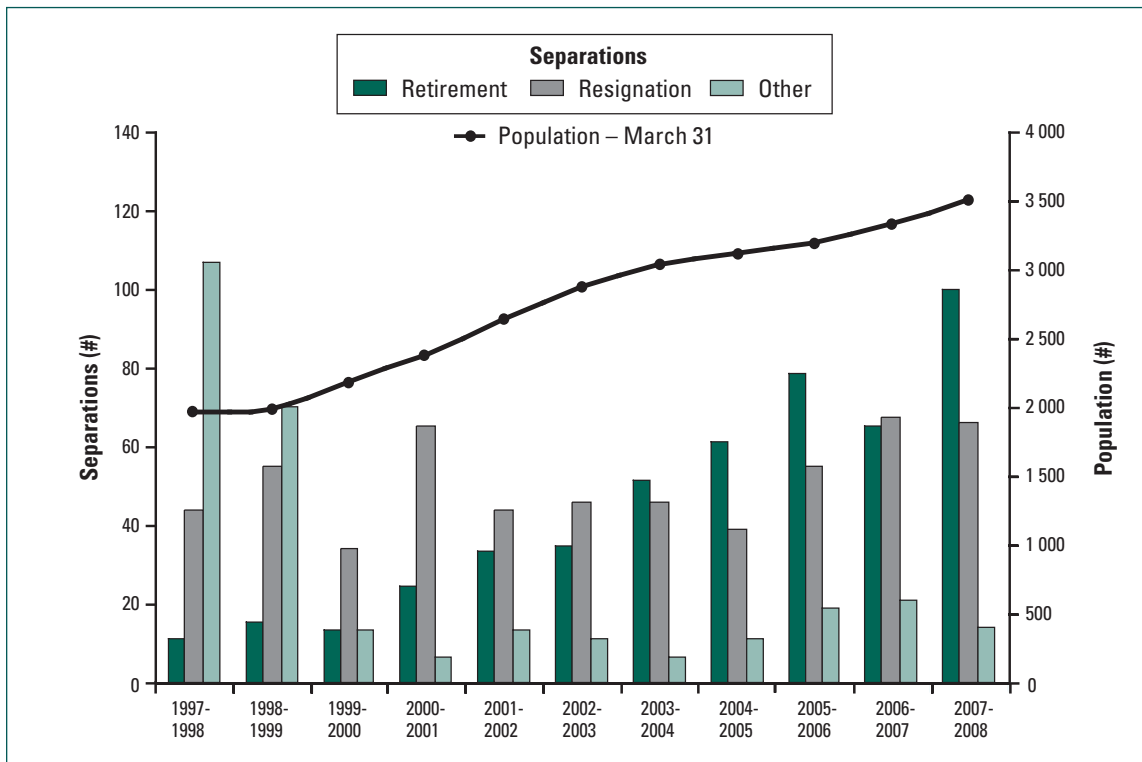
Source: PSC appointment and population files

FI rate of movement varied from 35% to 60% during the study period. In the last four years, FI rate of movement increased sharply from 38% (2004-2005) to 60% (2007-2008).

The FI group saw a large increase in acting appointments (from 212 in 1997-1998 to 398 in 2007-2008), and these can be seen overtaking both promotions and lateral/downward movements, in 2003-2004 and 2004-2005. The proportion of acting appointments increased from 21% in 1997-1998 to over 30% in 2007-2008 (see **Appendix 2, figure 40**).

A combination of growth, high demand for FIs and a younger workforce influenced movement in the FI group

Figure 15: Growth and separations in the FI group



Source: PSC appointment and population files

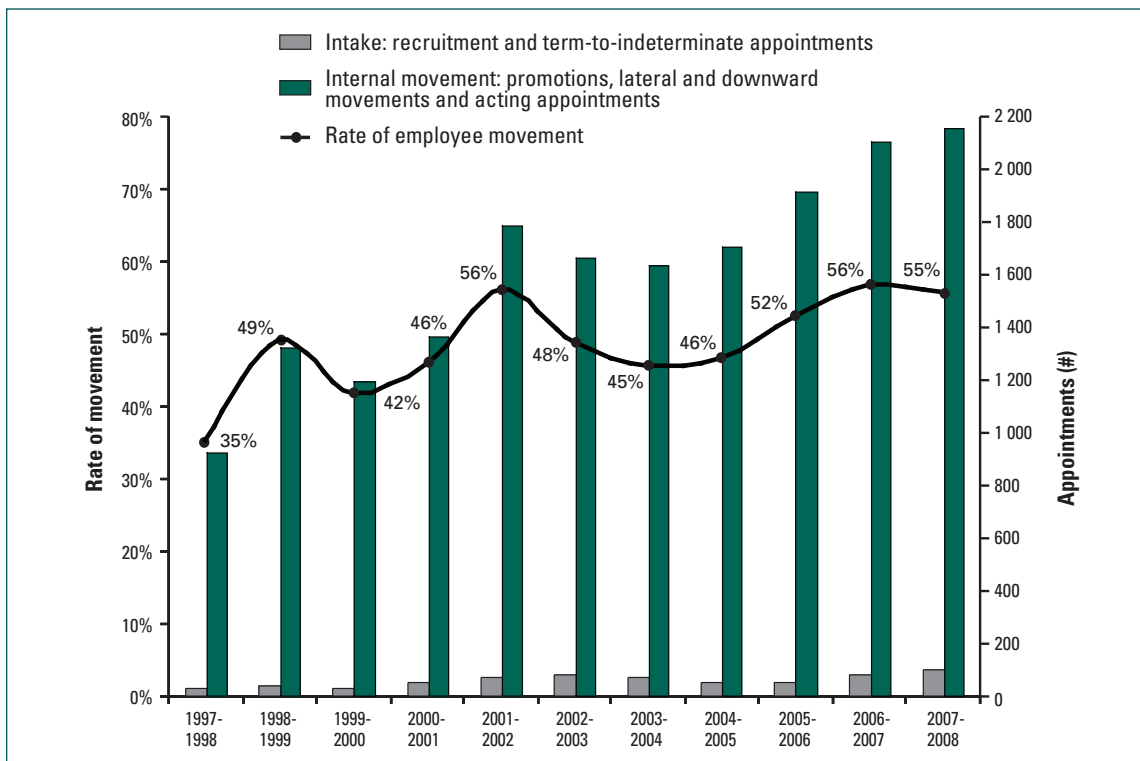
FI group retirements steadily increased in the latter half of the study period. While not as pronounced as the PE group, this trend was broken only in 2006-2007 when resignations overtook retirements by a slight margin. The group grew at a rate of 77% since March, 1999.

The proportion of FI employees less than 35 years of age and that over 49 increased between March 1998 and March 2008. The proportion of FI employees under the age of 35 constituted 30% of the FI group, similar to the IS and ES groups (see **Appendix 2, figure 41**).

FI movement between organizations more than doubled over the study period, increasing from 14% in 1997-1998 to 30% in 2007-2008. The proportion of interorganizational movement remained stable between 1999-2000 and 2005-2006 but has been on the rise since then (see **Appendix 2, figure 42**). Some interviewees indicated that a tight labour market for FIs facilitated interorganizational movement. Some interviewees also attributed the introduction of the *Federal Accountability Act* to the increased demand for FIs.

Movement in the Executive group

Figure 16: Overall rate of movement – EX group

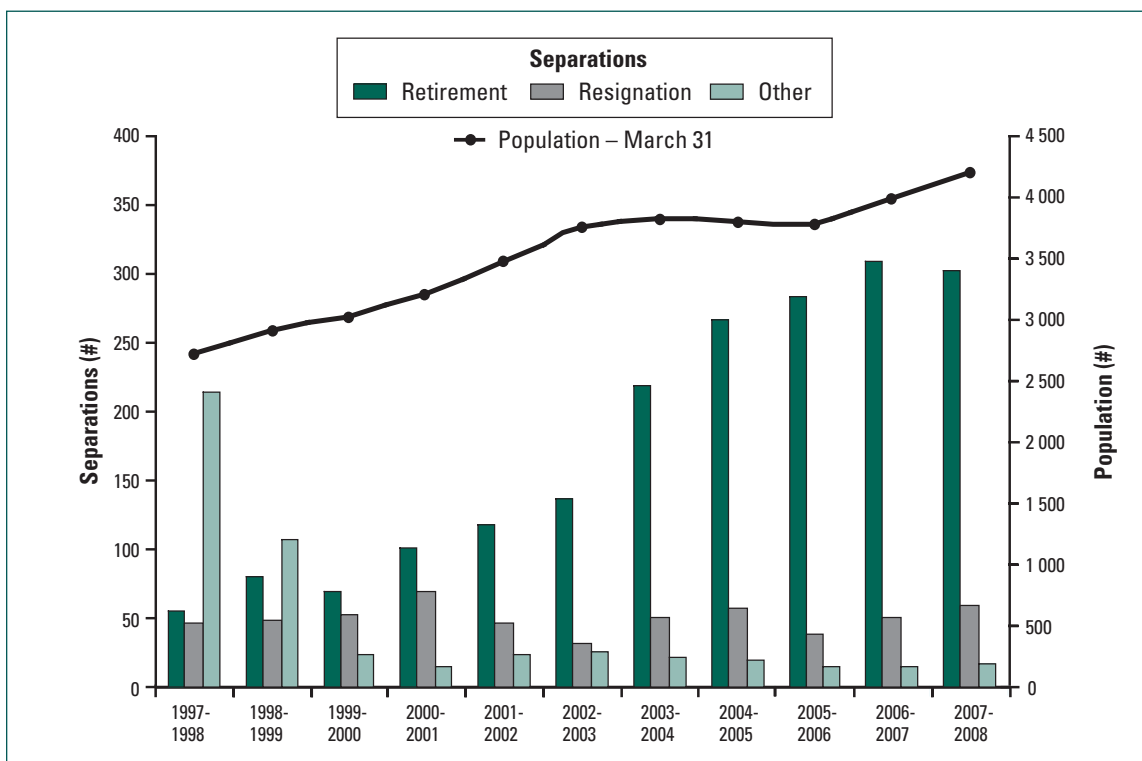


Source: PSC appointment and population files

Movement rate for the executive cadre varied between 35% and 56%, rising between 2004-2005 and 2006-2007. Unlike the other five occupational groups, the 2007-2008 movement rate decreased slightly. Internal movements have been on the rise over the last four years of the study period.

For the majority of the study period, promotions accounted for most EX movement. However, there has been a large increase in acting appointments, which overtook lateral/downward movements, particularly after 2001-2002 (see **Appendix 2, figure 44**).

Figure 17: Growth and separation in the EX group



Source: PSC appointment and population files

The EX group grew by 45% since March, 1999. EX group separations were increasingly dominated by retirements. Particularly since 2003-2004, four to five times more EXs retired than resigned; there has been a five-fold increase in retirements over the reporting period. Cumulatively, a total of 1 945 executives have retired over the last 11 years, over 70% of those doing so in the last five years. Conversely, resignations have consistently remained at the lower end of the scale throughout the study period.

The proportion of executives less than 40 years of age and that over 49 increased between 1997-1998 and 2007-2008. The EX group has a high proportion of its workforce close to retirement, with 29% of executives being older than 55 years (see **Appendix 2, figure 45**).

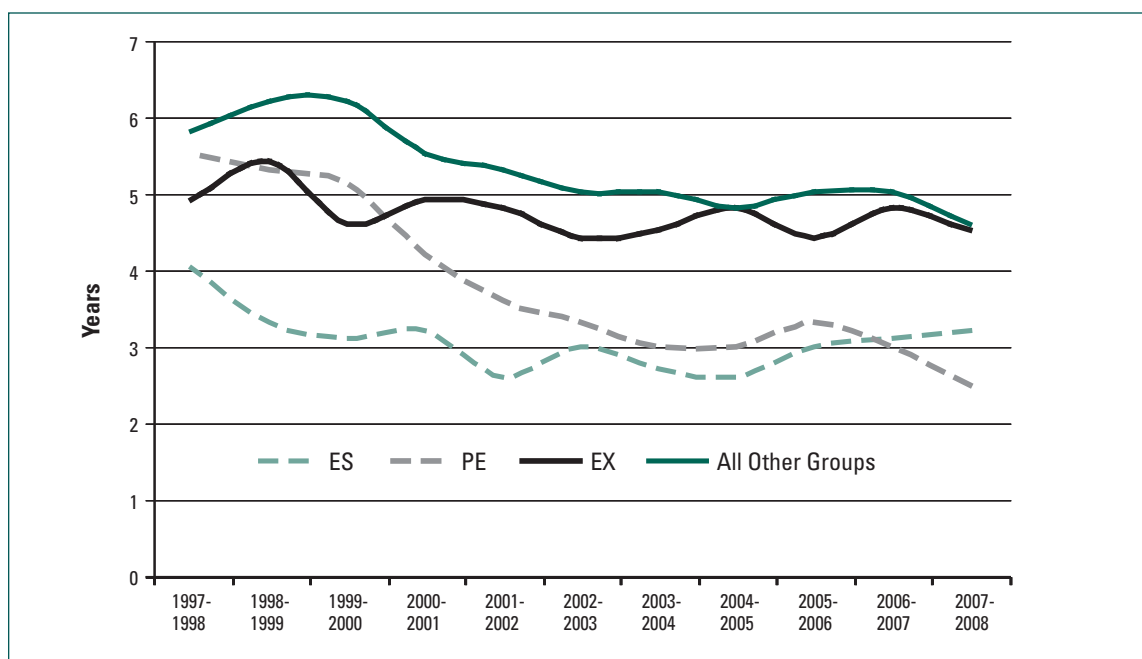
Most movement of the executive cadre occurred within the same organization; however, the proportion of interorganizational movement increased from 14% in 1997-1998 to 19% in 2007-2008 (see **Appendix 2, figure 46**).

Years at level

Since 1999, the trends show a decline in the number of years of experience acquired before promotion (see **Appendix 2, figures 31, 35, 39, 43 and 47**). In the NCR, employees spent less time on average at a given level before being promoted than those in other regions (see **Appendix 2, figure 54**).

As demonstrated in figure 18, the PE group had a more dramatic decline in the number of years at level before promotion compared to the rest of the public service. It decreased by 55% between 1997-1998 and 2007-2008.

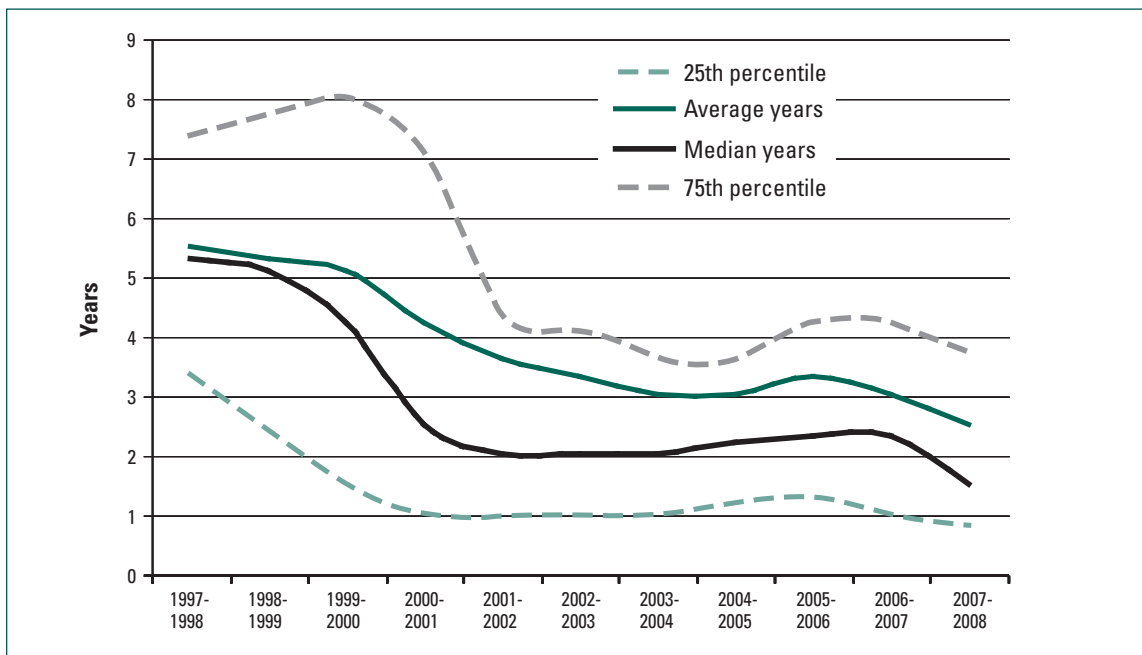
Figure 18: Years at level prior to promotion



Source: Job-Based Analytical Information System (JAIS)

We examined PE years at level in more detail. **Figure 19** shows that, in 2007-2008, the median years at level before promotion declined significantly to 1.5 years. This decreasing trend of years at level was observed at all PE levels (see **Appendix 2, figure 27**).

Figure 19: Years at level prior to promotion – PE group



Source: Job-Based Analytical Information System (JAIS)

Almost half of interviewees perceived that the current rate of mobility was already showing adverse effects in terms of classification-level “creep.” Interviewees reported that the rapid rate of movement of PEs at more junior levels has contributed to an experience gap, characterized in some cases by lack of knowledge of procedures and legislation and reduced service to clients.

Interorganizational movement

Low movement between organizations, with the exception of central agencies

We noted that organizations other than the PSC and central agencies experienced low levels of interorganizational movement (i.e., movement between organizations) over the study period. Interorganizational movement in line organizations accounted for a small proportion of overall movement. However, it should be noted that interorganizational movement has increased over the study period from 8% in 1997-1998 to 12% in 2007-2008 (see **Appendix 2, figure 48**).

Conversely, interorganizational movement in central agencies accounted for a sizeable proportion of overall movement. It increased from 17% in 1997-1998 to 39% in 2007-2008 (see **Appendix 2, figure 49**).⁷

⁷ These include movements to the Public Service Commission and other central agencies. These include the Canada School of Public Service, the Privy Council Office, the Canada Public Service Agency, the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat and the Department of Finance.

Quantitative data indicates that employee movement is related to the size of an organization. Trends in employee movement show that small and medium-sized organizations have a higher rate of interorganizational movement than do large and very large organizations (see **Appendix 2, figure 50**). Organization size was also seen by interviewees as a factor influencing employee movement. Employees moved to larger organizations to seek opportunities for advancement and development. Small organizations were viewed as feeding larger ones in which promotions and lateral opportunities were more abundant. Interviewees indicated that employees also moved to other organizations to access developmental programs and greater resources for training and development.

Geographic perspective

National Capital Region experienced significantly higher movement rates than the regions

The National Capital Region (NCR) consistently had a higher average rate of movement for all three types of movement than the regions did. The average promotion rate over the study period for employees in the NCR was about 15%, which is much higher than the 9% average rate in the regions (see **Appendix 2, figure 51**).

Of note, the NCR's growth rate was higher than the regions – 59% since March, 1999 compared to 23% for the regions.

Low movement between the regions and the National Capital Region

Internal movements from the regions to the NCR were infrequent and the rate of movement remained fairly consistent in the 11 years (see **Appendix 2, figures 52 and 53**).

Based on interviews, employees are less likely to move from the regions to the National Capital Region due to the following:

- personal reasons;
- work in the regions being perceived as more rewarding and offering more responsibility at lower levels; and
- inability to meet language requirements.

Some interviewees did note EX movement between the regions and the National Capital Region due to executives undertaking assignments as part of their developmental paths.

Lessons learned and concluding remarks

The number of indeterminate appointments has increased in the last four years and has reached a high of 67 287 in 2007-2008. This translates into an 89% increase in transactions/volume of indeterminate staffing activities between 1997-1998 and 2007-2008. For example, rapid movement in the PE group has contributed to an increased volume of PE staffing processes — sometimes staffing the same position three times within one year. An increase in the number of staffing activities affects the workloads of those involved in human resources. The recent report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, *The Right Pay for Valuable Employees*, raised the same issue and stated that “the high mobility of federal public servants has become a real burden for departmental human resources services.”

From a capacity perspective, the primary effects of high movement in the PE community were perceived to be instability in the community and the associated threats it posed to capacity, work environment, quality and corporate memory. These effects, in turn, influenced the choice of employees to move, again contributing to churn.

Mobility, if well-managed, can make a positive contribution to departments and agencies and to the public service at large. However, mobility is a complex phenomenon that is influenced by a combination of factors. Its nature, magnitude and the factors influencing it differ by occupational group, organization and region (National Capital Region versus other regions).

Strategic human resources planning that takes into account the scope and nature of movement and, the age distribution and occupational make-up of the workforce will help organizations manage employee mobility and optimize its benefits. This study provides information that can help departments/agencies and functional communities develop staffing, developmental and succession strategies tailored to their specific context and business needs. It also helps identify areas that may benefit from collective recruitment strategies.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Methodology

Quantitative component

The study team performed quantitative analyses to identify historic trends of employee movement in the federal public service and its components. The quantitative analysis provided data to view the public service employee movement in its historic and organizational context and to pinpoint any areas of interest.

The level of movement is calculated as the ratio of the total number of hires, promotions, actings and lateral and downward appointments of indeterminate employees during the fiscal year to the average of the active population at the start and at the end of the same fiscal year.

The study is based on departments and agencies which were under the *Public Service Employment Act* for the past 11 years, which means that appointments and population numbers for Canada Border Services Agency and several small agencies are not included in these numbers.

Qualitative component – case studies

We selected eight organizations for case study to examine factors influencing employee movement and to identify lessons learned. Organizational cases were selected across 6 criteria: (1) the organization's rate of employee movement; (2) the employment share of PE employees represented by the organization; (3) the employment share of ES employees; (4) the size of the organization; (5) the relative maturity of the organization; and (6) the geographic distribution of the workforce.

Applying these six criteria across the sampling frame yielded the following eight organizations:

- Public Safety Canada
- Human Resources and Social Development Canada
- Public Service Commission of Canada
- Health Canada
- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
- Public Works and Government Services Canada
- Statistics Canada
- Indian and Northern Affairs Canada

Key informant interviews

We interviewed 42 individuals within organizations whose positions bring them into contact with the employee movement phenomenon. These individuals were expected to have insights about the potential factors contributing to employee mobility at the local level in the organization. The table below shows the key informants who were included in the data collection, as well as the number of interviews held with each group:

Position in organization	Number of interviews conducted
Deputy heads	6
Senior management responsible for the HR function	14
Senior management in operational or policy branches	14
Managers who have been involved in staffing actions	8
Total	42

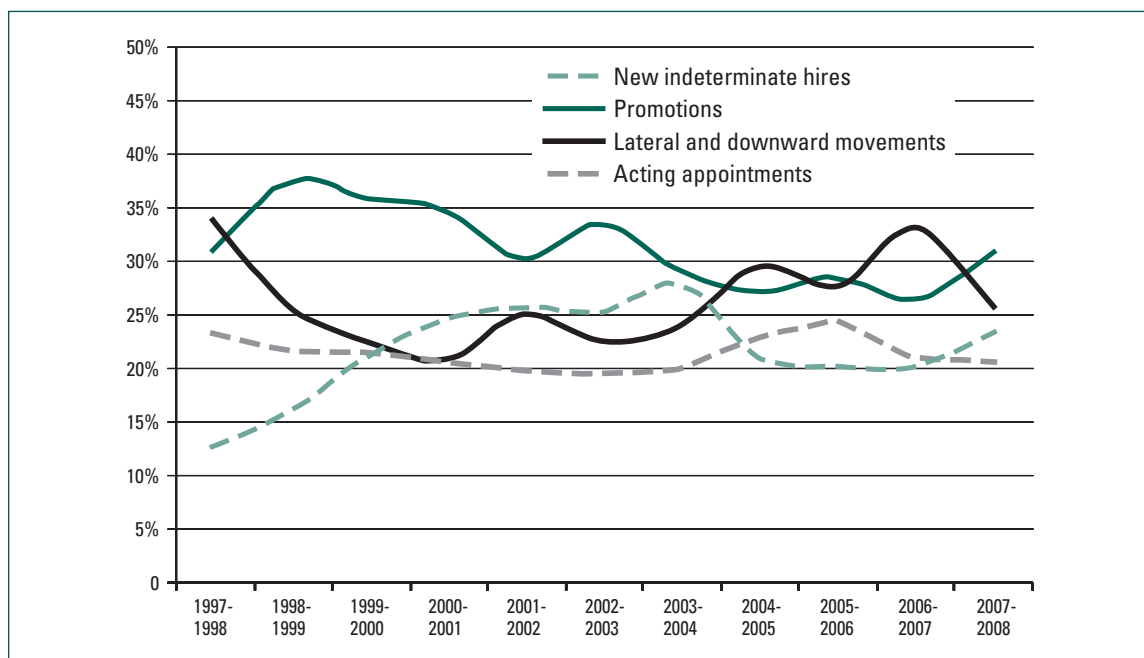
Most interviews were held in-person using a semi-structured interview guide. Each interview lasted between 45 minutes and an hour.

Appendix 2 – Statistical background

Government-wide movement

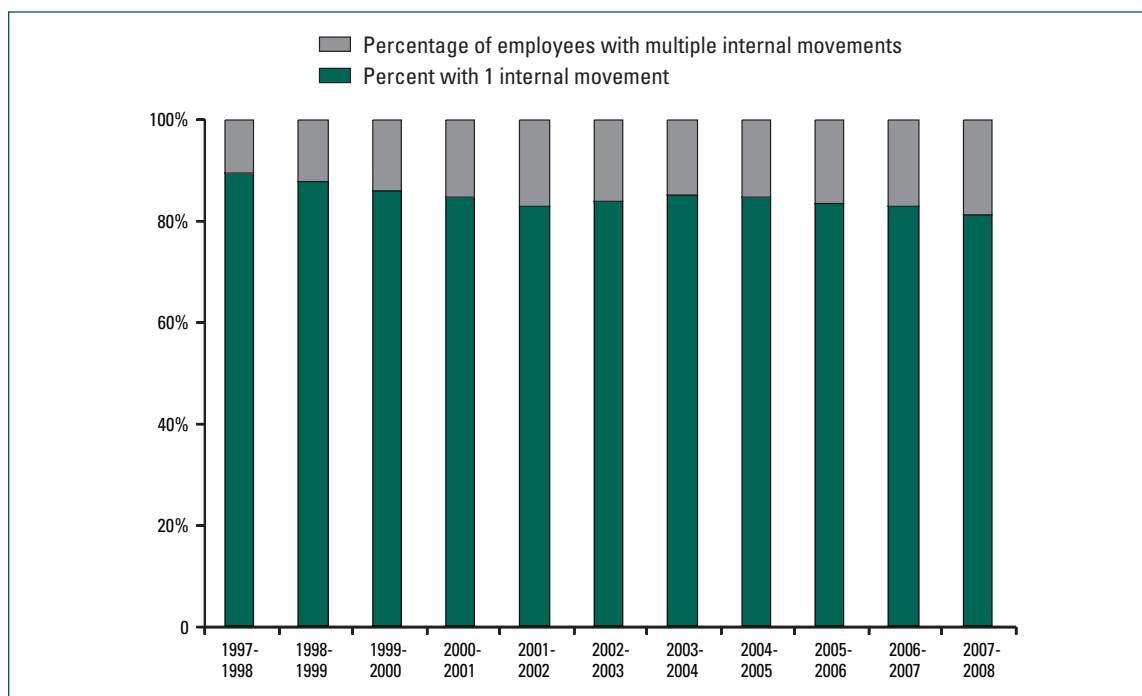
Types of movement

Figure 20: Trends by type of movement



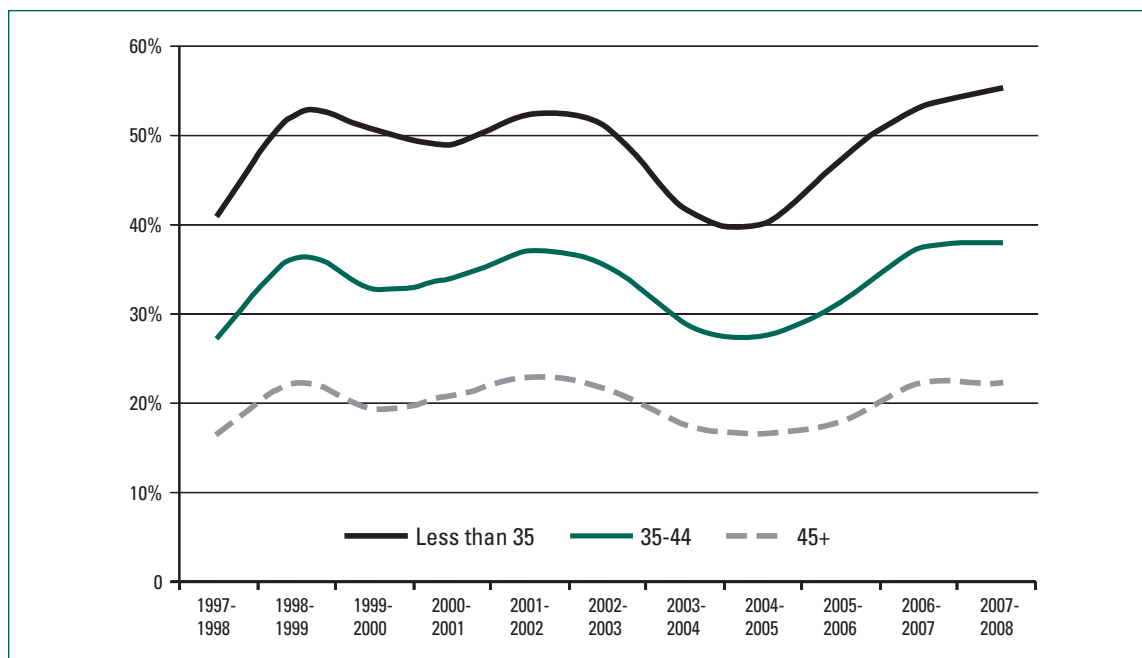
Source: PSC appointment and population files

Figure 21: Single and multiple internal moves



Source: PSC appointment and population files

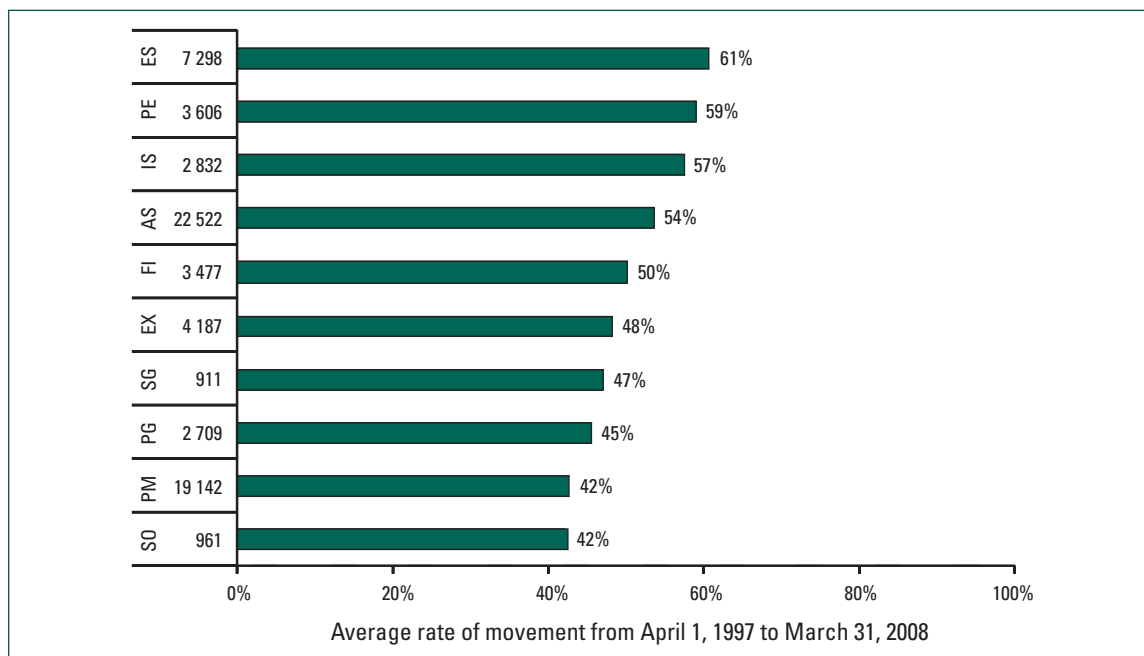
Figure 22: Trends in the rates of internal movement by age group



Source: PSC appointment and population files

Occupational movement

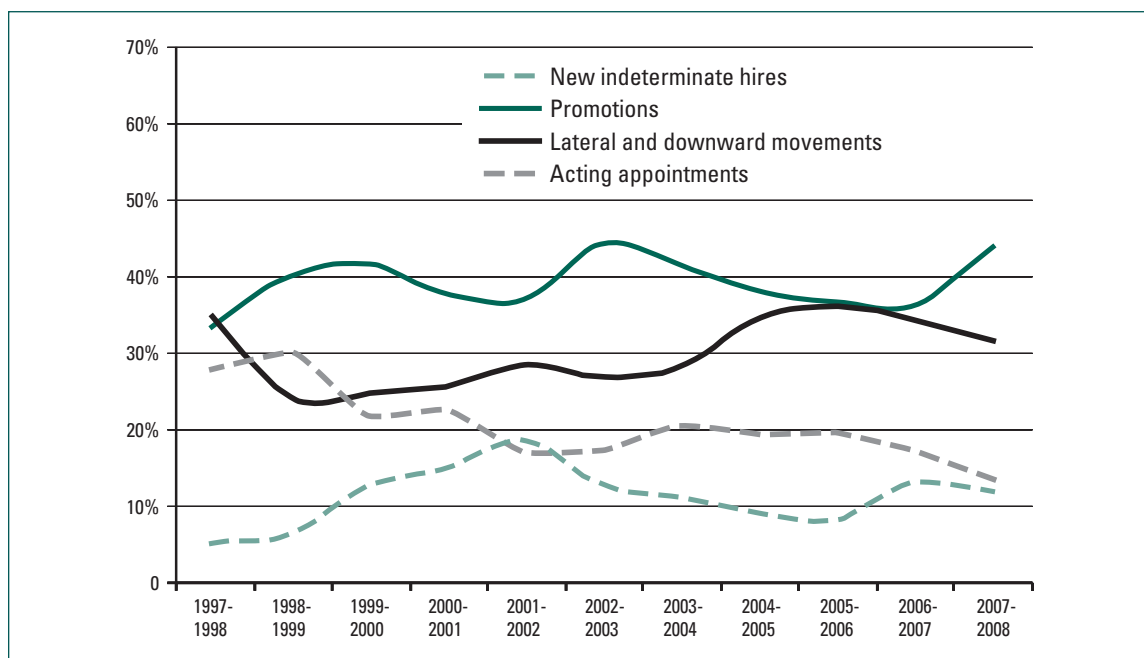
Figure 23: Top 10 movers



Source: PSC appointment and population files

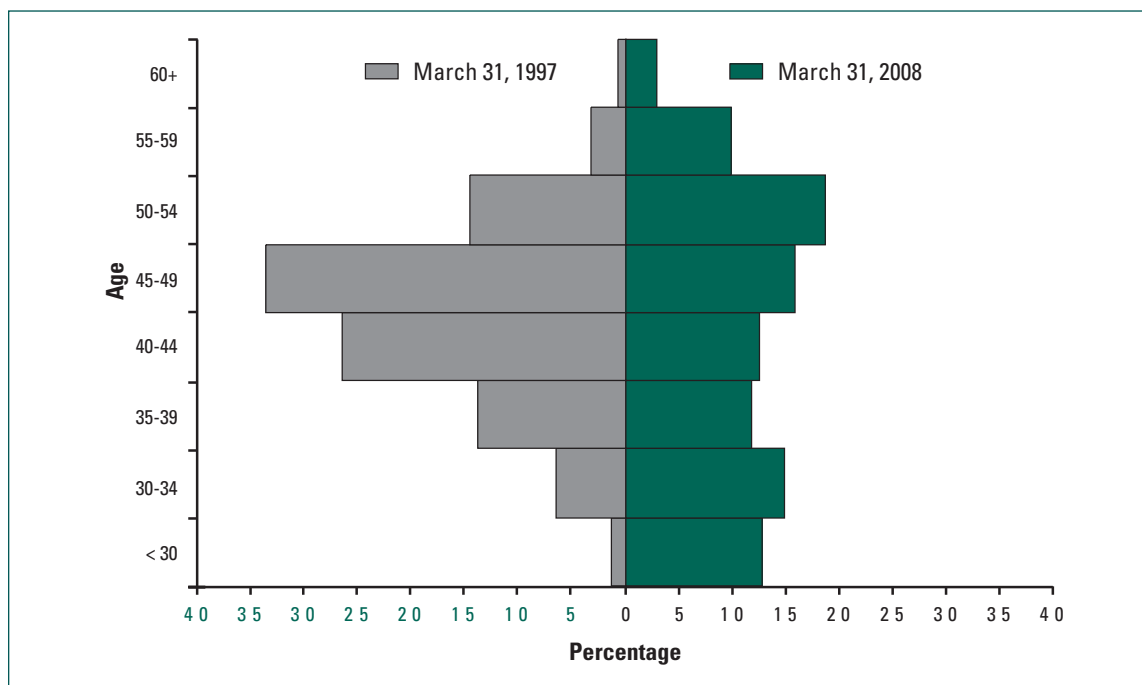
PE group

Figure 24: Types of movement – PE group



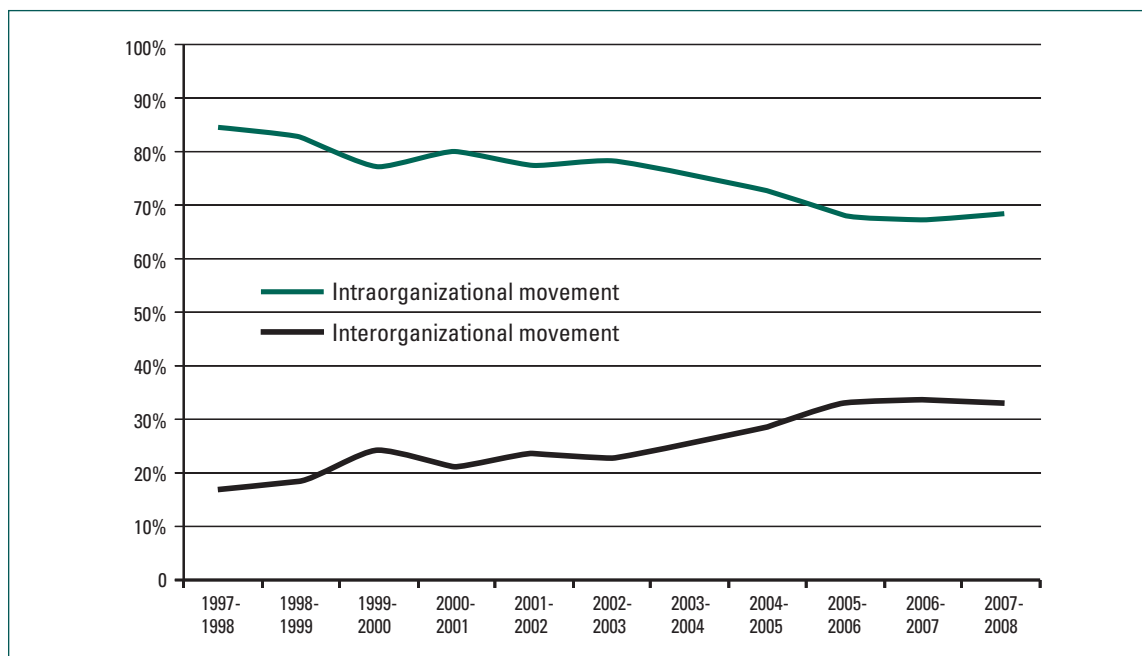
Source: PSC appointment and population files

Figure 25: Age distribution – PE group



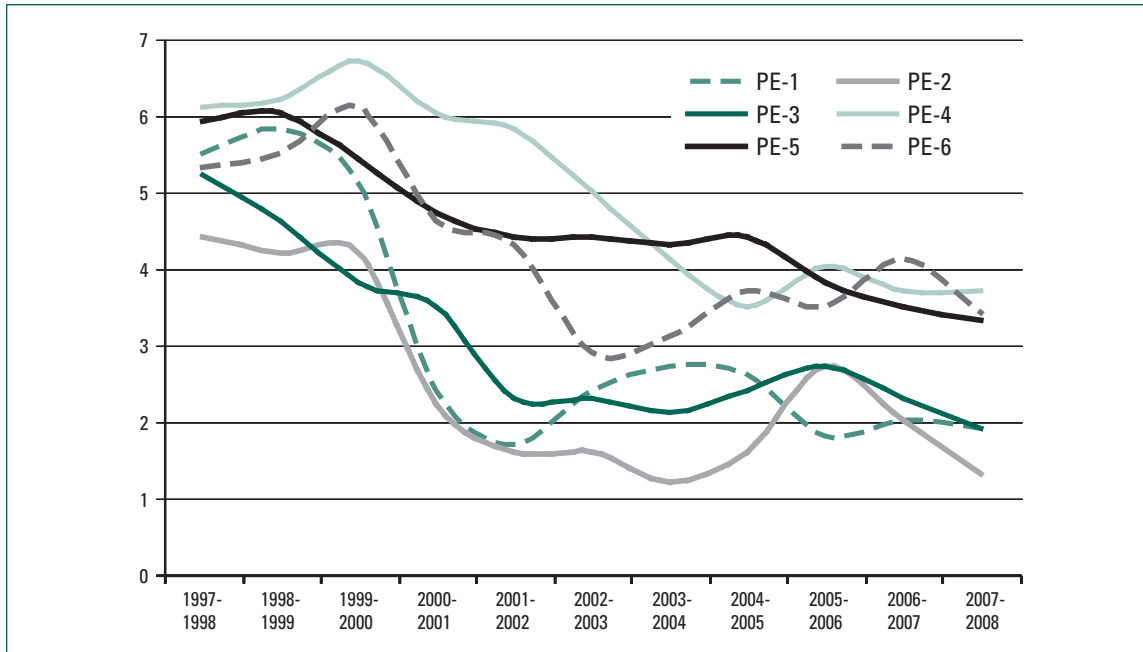
Source: PSC appointment and population files

Figure 26: Intra- and interorganizational movement – PE group



Source: PSC appointment and population files

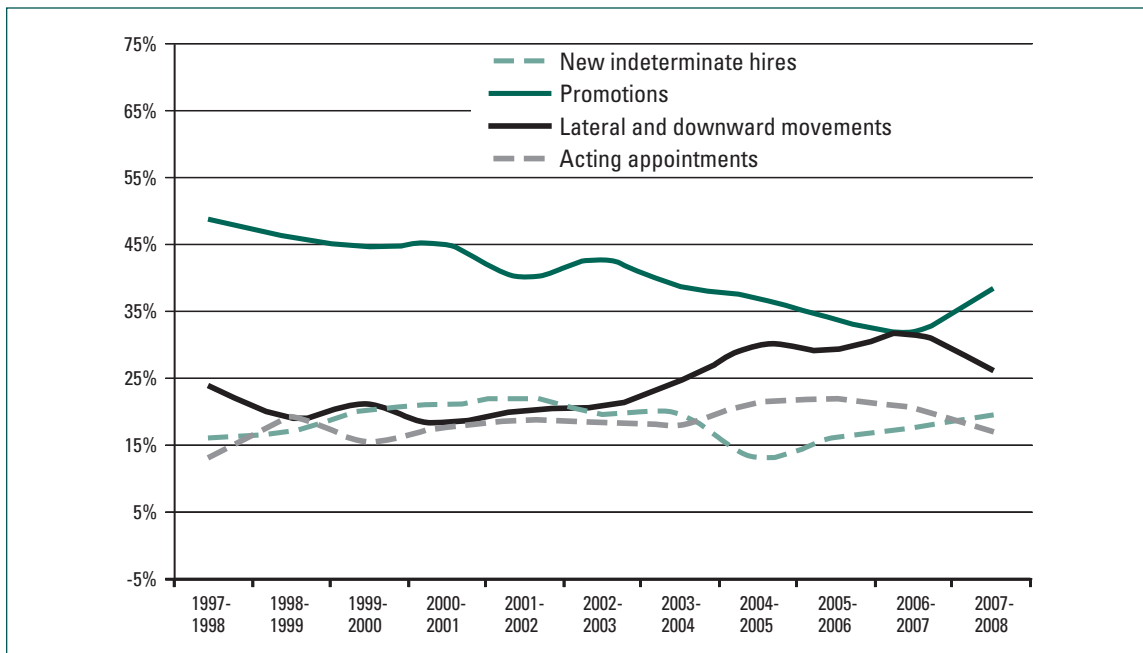
Figure 27: Average years at level before promotion – PE group



Source: PSC appointment and population files

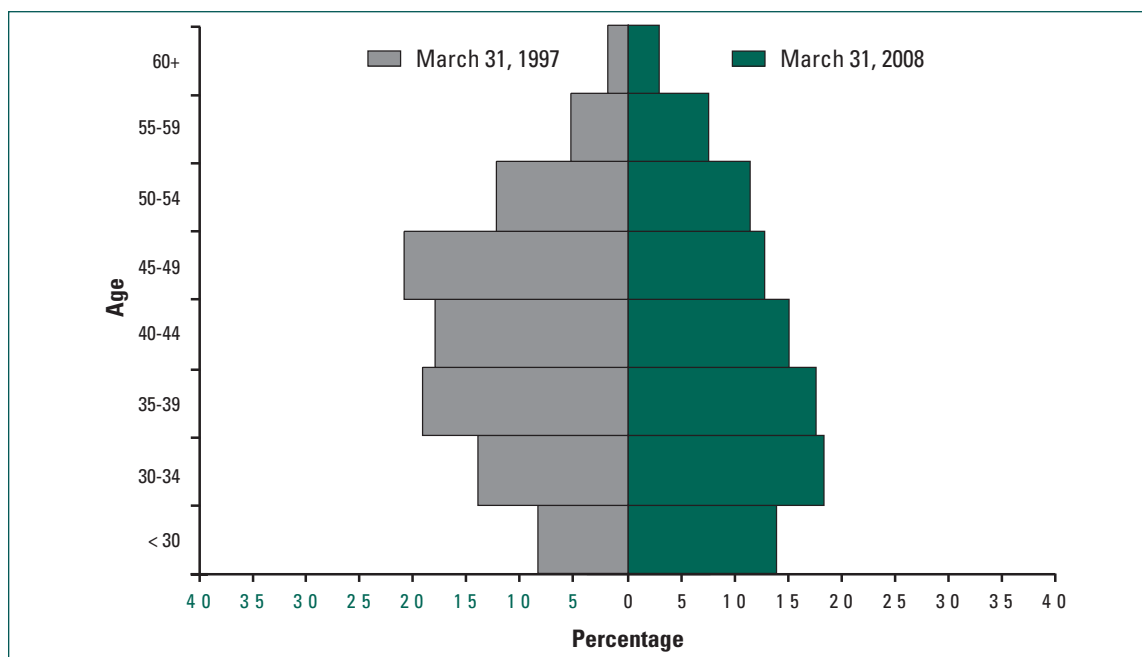
ES group

Figure 28: Types of movement – ES group



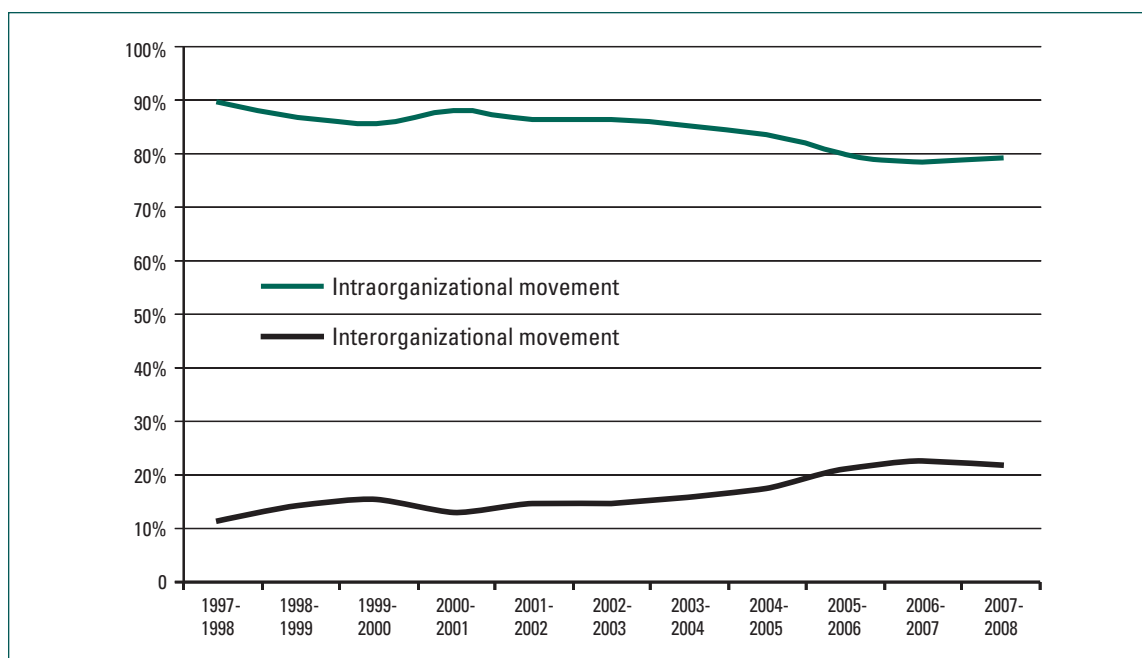
Source: PSC appointment and population files

Figure 29: Age distribution – ES group



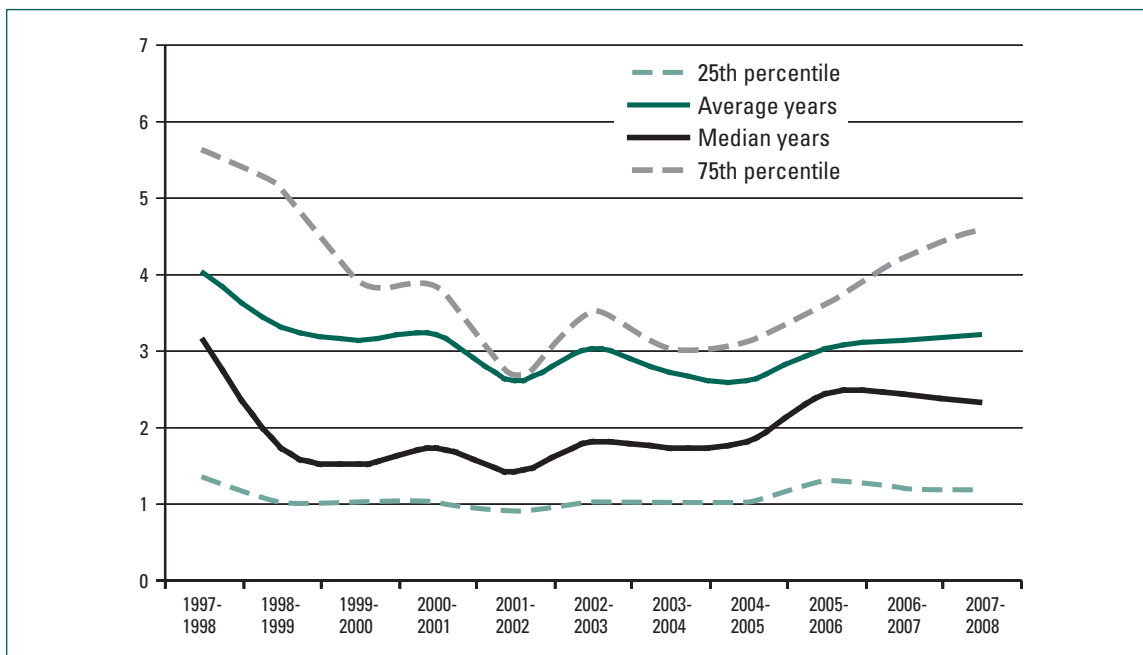
Source: PSC appointment and population files

Figure 30: Intra- and Interorganizational movement – ES group



Source: PSC appointment and population files

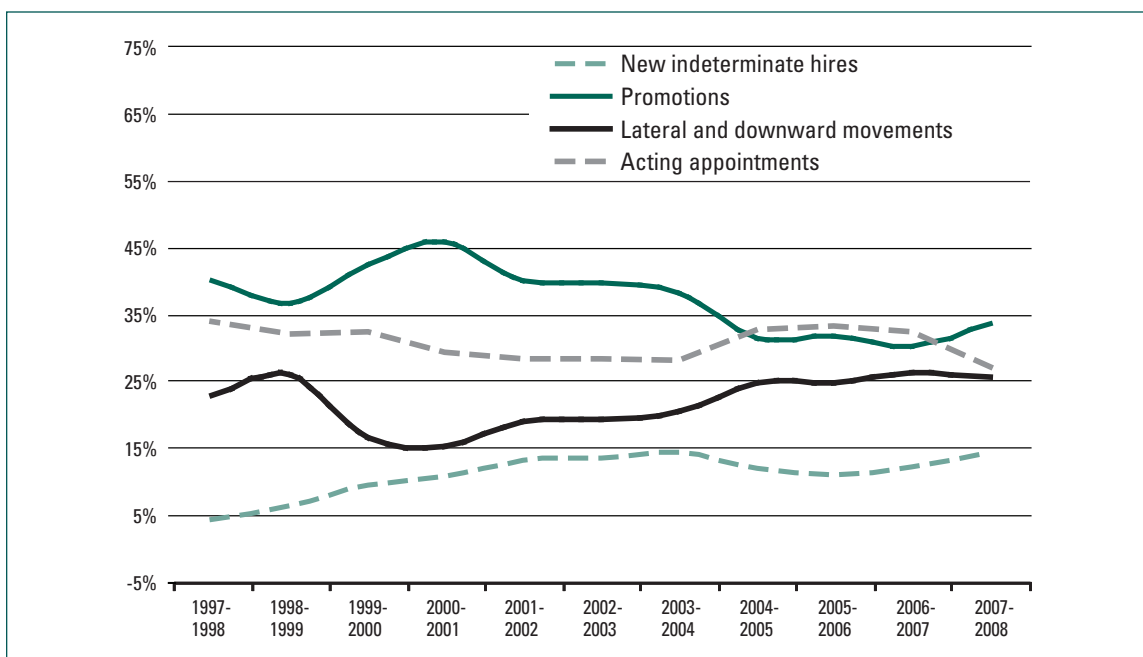
Figure 31: Years at level before promotion – ES group



Source: PSC appointment and population files

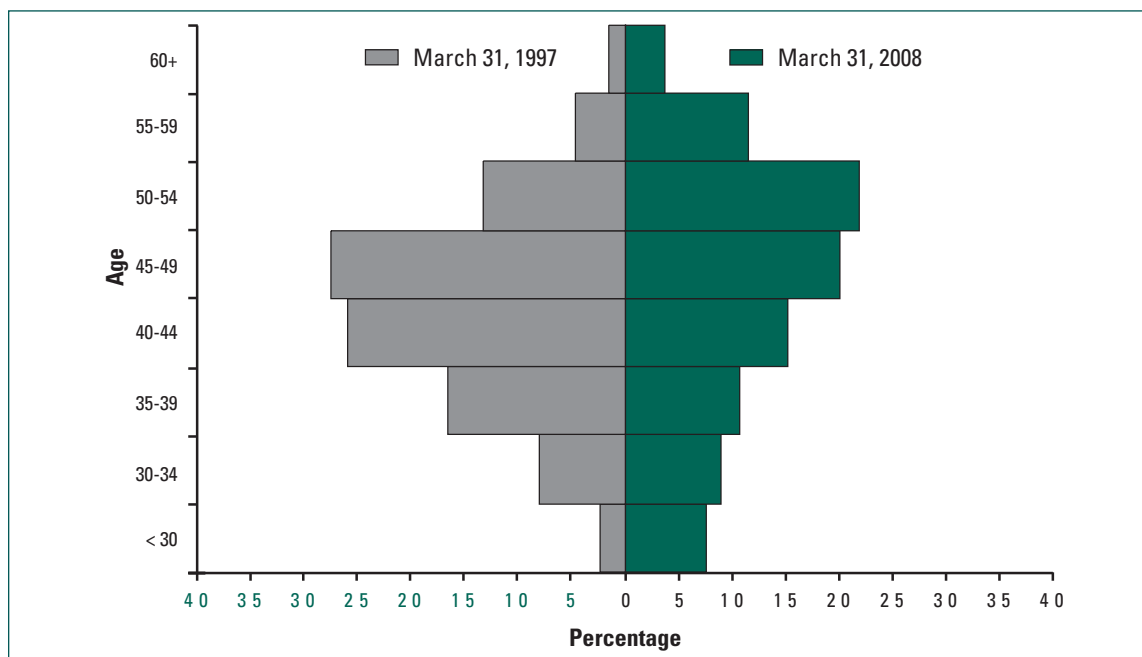
AS group

Figure 32: Types of movement – AS group



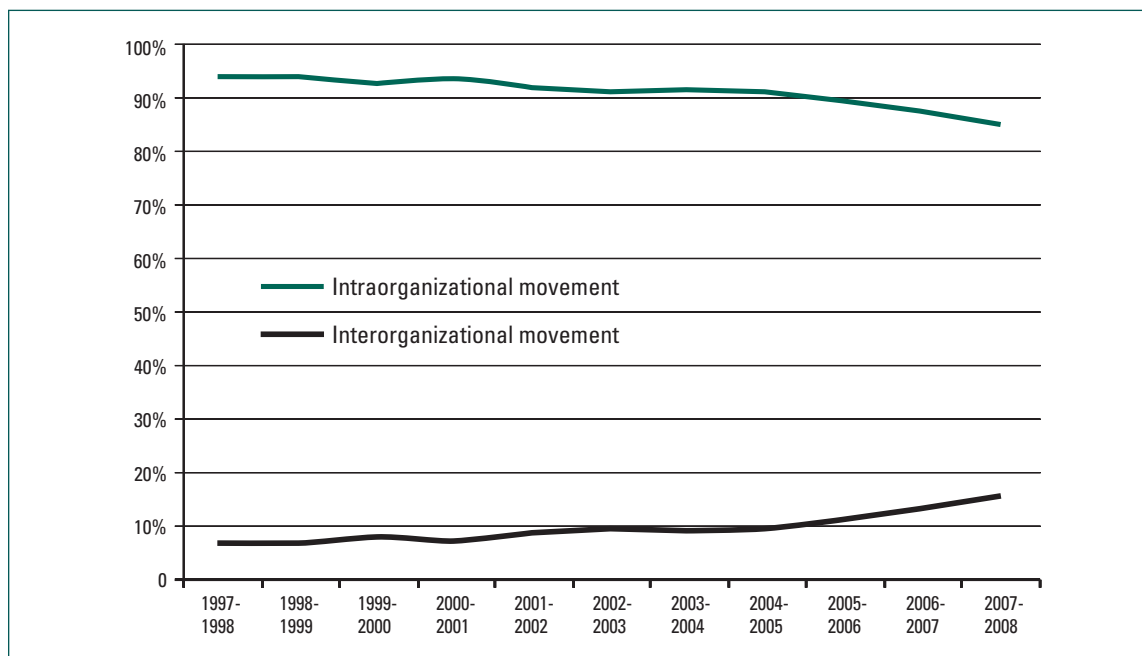
Source: PSC appointment and population files

Figure 33: Age distribution – AS group



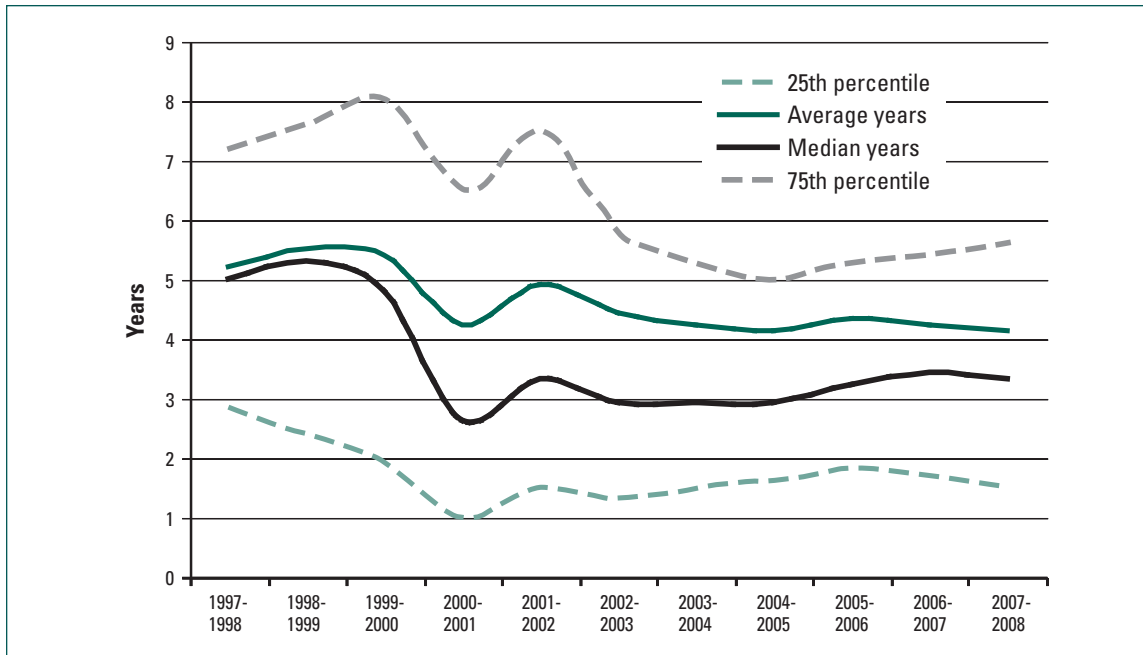
Source: PSC appointment and population files

Figure 34: Intra- and interorganizational movement – AS group



Source: PSC appointment and population files

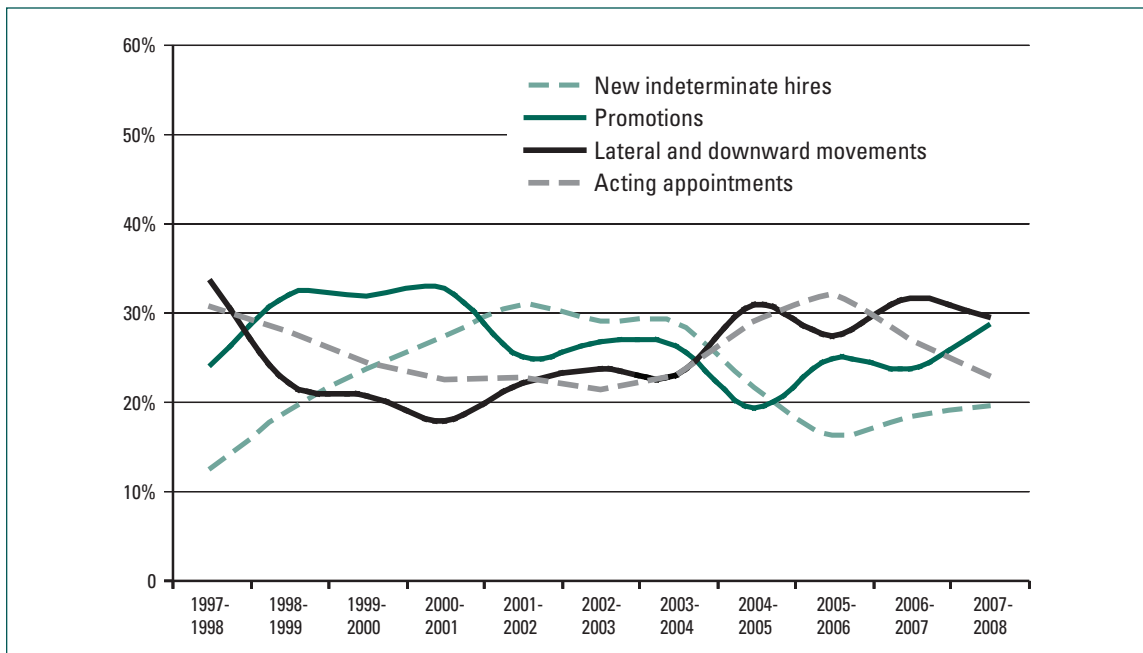
Figure 35: Years at level before promotion – AS group



Source: PSC appointment and population files

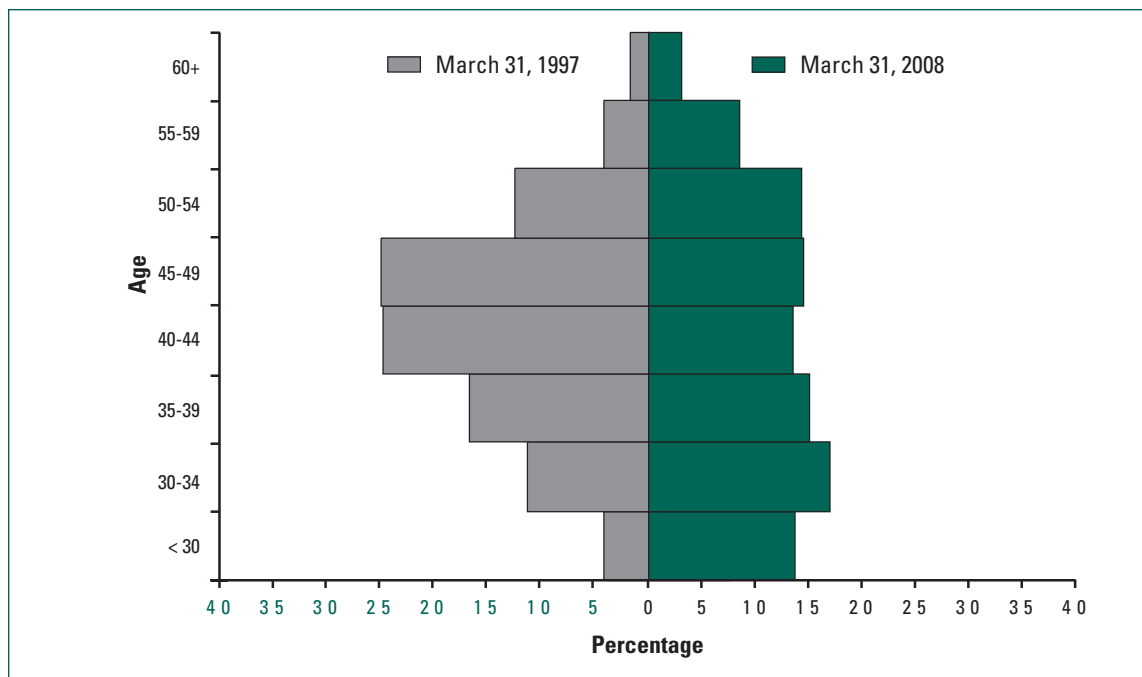
IS group

Figure 36: Types of movement – IS group



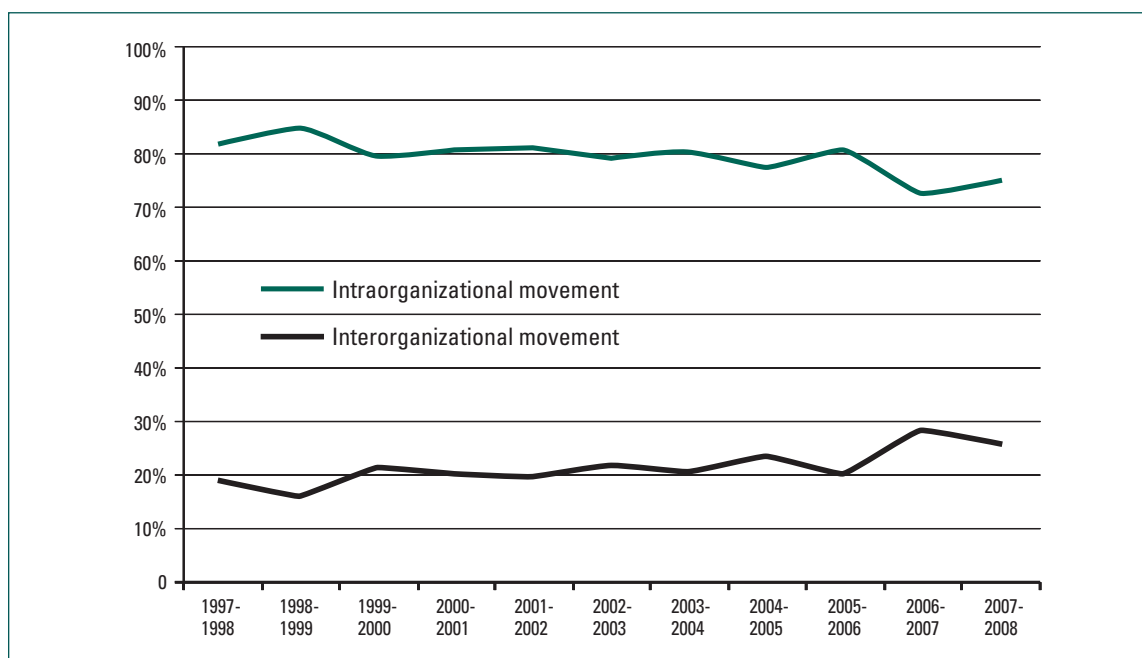
Source: PSC appointment and population files

Figure 37: Age distribution – IS group



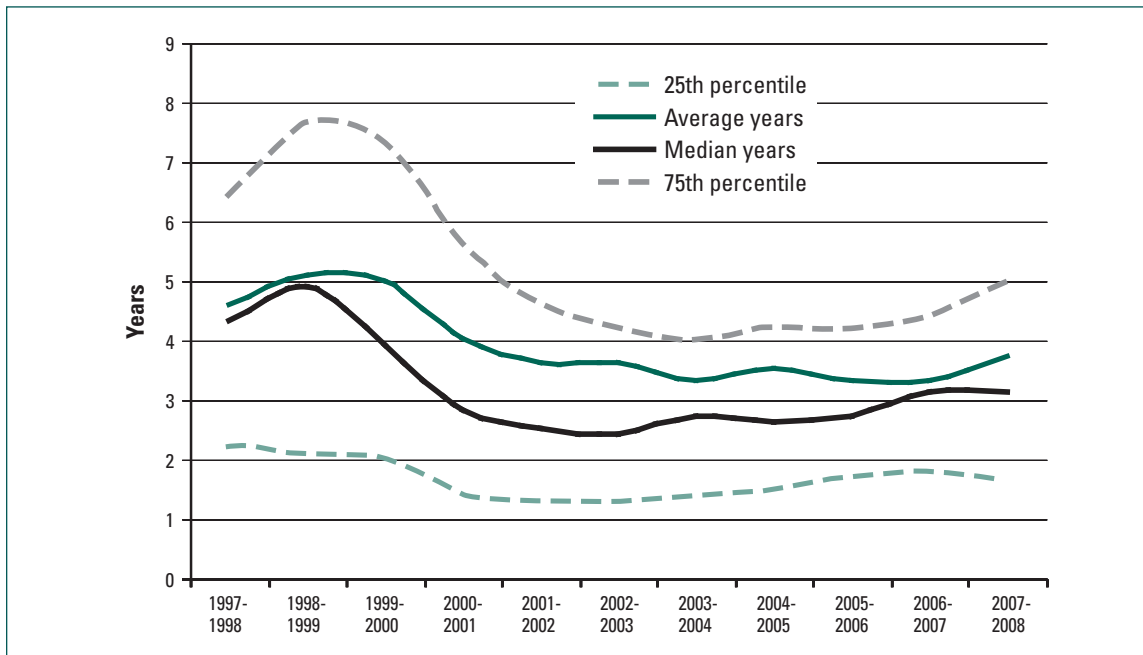
Source: PSC appointment and population files

Figure 38: Intra- and interorganizational – IS group



Source: PSC appointment and population files

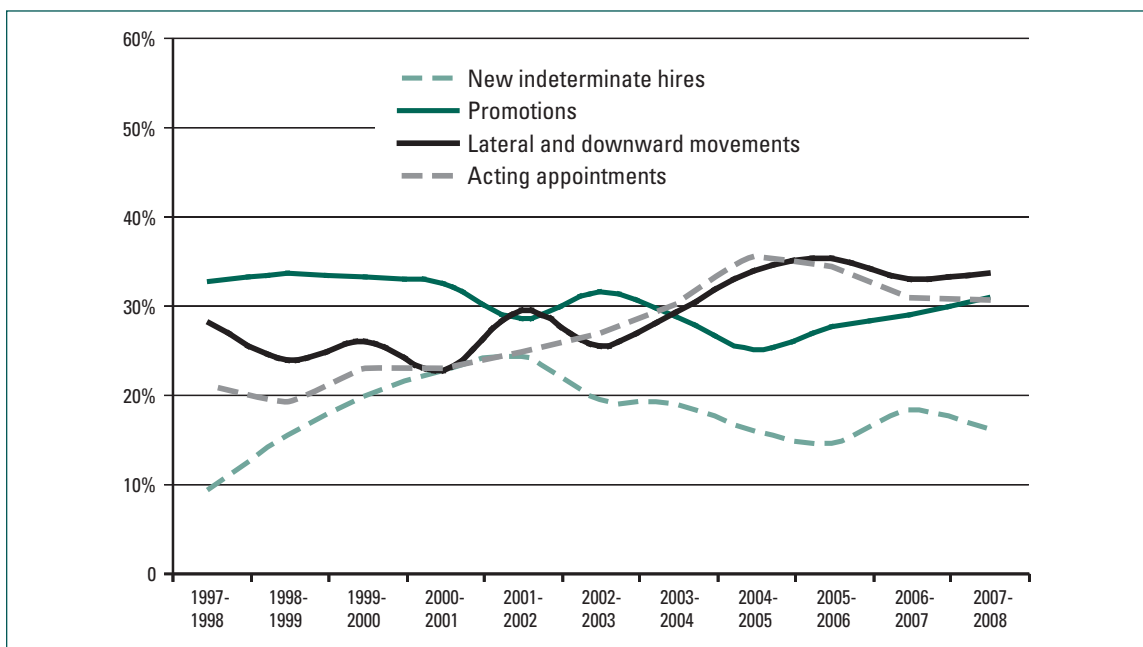
Figure 39: Years at level before promotion – IS group



Source: PSC appointment and population files

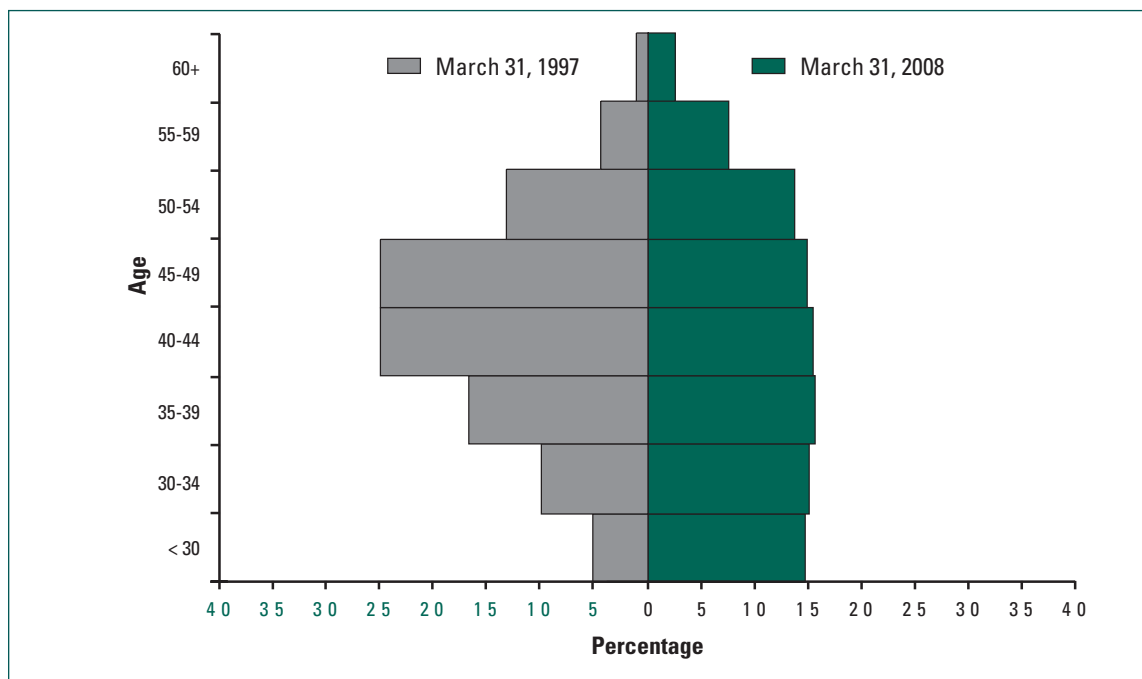
FI group

Figure 40: Types of movement – FI group



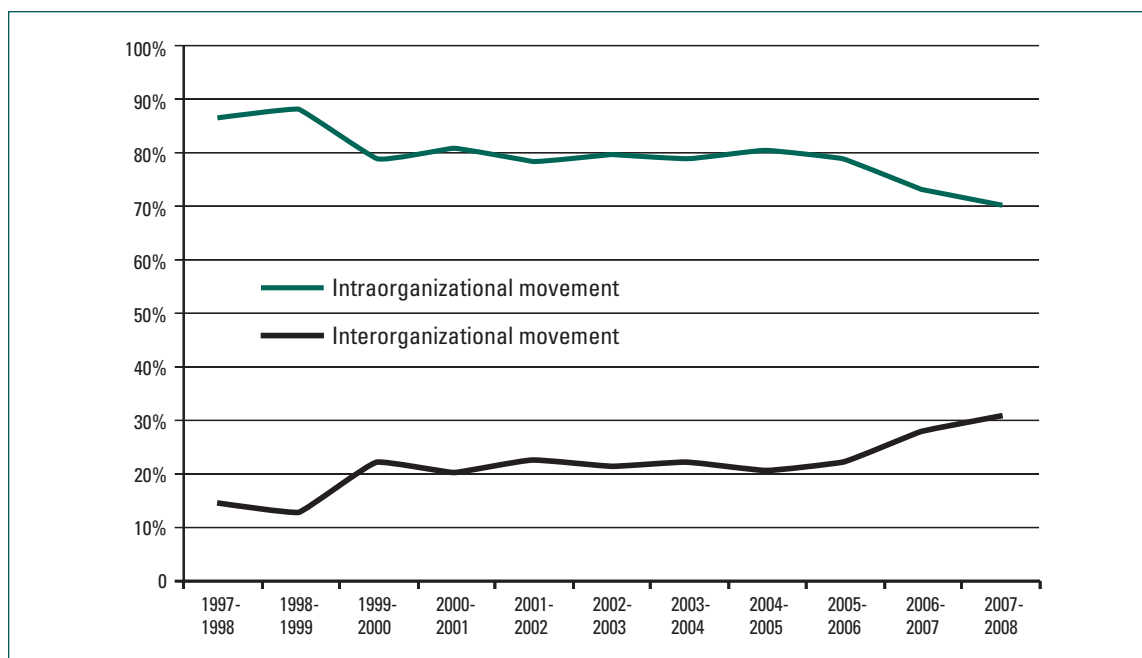
Source: PSC appointment and population files

Figure 41: Age distribution – FI group



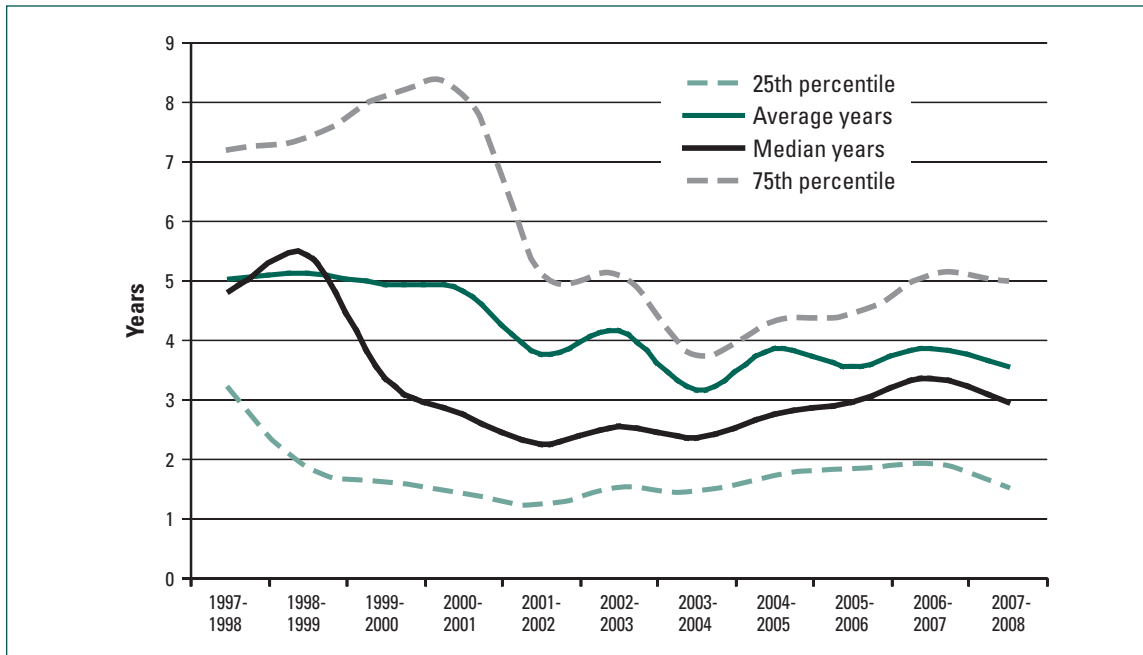
Source: PSC appointment and population files

Figure 42: Intra- and interorganizational movement – FI group



Source: PSC appointment and population files

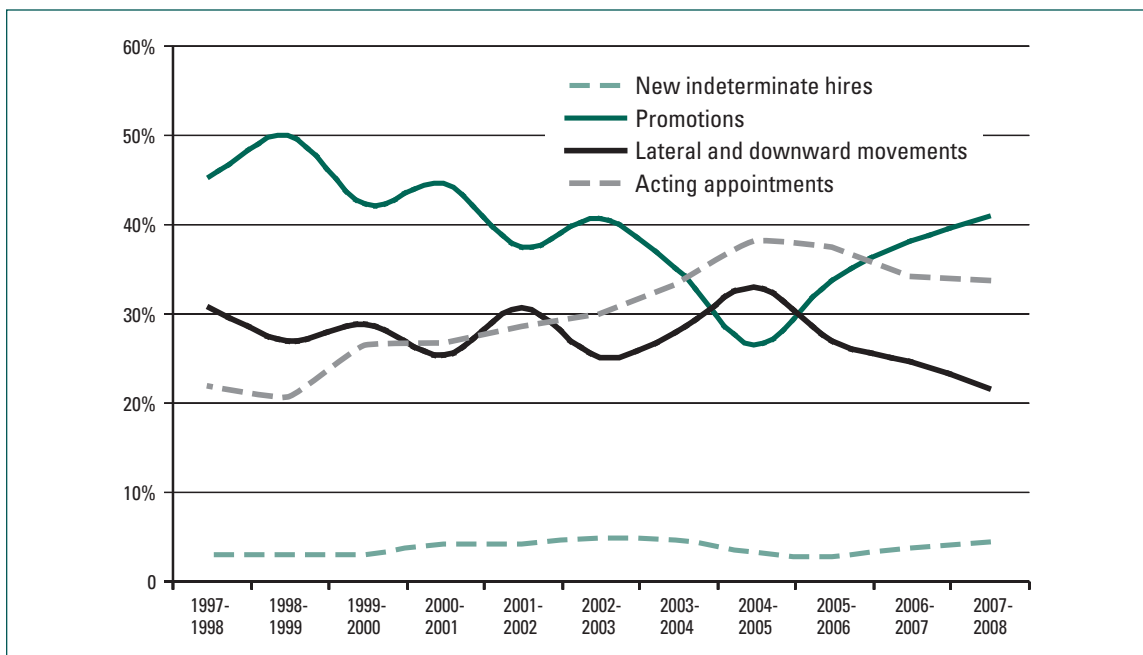
Figure 43: Years at level before promotion – FI group



Source: PSC appointment and population files

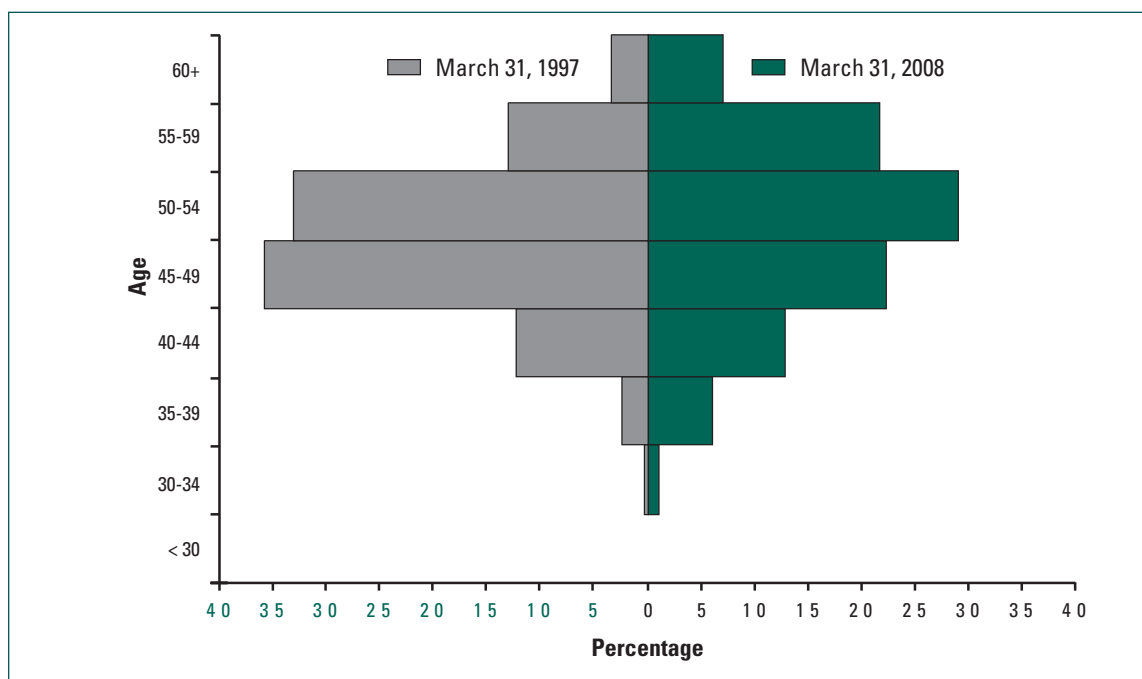
EX group

Figure 44: Types of movement – EX group



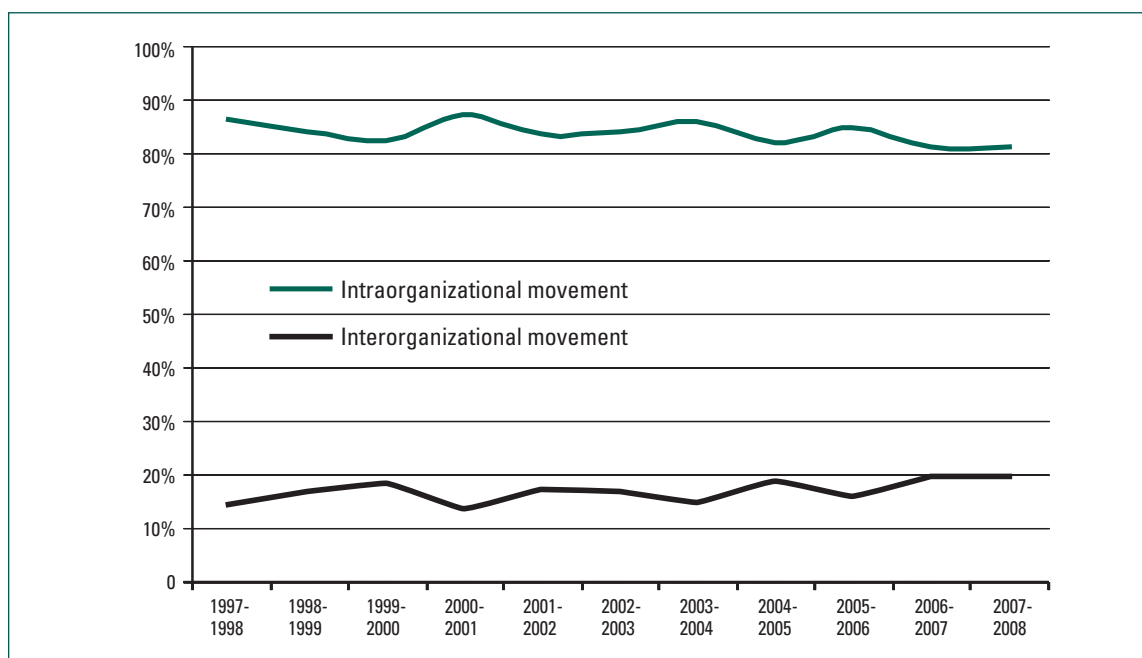
Source: PSC appointment and population files

Figure 45: Age distribution – EX group



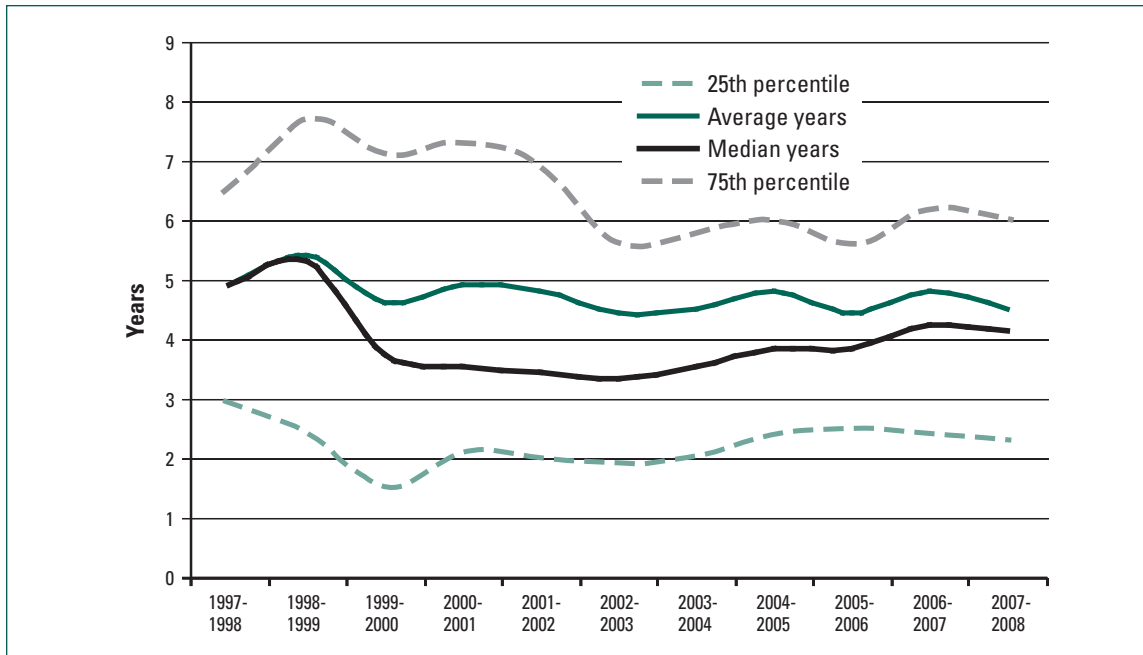
Source: PSC appointment and population files

Figure 46: Intra- and interorganizational movement – EX group



Source: PSC appointment and population files

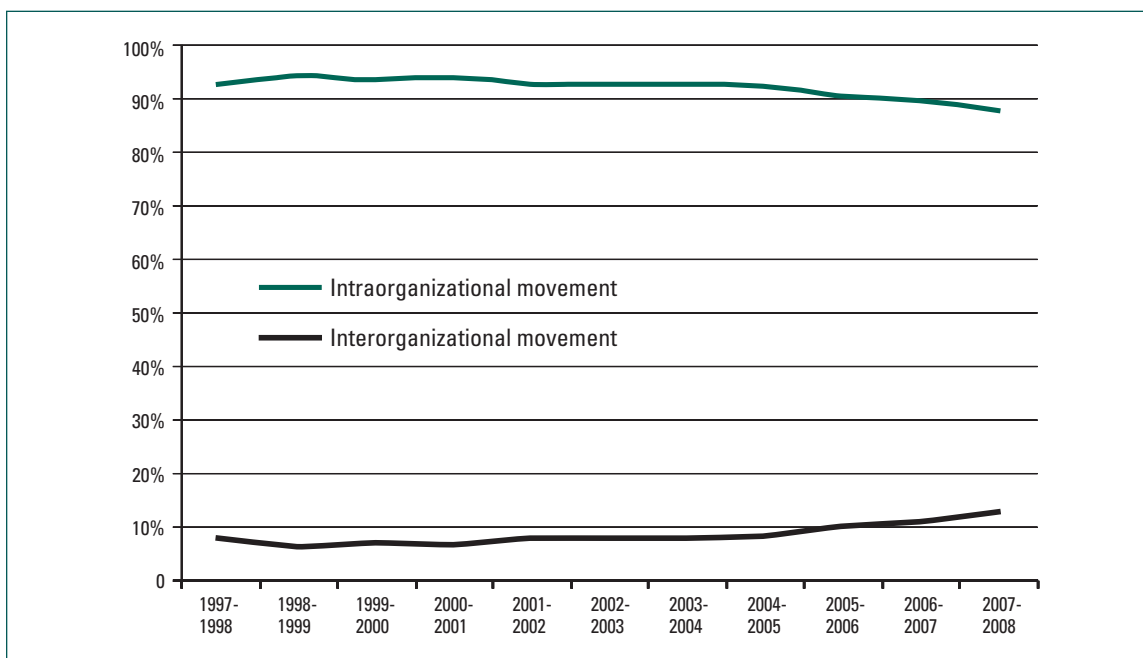
Figure 47: Years at level before promotion – EX group



Source: PSC appointment and population files

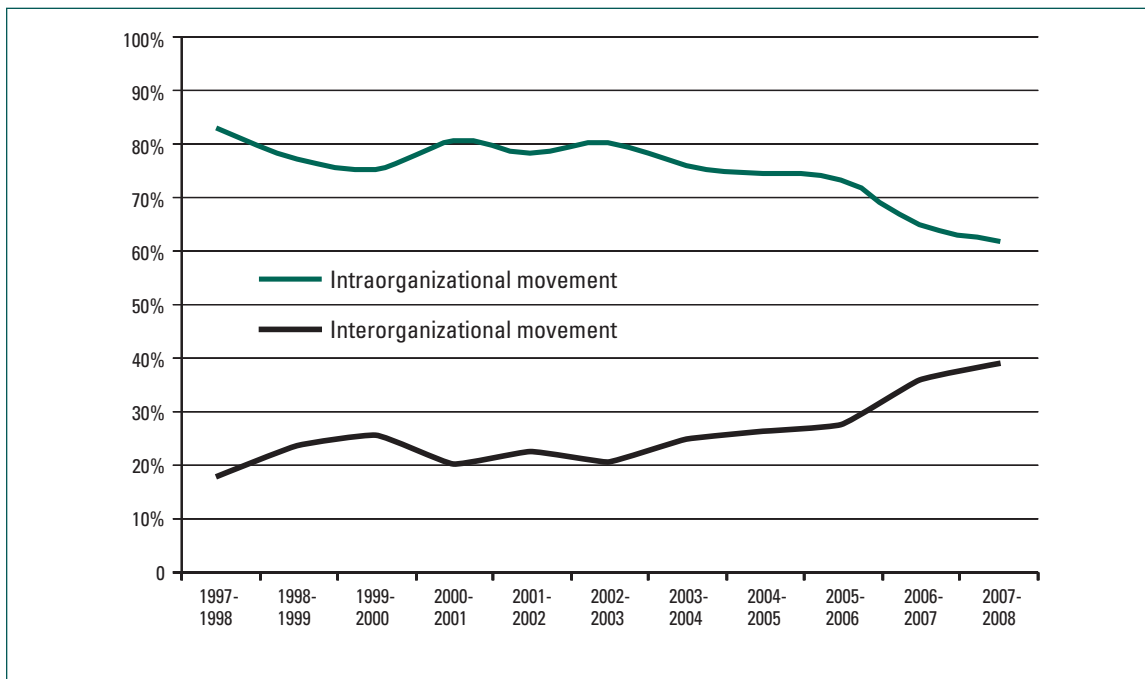
Departmental movement

Figure 48: Intra- and interorganizational movement – line departments/agencies



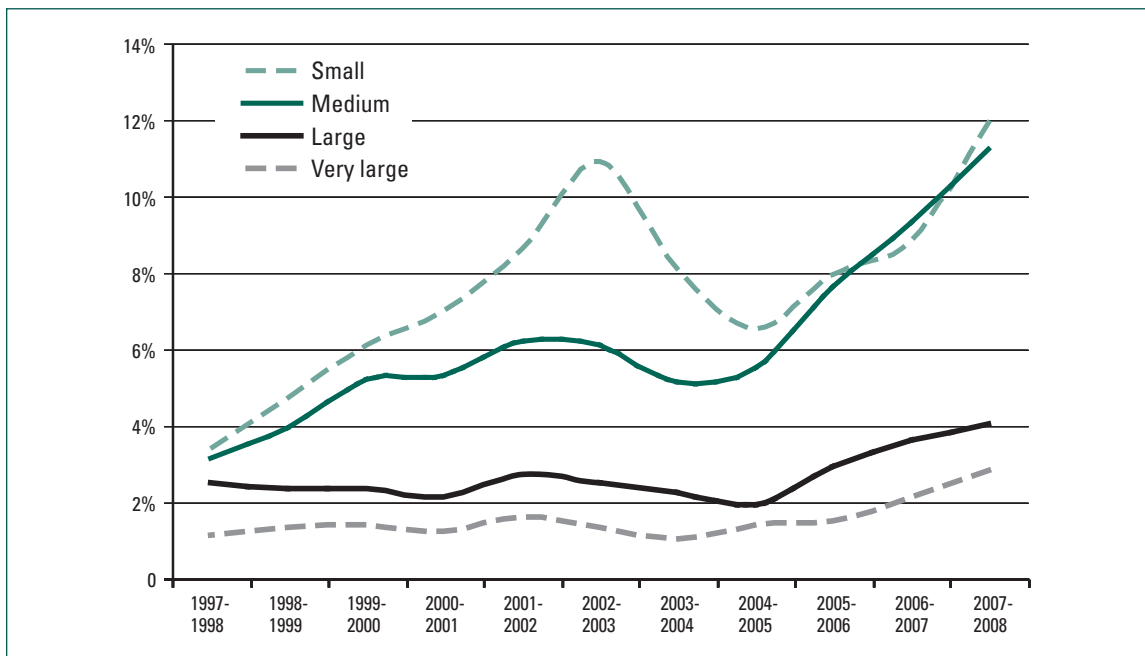
Source: PSC appointment and population files

Figure 49: Intra- and interorganizational movement – central agencies



Source: PSC appointment and population files

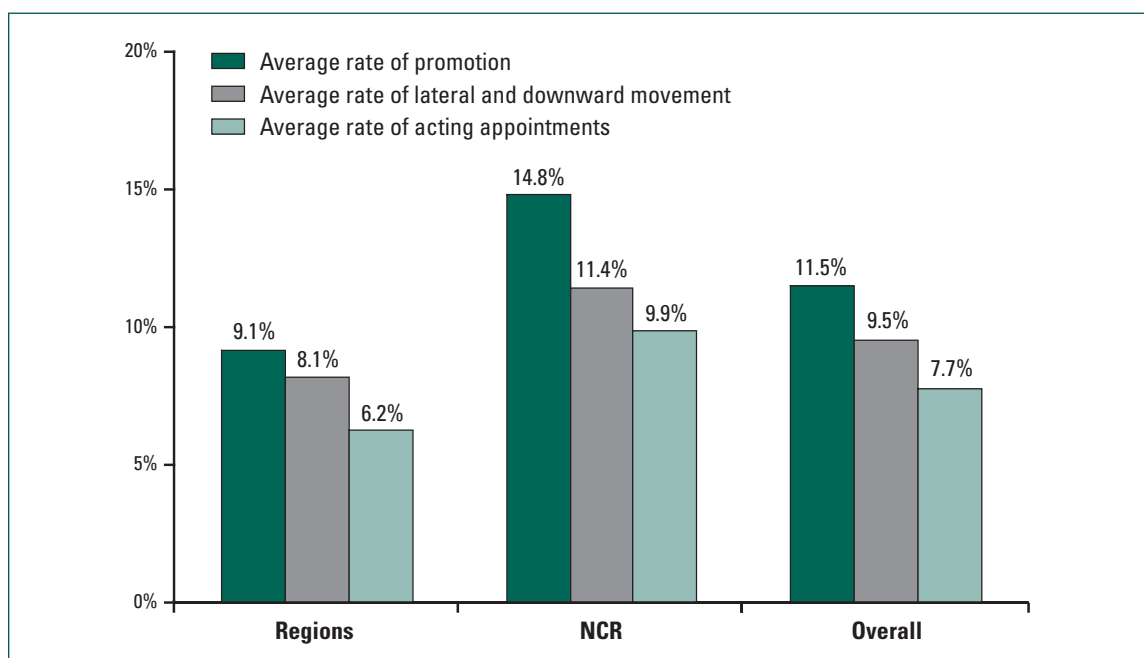
Figure 50: Interorganizational movement – department/agency size



Source: PSC appointment and population files

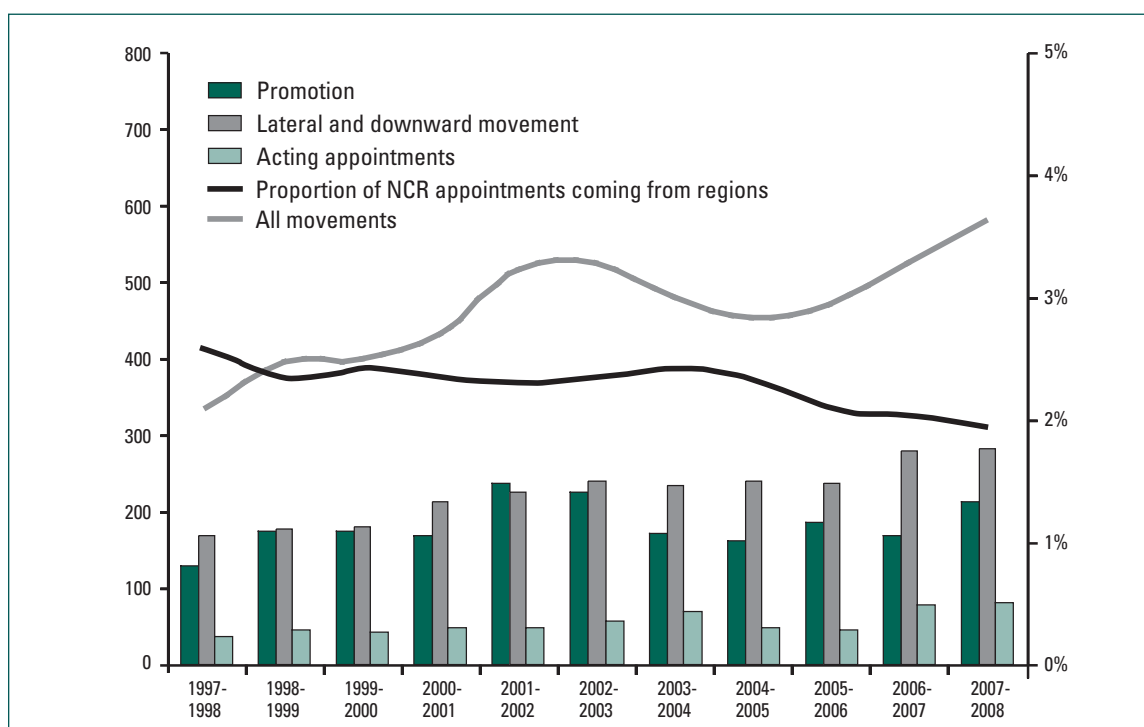
Geographic movement

Figure 51: Average rate of movement – National Capital Region and others



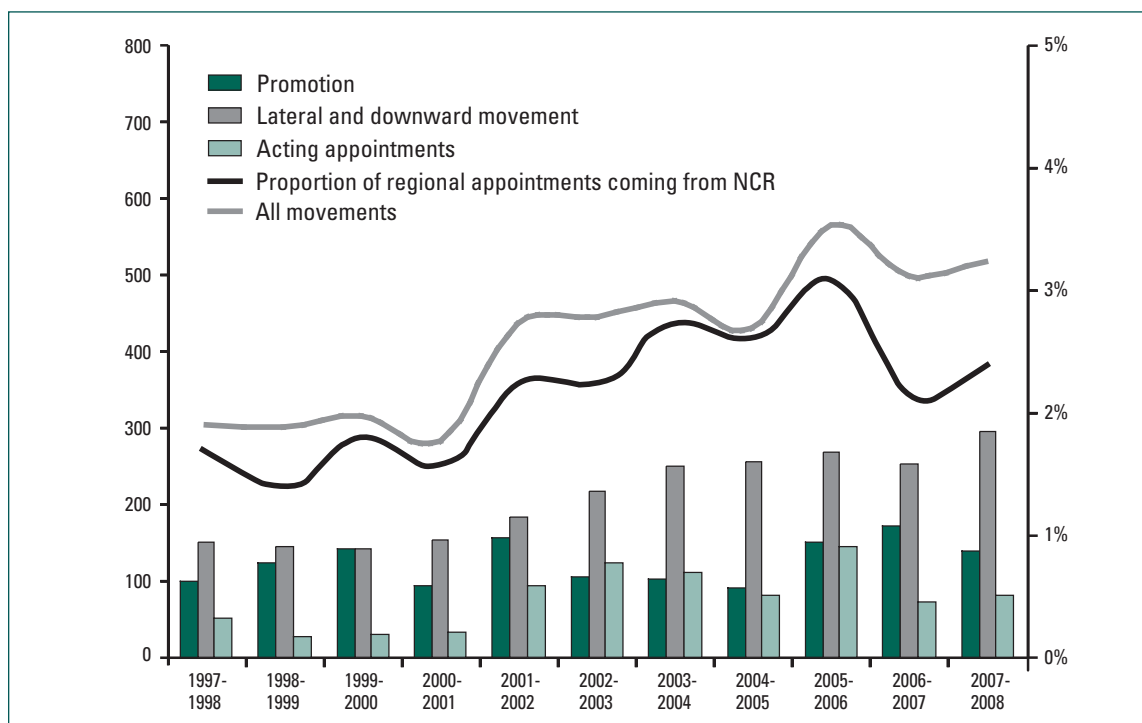
Source: PSC appointment and population files

Figure 52: Internal movement from other regions to National Capital Region



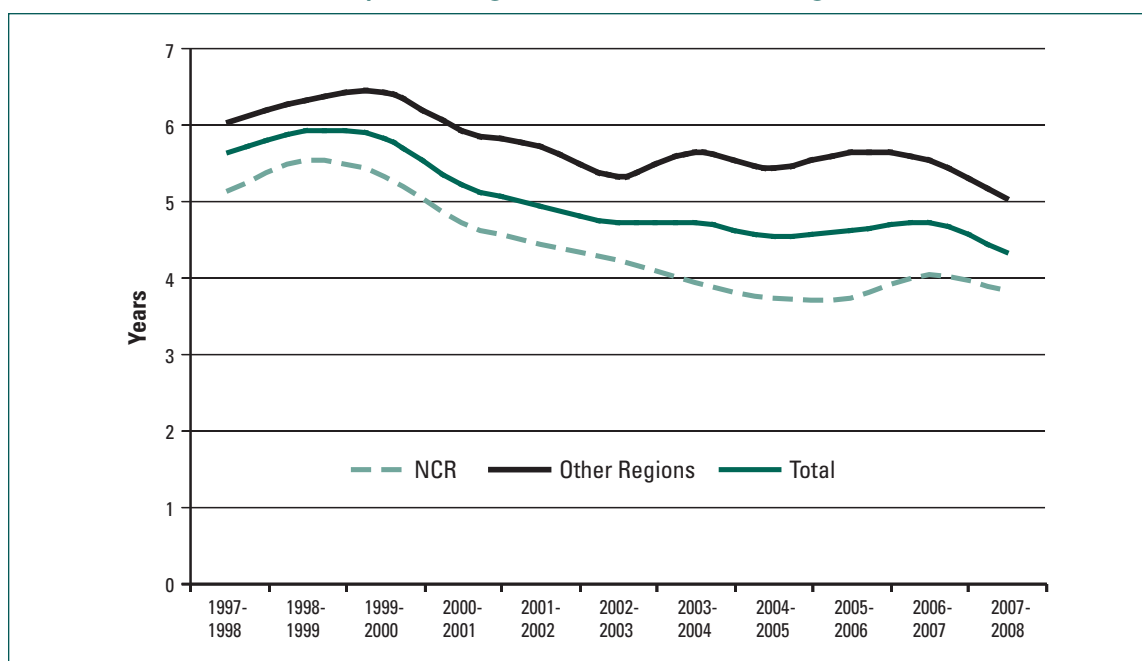
Source: PSC appointment and population files

Figure 53: Internal movement from National Capital Region to other regions



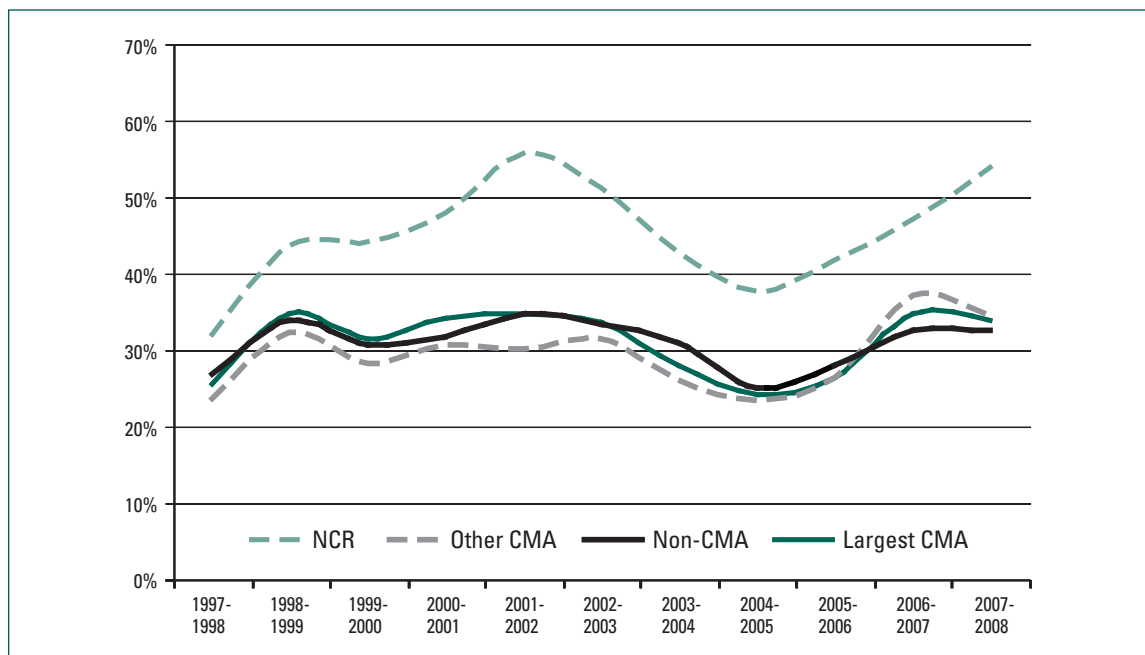
Source: PSC appointment and population files

**Figure 54: Years at level before promotion:
National Capital Region *versus* other regions**



Source: PSC appointment and population files

Figure 55: Indeterminate appointments – Census Metropolitan Area (CMA)



Source: PSC appointment and population files