

Age profile of central government workforce

The age profile of the central government workforce can determine current and future workforce management challenges. On the one hand, governments with a predominantly older workforce may be well placed to draw on a wealth of experience, but may face challenges related to workforce renewal and building the next generation of public servants. On the other hand, countries with a predominantly younger central government workforce may be perceived as attractive to younger staff, but they may have to prioritise career development and the retention of more experienced staff. In all cases, a multi-generational public service workforce presents opportunities to combine the experience of long-serving staff with younger employees in development, for example through intergenerational work teams and mentoring programmes. This can help to ensure that the design of policies, programmes and services reflects different perspectives, making them more responsive to citizens' needs across all age cohorts. In this context, central administrations could examine their working arrangements and explore the development of talent management strategies to focus on the characteristics and preferences of individual cohorts of workers.

On average, the share of workers aged 55 and over in OECD central governments increased only slightly between 2015 and 2020, from 25% to 26%. However, this average hides large discrepancies across countries. For example, in Spain, the share of central government workers aged 55 and over increased significantly from 35% to 46%, and in Greece it increased from 27% to 37%. Italy remains the country with the largest share of older workers: 48% of the central government workforce in 2020 were 55 or older. A few OECD countries saw reductions in the share of older workers, such as Israel (from 23% to 19%) and Korea (from 12% to 9%). Not all OECD countries have a predominantly older central government workforce: in Australia, Hungary, Israel, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg and Turkey the share of people aged 55 and over is below 20% (Figure 3.5).

The share of younger workers (18-34 year-olds) also increased by 1 p.p. between 2015 and 2020, to reach 19% of the central government workforce. Over the same period, some countries experienced significant declines in this share of the workforce, including Germany (where the share fell from 30% to 17%), Lithuania (26% to 16%) and Latvia (30% to 21%). In contrast there were large increases in Korea (from 9% to 21%), Denmark (from 19% to 29%) and Israel (from 26% to 33%). This is particularly notable for Israel, which became, along with Turkey and Hungary, one of only three countries where 18-34 year-olds made up over 30% of the central government workforce (Figure 3.6).

Methodology and definitions

Data in central government by positions and gender were collected through the 2020 OECD Survey on the Composition of the Workforce in Central/Federal Governments and refer to the situation on 1 January 2020. Most respondents were senior officials in central government human resource management (HRM) departments, and the data refer to HRM practices in central government. The survey was completed by all OECD countries except Iceland, one OECD accession country (Costa Rica), and key partners Brazil and Romania. Data are missing for Chile. There are considerable variations in the definitions of public service as well as the organisations governed at the central level of government, which should be considered when making comparisons. Comparisons with the data from *Government at a Glance 2017* should be made with caution, as the scope and number of country responses vary between the two.

Further reading

OECD (2019), *Recommendation of the Council on Public Service Leadership and Capability*, OECD, <https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/%20en/instruments/OECD-LEGAL-0445>.

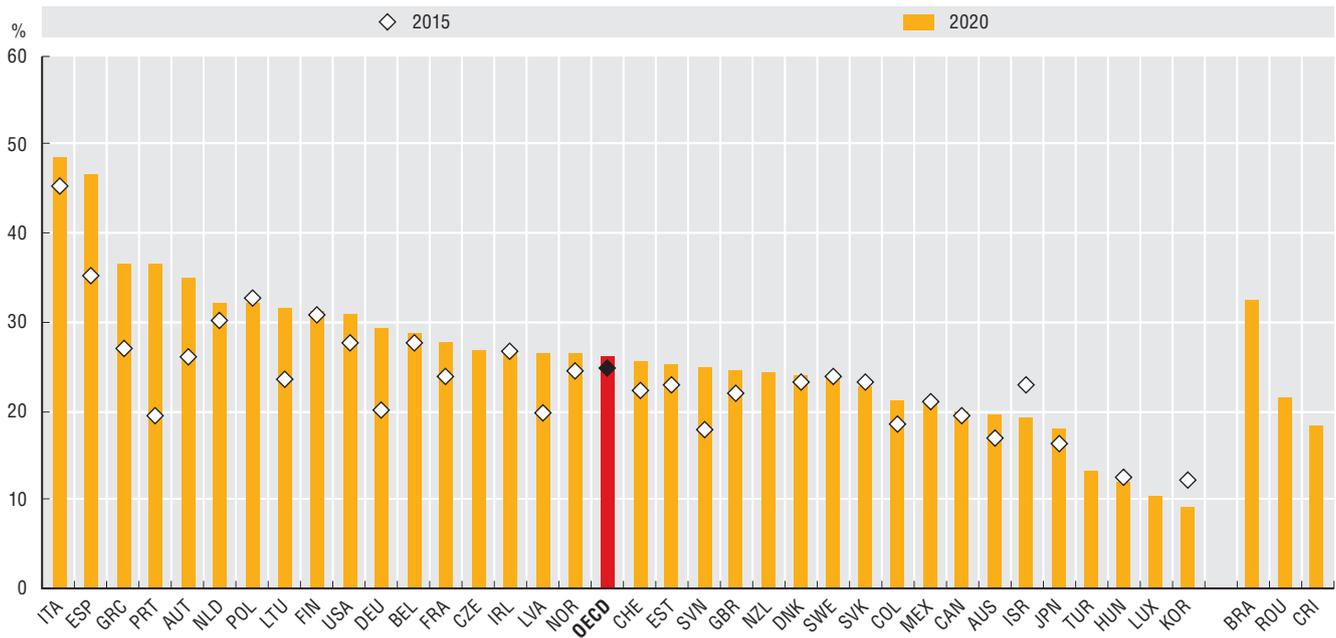
Paccagnella, M. (2016), "Age, ageing and skills: Results from the Survey of Adult Skills", *OECD Education Working Papers*, No. 132, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/5jm0q1n38lvc-en>.

Figure notes

Data for France are for 31 December 2018. Data for Hungary are for 2018. Data for Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Poland are for December 2019. Data for Denmark and Finland are for February 2020. Data for Colombia are for March 2020. Data for Korea are for 31 December 2020. The age groups for 2020 for Hungary and Luxembourg are 18-35 years old and over 56 years old. The age groups for 2020 for Poland are under 30 and 50 years and over. Data for 2015 for Poland are for over 51-year-olds. Data for Estonia do not include higher public servants such as ministers, or the chancellor of justice, president or state controller.

Data for Greece and the United Kingdom are for 2016 rather than 2015. Data for Italy and France are for 2014 rather than 2015. Data for Estonia and Sweden for 2015 refer to full-time equivalents.

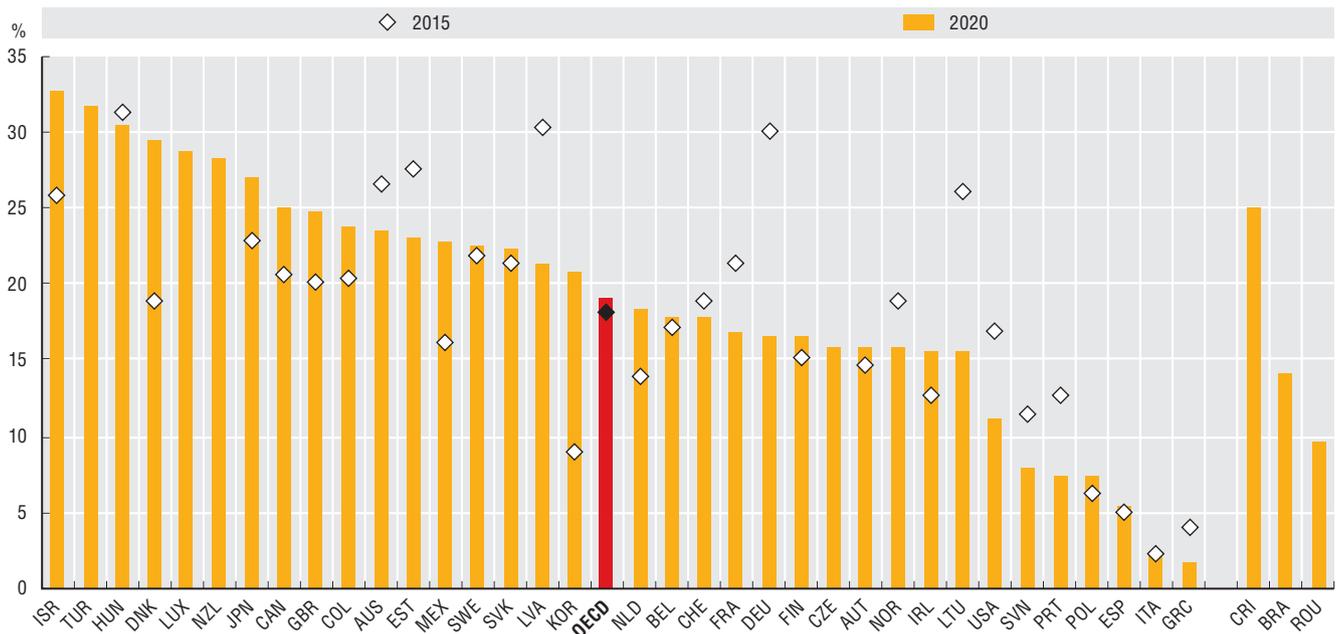
3.5. Percentage of central government employees aged 55 years or older, 2015 and 2020



Source: OECD (2020) Survey on the Composition of the Workforce in Central/Federal Governments.

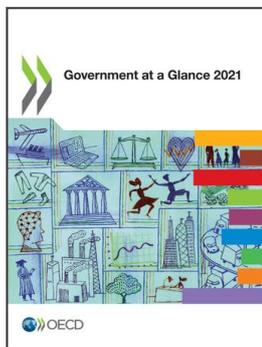
StatLink <https://doi.org/10.1787/888934257413>

3.6. Percentage of central government employees aged 18-34 years old, 2015 and 2020



Source: OECD (2020) Survey on the Composition of the Workforce in Central/Federal Governments.

StatLink <https://doi.org/10.1787/888934257432>



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