

Gender equality in public sector employment

Equal representation of women in the public sector represents a key indicator of progress towards building a more diverse and inclusive workforce. The public sector is expected to lead the way and set standards in implementing gender equality and promoting diversity in the public sector. In turn, encouraging a greater diversity of staff in public employment can contribute to organisational performance and foster policies and services that better reflect citizens' needs.

In OECD countries on average, women are over-represented in the public sector workforce (59.6%), though there are broad variations. In 2017, only one-quarter of positions in the Turkish public sector were filled by women, whereas the corresponding figure for the Nordic countries (Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark) was between 69% and 71.3%. Some countries, such as Mexico (51.5%) and Greece (48%) approached parity between the sexes in the public sector workforce. The trend across OECD countries points to an increasing rate of participation of women in the public sector workforce from 2011 to 2017. Japan, for example, increased the share of women working in the public sector by almost 3 p.p. between 2011 and 2017.

The share of women working in public sector workforces (60.1%) has usually been higher than in total employment in OECD countries (45.9%). It is also the case in all OECD countries with the exceptions of the Netherlands and Turkey, where the share of women employed in the public sector is slightly lower. The relative difference in the shares of women in public sector employment compared to that in total employment is as high as 20 p.p. in countries such as Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark. At the same time, these countries also record the highest shares of women in total employment. One reason for explaining the relative higher women participation in the public sector workforce is that some key public sector occupations, such as teachers and nurses, are traditionally considered “women’s jobs”. Discouraging such gender stereotyping and ensuring that women have access to varied public sector occupations is a key goal across OECD countries. Ensuring that women can access and compete on an equal footing for leadership and decision-making

positions (traditionally dominated by men), is part of the move toward more diverse, inclusive – and effective – public sector workforces.

Methodology and definitions

Data on public sector employment were collected by the ILO, ILOSTAT (database). Data are based on the Labour Force Survey unless otherwise indicated. Public sector employment covers employment in general government plus employment in publicly owned resident enterprises and companies. Data represent the total number of persons employed directly by those institutions, without regard to the particular type of employment contract and working hours. The employed comprise all persons of working age who, during a specified brief period, are in the following categories: paid employment or self-employment.

Further reading

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

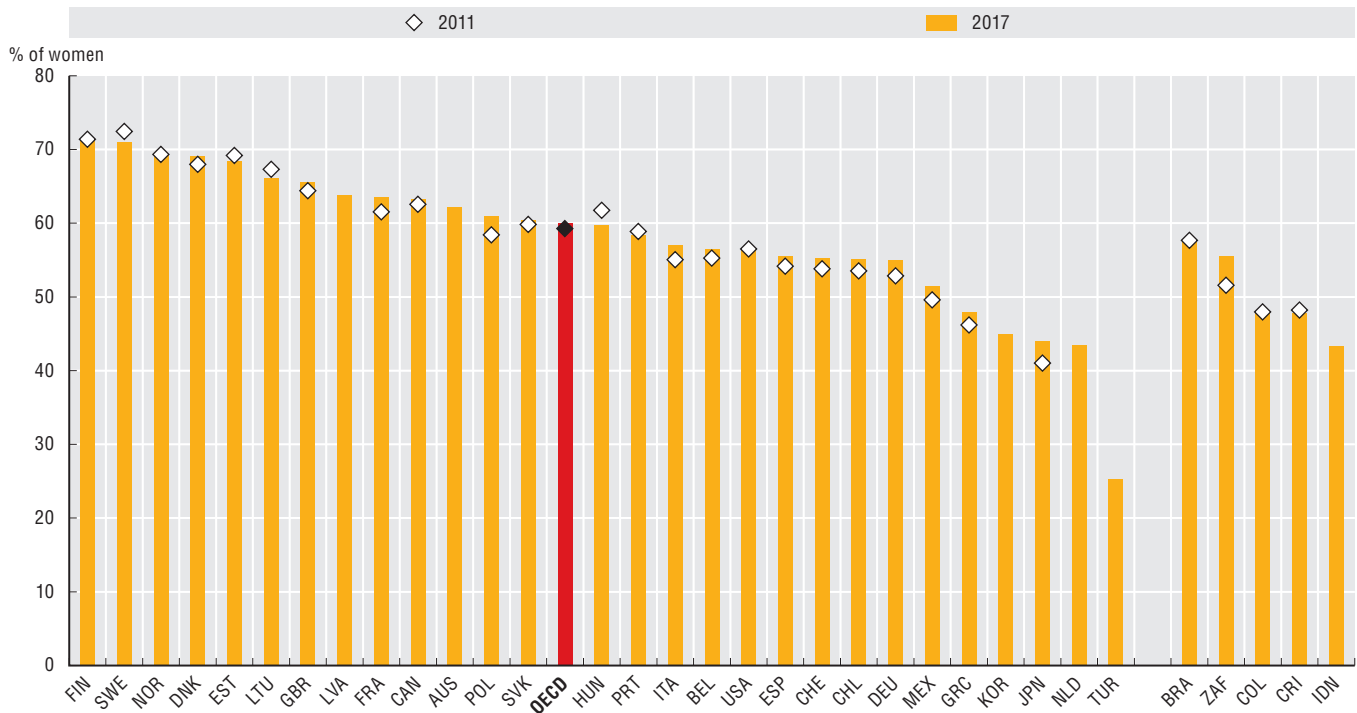
OECD (2017), *Skills for a High Performing Civil Service*, OECD Public Governance Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264280724-en>

OECD (2014), *Women, Government and Policy Making in OECD countries: Fostering Diversity for Inclusive Growth*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264210745-en>.

Figure notes

Data for Austria, the Czech Republic, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Luxembourg, New Zealand and Slovenia are not available. Data for Australia, Korea, Latvia, the Netherlands and Turkey are not included in the OECD average due to missing time series. Data for Denmark, Germany and Switzerland are based on administrative records or establishment survey. Data for Japan are for 2010 rather than 2011. Data for Switzerland are for 2015 rather than 2017. Data for Brazil are for 2012 rather than 2011. Data for Indonesia are for 2016 rather than 2017.

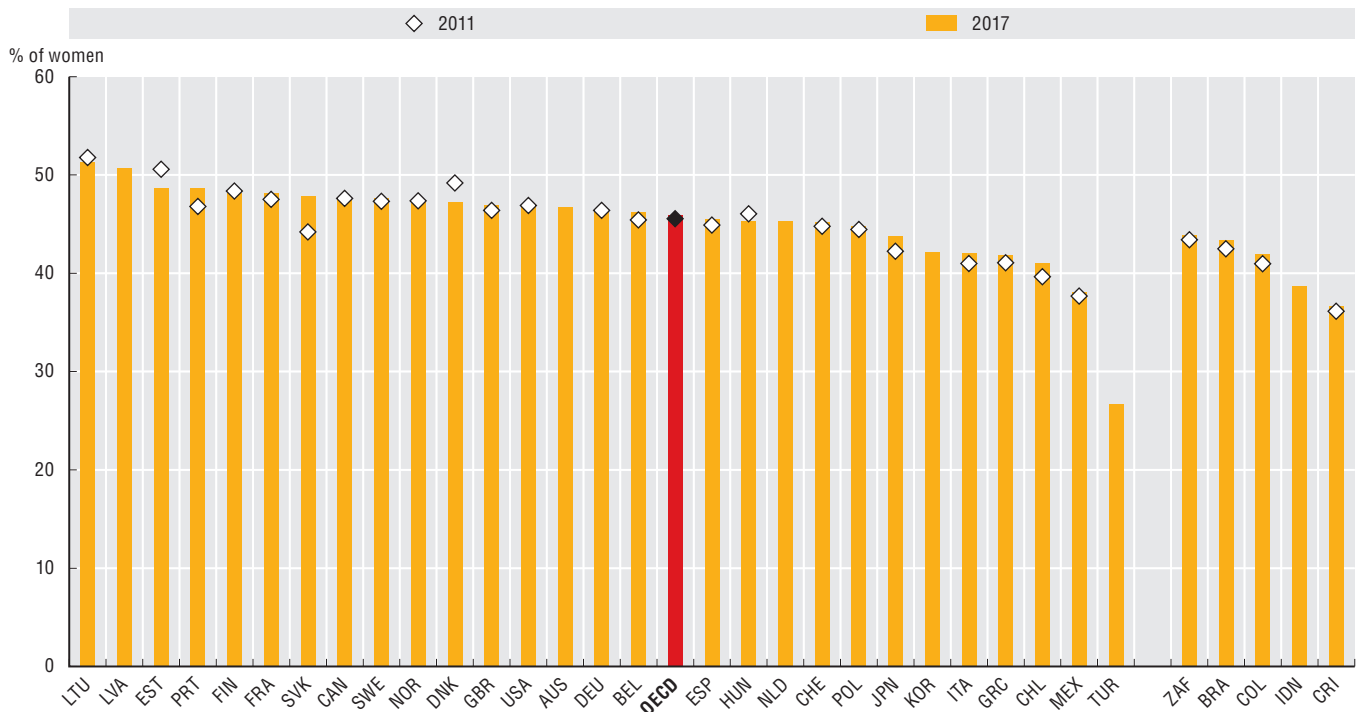
3.5. Gender equality in public sector employment, 2011 and 2017



Source: International Labour Organization (ILO) ILOSTAT (database), *Employment by sex and institutional sector*. Data for Italy, Korea and Portugal were provided by national authorities.

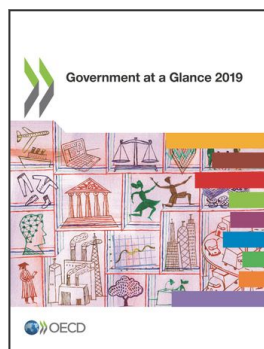
StatLink <https://doi.org/10.1787/888934032073>

3.6. Gender equality in total employment, 2011 and 2017



Source: International Labour Organization (ILO) ILOSTAT (database), *Employment by sex and institutional sector*. Data for Korea and Portugal were provided by national authorities.

StatLink <https://doi.org/10.1787/888934032092>



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