

Measuring employee engagement

Engaged employees perform better, thus increasing productivity, public sector innovation and citizens' satisfaction. Organisations with more engaged employees also see less sick leave and higher retention rates. The drivers of employee engagement vary greatly, but common factors include perceived quality of leadership and management, working conditions and opportunities for career progression (OECD, 2016). Employee engagement can thus be considered a performance measure for people management.

The OECD facilitated the creation of a standard questionnaire module for comparing aspects of work and organisational engagement, and public service motivation. It was piloted in seven countries in 2020 via existing national public employment surveys.

Work engagement measures the relationship between employees and their job. In all the pilot countries, at least 67% of respondents are satisfied with their job, at least 42% consider that their work gives them a sense of accomplishment, and slightly fewer (at least 39%) are inspired by their job (Figure 6.9, Panel A). Organisational engagement measures the relationship between an employee and the organisation where they work (Figure 6.9, Panel B). The data here suggest that most public servants (at least 56%) strongly identify with the mission of their organisations, but feel less attached to the organisation itself. In Latvia the results are reversed. Finally, public service motivation has the highest average score of all the questions in all the countries, ranging from 81% in Belgium to 98% in Israel, highlighting the importance of contributing to the common good (Figure 6.9, Panel C). Taken together, the data show that public employees are highly motivated by mission, but suggest there are opportunities to improve organisational leadership and management policies to inspire public servants and build their pride in their organisation.

Some demographic differences exist. The gender differences were not statistically significant, but those based on age were. In Israel and Latvia, older cohorts scored slightly higher on all survey questions, while the opposite is true in Belgium (Figure 6.10). The difference reaches 0.73 in Latvia for organisational engagement. There could be many reasons for such differences, relating to the cultural environment, pay or career opportunities. Working patterns also affect engagement. In most of the OECD countries analysed, full-time employees were generally more positive than those working less than 90% full-time hours (Online Figure G.29). Only Latvia sees greater employee engagement from part-time workers. The integration of more variables and deeper analysis would be required to explain such difference between working patterns, but they suggest there may be challenges in generating employee engagement while increasing the use of flexible working patterns in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis.

Methodology and definitions

The module on employee engagement was designed by the OECD, academics and national experts in civil service surveys. The pilot countries reported in this

publication (six OECD and Brazil) fielded this module in their existing public employment surveys.

The module has three questions on work engagement: 1) Overall, I am satisfied with my job, 2) My job inspires me, 3) The work I do gives me a sense of accomplishment; two questions on organisational engagement: 4) I feel a strong personal attachment to my organisation, 5) I identify with the mission of my organisation; and one on public service motivation: 6) It is important to me that my work contributes to the common good. Participating countries used a 1-5 scale where 1 = "strongly disagree" and 5 = "strongly agree". Employees responding 4 or 5 are considered to positively rate the statement. Brazil used a similar Likert scale, replacing numbers by sentences related to the agreement or disagreement with each statement.

Australia: 108 085 Australian Public Service personnel employed under the Public Service Act 1999 participated from 12 October to 13 November 2020.

Belgium: 1 735 employees from 3 different organisations participated, 2 of them conducted the survey during the second semester of 2019, the third at the end of 2020.

Israel: 6 605 employees participated from 1-15 December 2020.

Luxembourg: 261 civil servants, employees and, in some cases, external staff from 4 different administrations participated between November 2019 and December 2020.

Latvia: 5 778 civil servants from 153 state institutions participated from 21 October to 9 November 2019.

The Netherlands: 2 158 employees, representing a sample of civil servants in Dutch core ministries (excluding agencies and other executive services) participated from 3-25 November 2020.

Brazil: 32 393 employees from the Federal Executive Public Administration participated from 21 September to 23 October 2020.

Further reading

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

OECD (2016), *Engaging Public Employees for a High-Performing Civil Service*, OECD Public Governance Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264267190-en>.

Figure notes

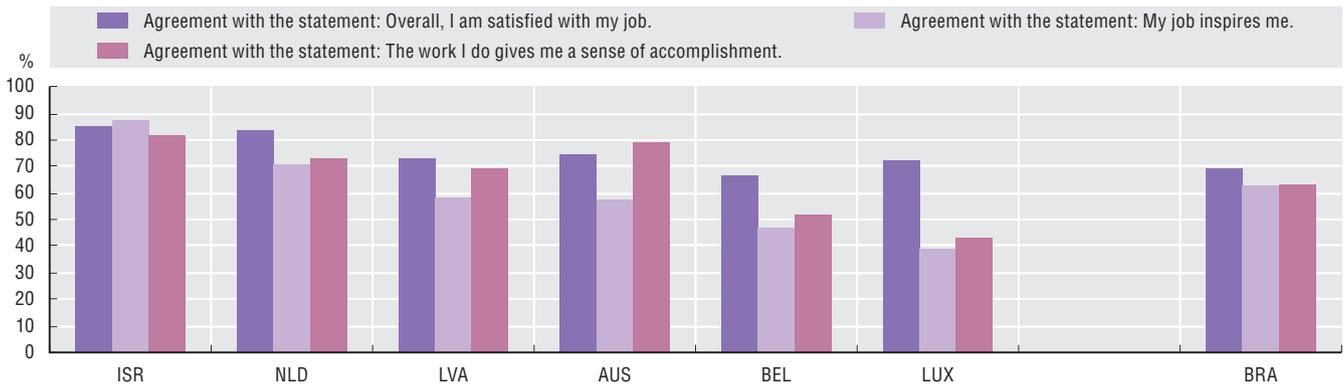
Data for Australia are not available for "I identify with the mission of my organisation" and "It is important to me that my work contributes to the common good". Data for Israel are not available for "I feel a strong personal attachment to my organisation".

6.10. Data for Luxembourg are not available.

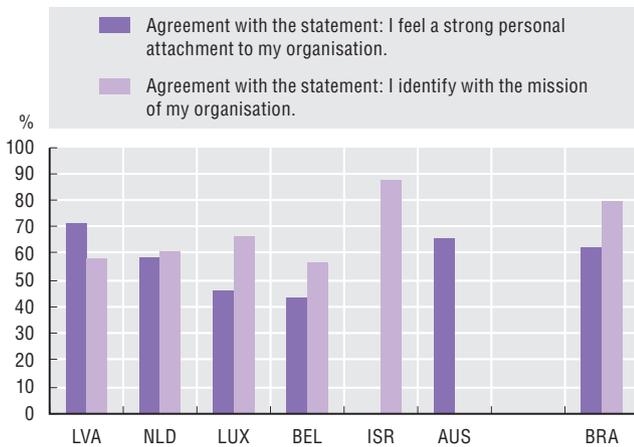
G. 29. (Average employee engagement score by working pattern, 2020) is available online in Annex G.

6.9. Share of public employees positively rating employee engagement, 2020

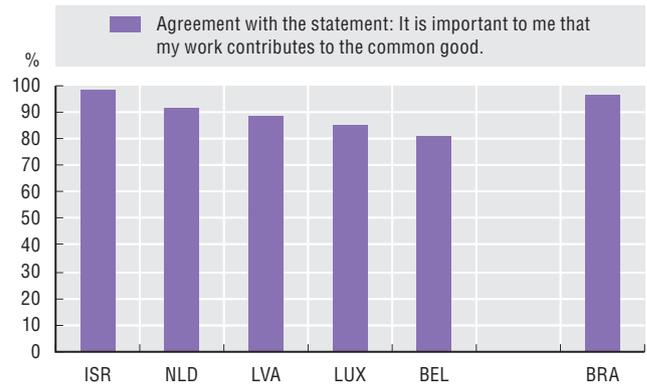
Panel A: Share of employees agreeing or strongly agreeing with work engagement-related statements



Panel B: Share of employees agreeing or strongly agreeing with organisational engagement-related statements



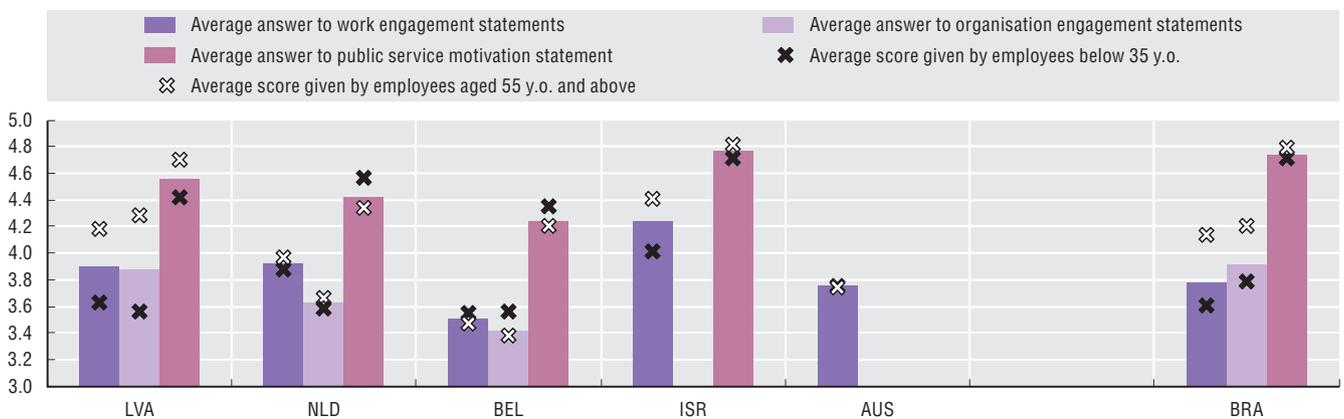
Panel C: Share of employees agreeing or strongly agreeing with this public service motivation-related statement



Source: OECD (2021), Special employee engagement module of the Civil Service Survey.

StatLink <https://doi.org/10.1787/888934258097>

6.10. Average employee engagement score and difference between age groups, 2020



Source: OECD (2021), Special employee engagement module of the Civil Service Survey.

StatLink <https://doi.org/10.1787/888934258116>



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