

Recruitment systems can help government organisations to bring people with the required skills and competencies into the civil service. To this end, workforce planning can help identify skills needs and assess skills gaps. Merit-based recruitment processes help identify the most suitable candidates and have been a bedrock of professional civil services in most OECD countries for many years.

Recruitment systems can be broadly categorised between being more “career-based” or “position-based”. Career-based systems tend to be based on competitive selection earlier on in a civil servant’s career, with all or most positions only open to civil servants. In position-based systems, candidates usually apply directly to specific positions, which tend to be open to internal and external candidates. While career-based systems can help build a dedicated and experienced group of civil servants, position-based systems can offer more flexibility to adjust the workforce in response to a changing environment, and can bring in a wider diversity of perspectives, skills and experiences.

Professionals are hard to draw into the civil service in seven of the nine SEA countries surveyed (all except Lao PDR and Malaysia) and 23 of 35 OECD countries (including Korea and New Zealand). This suggests that attracting the best people is not only related to the type of recruitment system, but also requires human resources and line managers to consider other factors such as future skills demands, length of recruitment processes and competitive employment conditions.

While most countries struggle to attract skilled professionals, particularly in the domain of new technologies, a smaller number of OECD countries (seven) and none of the SEA countries surveyed have challenges recruiting senior managers. This may be due to the attractiveness of SCS positions or the logic of career-based systems, but it also raises questions about countries’ awareness of how the digital transformation is affecting the future of work in the public sector.

In SEA and OECD countries, recruitment systems vary to a great extent and combine elements of both systems. Like Australia and New Zealand, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore use primarily position-based systems. They also report a trend towards more external recruitment of professionals in the last five years, the time period for which information was sought in the survey. In Singapore, unlike all other SEA countries, people enter the civil service through direct application to a specific post. In the Philippines and Thailand, attracting qualified professionals is a big challenge, where there is strong competition from the private sector in the country and abroad. The main challenge in Viet Nam is attracting people with governance expertise.

On the other side of the spectrum are countries like Cambodia and Lao PDR. To become a civil servant, candidates need to go through a competitive examination that allows entry into a specific group of the public service. In Cambodia, Lao PDR and Viet Nam, no posts are open to external recruitment. In Lao PDR, the recruitment targets recent university graduates and promotions are based on work experience and tenure. In Japan, one of the OECD countries with the strongest “career-based” approach, people enter the civil service through a competitive examination that provides for entry into a specific group, but some posts are also open to external recruitment.

Methodology and definitions

Data were collected through the OECD Strategic Human Resource Management Survey and refer to 2016 for OECD countries and 2018 for SEA countries. Respondents were predominately senior officials in central government human resources management (HRM) departments, and data refer to HRM practices in central government. The survey was completed in 2018 by all SEA countries except Myanmar and in 2016 by 35 OECD countries.

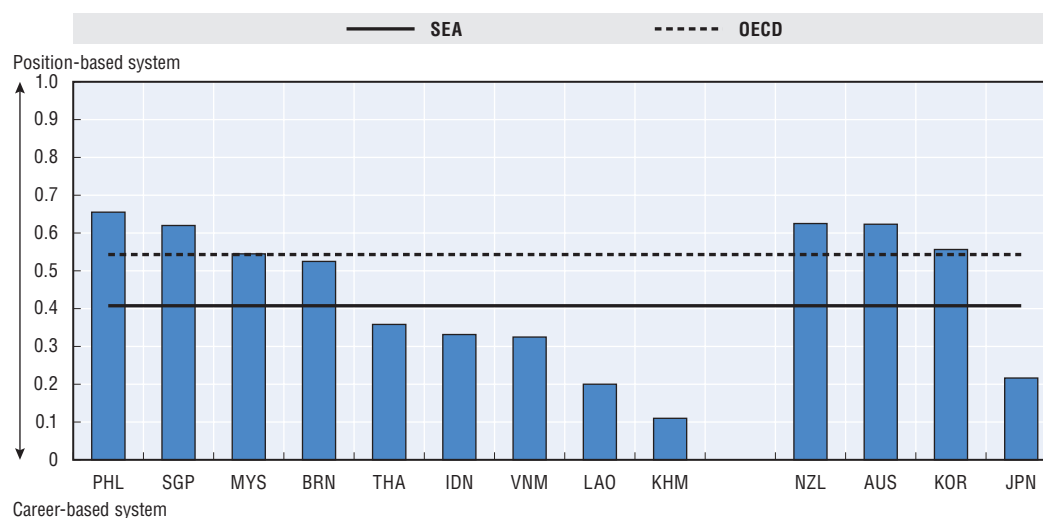
The terms public and civil service/servants are used interchangeably throughout this chapter.

This composite index describes a spectrum of recruitment systems in place in OECD countries, ranging between 0 (career-based system) and 1 (position-based system). It does not evaluate the performance of different systems. Data refer to HRM practices at the central level of government for the civil service. Definitions of the civil service, as well as sectors covered at the central level of government, differ across countries and should be considered when making comparisons. The variables comprising the indexes and their relative importance are based on expert judgements. The indicator looks at how one can become a civil servant, ensuring merit-based appointments at entry in the selection process, the allocation of posts, the existence of measures to enhance/reduce external recruitment, and the recruitment of senior civil servants.

Further reading

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

5.11. Type of recruitment system used in central government, 2018



Sources: For SEA countries, OECD (2018) Strategic Human Resources Management Survey. For OECD countries, OECD (2016) Strategic Human Resources Management Survey.

StatLink <https://doi.org/10.1787/888933841159>

5.12. Challenges in attracting particular groups of applicants to the civil service, 2018

	Groups of applicants hard to attract into the public administration		
	Senior managers	Line managers	Professionals
Brunei Darussalam	○	○	●
Cambodia	○	○	●
Indonesia	○	○	●
Lao PDR	○	○	○
Malaysia	○	○	○
Philippines	○	○	●
Singapore	○	○	●
Thailand	○	○	●
Viet Nam	○	●	●
SEA Total	0	1	7
Australia
Japan	○	○	○
Korea	○	○	●
New Zealand	○	○	●
OECD Total	7	1	23

Key:

Yes = ●

No = ○

Sources: For SEA countries, OECD (2018) Strategic Human Resources Management Survey. For OECD countries, OECD (2016) Strategic Human Resources Management Survey.

Data refer to 2016 for OECD countries.

StatLink <https://doi.org/10.1787/888933841178>



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