

23. Ageing central government workforce

The majority of OECD member countries are experiencing population ageing, with changes occurring at a faster pace in some countries (e.g. Italy) than in others (e.g. Estonia). Ageing is even more marked in the central governments of OECD countries, where the ratio of government workers aged 50 years or older is on average 26% higher than in the total labour force. Indeed, in all but four OECD member countries (Japan, Estonia, Chile and Korea) central government workforces have a higher ratio of workers 50 years or older than in the total labour force. The difference is the most pronounced in Italy and Belgium.

Of the OECD countries with available data, Italy (49.2%) and Iceland (45.5%) had the highest percentage of persons aged 50 years or older working in central government in 2009, followed closely by four other countries: Sweden, Belgium, Germany and the United States, which all reported shares over 40% for this age group. An ageing government workforce is not a concern for Chile, Korea and the Ukraine.

The central government workforce is continuing to age in the majority of OECD member countries with the exception of Mexico, Hungary and Japan. Ageing in Denmark and Switzerland has remained relatively stable from 2005 to 2009. Brazil and Italy present the highest levels of change since 2000: the percentage of civil servants aged 50 years or over rose 16.9 and 16 percentage points respectively. Ireland and Greece also demonstrated higher than average ageing during this period, and since 2005 the central government workforce in the Netherlands has also aged relatively rapidly (8.2 percentage points).

The expected wave of retirements could provide an opportunity for governments to restructure their workforce by decreasing employment levels and/or reallocating resources according to sectoral priorities. At the same time, however, the departure of central government staff could also lead to a loss of organisational knowledge and experience. Mitigating these effects could require human resources management (HRM) practices aimed at increasing the attractiveness of the central government as an employer, especially among young university graduates.

Methodology and definitions

Data refer to 2009 and have been collected through the 2010 OECD Survey on Strategic Human Resources Management. Respondents were predominately senior officials in central government HRM departments, and data refer to the core civil service in the central level of government. The survey was completed by all OECD members except of Luxembourg. Definitions of the civil service, as well as the organisations governed at the central level of government, differ across countries and should be considered when making comparisons. The terms public and civil service/servants are used interchangeably.

Data for total labour force originate from the OECD *Labour Force Statistics Database*. The total labour force, or currently active population, comprises all persons who fulfil the requirements for inclusion among the employed or the unemployed during a specified brief reference period.

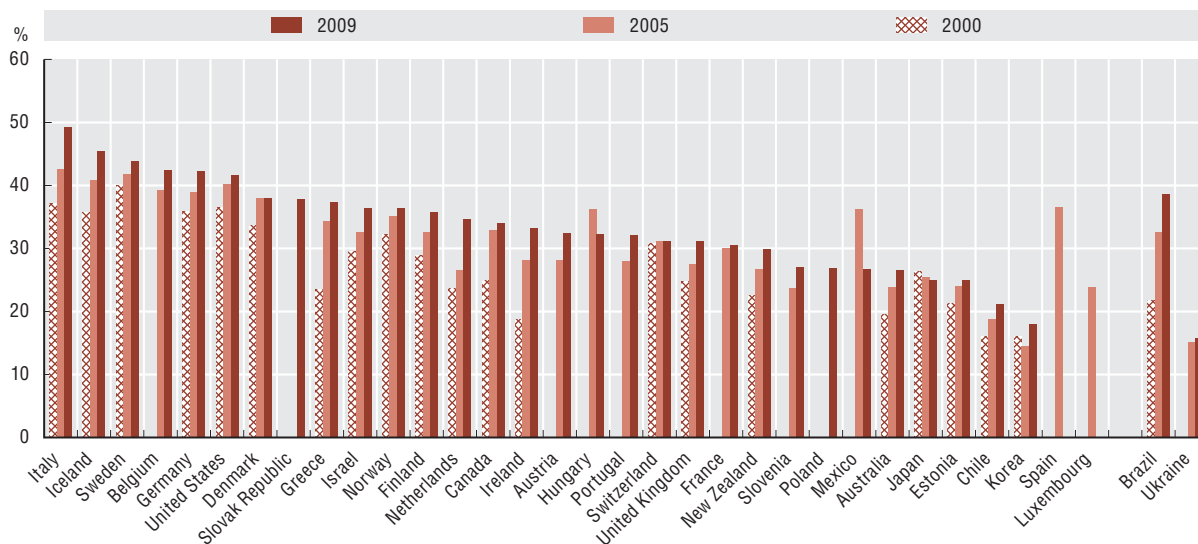
Further reading

- Kings, J., E. Turkisch and N. Manning (2007), "Public Sector Pensions and the Challenge of an Ageing Public Service", *OECD Working Papers on Public Governance*, No. 2, OECD Publishing, Paris.
- OECD (2007), *Ageing and the Public Service: Human Resource Challenges*, OECD Publishing, Paris.
- Pilichowski, E., E. Arnould and E. Turkisch (2007), *Ageing and the Public Sector: Challenge for Financial and Human Resources*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

Figure notes

- Data are not available for the Czech Republic, the Russian Federation and Turkey. Data are not available for Luxembourg and Spain for 2009. Data for Brazil, Italy, Japan and Korea are for 2008 rather than 2009. Data for Portugal are for 2010 rather than 2009. For Brazil, Estonia and Hungary, the data represent the percentage of government employees over 51 years old. For Chile, data represent the percentage of government employees over 55 years old.
- 23.1: Data are not available for Austria, Belgium, France, Hungary, Luxembourg, Mexico, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and Ukraine for 2000. Data are not available for France and Poland for 2005. Data for Italy are for 2001 rather than 2000. Data for Korea are for 1998 rather than 2000. Data for Switzerland are for 2002 rather than 2000. Data for Austria, Mexico and Norway are for 2006 rather than 2005. Data for Korea are for 2003 rather than 2005. Data for the United States are for 2004 rather than 2005.
- 23.2: Total labour force data for Israel refer to 2008. Data are not presented for Brazil and Ukraine as total labour force data are not available.
- Information on data for Israel: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932315602>.

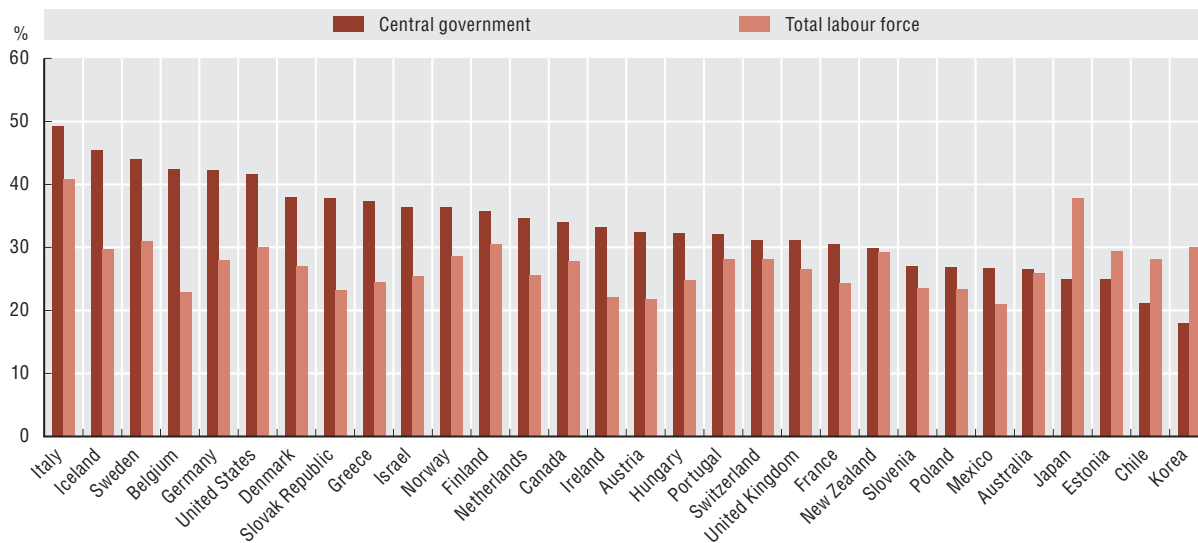
23.1 Percentage of central government employees aged 50 years or older (2000, 2005 and 2009)



Source: 2010 OECD Survey on Strategic Human Resources Management in Central/Federal Governments.

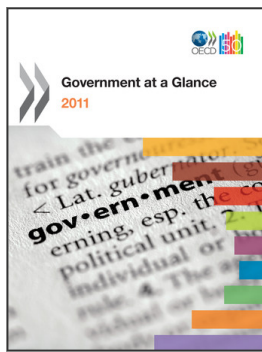
StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932390614>

23.2 Percentage of employees aged 50 years or older in central government and total labour force (2009 or latest available year)



Source: 2010 OECD Survey on Strategic Human Resources Management in Central/Federal Governments and OECD Labour Force Statistics Database.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932390633>



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