

The proportion of government staff employed at sub-central levels is a potential indicator of the level of decentralisation of public administration and the level of responsibility accorded to state and/or local governments. In general, the larger the staff at sub-central levels, the more responsibilities these governments would be expected to have for providing public services. While decentralisation is generally thought to improve government response to local needs and priorities, it can lead to differences between central and sub-central government interests and human resource management practices, as well as variations in service delivery within countries.

Of the 21 countries for which data are available, the vast majority have more employees at the sub-central level than at the central level. In general, federal states have fewer than one-third of all government employees at the central level, confirming higher levels of decentralisation. The range in the proportion of government employees at the central level of government is much wider for unitary states, from 15% in Sweden to almost 90% in Turkey.

For countries for which data are available, the proportion of government employees at the central and sub-central levels has been relatively stable between 1995 and 2005. Norway stands out as having experienced a relative re-centralisation of staff, whereas Spain experienced a relative decentralisation of staff.

Methodology and definitions

Data refer to 2005 and were collected by OECD's 2006 Comparison of Employment in the Public Domain (CEPD) Survey. Respondents to the survey were predominately national statistical offices.

The data represent employment in central and sub-central government-owned or government-controlled organisations. The data use the definition of "central" and "sub-central" government found in the SNA and generally include core ministries, departments and agencies, and non-profit institutions controlled by government.

Sub-central government comprises state and local government including regions, provinces and municipalities. Together, the central and sub-central levels comprise general government. Ten of the 21 countries for which data are available provided information on employment in social security, which were included in employment at the sub-central level: Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Japan, Korea, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and Turkey. Social security represents a small number of employees and is of minor importance as a percentage of the total government workforce.

Further reading

OECD (2008), *The State of the Public Service*, OECD, Paris.
Pilichowski, E. and E. Turkisch (2008), "Employment in Government in the Perspective of the Production Costs of Goods and Services in the Public Domain", OECD Working Papers on Public Governance, 8, OECD, Paris.

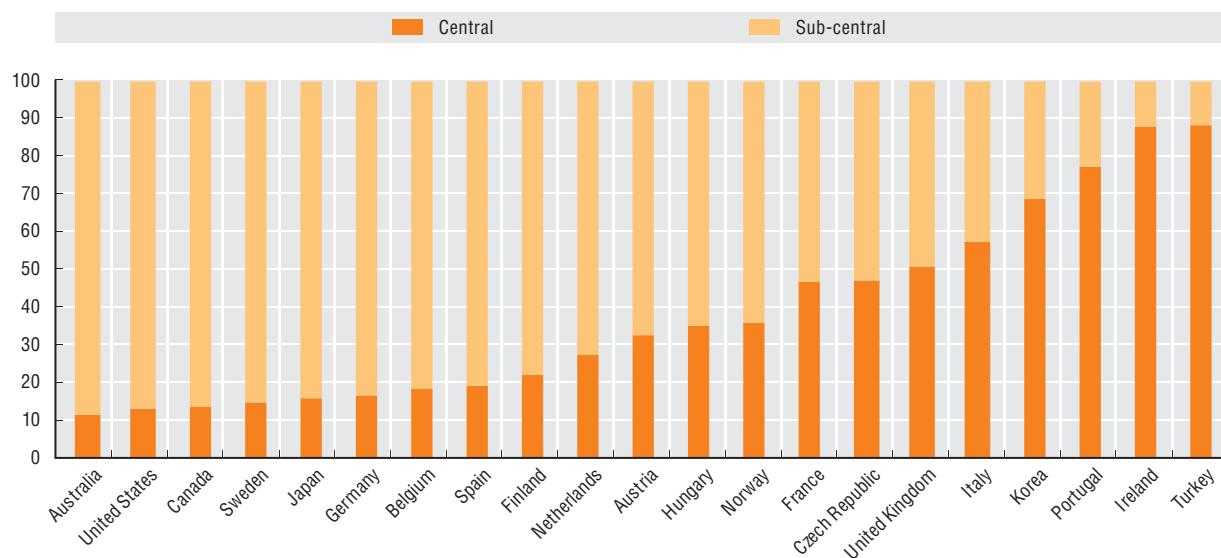
Notes

Data for Austria do not include private non-profit institutions financed by government. Data for France exclude some public establishments and all teachers are central government employees. Korean data include teachers and police officers at the central level (which account for 75% of the central government workforce). Data for Austria and Finland are a mix of 2004 and 2005. Data for Belgium and France are for 2004.

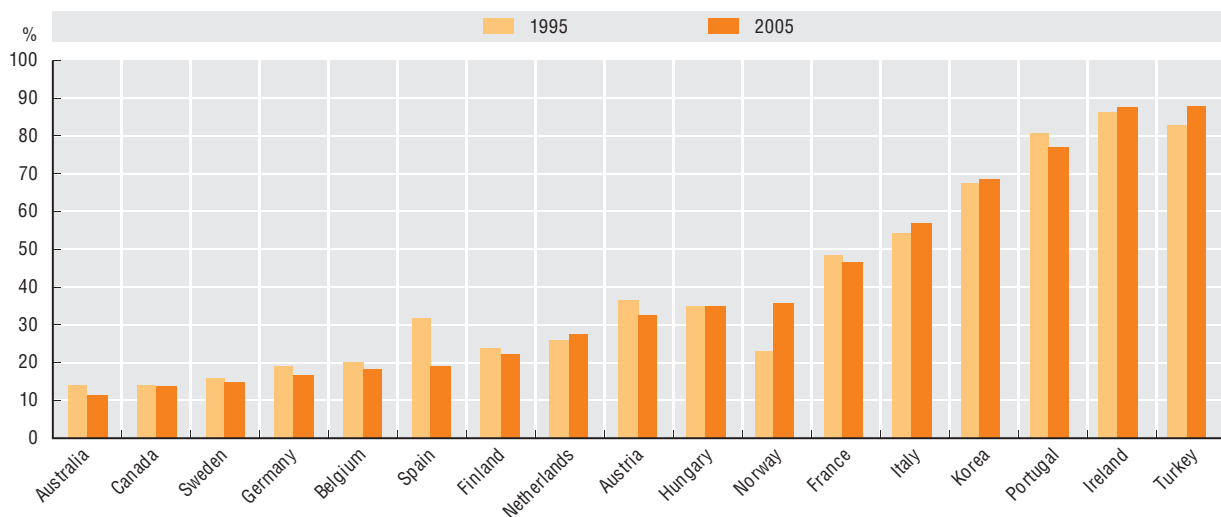
10.1: Data are not available for Denmark, Greece, Iceland, Luxembourg, Mexico, New Zealand, Poland, the Slovak Republic and Switzerland.

10.2: Data are not available for the Czech Republic, Denmark, Greece, Iceland, Japan, Luxembourg, Mexico, New Zealand, Poland, the Slovak Republic, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States. Data for France, Hungary and Norway are for 2000 and 2005. In Austria, public hospital employees were reclassified from government to public corporations (not depicted in graph) between 1995 and 2005.


10.1 Distribution of employment between the central and sub-central levels of government (2005)

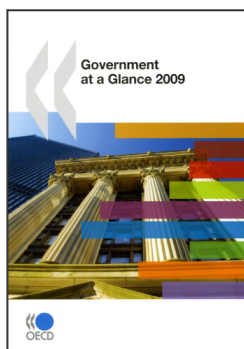


10.2 Change in the percentage of government staff employed at the central level (1995 and 2005)



Source: OECD CEPD Survey (2006). Data for Ireland, Germany and the United Kingdom were provided by government officials.

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/723627140760>



From:
Government at a Glance 2009

Access the complete publication at:
<https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264075061-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2009), “Decentralisation of employment”, in *Government at a Glance 2009*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264061651-14-en>

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