

Employee surveys

Employee surveys allow public organisations to measure and monitor employee perceptions of their work and work environment, which can provide useful input to performance-related indicators such as employees' engagement to their work and their employers, their well-being at work, and their perceptions of management and leadership. Employee surveys can also measure and assess important indicators related to diversity and inclusion, such as employees' perceptions of harassment and discrimination in the workplace. When common surveys are run across many government entities, results can be used to benchmark performance, identify areas of high and low engagement, and undertake informed and appropriate management responses and civil service reforms. When surveys are run at regular intervals, they can be used to track changes over time, including the impacts of reform measures.

The use of employee surveys in OECD countries is widespread. Only five OECD countries do not use the tool. Among the rest, the scope of surveys is diverse. Some 19 countries conduct centralised surveys across the full central public administration, 19 also report different surveys conducted at individual ministries/agencies. Most OECD countries conduct employee surveys at regular intervals, with 14 countries conducting annual surveys, while 7 OECD countries conduct surveys every two years, and 10 OECD countries undertake surveys more seldom. Additionally, employee surveys are a current area of reform activity in 10 OECD countries (including a number of countries that indicate not yet using the instrument) and an area of significant reform discussion in an additional 16 countries.

Another area of variation is the content of employee surveys. A majority of OECD countries use their employee surveys to measure employee engagement, motivation, satisfaction and commitment. Indicators of employee well-being (e.g. work/life balance, stress and work intensity) and employees' perceptions of management and leadership also figure prominently. Fewer countries use their employee surveys to assess integrity issues such as corruption or conflict of interest. Skills match, which can be an indicator of workforce productivity, is less often assessed. This could be a useful indicator to develop as OECD research suggests that the ability of organisations to put skills to use is an important driver of productivity in the private and public sector. Data from the United States suggests that employees

in the federal bureaucracy report significantly higher underuse of their skills than private sector benchmarks.

Employee surveys can also be powerful tools to assess and address issues related to diversity and inclusion. Only 10 OECD countries use their surveys to directly assess workplace inclusion, while 12 ask about experience of harassment and 15 of discrimination. Segmenting results of the surveys by demographic indicators and looking at variations in responses between, for example, men and women, different age groups, or members of minority groups can also provide valuable insights. For example, the US engagement index is analysed across five demographic categories and for specific "mission critical occupations" that are particularly difficult to attract and retain. In this way, the employee survey helps to develop better employer branding strategies to attract the right workforce, and more targeted HRM strategies to retain employees.

Methodology and definitions

Data refer to 2016 and were collected through the 2016 OECD Survey on Strategic Human Resources Management (SHRM). Respondents were predominantly senior officials in central government HRM departments, and data refer to HRM practices in central government. The survey was completed by all OECD countries, as well as the OECD accession countries Colombia, Costa Rica and Lithuania. 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 throughout this chapter.

Further reading

OECD (2016), *Engaging Public Employees for a High-Performing Civil Service*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

Figure notes

Information on data for Israel: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932315602>.

6.10. Scope and content of employee surveys, 2016

	Surveys in central public administration	Regularity of surveys	Aspects assessed in employee surveys					
			Employee engagement	Skills match (between job and employee)	Inclusion (of, for example, minorities)	Integrity at the workplace	Effectiveness of management	Work / life balance
Australia	■□	▲△	●	●	●	●	●	●
Austria	■	◆	●	○	○	○	●	●
Belgium	□	▲⊕	●	●	○	○	○	●
Canada	■□	▲▲	●	●	●	●	●	●
Chile	■◆□	▲△◆	○	●	○	○	●	●
Czech Republic	■□	△	●	○	○	○	○	●
Denmark	□	△	●	●	○	○	○	●
Estonia	■□	▲△⊕◆	●	○	●	●	○	○
Finland	■□	△	●	○	○	●	●	●
France	■◆□	◆	○	○	○	○	●	○
Germany	□	▲	○	○	○	●	●	●
Greece	○	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Hungary	○	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Iceland	■□	▲△	●	●	●	●	●	●
Ireland	■	⊕	●	●	○	○	●	●
Israel	■	△	●	●	●	●	●	●
Italy	□	◆	○	○	○	○	●	●
Japan	○	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Korea	■	◆	●	○	○	○	○	●
Latvia	■	⊕	○	○	○	●	●	●
Luxembourg	○	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Mexico	■◆	△	●	●	○	●	○	●
Netherlands	◆□	⊕◆	●	○	○	●	●	●
New Zealand	□	▲	●	●	●	○	●	●
Norway	■	◆	●	●	●	●	●	●
Poland	□	▲	○	○	○	○	○	○
Portugal	■	⊕	○	○	○	○	○	○
Slovak Republic	◆	▲	○	○	○	○	●	○
Slovenia	□	△	○	○	○	●	●	○
Spain	○	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Sweden	□	⊕	●	●	●	●	●	●
Switzerland	■	△◆	●	○	○	○	●	●
Turkey	◆□	▲△	●	○	○	●	●	●
United Kingdom	■	△	●	●	●	●	●	●
United States	■◆□	△	●	●	●	●	●	●
Total OECD			21	14	10	16	22	24
Yes, centralised surveys across the whole CPA ■	19							
Yes, administrative sectors conduct their own surveys ◆	7							
Yes, each ministry / government conducts its own surveys	19							
No □	5							
Yes ○								
x: not applicable		5	5	5	5	5	5	5
On an as-needed basis ▲		11						
Every year △		14						
Every two years ⊕		7						
More seldom than every two years ◆		10						
Lithuania	○	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Colombia	■□	▲△◆	●	○	○	●	○	●
Costa Rica	○	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

Source: OECD (2016), Strategic Human Resources Management Survey, OECD, Paris.

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933535069>



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