

Women in public sector employment

Equal representation of women in public employment is an important indicator of progress towards building a more diverse and inclusive workforce. When managed effectively, diversity helps expand the pool of talent available to contribute to organisational performance. A diversity of views and experiences in public sector organisations can lead to policies and services that better reflect citizens' needs. At the most senior levels, gender balance is an important indicator of the role that women play in decision-making processes and policy making.

The representation of women in public employment in OECD countries is larger (58%) than in total employment (45%). One of the reasons for this is that some key public sector occupations, such as teachers or nurses, are heavily female dominated. It could also reflect more flexible working conditions in the public than in the private sector. For example, in 16 OECD countries the public sector offers more child or family care arrangements than the private sector. In central government, women account on average for 53% of employees (2015). Greece, Italy, Denmark, Belgium and Spain have a relative gender balance (51% to 52% of women). Hungary has the highest share of women in central government (72%), followed by Poland (69%) and the Slovak Republic (68%). On the other side of the spectrum are Japan (18%), Korea (29%) and Switzerland (31%).

The extent to which women hold senior positions in central government varies considerably. The data shows that in most countries the higher the positions, the fewer women work in them. Very few countries achieve gender parity: in Poland, Greece, Iceland and Latvia the share of women in senior positions is the highest (between 50% and 54%). The smallest shares are found in Japan (3%), Korea (6%) and Turkey (8%). Iceland and Norway are the countries where the share of women in senior positions has increased the most since 2010 (by 12 and 11 p.p.). In Denmark, Portugal and Spain, the share of women in senior positions has decreased by about 3-4 percentage points. By creating policies that aim at gender parity in the most senior levels of administration, governments improve their capacity to attract more women into these positions. In 2015, gender balance was the main goal of diversity strategies in 15 European Union countries (of which 11 OECD countries). Hiring targets for women are in place in 10 OECD countries and 6 OECD countries have promotion targets for women.

Methodology and definitions

Data on public sector employment were collected by the International Labour Organization (ILO), ILOSTAT (database). Data are based on the Labour Force Survey unless otherwise indicated. Public sector employment covers employment in the government sector plus employment in publicly-owned resident enterprises and companies. Data represent the total number of persons employed directly by those institutions, without regard to the particular type of employment contract. The employed comprise all persons of working age who,

during a specified brief period, were in the following categories: paid employment or self-employment.

Data on shares of women in central government were collected through the 2016 OECD Survey on the Composition of the Workforce in Central/Federal Governments. Respondents were predominantly senior officials in central government HRM departments and data refer to composition of the workforce in the central/federal government by gender and position. The survey was completed by all OECD countries except Luxembourg and New Zealand. Please refer to Annex D further details on the classification and the definition of the occupations.

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.

Data on the share of women in total employment (3.10) and policies to support equal opportunities for women (3.11) are available online in Annex F.

Further reading

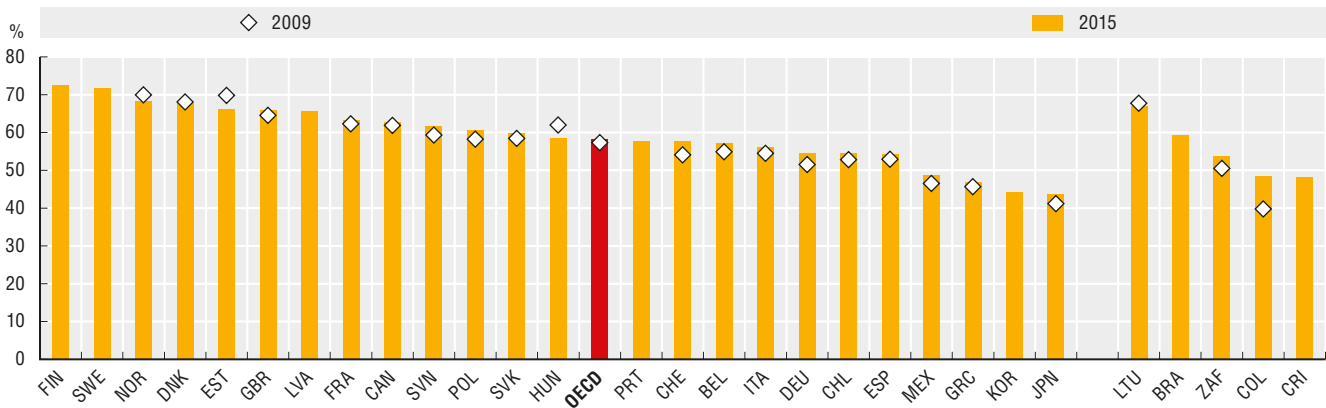
OECD (2014), *Women, Government and Policy Making in OECD Countries: Fostering Diversity for Inclusive Growth*, OECD, Paris.

Figure notes

- 3.7: Data for Australia, Austria, the Czech Republic, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Turkey and the United States are not available. Data for Denmark, Germany and Slovenia are based on administrative records and related sources. Data for Finland, Korea, Latvia, Portugal and Sweden are not included in the average due to missing time series. Data for Slovenia, Switzerland and Lithuania are for 2014 rather than 2015. Data for Denmark, the United Kingdom and Costa Rica are for 2013 rather than 2015.
- 3.8 and 3.9: Data not available for Estonia, Germany and Hungary. Data for Italy and France are for 2014 rather than 2015. Data for the United Kingdom are for 2016 rather than 2015. Data for senior management positions in Korea are for 2016 rather than 2015. Data only available for D1 positions for Austria. Category D4 does not exist in Denmark. Data are not available for D4 positions, senior and junior economists for Japan. Data for senior and junior economists not available for Israel. Data for senior analysts are included in D4 for Switzerland. Data for France covers employees in the state public service working in ministries in the region Ile-de-France (except administrative public institutions – établissements publics administratifs). A very large cohort of the Irish civil service does not fall under the senior or middle management descriptions and are more appropriately termed “administrative or operational staff”.
- 3.9: Data not available for Latvia, Greece, Israel, Japan, the Slovak Republic, Austria, Mexico, Colombia and Lithuania for 2010. Data for Estonia 2015 refer to full-time equivalents, and for 2010 to the number of employees. Data for Hungary for 2015 may not be comparable with data for 2010 due to thorough reforms in public administration (reorganising central and territorial levels etc.). Data for senior management positions also includes D3 positions for Poland for 2010. Data for Portugal and Switzerland are for 2011 rather than 2010. All figures refer to full-time equivalents for Sweden. Data for Korea are for 2016 rather than 2015.

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

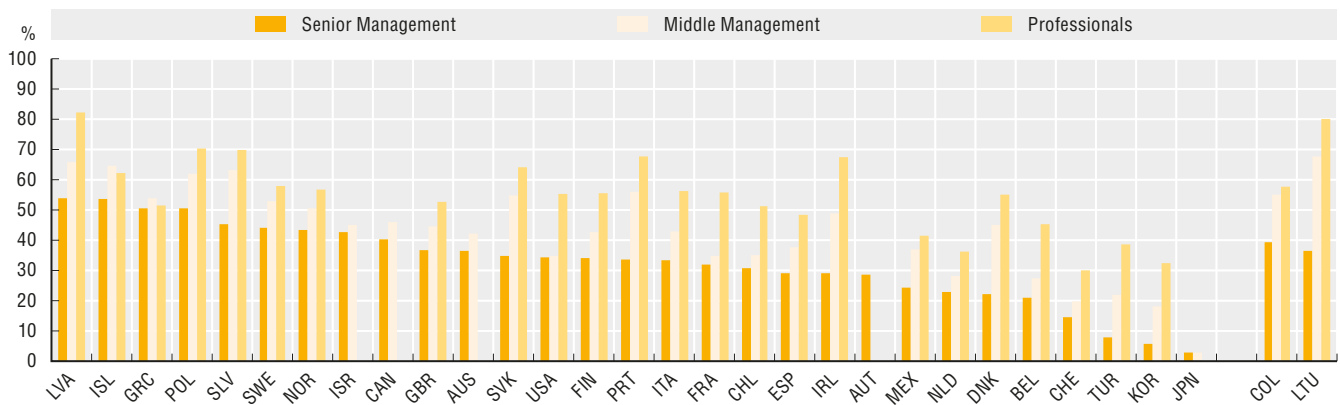
3.7. Share of public sector employment filled by women, 2009 and 2015



Source: International Labour Organization (ILO) ILOSTAT (database), *Employment by sex and institutional sector*. Data for Italy, Korea and Portugal were provided by national authorities.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933532162>

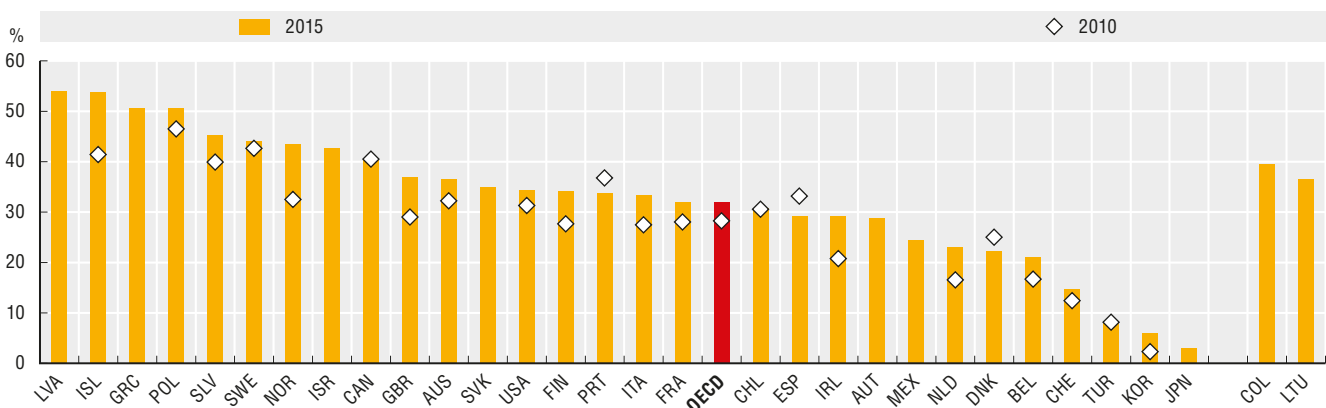
3.8. Share of women in selected central government positions, 2015



Source: OECD (2016) Survey on the Composition of Employees in Central/Federal Governments.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933532181>

3.9. Share of women in senior management positions in central government, 2010 and 2015



Source: OECD (2016) Survey on the Composition of Employees in Central/Federal Governments.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933532200>

