Public Employment and Management 2021

THE FUTURE OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE



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Foreword

Governments in OECD countries are among the largest employers worldwide, and invest an average of 9.2% of GDP, or 22.5% of total government expenditures, in the wages of their public servants. When managed correctly, this investment ensures that governments have access to the people and skills they need to deliver policies and services that secure prosperity and reinforce trust in government. This requires public employment policies that enable effective people management in government.

Public Employment and Management is a new annual publication that provides governments with insights on how to maximise the impact of their investments in public employees. Each edition compiles recent work undertaken by the OECD on the changing nature of work in the public service and the policies needed to equip public servants with the necessary skills and tools.

This first 2021 edition looks at the future of the public service through four inter-related chapters and a set of illustrative case studies. It sets out a vision of a future-ready public service that is forward-looking, flexible and fulfilling to a diverse range of public employees, and provides insights to help governments achieve that vision. Public service leadership is key to achieving any future vision of the public service, and recruiting the next generation of public servants with the right skills and competencies is fundamental to renewing the public service. Both of these issues are highlighted and illustrated with new data from recent surveys.

Public Employment and Management is co-ordinated by Daniel Gerson, senior project manager in the Public Management and Budgeting Division of the OECD Public Governance Directorate, which is led by Elsa Pilichowski, Director. Jon Blondal, Head of Division, provides strategic oversight and guidance. Chapter 1 is drafted by Daniel Gerson, with input from Natalia Nolan-Flecha. Chapter 2 presents expert commentary by Professor Peter Cappelli, Director of Wharton's Center for Human Resources at the University of Pennsylvania. Chapter 3 is drafted by Felicitas Neuhaus. Donal Mulligan drafted chapter 4. Francois Villeneuve provided data analysis and support. The OECD Secretariat wishes to thank the Delegates to the Working Party on Public Employment and Management and the Public Governance Committee for their commitment and support to this work.

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Executive summary

Public Employment and Management is a new annual publication compiling studies and articles on people management in governments of OECD countries. The chapters in this first edition contribute to a vision of what could be possible and desirable for the future of the public service to inform people management policies as countries emerge from the COVID-19 crisis. They present a vision for a public service that is able to attract, retain and develop talent that can direct new technology and innovation to areas of pressing public need, and respond quickly to fast-changing global circumstances. Although this work began before COVID, the crisis has reinforced the importance of these themes that rings true in new circumstances, and if anything has become even more pressing and relevant.

The first chapter sets out a vision of the future public service that is forward-looking, flexible and fulfilling to a diverse range of public employees. A **forward-looking** public service understands how the work of public servants is changing, and knows how to equip its workforce to get the work done. It is a public service that can anticipate the skills it will need and has the tools to plan ahead so that skilled workers are ready to be deployed when they are required. The COVID-19 crisis has thrown a spotlight on the need to plan for uncertainty and support public service resilience. In addition to emerging technical skills, cognitive, social and emotional skills such as the ability to learn, adapt and manage through ambiguous situations will likely increase in importance across all public service professions.

A **flexible** public service can move people with the skills it needs to the places it needs them in reaction to fast-changing circumstances, regardless of organisational or programmatic silos. It can stop doing things that are no longer required and shift talent to focus on emerging priorities. It is able to upskill and reskill the existing workforce to make use of new technologies, and it promotes a culture that encourages experiential learning, reflection and improvement. A flexible public service can also access skills from the labour market quickly and effectively. Finally, it is able to adapt work arrangements to the individual needs of employees – including time and place of work, and terms and conditions of employment. A flexible public service recognises that 'one size fits all' solutions and policies are obsolete.

A **fulfilling** public service will attract, retain and make the best use of the skills it needs by appealing to the motivations of an increasingly diverse public workforce – not only demographically diverse, but also diverse in skill sets, professional backgrounds, experience, and ways of thinking and solving complex problems. A fulfilling public service is one that understands employee experience by tracking data and employee behaviour. It uses this understanding to improve management and leadership to generate fulfilling work experiences in inclusive environments; to improve job design to increase autonomy and a sense of achievement; and to design employment policies that enable appropriately adapted support.

The second chapter presents an independent expert assessment of the future of work in the public service, by Professor Peter Cappelli. He discusses two different types of predictions about the future: the first relates to predictions based on historical data, while the second type of prediction, expert judgement, is used when the past is not a good predictor of the future. He considers current trends in human resource management in areas such as outsourcing, agile project management, and data science, and considers how these are likely to shape the future of the public service. He also provides a sober reflection on some

of the more disruptive claims regarding the potential impacts of artificial intelligence on the workforce, particularly as this may apply to the public service.

The third and fourth chapters each present a selection of comparative indicators on the management of senior level public servants, and on attraction and recruitment practices in OECD countries. The third chapter shows that, while most OECD countries use competency frameworks to focus on leadership skills, many are still challenged to develop these skills, assess them, and hold managers accountable for effective people management. Furthermore, the chapter identifies gaps in digital and innovation skills for leaders – while these are often prioritised by countries, they are rarely highlighted in competency frameworks.

The fourth chapter, on recruitment, shows that skills gaps are common in the public services of OECD countries. Most governments across the OECD find it hard to recruit candidates with specific skills, usually in IT or science, technology, engineering and mathematics-related fields (STEM). Some countries are beginning to use more proactive recruitment practices involving marketing, sourcing, networking, evaluation and adjustment to fill the gap. The chapter also identifies scope to improve data to measure the attractiveness of the public service and the effectiveness of recruitment strategies.

Taken together, these chapters recommend that governments of OECD countries take active steps to design the future of their public services. Governments will choose which tasks to automate, where to invest in needed skills and how to develop a workforce that is forward-looking, flexible and fulfilling. For this reason, the future of the public sector will be different than in the private sector, and will advance at its own pace, ideally learning from successes and failures in other organisations and sectors, and leading by example, to embed and reinforce public service values. This future will not come about naturally. Governments will have to take an active role in setting a vision for this transformation and making the necessary investments to achieve that vision, not only in technology but also in the workforce and its leadership.

1 The future of the public service: Preparing the workforce for change in a context of uncertainty

This chapter contributes to a vision of what could be possible and desirable for the future of the public service to inform people management policies as countries emerge from the crisis. This chapter presents a vision of a public service that is forward-looking, flexible and fulfilling to a diverse range of public employees, so that it is able to attract, retain and develop talent that can direct new technology and innovation to areas of pressing public need, and respond quickly to fast changing global circumstances.

Introduction: The future is already on our doorstep

In a context of increased uncertainty and disruption, public service workforces are surmounting numerous challenges and leveraging significant opportunities. Today's COVID-19 crisis has placed the public service at the centre of the greatest global disaster response effort experienced in recent memory. Public servants are being called on to ensure the resilient delivery of health services under particularly challenging circumstances, provide economic relief to businesses and families, and ensure that fundamental social services remain in place for those who count on them. At the same time, public servants are impacted themselves by the crisis, often working remotely with new technologies and implementing new ways of working. The crisis has sped up flexible working, collaboration and co-ordination across government bodies, and innovations from within public administrations. In many ways, the future of the public service is arriving faster than many had expected. This presents opportunities to review and renew efforts to ensure public servants are supported in the essential roles they play in society.

However, uncertainties about the future raise many questions in various areas of public employment. In the short to medium term, public servants will be called upon not only to help manage the health, social and economic impacts of the crisis, but to also find innovative solutions to help rebalance budget deficits in the immediate aftermath of recessions. The opportunity and policy challenge is to find a way to use budgetary pressure and high expectations from citizens to spark transformation in the public sector rather than making short-term cuts that freeze renewal and stunt progress, as was often the experience resulting from the 2008 financial crisis.

This chapter contributes to a vision of what could be possible and desirable for the future of the public service so that governments can align policies with that vision as they emerge from the crisis. The chapter builds on discussions held in November of 2019, when civil service leaders from OECD countries gathered in Paris to explore the forces that are reshaping the work of the civil service, and the employment policies needed to support this work. These leaders generally agreed on the following points:

- The promise of new technology to improve government service delivery will only be achieved with a commensurate investment in the capabilities of civil servants.
- Change is not new but is happening at a pace that requires constant reconsideration of what civil servants know, and how they learn and acquire new knowledge.
- Civil services need to become more flexible, agile and responsive in the way they organise, reward and employ.
- There are important new possibilities to focus people management on the experience of work, public service values, mission and the public good to attract and retain diverse employees.

Together, these common considerations create the backbone of a vision for a public service that is forward-looking, flexible and fulfilling to a diverse range of public employees. In many ways, the COVID-19 crisis has reinforced the importance of these principles that ring true in new circumstances, and if anything have become even more pressing and relevant.

This chapter presents a vision of the possible – a public service of the future that is able to attract, retain and develop talent that can direct new technology and innovation to areas of pressing public need, and respond quickly to fast changing global circumstances. By way of introduction, this section explores some of the trends affecting the future of work in the public sector: digitalisation, changing career expectations, and an ageing workforce.

Box 1.1. Scope and definitions

The terms *public service* and *public servants* are used throughout this report (as opposed to, for example, *civil service* or *public sector*).

This is because:

- In some countries, the term *civil servant* refers to a specific legally defined category of public employee, and this category varies from country to country. The term *public servant* was chosen as a more inclusive alternative, as the focus of analysis is all employees of central governments, regardless of their official legal status. In this regard, *public servants* may be life-long civil servants, or public employees on indeterminate or temporary labour contracts.
- The *public service*, as defined in this report, covers the workforce of a limited set of institutions related to the executive branch of the central government. In some countries, it may extend to subnational levels as well, depending on the legal arrangements for public employment in each country.
- The report is not specific to employees of the broader *public sector* who are usually covered under alternative employment frameworks, such as doctors, teachers, police, the military, the judiciary, or elected officials, although, depending on the circumstances, many of the insights in the rerpot could also apply to such employees.
- *Leadership* refers to administrative and institutional leadership. Leadership of elected officials is not within scope.

Automation can replace some public sector jobs and transform many others

Digitalisation is driving the transformation of society, the economy, the government, and the world of work. While the potential benefits of this transformation are immeasurable, many researchers also discuss potentially negative impacts, the destruction of jobs in particular, and the potential for such transformation to exacerbate growing levels of inequality.

Technologies will affect the way public servants perform many jobs. While most economists believe that new technologies will create more jobs than they will destroy in the long-run, automation is expected replace many tasks that people do today. The focus on tasks is an important distinction, as most jobs include some tasks that may be automated, and others that will likely not be. Therefore, the OECD's research estimates 14% of jobs across the economy are at high-risk of automation (i.e. they may disappear completely) while 32% of jobs may see from 50 -70% of their tasks automated and will therefore be radically transformed (OECD, 2019[1]). More specifically, routine manual tasks will likely be replaced by non-routine tasks performed alongside technologies. This trend is not new, as clerical jobs used to represent more than 19% of the public workforce in the United States in 1985, versus 4.3% in 2017 (US Bureau of Labour Statistics), but the potential scale of the impact could be unprecedented.

When it comes to public sector workforces, governments will choose which jobs to automate and which to transform – they are in control and set the pace of change. An important difference between the public and private sectors is that market forces will not apply the same pressure to automate. Other pressures, such as the expectations of citizens, and desire to benefit from possibilities of new technologies and fiscal constraints will surely exist, but the public sector will benefit from time to consider when and where to use automation. Alongside this planning, successful transformation will depend on careful planning and work redesign at the organisational level, as well as reskilling and upskilling strategies at the individual level. The goal is not to replace people with machines, but rather to ensure people are working in highest value positions, enabled by technology. To achieve this, workforce planning and digital transformation need to

happen in a joined up, integrated and inclusive fashion, recognising that these transformations will impact different groups in different ways. These points are further explored in the next chapters.

Diverging career paths and job expectations

In many professions, individual careers diverge from traditional paths. This may be particularly true in those high-tech professions most typically associated with the future of work, but this is also apparent in the public sector. The typical public sector career, in which public employees would climb the hierarchical ladder of a secure lifetime job, is already showing signs of erosion. Horizontal moves, pauses for learning and development, etc., will become the norm.

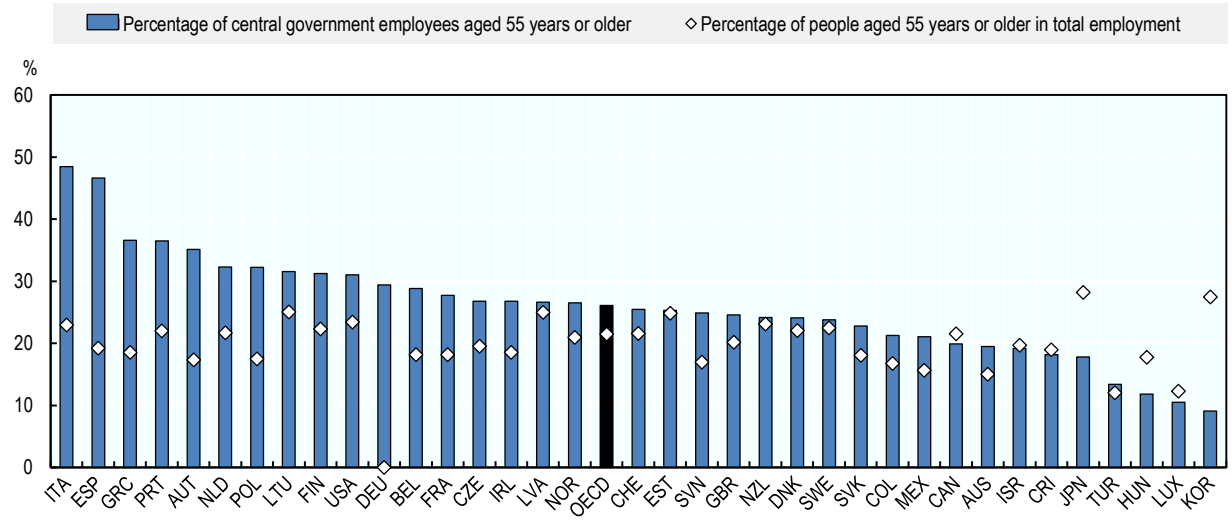
One of the widespread myths in this area is the idea that new generations of employees have completely different expectations than previous generations – that they want more independence or more meaningful experiences. A 2016 study (Gallup, 2016[2]) showed that when applying to a job, millennials and baby boomers[1] usually sought the same aspects – the quality of management and interest in the type of work. Millennials were more interested in opportunities to learn and grow than baby boomeers, which is likely a function of age rather than generation. This does not mean these generations are not different, but they often have misunderstood expectations.

Considering their size, public employers are very well suited to embrace non-linear career paths through internal mobility and the creation of flexible project-based workforces using “talent pools” of public workers to manage in-demand skills and fluctuations of activity. However, many OECD countries report lower attraction rates to their public services, especially for in-demand skills. This is probably the result not only of salary mismatch, but also of reputation and communication problems. There are also associated risks. For example, the use of non-standard forms of employment can lead to under-employment, lower hourly wages, worse working conditions. In turn, these can affect disadvantaged groups disproportionately, for example by deepening gender inequalities in the workforce (OECD, forthcoming). Some of these trends are on the rise across the labour market including in public services.

An ageing public workforce

Most OECD countries are experiencing an ageing of their population, translating into an ageing of their workforce. In many OECD countries, the share of central government employees aged 55 years or older is significantly higher than the broader labour market (Figure 1.1); and moderate or high austerity measures prevented hiring for several years following the global financial crisis in 64% of OECD countries (OECD, 2016[3]).

Figure 1.1. The share of workers aged 55 years or older in central/federal administration and general labour market, 2020



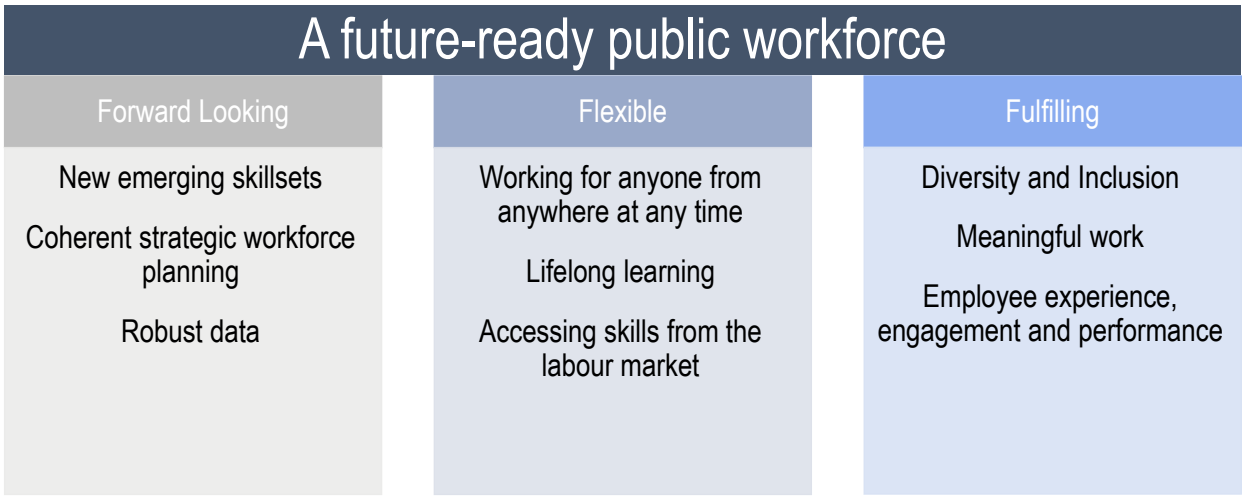
Notes: For data in central government, data for France are for 31 December 2018. Data for Hungary are for 2018. Data for Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Poland are for December 2019. Data for Denmark and Finland are for February 2020. Data for Colombia are for March 2020. Data for Korea are for 31 December 2020. The data for Hungary and Luxembourg are for people over 56 years old. The data for Poland are for people 50 years old and over.
Source: OECD (2020) Survey on the Composition of the Workforce in Central/Federal Governments; OECD.Stat (2020), Labour Force Statistics by sex and age.

The ageing of the public sector workforce will shape the future of the public service. Older workers may be more exposed to the risks brought by digitalisation than younger cohorts. Indeed, on top of lower levels of digital readiness than other segments of the population, workers aged 55-64 are less engaged in job-related training (OECD, 2016[4]). The future public service will have to make the most of the knowledge of older cohorts. New special roles as advisers or coaches, with flexible working conditions, can strike a balance between retaining the capacities and knowledge of older workers and the need for younger workers to enter the public workforce.

Conclusion

Public service workforces across the OECD are facing similar challenges and trends, and much uncertainty. Taken together, these suggest that a future-ready public service will need to be more forward-looking in order to identify the way the work will change, the skills and talents that will be needed and plans to get from a current to future state of readiness. It will need flexible workforce management to be able to access the skills it needs to meet fast emerging, often-unforeseen challenges. Additionally, it will need to provide fulfilling work experiences to attract, retain and motivate an increasingly diverse workforce. Moreover, it will need to do this in a way that protects and reinforces the public service values that serve as a foundation for public employment, such as the rule of law, accountability, objectivity and political neutrality, merit and protection from discrimination. The public sector cannot simply transplant people management from the private sector, but must lead by example. Each of these three themes are explored in the next pages.

Figure 1.2. A future-ready public workforce



A forward-looking public service

A forward-looking public service understands how the work of public servants is changing, and knows how to transform its workforce to get the work done. It is a public service that can anticipate the skills it will need and has the tools to plan ahead so that skilled workers are ready to be deployed at the moment they are needed. The COVID-19 crisis reminds us that the future is highly uncertain. This places a special emphasis on how to plan for uncertainty and support public service resilience. In addition to emerging technical skills, cognitive, social and emotional skills such as the ability to learn, adapt and manage through ambiguous situations will likely increase in importance across all public service professions.

Table 1.1. Forward-looking public service: Summary table

From	To
One dominant generalist profession (e.g. public administration, law)	A wider diversity of technical professions and skills
Task-based focus on jobs and skills	Focus on behavioural competencies and meta-cognitive skills
Hierarchical focus on leadership skills	Generalised distribution of leadership skills
Rigid operational planning processes	Strategic planning with flexible operational processes
Rudimentary workforce data	Complex workforce data used for management decision making

Emerging skillsets

The OECD has done extensive research on workforce skills in general (OECD, 2019[5]) and public service skills more specifically (OECD, 2017[6]). The 2017 report on Skills for a High Performing Civil Service identifies four ways the civil service workforce delivers public value, and some of the emerging skills associated to each:

- **Policy advice and analysis**: Civil servants work with elected officials to inform policy development. New technologies, a growing body of policy-relevant research, and a diversity of citizen perspectives demand new skills for effective and timely policy advice. Emerging skillsets in this area include the use of foresight techniques, experimental policy design, data-driven policy development, open policy making, design and systems thinking.
- **Service delivery and citizen engagement**: Civil servants work directly with citizens and users of government services. New skills are required for civil servants to effectively engage citizens and co-create better services. Emerging skillsets in this area include nudging, social media management, prototyping with the public, crowdsourcing, challenge prizes, digital services and user analytics.
- **Commissioning and contracting**: Not all public services are delivered directly by public servants. Governments increasingly engage third parties for the delivery of services. This requires skills to design, oversee and manage commissioned arrangements with other organisations. Emerging skillsets in this area include using commissioning to achieve secondary objectives (e.g. environmental, social, etc.), agile product development, social finance, impact investing, and the design of social impact bonds.
- **Managing networks**: Civil servants and governments are required to work across organisational boundaries to address complex challenges. This demands skills to convene, collaborate and develop shared understanding through communication, trust and mutual commitment. Emerging skillsets in this area include incubating social innovation, leveraging government as a platform, building partnerships around open government data and systems approaches to public problems.

Two additional categories of skills will be fundamental enablers of the emerging skills identified above. First, a digital future requires a workforce with digital skills. The second category is the cognitive, social and emotional skills that render people effective in their work, and that are foreseen to become even more prominent in a future where increased automation takes over many of the routine tasks previous performed by public servants. These are explored in turn.

Digital skills

Digitalisation creates an opportunity to reconsider the work of civil servants and focus it on innovation, transformation and value-added effort. In this context, public services will likely need to appeal to different skillsets than in the past. In a 2020 survey conducted by the OECD, a large majority of countries identified significant challenges in attracting people to their central public administration with skills in digital, data and STEM (Science Technology Engineering, and Math) areas; followed by senior level leaders and managers.

In a recent analysis, the OECD (OECD, 2021[7]) argues that the digital transformation of the public sector cannot be carried out by the "IT department" alone. All civil servants in a digital government require a multi-faceted understanding of the potential for digital, data and technology to transform the functioning of government and better meet the needs of the public. The OECD identifies a foundational set of competencies for digital government that go beyond basic digital literacy and the ability to use digital tools. These competencies are discussed across the following five areas:

1. *The potential of digital transformation*: establishing a shared vision and mindset across the public sector for the possibilities provided by digital and data to respond to the needs of the public.
2. *Understanding users and their needs*: identifying service users, understanding the extent to which needs are being met and how to reconfigure or redesign a better approach.
3. *Collaborating for iterative delivery*: involving the public as early and often as possible, to ensure service design and delivery reflects their needs; and appreciating the benefits of open source code and 'working in the open'.
4. *Trustworthy use of data and technology*: Managing information and digital security and data handling or processing.
5. *Data-driven government*: understanding the potential for applying data in one's daily work to and equipping all public servants with the abilities to source data, carry out analysis and define actionable metrics for measuring success, outcomes or impact.

In addition to these baseline skillsets, a forward-looking public service will also require investments in digital specialisations. These specialisations, outlined in Box 1.2 go beyond many public servants' perceptions of the traditional roles found in IT departments. They include a range of design and management professions that need to be embedded in multidisciplinary teams with policy and service delivery experts to redesign digital services. While these skills do not apply to all civil servants, managers of services will need to understand their application and how to access them as they integrate digital services into their delivery channels. Given that women are underrepresented in digital jobs in OECD countries, it is important to consider this dimension and make extra efforts to reach these under-represented groups (OECD, 2021[7]).

Box 1.2. Digital Government Professionals

A digital government will need to draw on multi-disciplinary teams composed of a variety of professions, including the following digital and data specialisations. Honing and developing the skills of each of these disciplines requires targeted training and a set of skills that are already well defined.

- User-centred design professionals include the specialisms of service design, interaction design, content design, and user research. At the most senior level they include Heads of Design and Research who provide strategic direction and vision as well as professional leadership for these different disciplines. Their responsibility is to embed a user-centred culture in the public sector and establish the importance of these disciplines and their allied roles. Proficiency in these roles concerns understanding the needs of users and presenting that research to others in the team to ensure a collective recognition of the problems to address in transforming government services.
- Service professionals are senior roles with responsibility for the user experience across product, service and organisational boundaries. Their activities are measured against user-driven and citizen-centric metrics and government outcomes and typically work closely with the leaders of their organisation, and in proximity to ministers. This role ensures accountability for the end-to-end user experience and combats the proliferation of disparate digital services and duplicated spending.

- Product professionals work at the intersection between the different disciplines in a team to ensure a balance between the understood needs of users, the technical feasibility of solutions and the broader organisational context. At the most senior level is the Head of Product taking a broad perspective across multiple products and services.
- Delivery professionals contribute to successful digital government teams by supporting delivery through activities that involve others in the organisation like financial management and hiring into the team. They are focused on the health of teams through encouraging and protecting them from external distraction. They will often use Agile or Lean practices to help the team keep a rhythm of delivery and learning that ensures value. At the most senior level is a Head of Delivery who is often responsible for supporting all disciplines in an organisation improve their delivery culture.
- Data professionals include leadership roles such as Chief Data Officers at the most senior level providing strategic direction and vision for an effective data governance model and ensuring the application of data builds, rather than diminishes, trust . Their responsibility for embedding a data-driven public sector includes acknowledging the importance of roles including data analyst and data scientist. The operational activities include managing the data collected through the activity of government, monitoring the performance of public services and drawing insights to inform ongoing delivery or new policy development.
- Technology professionals contribute several disciplines to effective multi-disciplinary teams . At the most senior is the Chief Technology Officer who has responsibility for consistent architectural decisions and the direction of technology practice in an organisation. At an operational level, there are different roles that may be needed including Technical Architects and Developers covering frontend, backend and operations. Technical Architects work with teams to ensure the resilience, scalability and security of the work that teams are doing and helping to make decisions that are consistent with the wider organisation. Developers are needed to build accessible software but to also support the wider activities of the team through advising on technical feasibility, maintaining and documenting code, running production services and solving technical problems.

Source: OECD (2021[7]), "The OECD Framework for digital talent and skills in the public sector", *OECD Working Papers on Public Governance*, No. 45, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/4e7c3f58-en.

The United Kingdom's Government Digital Service (GDS) provides an interesting example of how a government can map digital skills across a wide-ranging civil service. When GDS was formed, there was not a recognised digital profession in government with a defined framework of roles and skills. Civil servants with similar responsibilities had different titles, different pay, and varying levels of expertise. Box 1.3 provides a short summary of the work they undertook to map skills across the ministries and develop a common structure that has become the Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT) profession of the UK civil service.

Box 1.3. Developing the Digital Data and Technology framework of the UK Civil Service

The United Kingdom's Government Digital Service (GDS) has developed a framework based on a mapping of digital skills across the civil service. When GDS was formed, there was not a common approach to identifying digital jobs and skills in the civil service – different ministries and agencies had their own approach. This resulted in challenges for developing a workforce with enough digital skills and lead the digital transformation of the government.

In 2015, GDS began to scope the skills needed to improve digital services and conduct government transformation. To start, GDS created an outline of the defined jobs they wanted to be a part of the new framework. The team first agreed on the initial roles via user research and a series of focus groups with departments' capability teams and specialists. In total, 37 jobs were mapped to the new framework with the name "Digital, Data, and Technology (DDaT) Capability Framework." In developing this framework, the GDS team also tested job descriptions for gender parity.

With the jobs mapped out, GDS spent the next 9 months gaining feedback and building coalitions by co-creating the competencies within the frameworks with other government departments. At the end of the process, there were 37 jobs roles defined with skills outlined for each level of role. This created defined skills and attributes within each job and a more formalised career path that added hierarchy to the process.

In March 2017, the first version of the framework was published on GOV.UK as a beta to make them accessible to all across government and in order to continue to iterate based on wider user feedback. The framework was then rolled out alongside GDS' Government Transformation Strategy. One of the pillars of the strategy was to make the UK Civil Service the most digital civil service in the world. This involved not only skills, but organising in the most appropriate way to help drive digital adoption. By combining the Government Transformation Strategy with the rollout of the DDaT Capability Framework, GDS was ready to start realising its vision and help government implement the framework. This framework is now used to develop communities of practice, training and career paths, and to guide recruitment.

Source: OECD (2018[8]), HR and Leadership Strategies for Building Innovative Public Sector Organisations. Alpha version: https://oecd-opsi.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/HR-and-Leadership-Catalyst-for-Innovation-Capabilities.pdf.

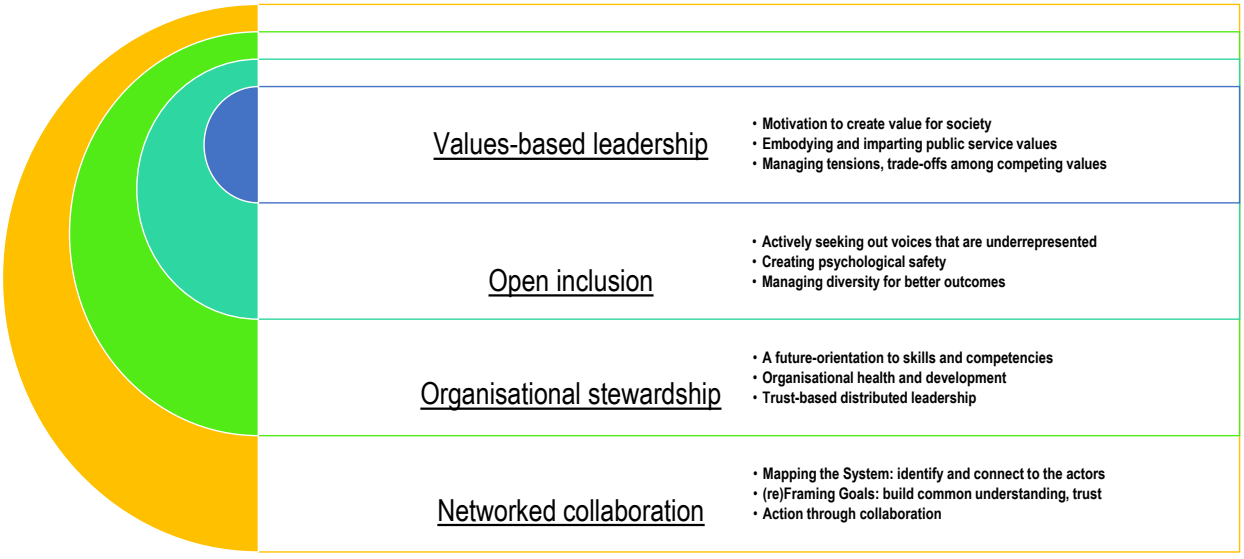
Cognitive, social and emotional skills

Technical skills will have to be complemented with social, emotional and cognitive competencies. Cognitive skills are sets of thinking and reasoning strategies that support, for example, creative thinking and problem solving. These also include higher-order skills (sometime called meta-cognitive skills) that enable learning, critical thinking and the self-awareness to recognise one's own knowledge and skills, including their limitations. Social and emotional skills include peoples' abilities to develop empathy, cultivate relationships, effectively manage group dynamics, and accept personal accountability and responsibility. These will be especially important in an increasingly diverse and multi-disciplinary public service workforce.

Adapting to fast-changing work environments and ways of working requires different sets of competencies. For instance, project-based work requires strong social and emotional competencies, to establish rapport and enable co-operation with different stakeholders over a certain timespan. It also requires metacognitive competencies to enable collective learning within a dynamic process. These skills are particularly complicated to develop and assess within a workplace, as they refer to emotions, behaviours, values and ways of reasoning. This is a key challenge for the future of the public service.

These cognitive, social and emotional skills are especially important for public service leadership. The OECD has identified four leadership capabilities (Figure 1.3) that effective senior level public servants are using to address complex public service challenges (Gerson, 2020[9]). Each of these capabilities focuses these skills in different directions. Although based on observations specific to senior level public servants, these capabilities are likely applicable to most professional disciplines in the public service, particularly those involved in multidisciplinary and project-based work. Leadership is not only for those working at the highest levels of the organisational hierarchy.

Figure 1.3. Four leadership capabilities

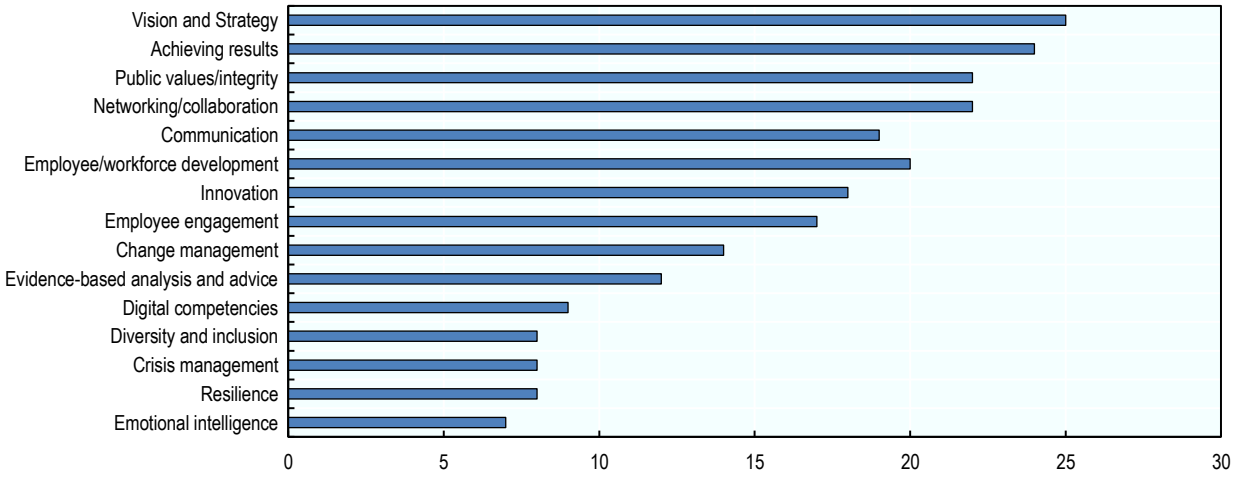


Source: Gerson, D. (2020[9]), "Leadership for a high performing civil service: Towards a senior civil service systems in OECD countries", *OECD Working Papers on Public Governance*, No. 40, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/ed8235c8-en.

In 2020, the OECD also conducted a survey of its member countries to determine which skills and competencies were prioritised in leadership competency frameworks (Figure 1.4). Competency frameworks set expectations for behaviour among senior level public servants and those who aspire to those positions, and they usually determine training and development priorities and criteria for selection. The results suggest that countries expect their public service leadership to communicate a vision and strategy for achieving results through public values, integrity and networked collaboration. However, many of the future-oriented competencies identified in the paper are less emphasised in these frameworks, such as emotional intelligence, resilience and crisis management, inclusion and digital competencies. This raises questions as to whether and how these competencies are prioritised in the development of current and future public service leaders.

Figure 1.4. Areas included in the competency framework for senior level public servants

Number of OECD countries, n=34 (2020)



Note: Original survey question: "Please specify which of the following areas are included in the competency framework for senior level public servants?"
Source: OECD (2020) Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability.

Global competencies

Another emerging skillset relates to the management of transboundary and global challenges, which cannot be addressed by one government alone. This includes big societal challenges that dominate discussions about the future, such as climate change, international migration, and the regulation of social media, but also more acute crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Increasingly, it appears that most issues that the public sector addresses, have local, national and international aspects that require even those public servants who work on domestic issues, to have some awareness of international activities, practices and processes.

From a domestic governance perspective, relevant skills might include anticipation and risk management, to prepare for, and address the domestic impacts of global challenges. Furthermore, many global challenges are highly complex and technical in nature, raising questions about whether public servants have or have access to necessary trustworthy expertise. For example, what kind of skills will public services need to harness the opportunities and challenges posed by global digital players?

Another related skill set is about how public servants engage with key stakeholders to best address global challenges. This requires skills and understanding of how to influence on the international stage. This raises questions about the skillsets required of diplomatic services and whether they are fit for today's digital and global challenges. But also how policy experts within line ministries access international bodies and leverage their knowledge and expertise to contribute to policy making at the international scale. It also includes skills to understand and partner with other governments, international private sector entities, and citizens.

Resilient public servants

Resilience is a key capability for the future, to address uncertainty and the sense of increasing rates of change. The COVID-19 crisis reminds governments of the importance of resilience, defined by the OECD as, "the capacity of systems to absorb a disturbance, recover from disruptions and adapt to changing conditions while retaining essentially the same function as prior to the disruptive shock". Since the

workforce is at the heart of public service delivery systems, resilient public service systems depend upon resilient workforce management (discussed in the next chapter) and resilient public servants. There is no one skillset that makes workers resilient, nevertheless, public services can focus on developing a workforce rich in skills that could contribute to resilience. This may include the following:

- **Wellness:** resilience takes energy and implies added stress when people are forced to work in new, often sub-optimal conditions, at a moment's notice. This puts a high premium on health – physical and mental – and organisational and management support for it.
- **Motivation and commitment to mission**: committed employees will be the first to find new ways of delivering the mission when the environment shifts around them.
- **Anticipation and foresight**: public servants who systematically take into account a variety of plausible future developments can design systems that are ready to withstand shocks.
- **Creative problem solving**: Even with foresight, not all problems will be foreseen. Regardless of an employee's technical expertise, creative problem solving can enable public servants to apply their skills to unpredictable challenges.
- **Learning agility**: learning to learn is at the heart of innovation, resilience and adapting to future change. Innovation is primarily a learning experience, and resilience is innovating in real time, managing through unforeseen crises, learning with imperfect data and information and learning from mistakes.
- **Systems thinking and collaboration**: resilience requires connections across organisational boundaries. This requires public servants who understand the machinery of government and complex service delivery systems, and already have the relationships needed to co-ordinate response with the different key actors.

Strategic workforce planning, data and uncertainty

A forward-looking public service requires coherent and robust workforce planning. In a fast-changing employment environment, with scarce skills and resources on one side and unpredictable future changes on the other, strategic workforce planning based on foresight capabilities has the potential to become a cornerstone of public employment policies. Good workforce planning requires:

1. A good understanding of the organisational operating model, transformation strategies and objectives, and the broader operating environment, including the socio-political context and the labour market.
2. High quality mapping of current workforce in terms of numbers, skills, performance, potential and diversity of the workforce.
3. Determination of future workforce needs based on factors such as the transformation strategies and objectives of each government organisation, changing skills needs, diversity objectives, motivation and engagement of employees (including differences related to gender, age, etc.), numbers and expenditure (not just in terms of salary, but also hiring, development, retiring, etc.).
4. Identification of workforce gaps, including gaps in profiles that are lacking and those that are oversupplied. This would have to be done with a specific view to each profession and each competence area, since no two skills sets are alike.
5. Actions to address the gaps – which require flexibility in the management of the workforce; a whole-of-government perspective on allocations across sectors and co-ordinated implementation approaches that work in lock step with other transformation exercises.
6. Monitoring, evaluation and accountability from the highest levels of management (not just HR).

Australia's Public Service Commission has recently launched a workforce planning capacity development programme that aims to develop workforce planning skills in all of its central government HR offices:

Box 1.4. Developing workforce planning capabilities for Australia's Public Service

The Australian Public Service (APS) Commission has prioritised the development of workforce planning capabilities across its federal administration in order to develop a more forward-looking approach to workforce management. The COVID-19 crisis underlined the importance of having workforce planning that can enable a better understanding of the workforce, its critical functions, and staffing availability for surge capacity. The programme under development is based on a thorough maturity assessment conducted by the APSC, and focused on the 4 core pillars:

- Capability: focused on workforce planners, leaders and managers, including building the capability pipeline for workforce planning roles
- Leadership: leadership accountability for workforce planning outcomes
- Tools and technology: designed centrally to support workforce planning in agencies and across the APS.
- Analytics and insights: data-driven workforce and labour market insights to inform better planning

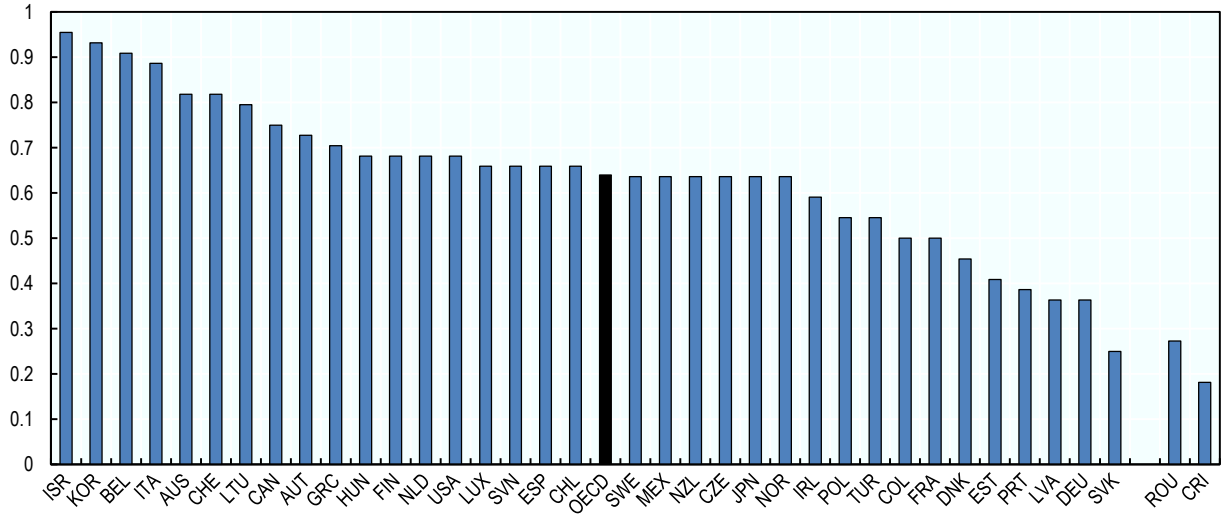
Note: For more information, see Case study in Chapter 5.

A forward-looking workforce plan should begin with a solid understanding of the current workforce – their skills, activities, potential, motivations and engagement. But how much do governments really know about their workforce? Figure 1.5 shows the extent to which the generation, collection and centralisation of administrative data varies across OECD countries. Many public services are generating and collecting more data on their public employees today than ever before. This can and should contribute to better workforce planning. (OECD, 2019[10]). This includes:

- Demographic and employee profile data can give a snapshot of the workforce. These data enable a better understanding of skill sets, workforce diversity and age, and ideally map available skills and identify gaps.
- Administrative data show employment trends and patterns that can indicate organisational health through, for example, job attractiveness, efficiency of HR processes, and mobility/turnover rates.
- Employee surveys data can provide rich indications of employees' engagement and satisfaction with their work and working environment, as well as the use of their skill sets, and employee's perceptions of their opportunities to develop emerging and necessary skills.
- Labour market data focus on key skills availability in the labour market and contribute to decisions around the way emerging skills can be incorporated into the workforce.

Figure 1.5. Collection and availability of administrative human resources data in central government, 2020

Degree to which administrative human resources (HR) data is collected and made available by the central government



Note: This indicator was first developed in 2016, and updated in 2020. More information on the methodology available at https://www.oecd.org/gov/survey-on-strategic-human-resources-management-theoretical-framework-2016.pdf.
Source: OECD (2020), Survey of the composition of the central/federal public administration workforce.

Using the data to inform workforce planning requires increasingly sophisticated people analytics – bringing all the data areas listed above together to form a deeper understanding of workforce strengths, gaps, and trends. For example, people analytics can help to understand:

- current workforce strengths and gaps by providing a granular understanding of employees in posts and the skills they possess, their likelihood to stay or advance, and the general quality and quantity of their work output.
- future workforce needs and gap analysis by mapping employees to (future predicted) activity levels, benchmarking with other organisations, forecasting based on past trends and workforce modelling, workflow transformation analysis (e.g. when implementing new digital tools), and informing scenario planning.
- actions to address future needs by assessing the availability of needed skills in the labour market and determining potential attractiveness, cost-benefit analysis of recruiting versus developing skills in-house, developing reskilling plans to move employees from one area to another, conducting risk analysis on various options.

However, most countries struggle to use workforce data effectively. They lack the skills and capabilities to conduct scientific analysis, to drive insights and proactively use HR data for better management decision making and HRM policy development. ‘Data scientist’ is not yet a common job profile within HR departments in the public sector. The Korean government is taking active steps to address this problem (Box 1.5).

Box 1.5. Data-driven Human Resource Management in Korea

Many of OECD countries have leveraged digital systems and improved digital capabilities in order to respond to the COVID-19 crisis and prepare for the future of work. The Korean government is one of the leading countries that has established and implemented strategic policies for digital HRM. The Korean Government's standardised electronic HRM system supports government-wide personnel administration and personnel policy tasks of the Ministry of Personnel Management, by digitising the overall personnel administration from recruitment to retirement. Various data and statistics available in this system are used for personnel policy making such as diversity management, placement of personnel in the right place and human resource development.

Moreover, the Korean government has also improved digital skills and capabilities of public officials through recruitment and training. A public position category for data-based public administration in the government has been newly created in 2020. The Korean government has recruited digital talents, such as the Director of the Big data & Statistics Division in the Statistics Korea (KOSTAT) and the Director of the Big Data Analytics Division in the Ministry of the Interior and Safety (MOIS), through headhunting or career competition recruitment. The Korean government provides various education programmes related to digital literacy, AI and big data, co-operating with the Korea Advanced Institute of Science & Technology (KAIST), in order to foster talents who lead digital government transformation. The Korean government also operates an e-learning platform for government employees with courses available anytime and anywhere.

Note: For more information, see the case study in Chapter 5.

Digitalisation presents specific and unique challenges that need to be addressed by workforce planning. Technology enables the automation of tasks (mostly routine and manual for now) conducted by humans, and therefore any transformation plan that contains these technologies needs to be accompanied by a careful workforce plan that identifies the tasks that will disappear and redesigns jobs around those that will stay. It must also include analysis of the changing numbers of employees needed to do the redesigned job, and plans for those who will no longer be required to help them move to new jobs (see more in the discussion on reskilling in the next chapter). Israel's civil service commission has been developing a method to do this (Box 1.6)

Box 1.6. Planning for the impacts of automation in Israel's civil service

In 2017, the Israeli Civil Service Commission (CSC) began a project to identify roles and functions across the Israeli civil service at risk of substantial change. The purpose was to develop a methodology to enable line Ministries and agencies to understand where and how broad labour market, technological and socio-economic changes could affect their workforce. The CSC built a workforce mapping model based on human capital research and existing people analytics data. The outcome was a tool to classify jobs in individual Ministries and line agencies according to their risk of change. The CSC worked with Ministries on the results of the mapping to develop workforce management strategies. Over time, the project is expected to provide greater clarity to the leadership of the Israeli public sector on how their staff and organisations will be affected by change.

Note: For more information see case study in Chapter 5.

Furthermore, the recent crisis illustrates that workforce planning should not give a false sense of security over a future that is increasingly uncertain and difficult to predict – there is a risk that overly rigid workforce planning systems could act as constraints to the kind of flexibility needed in times to respond to uncertainty. Rather strategic workforce planning can be used to plan for a resilient workforce and to build up better data on the workforce that can be leveraged in moments of crisis. Indeed this was part of the motivation for Australia's investment in their workforce planning capacity development programme (Box 1.4). Planning for an uncertain future could include:

- Planning in two time perspectives: In the longer-term, a strategic plan should be aligned to a vision of the kinds of public service needed in the future. It also requires shorter-term operational HR planning that is revised and recalibrated regularly to adjust to ensure responsiveness to unforeseen changes in the operating environment.
- Workforce data can help manage uncertainty, providing a better view of skills availability in times of crisis.
- Scenario planning is a well-developed tool to map various plausible futures and inform plans that take these into account.
- Workforce planning can also be used to identify potential flexibilities in the workforce, including talent pools for surge capacity when needed, mobility tools to link internal supply to demand in emergency situations, and the identification of essential functions and jobs that can be done at a distance, and the supports needed.
- Finally, workforce planning for uncertainty should include investments in resilience skills as discussed above.

A flexible public service

A flexible public service can move people with the skills it needs to the places it needs them in reaction to fast changing circumstances, regardless of organisational or programmatic silos. It can stop doing things that are no longer needed and move that talent to places that are emerging priorities. It is able to upskill and reskill the existing workforce to make use of new technologies and respond to new challenges, and it promotes a culture that encourages experiential learning, reflection and improvement. A flexible public service can also access skills from the labour market quickly and effectively. Finally, it recognises the individuality of public servants – that each comes with their own sets of skills, knowledge, personal lives, and needs. This flexibility means that the public service is able to provide work arrangements that reflect these – including time and place of work, and terms and conditions of employment. A flexible public service recognises that 'one size fits all' solutions and policies are of the past.

Table 1.2. Flexible public service: Summary table

From	To
Working for one specific unit within a hierarchical organisation	Working for the government as a whole, prioritising horizontal mobility
Working in the office, at set hours of the day	Working from anywhere (remotely) at any time
A professional public service, where most public servants have the same career path and learning opportunities	A public service of professions, where different professions are on different career tracks, with clear development opportunities
Little consideration of retraining redundant employees	Tools and plans to reskill the existing workforce
Focus on traditional training, Rule-based repetitive work	Learning culture, trying new things, experimentation, risk acceptance, learning from experience
Slow and generalised recruitment processes	Faster and better targeted recruitment processes
One standard employment modality based on lifelong employment	A variety of employment modalities that align to an increasingly diverse workforce and individualisation of employment relationships

Flexible ways of working: for anyone, from anywhere, at any time

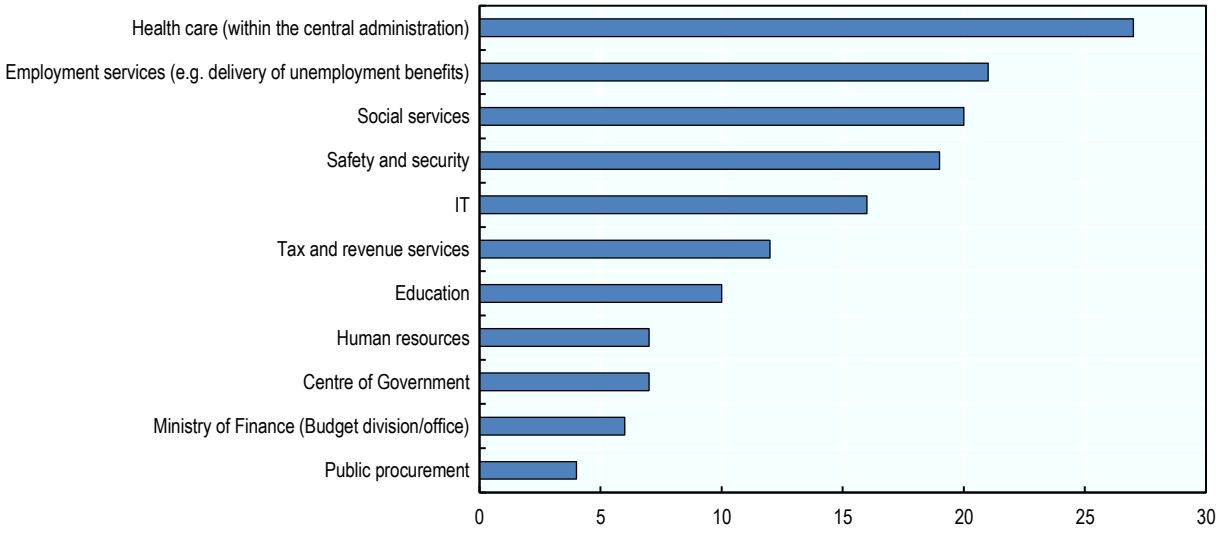
The need to work across policy and organisational silos will only increase. The problem of policy silos is already well known, and the OECD has launched work on delivering results across organisations. However, public employment systems tend to reinforce silos, as workers' positions are usually attached to specific organisations with vertical reporting relationships. This is a common challenge, one that is often addressed through senior management performance and accountability systems (see, Chapter 3, Figure 3.15, which shows that in almost all cases, senior level public servants are made accountable for cross-government objectives through either shared or individual accountability structures). This a can be a useful tool, however the challenge of resource flexibility remains: how to ensure that people, and their skills, can be made available to support leaders in achieving these cross-governmental objectives? This will be a key challenge to resolve in the public employment systems of the future.

One promising response is Canada's Free Agents programme, which was developed as a small scale experiment to address some of these issues. Free agents[2] are employees who are hired by one host ministry and then lent out to others who require their specific skill sets to develop time-bound projects. Free agents are usually embedded into an existing team and work with them to support a project for a period of six months to a year. This model has been considered a success for both the free agents, who enjoy working on specific time-bound projects in different ministries, and to the teams that benefit from their support. It should be noted that the Free Agent programme is a staffing strategy to increase mobility within the current classification framework. Creating a more flexible employment framework will involve important systemic reforms across areas of classification, compensation, terms and conditions of employment, as well as tenure and location of work. It also requires a change in mindset from employees and their managers.

Rigid silos also present barriers to resilience in the face of unforeseen shocks and crises. Those public services which already had flexible structures in place to redeploy staff for short-term assignments tended to fare better in terms of people management during the COVID-19 pandemic, which enabled a more resilient response. Figure 1.6 shows the scale of the resourcing challenges faced across OECD countries' central public administrations. Most countries identified pressing needs to deploy surge capacity to their health, employment, social and security services. Figure 1.7 shows the various tools that were used, which consisted primarily of temporary reallocations within and across ministries, and the accelerated use of existing hiring procedures. A minority of countries repurposed existing online tools to manage staff reallocations and hiring during the crisis. This underlines the importance of knowing where employees with needed skill sets are located and having the tools to redeploy them in short order. The experience of those countries that used these tools and processes will likely provide a path forward to a more flexible public sector workforce in the future.

Figure 1.6. Areas that required additional staffing during first wave of the COVID-19 crisis

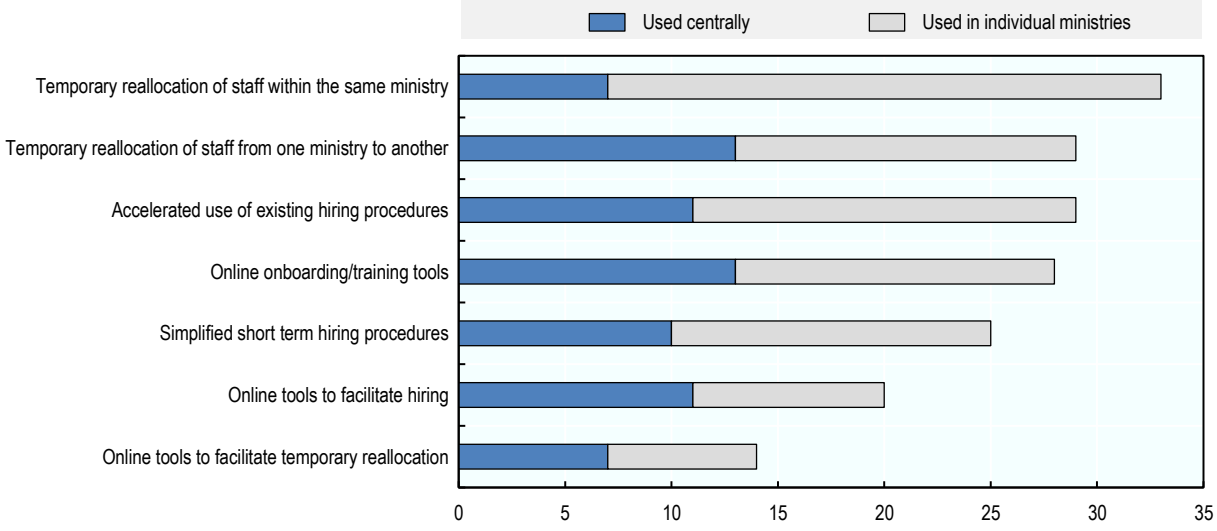
Number of OECD countries, n=32 (2020)



Note: Data were collected in the summer of 2020 through a special COVID-19 module of the 2020 Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability. Data refer to HRM practices in central government designed at the time of the data collection. Not all OECD countries experienced the first wave of the pandemic and potential restrictions with the same intensity or at the same time.
Original survey question: "In which areas of central administration did additional workload require recruitment or reassignment of existing staff?"
Source: OECD (2020), Special COVID-19 module of the Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability.

Figure 1.7. Tools used to manage surge capacity in the central public administration during the first wave of the COVID-19 crisis

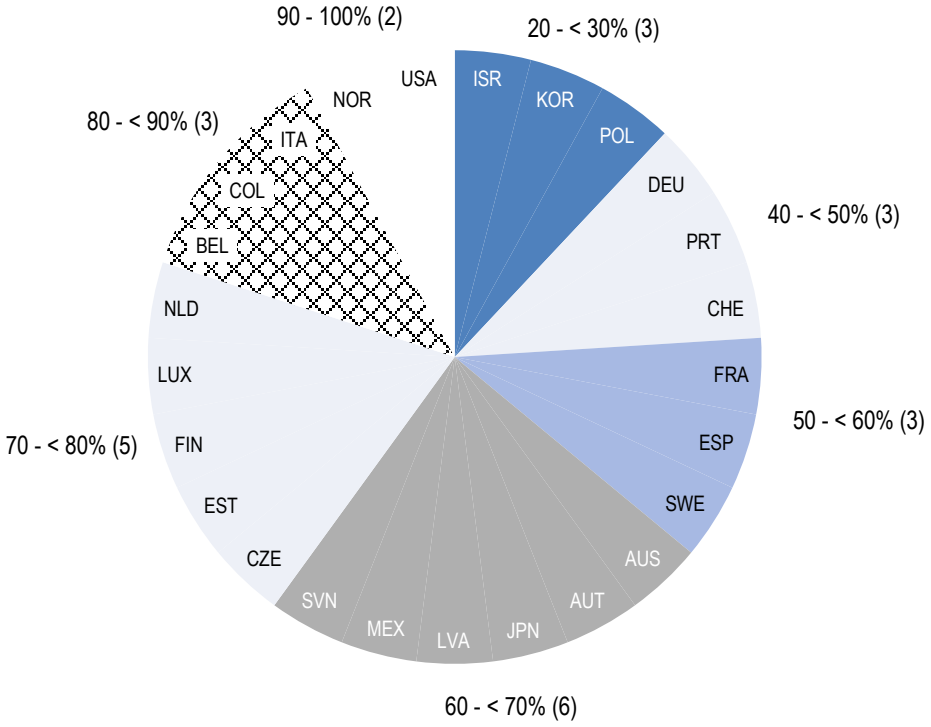
Number of OECD countries, n=32 (2020)



Note: Data were collected in the summer of 2020 through a special COVID-19 module of the 2020 Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability. Data refer to HRM practices in central government designed at the time of the data collection. Not all OECD countries experienced the first wave of the pandemic and potential restrictions with the same intensity or at the same time.
Original survey question: "Which of the following tools were used to staff the areas highlighted in the question above?"
Source: OECD (2020), Special COVID-19 module of the survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability.

Remote working is another important aspect of workforce flexibility that was implemented in unprecedented levels during the COVID-19 crisis. Most OECD countries reported that a large majority of their central government employees worked remotely during the first wave (Figure 1.8). Those governments that already had the tools, policies and practices in place to enable this were able to quickly and easily transition to maintain employee productivity and meet the needs of the moment. Furthermore, the same survey suggests that the vast majority of country respondents expected remote working to continue, and to embed this practice in the future operating models of the public service.

Figure 1.8. Share of the central government workforce who worked remotely during the first wave of the COVID-19 crisis, 2020



Note: Data refer to the highest percentage of employees working remotely between March and July 2020. Data for Canada, Denmark, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, New Zealand, the Slovak Republic and Turkey are not available.
Original survey question: "What was the approximate share of the workforce of the central/federal administration who worked remotely during the COVID-19 crisis?"
Source: OECD (2020), Special COVID-19 module of the survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability.

The COVID-19 crisis has shown that when conditions allow, employees can be moved quickly to work on high-priority issues regardless of their physical location. Therefore, it is possible that a future-ready flexible workforce will not be employed by any single ministry or agency, but rather by the government as a whole, and available for the needs of the moment regardless of their physical location. Before the crisis, there was already a trend towards an increasing individualisation of working arrangements for public servants. This included tailor-made arrangements in terms of working hours, workplaces, and sometimes work content. The COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated that this is not only useful for employees, but also for government response to crisis and uncertainty.

Developing skills in the existing workforce

Developing the skills discussed in the previous chapter will not happen without deliberate attention and investment in upskilling employees to keep up with new tools and developments, and reskilling for those employees whose jobs become redundant. Most public services do not use redundancies to replace their workforce with the skills they need to the same extent as private firms. Instead, they must rely to a greater extent on learning and development tools and strategies to prepare the public service for the future.

A flexible workforce requires a culture of continuous learning. In addition to formal training programmes, public servants need space for experimentation and learning-by-doing. In the fast-changing landscape of work, lifelong learning will become increasingly important in public sector employment policies, allowing people to adapt and enhance their future potential.

Upskilling

Regardless of their particular role and specialisation, public servants will need to upgrade their understanding, skills and competencies regularly to ensure they keep up with societal and technological change. This may mean learning to use new digital tools, making use of emerging data sets, keeping track of national and international development and good practice, and taking regular training to update their skill levels.

This can be achieved by developing structured professions within the public service that provide a career path for specific functions – HR, Data, Digital, Finance, Policy, Science, etc. In the UK civil service, there are 28 recognised civil service professions, each led by a designated head. Each of these professions clearly states the kinds of skills and training one should have at each level of the professional development path, including skills developed on the job and through training programmes. This can help to develop a pipeline and track skills availability across public service organisations. In this sense, the future may not be a professional civil service, but rather a civil service of many professions, united under a common set of core values and sense of common purpose.

Reskilling

Reskilling aims to help people transition from one job type to another. People who are doing work that will no longer be done in the future, due to social and/or technological changes, or who wish to change the work they are doing for personal reasons, require careful consideration. Effective reskilling requires an organisational and individual approach.

At the organisational level, consideration can be given to the job type that is impacted and jobs at similar skill level that are potentially suitable for impacted employees. Automation replaces specific tasks, rather than whole jobs, so a fine-grained analysis is required to determine which tasks within jobs will be automated, how that job will evolve (which tasks remain and how can they be reorganised) and what training and accompaniment is required.

At the personal level, it is important to consider the specific skill sets of an individual – their technical and behavioural/cognitive competencies, and their potential and desire to learn and transition. Motivation, coupled with the right learning supports, is likely more important than the technical skills they have. This is not to imply that clerks can become data scientists, but if an administrative clerk has excellent Excel and organisational skills, they may well find a supportive role to play within a data-driven profession.

Box 1.7. The Reskilling Toolkit of the United States' Office of Personnel Management

The US government has estimated that about 30% of work in the federal government today could be automated in the coming years. This does not mean that 30% of federal jobs will disappear with automation, but rather that employees will feel the impact of automation in terms of how their tasks will change and how their positions themselves will evolve to meet changing agency missions. To adapt, employees will need to acquire new skills that include technical knowledge along with new types of social or "people" skills. Continuous reskilling and upskilling also contributes to fostering a culture of continuous learning. The OPM's new Reskilling Toolkit describes what agencies should consider when deciding to reskill or upskill their employees — and how they should communicate those plans to the workforce. It includes steps and guidance for planning, implementing and evaluating reskilling initiatives, each from the point of view of managers/agency leaders, supervisors and employees.

Note: For more information see case study in Chapter 5.

The bottom line is that the reskilling challenge in the public sector has the potential to be significant and costly.[3] However, training for civil servants was subject to significant funding cuts in the aftermath of the 2008 crisis in 62% of OECD countries (OECD, 2016[3]). Indeed, it is often the first thing cut when public services look to identify cost savings. However, any transformation strategy that includes investments in digitalisation must also consider the commensurate investments needed in workforce development. The two will have to be addressed together, to prepare the public workforce for the future. The good news is that the pace of change will be set by the government itself, and therefore can be accompanied by a structured and deliberate approach to reskilling that works on organisation and individual levels.

Developing a learning culture

Formal up/reskilling programmes should exist within, and reinforce, a culture of continuous learning. The popular 70/20/10 framework, where only 10% of learning is done in classrooms, 20% through social interaction, and 70% by the experience of the work itself, is a reminder that a learning culture must extend far beyond the classroom. Experiential learning provides a great wealth of possibilities if supported and structured in a way that enables it. Often, operational demands of work reduce the opportunities to design learning into it.

Blackman et al (2019[11]) suggest the use of Bandura's social learning framework to think through the full range of learning opportunities that an organisation can offer. Social learning theory positions the workplace as the primary venue for learning, and the direct supervisor and teammates as the primary teachers. It also identifies four distinct elements of a complex process that adults require to learn and adopt new behaviours to build capability or respond to change:

- Attention – observing role models who exemplify desired behaviours – this is often a direct supervisor in a workplace, but can also be influential colleagues or senior management (although proximity is important, suggesting that senior leaders have less influence than direct supervisors in many cases).
- Retention – processing and recalling behaviours for future use
- Motor-reproduction – mastering behaviours through practice, self-correcting activities and constructive feedback, which suggests a role for work assignment, and regular feedback in informal settings, from the direct supervisor and other stakeholders when possible.
- Motivation – identifying clear benefits from adopting certain behaviours to motivate ongoing practice and eventual mastery

Developing a learning culture requires that all people managers have the skills to not only organise work, but to develop their employees. Managers need to be role models and coaches, providing space for collective reflection, practice with new tasks and tools, frequent constructive feedback, and rewards for learning achievements.

Accepting risk and experimentation

Managers also need to support an environment allowing for experimentation, iteration, and learning by doing, and provide safe spaces for group reflection on successes and errors. Too often, a culture of risk aversion limits public employees from trying new things for fear of breaking the complex rules that guide public sector activity, or concerns that failure will result in punishment rather than being seen as a learning opportunity.

Public services have, in most cases, higher accountability and transparency standards than the private sector, and these, coupled with politically sensitive working environments, produce additional disincentives. This puts an even higher premium on the need to take active approaches to support innovation and experimentation in safe and controlled ways; to enable the safe testing of new approaches at small scale; and to celebrate the lessons learned from testing new approaches, even when they do not produce the results that were expected.

Moreover, a culture of continuous learning is essential in the ever-increasing pace of change characterising the future, and for pathfinding in unforeseen crises. It is a fundamental aspect of resilience.

Accessing skills from the labour market

Recruitment in the future public service needs to be fast, and targeted to the right skills and profiles. The public sector across OECD members is facing growing pressure to attract, recruit and retain candidates with much-needed skills. Chapter 4 (see Figure 4.2) shows which profiles are identified as being particularly challenging to recruit – with data, digital and STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) professions most often identified. These professions are also in high demand in the private sector, against which the public sector must compete.

In a context where the needed skills, competencies and behaviours are only emerging, government recruitment should be strategic and targeted. Hiring specialists requires tailoring recruitment processes to attract specialists and assess their skills. Chapter 4 shows how most OECD countries are taking steps to attract needed skills. For example, France has been systematically identifying problematic job profiles and tailoring recruitment strategies to each. It also looks at how Governments need to ensure fairness and representation, addressing bias to improve diversity and inclusion.

Box 1.8. Tailoring recruitment strategies to specific profiles in France

Throughout OECD countries, the public sector faces direct competition with the private sector to attract talents and skills. In the meantime, in an increasingly digital public service, public workforces need the right digital skills to adapt to a constantly evolving service delivery. In order to tackle this issue, France has mapped the digital jobs that present current and future hiring challenges, and established an inter-ministerial working group to address them. This working group has established a 37-measure action plan divided into specific practices across ministries, focused on the attraction and retention of digital talents, notably by enabling the individualisation of human resources management practices, taking into account the uniqueness of the skills needed. To face this skills shortage, the French administration aimed to be more flexible in adapting to the needs of these groups which are used to participative work fostering innovation and working in communities across silos.

Note: For more information, see case study in Chapter 5.

The OECD survey (see Chapter 4, Figure 4.6) also shows which tools are most often used to attract the profiles highlighted above. Most countries have developed awareness-raising strategies, including presence at career fairs, and the use of targeted recruitment campaigns communicated through traditional and social media. Many have also developed strategies to reach out to universities to target potential candidates early in their skills development. A sizeable minority of countries have also developed more active programmes including headhunting and specific fast-track development programmes. For example, the United Kingdom's fast stream programme now has 15 different streams specifically targeted to profiles that are hard to recruit, including data and digital, commercial, and even HR specialists. A number of countries have also developed more flexibility in their salary systems to address pay gap issues for these specific profiles.[4] The use of short-term fellowships, where candidates are given prestigious opportunities to work on high-impact projects for shorter periods of time, are perhaps under-utilised and could be considered as tool for further development in the future.

Recruiters also need new tools to assess cognitive, social and emotional skills that are essential for building resilience: including learning potential, management and leadership capabilities, and collaboration. Most OECD countries still rely on interview questions to assess leadership capabilities (see Chapter 3, Figure 3.9). These are most effective when combined with other methods, such as simulation exercises and 360-degree feedback. The increasing sophistication of these assessment methods suggests that recruiters themselves may be targets for professionalisation in a future-ready public service.

Speeding up often-lengthy recruitment processes is a long-standing goal for many OECD members. While many good reasons exist to take some necessary time to ensure that hiring is done well, fairly and transparently, slow hiring processes can be less competitive – the best candidates may drop out of the process when they are offered jobs from others first. A small number of OECD countries indicate faster recruitment processes for specific profiles. Additionally, many OECD countries indicated the use of faster recruitment to manage surge capacity during the COVID-19 crisis, including the development of new online recruitment tools (Figure 1.7). These experiences could potentially be considered as pilots for reforming recruitment systems for improved speed, efficiency and accessibility, charting a path toward a future-ready recruitment system. This may mean confronting issues such as legacy recruitment systems, legislative frameworks, professionalising the recruitment function and empowering managers to act with greater discretion while managing risks of reduced transparency, accountability and quality. The example of Belgium's Ministry of Finance illustrates this opportunity and some of the challenges faced (Box 1.9).

Box 1.9. Moving recruitment online, in Belgium's Ministry of Finance

E-recruitment offers the public service and candidates a way to design and participate in a flexible and agile recruitment process. The COVID-19 pandemic acted as a catalyst for the trend toward e-recruitment. Following the Belgian government's decision to make telework the norm in the public sector, the Ministry of Finance initiated a pilot exercise to conduct recruitment online, first for internal mobility and later expanding to selected external vacancies. The e-recruitment process consisted a holistic process from employer branding to candidate assessment and onboarding. Initial feedback from the pilot highlights the advantages of e-recruitment such as increased transparency, flexibility, efficiency and participation that outweigh the challenges related to supervision of candidates during the examination phase, possible technical problems and the reduced possibility for non-verbal communication. The experience hints at the evolving skills needs of public sector recruiters to make e-recruitment work: pipeline development, sourcing, participating in virtual career fairs, digital marketing, etc. It also provides lessons learnt such as biases emerging throughout the process in new ways and highlighting positions for which e-recruitment may be more relevant.

Note: See Case study in Chapter 5 for more information.

Flexible employment modalities

In many OECD countries, public servants are traditionally employed through a specific legal status that emphasises stability and lifelong employment: this generally entails high levels of job security, stable but limited (seniority-based) pay and benefits, and a decent pension at the end, based on years of employment. These were put in place to ensure independence from interference by political authorities, and to identify those positions that exercised power on behalf of the state. From an employment perspective, this may work well for occupations that are specific to the public sector, that do not benefit from a high level of movement in and out, and for those that require protections, such as judges and the heads of law enforcement agencies.

However, the future of the public service brings a need for a wider variety of skills and backgrounds than ever before. With this greater diversity of skills comes the need for a greater diversity of employment models. Traditional public service employment may not be equally attractive for all profiles in the labour market – for example, some in-demand tech professionals may be less interested in being a lifelong civil servant. They may be more interested in taking shorter-term contracts (with higher pay options) that enable them to work on interesting projects with high visibility and impact.

For jobs or situations in which the traditional employment model is deemed unsuitable, governments often look to consulting contracts and third party providers. The problem in these situations is that governments often lack the internal skills and expertise to be smart buyers of complex products and services, resulting in wasted spending and lack of skills transfer.

However, these options are only two ends of a spectrum – lifelong public service employment at the one end, and service-based contracts at another**.** In the middle, there is a whole range of often untapped potential for shorter-term employment, project based employment, and prestigious fellowships that all can be used in cases where governments have shorter-term skills needs and want to find more flexible ways of integrating skills from the labour market. The goal is not to end traditional public service contracts, but to define when and where they provide the most value, and expand the range of tools available to access the skills needed, particularly when they are in short supply in the existing pool of public servants.

Flexible employment modalities can also enable surge capacity to address fluctuations in demand, including in emergencies. The COVID-19 response in many countries involved the use of more streamlined and temporary employment modalities in some countries, including the use of volunteers, students, and innovative partnerships with stakeholders, including civil society, academia and the private sector.

Pay and salary structures are another aspect of the employment package that could benefit from more flexibility in the future. Pay flexibility can often help to attract and retain employees with the skills discussed above. Employees also increasingly expect to be hired, managed, and compensated according to their unique sets of skills, performance and personal priorities. This could provide an opportunity for public employers to provide more individualised and flexible sets of terms and conditions to match, allowing for a more equitable approach to compensation. Compensation should be envisioned with a total reward approach, encompassing wage as well as other benefits the public service has experience in providing. From that perspective, shorter-term contracts could accompany higher pay levels since they carry less long-term liability (and security from an employees' perspective), making them more suitable to hire key skills from the labour market.

However, this complex issue can prove extremely challenging. While the public sector may be better able to access a broader pool of skills and have greater flexibility in deploying them, divergences across organisations without clear criteria and guidelines as to which contractual modality fits which type of situation could create unintended consequences, such as excessive or inappropriate use of certain contractual modalities, undermined stability and institutional memory (particularly if short-term contracts are used in an excessive or inappropriate way), inequities in pay levels between organisations resulting in internal competition and possibly wage inflation. Additionally, pay/employment flexibility risks exacerbating

inequities if human rights, gender (gender pay gaps are unfortunately well established and persistent in the public sector) and fairness lenses are not considered and applied, and could open the door to undue political influence in impartial public services. This introduction of further flexibility therefore requires clear and coherent guidelines, oversight and social dialogue with all the stakeholders involved. The degree to which private employment models can be adapted for public sector use merits further debates.

A fulfilling public service for a diverse range of public employees

The public service of the future will attract, retain and make best use of the skills it needs by providing fulfilling work experience. One of the main themes of this paper has been the need for increased diversity across the public service workforce – not only demographic diversity so that the public service reflects the society it serves, but also in terms of skill sets, professional backgrounds, experience, and ways of thinking and solving complex problems. Therefore, the public service needs to provide fulfilling work in many different ways, to different kinds of people. A fulfilling public service is one that understands employee experience by tracking data and employee behaviour. It uses this understanding to improve management and leadership to generate fulfilling work experiences in inclusive environments; to improve job design to increase autonomy and sense of achievement; and to design employment policies that enable individualised support - one-size-fits-all solutions are not the answer.

Table 1.3. Fulfilling public service: Summary table

From	To
One size fits all policies	Recognise diversity and individuality of public servants
Focus on job stability	Focus on purpose and meaning
Rules based management	Trust, autonomy, and accountability for results
Managers as hierarchical supervisors	Managers as coaches enabling change

Fulfilling work: Purpose and motivation

For work to be fulfilling, it should provide both a sense of purpose, and a positive work experience. A sense of purpose can be achieved by emphasising the mission, impact and values of an organisation and aligning those to develop a sense of employee pride. A positive work experience begins with looking at the working environment and aligning management tools to support employee motivation.

Public sector organisations are purpose-driven, and can use this purpose to attract, retain and motivate employees. Employees are increasingly attracted to job opportunities that align with their values and sense of purpose. Given the mission-orientation of public sector organisations, this should be a benefit. Indeed, in a recent OECD survey on attraction, most OECD countries highly rated a general interest in the public good, and the mission of their organisation (see Chapter 4, Figure 4.4). However, employees often appear to get lost in the bureaucratic requirements of their job, and express a sense of removal from the impact of their work. With increasingly sophisticated performance data, public employers can find new ways of communicating achievements and bringing employees closer to the impact of their work.

While purpose is important, the everyday experience of work also matters. Research shows that factors that motivate include a sense of achievement, recognition, the experience of the work itself, responsibility, advancement and growth (Herzberg, 2003[12]). Therefore, the future public service should emphasise these elements in the design of jobs and the management of employees. This has to be done by giving more space and autonomy to employees to use their skills in effective ways. It requires trust between management and employees (and between the political and administrative layers) in order to ensure employees feel some control over their work and are given the opportunity to develop in their roles. In the future, the public sector will have to move away from jobs defined by rules towards jobs defined by

objectives, autonomy and accountability for results; where employees feel empowered to test new approaches and innovate. Rules-based work is the kind of work that is increasingly easy to automate.

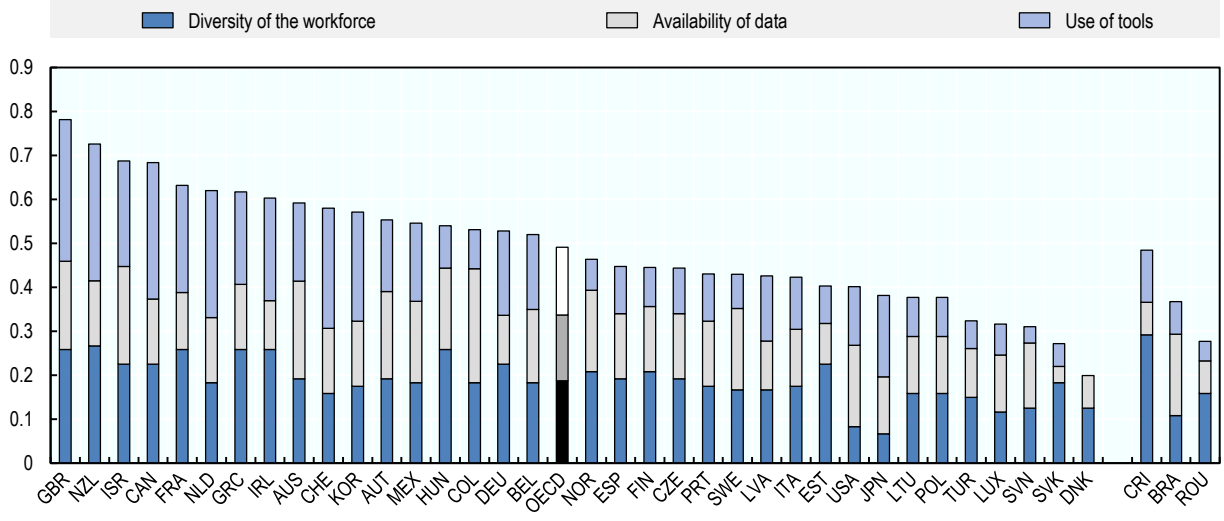
Managing an increasingly diverse public service

Diversity is a clear and ongoing trend in the public service workforce. While women's representation in senior levels has continued to grow, many OECD countries have extended their diversity targets and policies beyond gender. In fact, most countries report specific targets for people with disabilities, while some (but fewer) also include people from disadvantaged backgrounds, ethnic minorities and LGBTI in their targets and policies.

Many countries go further still, to actively develop a workforce that reflects the diversity of the society it represents, by using data to identify gaps and then using targets and active workforce development tools to fill those gaps. For example, 20 OECD countries have specific initiative to develop organisational culture and raise awareness about diversity and inclusion within their administrations, while 19 countries use specific outreach and communication strategies targeted to underrepresented groups. Some countries use special internship programmes (10 countries) or dedicated coaching and mentorship programmes (9 countries) to improve public service diversity and inclusion. These kinds of active interventions depend a solid legal foundation of merit, equal opportunity and protection from discrimination. This is captured in a new composite indicator presented in Figure 1.9.

This reflects not only a moral imperative to develop a workforce that reflects the diversity of the societies they serve, but also a business imperative to access skill sets that may be less activated in the workforce. Furthermore, diverse teams in an inclusive environment have been shown to contribute to innovation and better policy and service design. As such, it is safe to assume that diversity will continue to grow in the future, suggesting a great need for inclusive work environments.

Figure 1.9. Development of a diverse central government workforce (2020)



Note: Data for Chile and Iceland are not available. Gender data for senior level public servants used in the indicator only refer to D1 for Austria and Hungary, and D2 for Australia.
Source: OECD (2020), Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability; OECD (2020), Survey on the Composition of the Workforce in Central/Federal Governments.

Many of the trends and changes discussed in this paper have the potential to affect various groups in differently, if not managed carefully. For example, the trend towards digitalisation may result in more digital and STEM experts working in government, and these are industries which tend not to be male dominated, and potentially lacking in other diversity considerations. Trends towards increases in remote working and other flexible working arrangements may also have implications for gender equity, if, for example, they are used primarily by women. Or perhaps this will be the pivot that sees men taking advantage of these arrangements equally. Furthermore, any move towards pay flexibility and individual salary negotiations will have equity considerations that need to be tracked and managed carefully.

Managing a diversity of skills, backgrounds and career paths reinforces the need for individualised approaches to competency-based people management. While there is great value in analysing under-represented groups together, the concept of intersectionality is a reminder that individuals belong to multiple identity groups that can include gender, nationality, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, professional roles, family roles, community roles, and so on. Therefore no two members of any one group are the same, hence the need to diversify the criteria governments use to understand diversity, and also focus on individuals.

Managing diversity requires a greater focus on skills and competencies than ever before. Hiring managers, for example, tend to rely on proxies for skills, such as university degrees and/or number of years in a similar position. These are blunt instruments that often have the effect of reducing the diversity of candidates. People acquire skills in different ways, through different combinations of training and experience, and through various and divergent career paths. This suggests the need to refocus assessment tools on skills and competences.

Box 1.10. Testing competency based hiring to expand the diversity of applicants in Canada's public service

The Government of Canada Talent Cloud is a talent engine to recruit project-based employees with digital skills into government. It stems from the assumption that in a competitive digital talent skills market the Human Resources (HR) processes of the Government need to find new ways of recruiting to remain attractive. The overall aim is to optimise recruitment by reducing time to staff, improving the fit to team of the staff member and strengthen diversity and inclusion.

Instead of building a pool of permanent employees, it promotes project-based recruitment responding to the increasing need to provide employees with more job mobility and career choices. While the opened positions typically related to digital, tech and UX positions, more and more offers relate to administrative positions and HR, aiming to open policy, project management and procurement positions in the near future.

The platform consists of four different portals providing functionalities and features for the specific user:

- applicant portal;
- manager portal;
- human resources portal; and
- indigenous talent portal (at time of publication, this portal had not been released yet).

To strengthen inclusion, indigenous communities and underrepresented communities were involved in the design process of the portal, such as language used, platform configuration and overall process. This ensured the feeling of inclusion throughout the application process to encourage application from underrepresented groups.

Talent Cloud encourages hiring authorities to prioritise experiences instead of education which may lead to greater diversity and backgrounds by not discriminating against certain education backgrounds. People are chosen based on their hard and soft skills, regardless of their previous professional or academic background. Overall, the staffing process via Talent Cloud differs considerably from a typical Government of Canada staffing process. Most notably, it encouraged managers to rethink the process by which they develop the Statement of Merit Criteria necessary for opening a position. Furthermore, Talent Cloud standardised the elements included in a job advertisement in order to ensure attracting the right candidate, setting out the required skills, but also informing applicants on the working culture, such as team culture, work environment and management leadership style. Among standard information, job advertisements included impact statements, key tasks, skill requirements, information on the team culture, manager profiles, whether remote work would be possible and the possibility of flexible hours and telework. It also designed its platform to publicly show the number of applications received in real time on each job advertisement to provide potential applicants with more information.

Talent Cloud also developed a bias reduction methodology to focus on skills over years of pre-determined experience necessary for a certain position. In a small-scale experiment, the applicant portal gave applicants the opportunity to include their individual skills and experience gained from a wide-range of sources, including personal and community based learning. These are verified through evidence and corroborated by partners and/or previous colleagues. To reduce bias, the experiment also used behavioural sciences to "nudge" or prime hiring managers in advance of key decision points.

Source: Information provided by the Government of Canada to the OECD

Previous OECD work on the themes of diversity and inclusion (D&I) identifies the following necessary elements of next-generation D&I strategies, that build on a firm legal foundation that protects equality and anti-discrimination: (Nolan-Flecha, 2019[13]).

- **Address employees' and employers' deeply engrained views and assumptions:** Developing an inclusive organisational culture means changing attitudes and behaviours at all levels of the organisation. This can be an extremely challenging undertaking as many unconscious (and conscious) biases can often work against well-intentioned D&I initiatives. Policy interventions based on findings from behavioural sciences have aimed to responsibly "nudge" inclusive views and behaviours in public sector organisations.
- **Build inclusive leadership competencies across all levels of the organisation:** Senior officials and team leaders should display inclusive leadership skills aimed at making employees feel accepted, respected and enabled to contribute at their full potential. Ensuring leaders receive effective learning opportunities on inclusive competencies, integrating inclusive leadership skills in existing competency frameworks, and rewarding inclusive leaders through performance evaluations are still emerging policies in the public sector.
- **Leverage data and evidence to inform and monitor D&I initiatives:** Countries have various resources at their disposal including administrative data, data from employee surveys, or specific analytical tools (i.e. "inclusion indices, diversity trackers, etc.") to support benchmarking or examine particular groups or processes in greater detail. Emerging data driven methodologies demonstrate potential to capture intersectionality and better inform policies. A general shortage of data science skills in the public administration, and legal constraints about the types of data that can be collected may hinder some countries more than others.
- **Establish the adequate governance mechanisms for more effective and accountable D&I policies:** To be successful, D&I strategies must be supported by effective governance mechanisms that serve to promote coherence across agencies while respecting the individual inclusion needs of individual organisations. Governance mechanisms that balance a top-down with bottom-up approach help ensure accountability for results while also ensuring that the concerns of employees are continuously reflected in policies.

Rethinking management, engagement and performance

Higher levels of employee engagement improve the quality of public services and public sector innovation. Employee engagement is assessed and tracked through employee surveys, and can provide important tools for building evidence on employee experience and segmenting this across different aspects of the workforce (OECD, 2016[3]). Some research suggests that engagement, performance and learning are intrinsically linked through goal setting, frequent and informal feedback from managers, and efficient performance management that can track progress. Goals that are clear, specific and challenging can also be encouraging and drive personal learning outcomes, creating a virtuous cycle in a learning culture (see previous chapter), and making the public service a more attractive employer. As learning becomes more important and widespread, well-designed performance management systems will take learning into account as much as performance (CIPD, 2016[14]).

Engaging a diversity of employees also requires leaders and managers who are not just hierarchical superiors but also coaches enabling change. Effective coaching is based on the establishment of expectations, continuous support and accountability. Such an evolution in the role of managers in the public sector might require training and the development of new skillsets to recognise the unique strengths of each employee and how to support them to achieve objectives, contribute to the success of the team, and develop. This is an intrinsic part of diversity management and of developing a learning culture.

Conclusion: Designing a new future of the public service

The future of the public service will be enabled by new technologies, and shaped by changing expectations of workers young and old. However, it will be designed by governments. Governments will choose which tasks to automate, where to invest in needed skills and how to develop a workforce that is forward-looking, flexible and fulfilling. For this reason, the future of the public sector will be different than in the private sector, and will advance at its own pace, ideally learning from successes and failures in other organisations and sectors, and leading by example, to embed and reinforce public service values. This future will not come about naturally. Governments will have to take an active role in setting a vision for this transformation and making the necessary investments to achieve that vision.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a catalyst for change. Most of the elements highlighted in the sections above have been adapted or radically transformed to manage in an unprecedented and unexpected situation. Sometimes almost overnight, the public sector found itself under pressure to ensure public service continuity. It has generally responded with exceptional agility and resilience. This crisis has also acted as a stress test, exposing many of the strengths and weaknesses of public services, highlighting the need for a flexible public sector that can engage its public servants in times of ambiguity and uncertainty.

The capacity of public services to be more resilient to face the megatrends linked to the future and the next set of crises will rely on the design of post-pandemic policies in many areas, including people management. As governments design and implement recovery plans impacting most sectors of national economies, there is an important opportunity to reflect on the public service workforce that is needed to deliver these effectively today and into the future. The following key challenges could help guide this reflection:

- A forward-looking public service is one that is able to identify the emerging technical skills and competencies needed to ensure resilience in an increasingly uncertain future. This presents a challenge to find workforce planning methods that recognise uncertainty and prepare for the next shocks.
- A flexible public service in the future will be one where different kinds of people work from more locations at different times, contributing their skills and experience to projects, across multi-disciplinary teams, learning as they go. This presents a challenge to embed flexibility and learning

into the core of public employment systems so that public services generate a culture of learning, better risk management and experimentation.

- The public service of the future will attract, retain and optimise the use of the skills it needs by providing fulfilling work experience to an increasingly diverse range of employees. This presents a challenge for governments to improve job design to increase autonomy and impact, and design employment policies that recognise employees as individuals.

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Notes

[1] The definition of Millennial usually refers to people born between 1980 and 1995, not to be confused with Gen Z, the latest cohort. Baby boomers are usually defined as those born between 1945 and the beginning of the 1960s.

[2] For more information, see: https://wiki.gccollab.ca/Canada%27s_Free_Agents/FAQ

[3] According to World Economic Forum, the 1.37 million workers projected to be displaced within ten years could be reskilled for a cost of USD 34 billion, almost USD 25 000 per worker.

[4] While individual salary negotiations may help improve pay flexibility and attract certain profiles, care should be taken to manage for unconscious biases that may result in higher salaries and bonuses to more mainstream candidates, thus further disadvantaging candidates from vulnerable groups. For more information, please see OECD (Forthcoming, 2021), *Future of Work in Public Service: What is in Store for Gender Equality*.

2 Expert commentary on the future of the public service

Prof. Peter Cappelli, Director of Wharton's Center for Human Resources
at the University of Pennsylvania

This chapter presents independent expert commentary on the Future of the Public Service by Professor Peter Cappelli, Director of Wharton's Center for Human Resources at the University of Pennsylvania. He discusses two different types of predictions about the future: the first relates to predictions based on historical data, while the second type of prediction, expert judgement, is used when the past is not a good predictor of the future. He considers both types of predictions to identify trends in Human Resource Management and how these are likely (or not) to impact the future of the public service.

Two types of predictions on the future of work

Few topics generate more interest, and perhaps are more important, than anticipating the future. How to go about it and in particular how to assess predictions is not well-known. The arguments below consider what we know about that topic in the context of predictions about the future of work. The conclusions offer suggestions about how to proceed in the face of considerable uncertainty about what the future will bring.

How do we make sense of the arguments being discussed about the future of work?

There are at least two quite different types of predictions about the future that are made in the sciences. The first relates to questions where we are predicting events that have occurred before and have historical data to help us. We calculate these predictions by building forecasts. These include predictions as to the state of the economy or of politics where we use outcomes and experiences in the past to extrapolate to the present.

A great advantage of this approach in terms of epistemology is that we have some ability to assess how accurate our forecast of the future is based on how well our model has predicted outcomes in the past. The downside of the approach is that it only works if the underlying structure of the situation or context remains the same in the future as it has been in our historical data. Typically, we cannot tell that until we build the model and discover that it does not work.

The second type of claim is one where the past is not likely to be a good predictor of the future. This is the idea that something new has or will happen that will cause current arrangements to be, in the remarkably overused phrase of former Harvard Professor Clayton Christiansen, “disrupted.” Claims about the influence of artificial intelligence can fall into this category.

We might describe the effort to make such predictions as “expert judgment.” Tetlock (2017) studied the phenomenon of predictions by experts extensively, especially with respect to political events. He found that the accuracy of experts in making these predictions barely beat “monkeys tossing darts at a dart board,” or less creatively, no better than chance. Tetlock and Gardner (2018) engaged in a large exercise to see what makes some individuals better than others at actual predictions of events that could later be confirmed. Their conclusions are important to bear in mind in looking at the forecasts of disruptive events.

For example, those who question assumptions, who look for comparable situations and events elsewhere, and who consider the counter arguments to their positions do better at predicting. Those who are advocating for a position rather than examining it soberly, do poorly in their predictions. This should not be too surprising. In many cases, the goal of the advocates is much more about generating attention (and subsequent business) than being right in their forecasts.

What has driven the popular interest in the future of work appears to be ideas about how work might change in the future. An important development in the workplace that has helped drive media interest in the future of work has been the outsourcing of human resource tasks to vendors. The US vendor industry alone does over half a trillion US dollars of business every year, almost equivalent in scale to the entire construction industry. Their public relations efforts include issuing reports and studies about work. These often include reports about problems – mainly about the labor force or related attributes such as education – and not surprisingly they also offer solutions to those problems that their business provides.

To illustrate, in the mid-1990s, some of these vendors began to argue that the United States was facing a real labor shortage because of the smaller “baby bust” cohort of young people in the labor force, at least compared to the baby boomers. The United States had never had anything like a labor shortage in modern times, and the projections of the US Bureau of Labor Statistics showed no evidence of any decline in the projected size of the labor force. Nevertheless, reports continued about dealing with the coming labor shortage, and human resource departments developed contingency plans for dealing with it.

That was followed in the early 2000s by the creation of the "millennial" notion, the idea that younger people were somehow wired differently than those that came before them and had to be treated differently. The National Academy of Sciences in the United States examined the idea and thoroughly debunked the notion that there even is a definable millennial generation with specific preferences at the workplace. It pointed out that these claims mainly confused the fact that this age group was simply younger than the older individuals to whom they were compared and would change as they got older.[1] Yet consulting projects to understand millennials and training programmes to somehow accommodate them persist undaunted.

It is difficult to understate the influence of efforts like these on employer practices. The consequences of chasing problems that are not real is that they distract human resource executives and their limited resources from tasks that truly matter to employees and the organisation. Even when the reports and the marketing efforts are targeted at private sector employers, they eventually get to the public sector as well in part because of the conceit that the private sector is better managed, more advanced in its ideas, and so forth. Especially in Anglo-American countries where business expertise is seen as especially applicable to government operations, public sector leaders have to respond to these ideas simply because their private sector counterparts take them up.[2]

Assessing the predictions

In the public sector context, many and perhaps the most important of the arguments about the future of work are practices that are already underway in the private and public sectors. Here the assumption is that thoughtful public sector leaders may look into these arguments as a way to anticipate changes. There are also pressures on some leaders to adopt ideas from the private sector as a means for legitimacy in countries where business has a high level of legitimacy.

One set of ideas are those concerning the management of workers. These are the easiest ideas to assess because they actually exist already, and we know something about how these practices are actually being used and what they do.

A short list of recent developments in this domain includes the following:

- Greater use of contracting, which includes independent contractors but especially "leased" employees provided under contract from vendors.
- Greater outsourcing of employee management tasks.
- Agile project management systems.
- Reforms of performance appraisals and moves toward more continuous feedback.
- Greater use of performance-related pay .
- Greater use of data science to provide answers to predictions, such as which candidates will be good performers.

A second set has to do with claims about new developments affecting work per se that have yet to happen. Here there appear to be two major claims:

- Permanent remote work, at least for some jobs
- The role of artificial intelligence.

These will all be considered in the sections that follow.

HR management trends

Bearing the above criteria in mind about making accurate predictions, we turn to the first set of projections about how the future of work might change in the public sector. These are practices and arrangements for managing employees that already exist in some leading organisations. They are unlikely to be revolutionary notions, but they have the advantage of not being speculative. They exist now, and we have a reasonably clear idea how they work. The relevant projection is do we think they would bring benefits if expanded in the public sector.

There is enormous diversity within the public sectors of any individual country as well as diversity within any function or programme across countries in how work is executed and employees managed. It is difficult in that context to do more than make broad generalisations. With that in mind, we turn to these management practices, which have become popular in workplace management.

Outsourcing and contracting

These two related concepts refer to the boundary of organisations and the extent to which the work of those organisations is pushed outside its boundary to vendors in the form of outsourcing and the extent to which non-employees are brought inside the organisation to perform tasks that had been done by employees. The advantages of outsourcing and contracting with respect to managing uncertain futures is the ability to secure organisational capabilities quickly that would otherwise require considerable time to develop, especially in the public sector with its extra oversight requirements.

Outsourcing depends on the availability of a competitive market of suppliers and vendors, something which is now robust in virtually every aspect of managing work and the workplace. It is quite possible that vendors might also access greater expertise and lower cost from scale economies vendors than we might find even if we developed the capabilities ourselves. The most common examples have been managing payroll, where employees are spread across locations, each have their own tax and reporting requirements with respect to pay, and employee benefits such as retirement plans where actuarial matters and again tax considerations require specialised expertise.

There are disadvantages as well, of course, some of them fundamental. How well outsourcing works depends on the contract that is negotiated for the arrangement as vendors have no obligation to adjust what they deliver to the changing needs of the client or if the client makes an initial mistake as to what they need. Vendors also fail and go out of business, in which case most all of their obligations are nil; even though contracts may bind them, vendors may decide that an agreement has become too costly and pay the damages necessary to get out of it; disagreements about what is being delivered are common and can be difficult to adjudicate.

Contracting takes two forms. The first is with individual contractors, who come in to perform specific tasks that can be described in contracts. The second is to engage vendors to provide workers under contract to the organisation, sometimes known as staffing agencies. In some cases, the distinction between the latter and outsourcing is modest. For example, “master service providers” in the United States are vendors who take over entire functions, typically IT work, at the client’s location. They may be deeply embedded in the organisation, but they are not employees of the organisation.

The advantages of contracting are similar to outsourcing in the ability to access expertise or even just additional hands that the organisation needs. A second advantage is that contracting arrangements tend to be much easier to adjust than is outsourcing. The contracts for individual contractors tend to be short-term and violating them, e.g. asking a contractor to change what they are doing, are often accommodated informally without turning to legal solutions. Depending on a country’s legal framework, the workers from staffing firms can be redirected to different tasks by the client (common law countries refer to this as the “borrowed servant doctrine”), and the contracts with the vendor typically allow the client to adjust the number of workers provided up or down. Another way to describe this is that these vendors make labour

more of a variable than a fixed cost. The downsides are, first, that finding the precise skills needed to operate in the public sector may well be quite difficult in the outside market. Second, start-up issues such as security clearances can be considerable, and contractors have little that prevents them from walking away from a job if something better pops up elsewhere.

In summary, contracting gives clients more control as opposed to outsourcing, and it is easier for the clients to get resolutions if problems occur.

Agile project management

Arguably the biggest innovation in people management in the 2000's has been the rise of the idea of "agile" as an approach to managing projects. The term got going in 2001 when the software developers at Adobe developed a shortlist as to what they saw were the key factors in developing good software. As agile manifesto framers Alistair Cockburn and Jim Hightower noted in 2001, the essence of the agile approach is that it puts people and their interactions above process and planning (Cockburn and Highsmith, 2001[1]). Defining precisely what constitutes an agile approach has become something of a fetish – more than 1500 academic articles were written about it just in the first decade after the Agile Manifesto was published[3] – but there is agreement on the key themes.

- Small teams working collaboratively using an approach called "Scrum," where decisions are made in a transparent fashion.
- Priority to face-to-face interactions, as opposed to top-down decisions, and to iterations over plans. Autonomy for the team.
- Customers/Users are involved all along including in design.
- Resources are allocated based on need as it emerges – including "sprints" where they are used intensively to crack hard tasks – as opposed to based on plans.
- Stand up prototypes quickly, get feedback to improve them.
- Feedback and testing progress with users is everywhere.

The most notable aspect of agile may be what it takes away, and that is, top-down planning and control systems. When we started projects in the past, most of us have to develop a plan for it that specifies what we are going to achieve – what will the end result look like, what will it be capable of doing, and so forth – and then what it will cost, how long it will take, and what will the intermediate goals look like (e.g. how much will be accomplished this quarter, how much next quarter). That plan has to be approved by the leadership and especially by the CFO.

Most everyone who has led a project using this approach knows that it is largely guesswork. For a project doing something new, it is impossible to predict all that with any accuracy. Good project managers have to learn how to build buffers into the timelines and budgets to deal with inevitable unforeseen problems, how to package interim results to make them look like progress, and even how to hold back evidence of real progress to make it look like we are hitting our marks on the plan.

Agile gets rid of all of that. The project team is tasked with a problem to solve, and while there may well be discussions as to what this might cost to do, they are then on their own to do it, asking for additional resources when they need it, and finishing it as soon as they can. The evidence we have now, including companies like GE that are not simply in tech, is that agile projects are cheaper, faster, and have better outcomes than the previous planning-based approach. Simply cutting out the planning time and energy and the buffers that are built in to ensure that the plan is met saves a lot of time and resources.

Will agile expand through the public sector?[4] Nascent examples of agile-based projects are in the works in many governments around the globe now. A year or so before the pandemic, agile was about to be institutionalised in many companies, and it might well have become one of those "best practices" that was pushed faster onto the public sector. An important constraint for agile in government operations is the

concern about accountability, which in the context of agile projects manifests itself as knowing in advance how much money will go to whom and for what. The idea of trusting that employees will only spend what is needed is perhaps especially difficult when they are spending government money.

The human resource implications of agile systems are worth considering. Agile teams need resources just in time, when problems occur. That means securing additional staff, additional training and skills, contractors, and so forth when needed. It is extremely difficult for agile to work without that support. Whether public sector agencies could deliver that resource flexibility is an open question (Cappelli et al., 2018[2]).

Changes in performance management

At the heart of performance management is the idea that it is important to see how employees are performing in their jobs, in part to fix performance problems and in some countries in part to recognise and reinforce better performance. This interest is greatest in the Anglo-American countries perhaps because it is rooted in the more open-ended nature of common law employment and its set of mutual obligations that need to be managed continuously.

The most common manifestation of performance management is the performance appraisal process.

At various times, performance appraisals were designed to do three different tasks. The first was to measure the performance of employees to determine who should be promoted. The second is to help employees with career development, particularly important for white collar, corporate employees in the 1950s. The third was to help improve their performance. By the 1980s, the emphasis returned to measure worker performance, this time to hold them accountable for it, rewarding the good performers with merit-based pay and disciplining the poor ones.

Recognition that contemporary practice was not doing any of these tasks well has been widespread for decades. Specifically, career development more or less disappeared as internal advancement faded. Efforts to improve performance were essentially impossible with a simple end-of-the-year accounting. Merit pay budgets were too modest to expect much differentiation in motivation from them.

The most important development in performance management in 50 years or more started in the US private sector in the 2010's out of frustration with the appraisal process. The idea was simply to get rid of the end of the year appraisal exercise and substitute for it a process of continuous discussion between supervisors and subordinates as to how things are going. If it could be executed, it was almost certain to be better at the task of improving performance, and it could not be much worse at "holding workers accountable" than a single, end-of-the-year meeting.

Before the 2020 pandemic, some estimates suggest that as many as 30% of US corporate employers had either gotten rid of their annual performance appraisal system altogether or moved to reform it in the direction of more continuous discussions. That included companies like GE, which had been famous under Jack Welch for advocating the mandatory dismissal of the poorest performers in its annual review, as well as all the major accounting and consulting companies and many of the Silicon Valley software employers. The initial reviews of these new approaches were almost uniformly positive, as we might imagine: there was more learning, problems were identified and solved faster, relationships with supervisors improved, and so forth.[5]

As with all innovations, however, this one involved change, which also leads to resistance. The initial push back on the reform of performance appraisals came from top executives who were firmly behind the idea that it was important for everyone to have a score and that without it, there would be no accountability. Reform efforts died in many organisations for that reason alone.

Further, dropping performance appraisals was the easy part. Forcing supervisors to talk to their subordinates proved more difficult, and many organisations that dropped appraisal did nothing to make that happen. Whether these efforts will continue after the pandemic are not clear. They are not yet seen as the type of uniform best practices that the public sector would be expected to adopt. But instituting the notion of continuous conversations between supervisors and subordinates beyond the annual performance appraisal process would be very useful.

The fact that public sector employment arrangements are different than in the private sector in that there are fewer carrots and sticks – dismissing employees is more difficult, pay raises are more limited, and so forth – increases the need for better performance management precisely because rewards and punishments are not sufficient. The assumption is often that performance issues are simply due to motivation, but that is rarely the case. Often there are misunderstandings about performance goals, about how tasks should be performed, and about the issues facing subordinates. Supervisors also have much more influence than they may think, such as influencing the tasks that subordinates perform and crafting their work to make it more meaningful. The first step in doing so is to have more conversations with subordinates, which is the goal of performance appraisal reform.

Performance related pay

The idea here is that incentives are an important source of motivation that can be harnessed by tying goals for employees to payments to them. Central to the incentive idea is the notion that employees should know in advance what it is that you want them to do and what the reward will be for doing it. It began as an Anglo-American notion, especially important in the United States and is rooted in the belief that employees are rational economic actors interested in maximising their own pay: give them more rewards for something you would like them to do, and they will do more of it.

A great advantage of incentives as a management practice is that they are simple to introduce, at least initially. Unlike the hard work of changing an organisational culture or improving employee commitment, dropping incentives into place is typically a quicker intervention.

A fundamental choice in using incentive pay is deciding what the measure of performance should be. Do we tie pay to overall organisation or company performance, on the grounds that it is ultimately what we want? The drawback is that individual employees may well see no ability to influence those high-level outcomes. Do we pay for task-level outcomes that individual workers can easily control, at the risk that they suboptimise to achieve that goal, such as ignoring other tasks to run up my performance on the one that is being measured? There is no obvious solution to that tradeoff.

In the United States, incentive pay has been advocated as a solution for many public sector settings, most notably in education where the belief was that schools that were run by leaders who had a financial incentive for students to have higher academic achievement will perform better.

There is considerable evidence that incentives do get individuals to do more of what is rewarded, provided that they know how to do it. For example, students who are paid to do homework sets will do more of them. There is also evidence that they do not appear to increase the ability of individuals to succeed at tasks that they do not know how to do: schools whose leaders are paid more when they produce higher levels of student outcomes do not necessarily produce that outcome in part because getting students to learn more is a complex and difficult task. Lack of motivation is not necessarily the problem. There is also extensive evidence that incentives encourage the recipients to find suboptimal ways to achieve their goals. For example, schools with the above incentives make considerable efforts to get rid of poor performing students and attract higher performing ones to improve average student achievement scores. Finally, when people have a social purpose or charitable motivation for doing something, paying them to do more of it actually reduces those other motivations.[6]

In short, incentives work well in very focused contexts where outcome is within the control of the individuals, where it is easy to specify and measure, where the possibility of suboptimisation (overusing resources to achieve the measured goal and cutting back on other outcomes) is minimal.

In other contexts, it is not so useful and may even lead to perverse outcomes.

The pressure for the public sector to use more incentives comes from those who believe as a matter of principle that they are basic to motivation and, with few exceptions, are unaware of the evidence to the contrary. They also may appear to be a fairer way to distribute limited resources: rather than a very minor across-the-board increase, it may seem more reasonable to allocate meaningful increases where performance has improved.

It is also the case, however, that some of the mechanisms used in incentive contexts may create motivation even without the payment of the incentive. Measuring and reporting on individual performance has a strong motivational effect. Making comparisons of performance across individuals has a separate, motivating effect through social comparisons and peer pressure. Some part of the motivating effect that incentive programmes produce may actually come through that effect.

Data science

Separate from the arguments about what artificial intelligence might do to work going forward (see below) are predictions about what the more focused interventions from data science might do to workforce management. Because data science in aid of workforce management is already in use in much of the private sector, at least in modest ways, it is not a stretch to look at the lessons there and what they might suggest for the public sector.

Data science comes from the field of engineering, and it is to statistics what engineering is to science: an approach more focused on getting accurate answers rather than concerned about how those answers were generated. Machine learning is the technique most commonly used in data science. In contrast to standard statistical models that focus on one or two factors already known to be associated with an outcome like job performance, machine learning algorithms are agnostics about which variables have worked before or why they work. The more the merrier: It throws them all together and produces one model to predict some outcome like who will be a good hire, giving each applicant a single, easy-to-interpret score as to how likely it is that they will perform well in a job. It builds a complex, nonlinear model that maps the independent variables, say the attributes of individuals, onto the outcome, say their job performance. Then, as with forecasts, we plug in the attributes of an individual job candidate into that complex model, and it tells us how closely aligned that candidate is to our best performing employees.

In contrast to traditional statistical models, which might tell us how well candidates score separately on each of several attributes that have been shown elsewhere to predict job performance, such as IQ scores or experience, machine learning models give us one score that summarises all the attributes for an individual candidate. What that model cannot tell us is why one candidate scored better than another: was it their personality score, their college grades, or something else. It takes considerable additional effort and programming to identify the effect of any one factor in a machine learning algorithm, let alone to compare across attributes.

Algorithms derived in this manner can be used to predict anything in the workplace, not only which candidates are likely to do best but which ones should be promoted, what career paths make the most sense in terms of future success, and so forth.

The advantages of the data science approach begin with the fact that the way we make decisions now is not very good. We typically rely on immediate supervisors to make these decisions, sometimes with support from test scores and other measures of attributes, sometimes without, and those decisions are likely to be full of bias and inconsistencies across decision makers. Machine learning algorithms have the great advantage of being less biased in that regard. They look at the same attributes for all candidates,

and they treat them all in the same manner, based on their relationship in the "learning" data with what actually tracks the outcomes in question.

Partly because they standardise both data and practices and because they have only one goal, that is to produce an accurate estimate, they will do a better job than we are doing now in predicting the desired outcome, whatever that is. But because they standardise and treat everyone the same way, when they make mistakes, they tend to be at scale and are easier to spot. The best-known examples have been where the data on which the algorithms were based were biased, not surprising given that virtually all historical data reflects the biases of the period when they were created. For example, past discrimination against women meant that fewer of them made it to positions most associated with success, so an algorithm built on that data would suggest that women candidates are less likely to succeed.[7]

The same prejudice is likely to be in the heads of individual decision makers, but it is much more difficult to pin down and identify than in an algorithm where it is easy to identify whether, say, scores for women candidates are lower than for men, other things equal (Hoffman, Kahn and Li, 2018[3]). In this regard, current practice in the public sector and civil service systems in particular are likely to be far better than what we see in the private sector because the former are more standardised and give less discretion to individual decision makers.

The question about the use of data science algorithms in something like hiring, where it seems to be used the most, turns on how important it is to get the best likely performer into a role versus how important other factors are, such as the fairness of the process (procedural justice) and how the outcomes are distributed across different stakeholders (distributive justice). In the private sector, the latter seems to be more important than in the public sector; in the public sector, procedural justice issues are important and codified. For example, an algorithm that predicted well who to hire would nevertheless have serious difficulties if it turned out that it did not track well with civil service test scores, a process issue, or if it was positively associated with certain nationalities and negatively with others for international agency jobs, a distributive issue.

On topics that are less consequential than hiring, algorithmic guidance might well be welcomed. Even on material outcomes such as hiring, it is possible to generate algorithms and use them as only one input in the hiring process. In many contexts, that might appear to defeat the purpose for having them, but where issues other than the best predictor matter, it may well be a reasonable approach.

Data science is pushing the use of these tools into areas that create concerns even in the private sector. For example, algorithms that predict turnover that are built on data from social media sites raise issues of privacy, raised earliest in the European Union. A more general concern is the inability to explain to those affected by algorithms what their scores mean. When we use algorithms to drive decisions on something like promotions, we lose the ability to explain to employees who did not advance what they need to do for a chance next time.[8]

Claims of a "disruptive" future

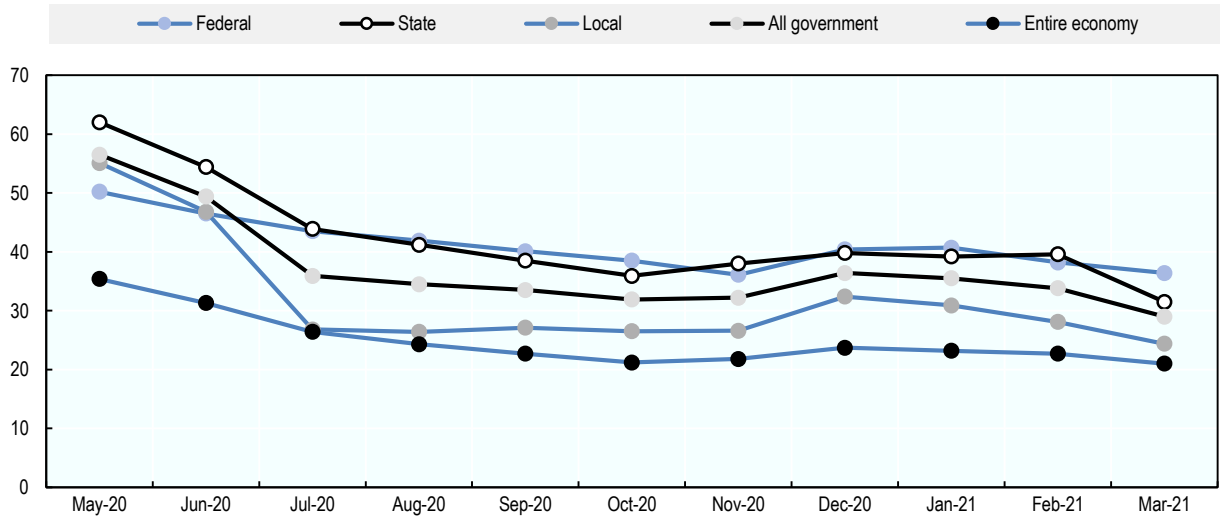
We turn now to the more challenging predictions, those claiming that some development will cause the future of work to be unlike anything we have seen in the past. That makes it impossible to assess the likelihood that such predictions will happen with forecasts or to use experience either to assess what is required to meet them or the costs and benefits of introducing them.

Remote Work and the Pandemic Lessons

The easiest of these prediction to address has to do with the temporary practices associated with social distancing policies of the pandemic, and that is the idea of continuous or permanent working from home. More generally, the idea here is to separate where we actually do our work from the location of our organisation.

Depending on the country, more than half of employees do work that could be done remotely (mainly white collar jobs, excluding jobs requiring interaction with people, such as services, and physical integration as in manufacturing). Public sector employees in the United States appear to have higher rates of remote work than others in the economy as the chart below indicates.

Figure 2.1. Government employees teleworking because of COVID-19



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey (COVID-19 supplement).

In the European Union, roughly 42% of employees in public administration were working full-time from home during the pandemic (Eurofound, 2020[4]). The prediction concerns how that number changes when pandemic requirements ease and employees are allowed to return to the office.

Why would we think that employees will not return to the office? It is difficult to know how well remote work functioned from the purposes of the organisation, but at a minimum, it was not the disaster that many employers expected, and in many organisations, work appeared to function more or less as it had with employees in the office. That may suggest some ability to keep workers at home.

In countries where we have data addressing the employee experience, most employees appreciate some aspects of remote work and want to continue them going forward. Of course, employees want many things that they never get from employers. If employees want it, there is some chance that their staff unions might advocate for it, perhaps as an alternative to higher wages, which appear difficult to secure.

On the organisation's side, why might employers be willing to accommodate working from home? In the US private sector, chief financial officers like the idea because it means eliminating offices and real estate costs. In other words, they are thinking about permanent working from home, not the occasional use as most employees prefer. Public sector agencies may have a similar interest in cutting office space, especially those that operate in expensive cities.

The benefits to employers of remote work appear to turn mainly on permanent remote work where it is possible to eliminate office space. It is not clear that many employees want that arrangement, and what we know from research on remote work before the pandemic is that employees who work remotely are disadvantaged in many ways as opposed to their in-office counterparts. If an employer moves in the direction of having employees who have no office and are located elsewhere, it is only a small move toward having them be independent contractors.

During the dot.com boom in the late 1990s, companies with expensive real estate encouraged employees to come to their office location only when necessary and by appointment. This became known as “hoteling” or “hot-desks” outside the United States. The idea was that, on balance, fewer offices would be needed, and companies could shrink their office costs. That model essentially failed in the United States, in part because employees wanted their offices, in part because an office where the people who are there change every day has few social benefits – no consistent interactions and networks – which is one of the main benefits of having offices.

Public sector and private sector offices operated remotely as of Spring 2021 with some success, which raised the issue of what if anything from that experience will translate after the restrictions are lifted. Many employers are talking about hybrid workplaces, where employees spend some time continuing to work from home. The private sector interest frankly is driven by saving office space if employees are no longer there. As a result, there has been considerable interest and early announcements of moving some jobs to permanent remote work. The other alternative, allowing employees to keep their offices and work from home as well, has less financial appeal for the employers and potentially greater complexity. The reason for doing this appears to be because employees say they like it. It is not clear that there are equivalent benefits for the employers except that hybrid schedules may be a perk that attracts candidates for hiring as some tech employers have argued.

We know a fair bit about what happens to individuals who are working remotely when their colleagues are not, and the results are not good. They tend to be overlooked and cut off from social relationships.[9] My read of the anecdotal experience with arrangements where some are in the office and some are remote, connecting electronically, has not been positive. If employees choose their own work schedules, then these half-zoom/half office interactions are inevitable because of the difficulty of having people needed in the office at the right time.

If public sector employers decide to maintain higher levels of work-from-home arrangements permanently, it is not that difficult an exercise to undertake, given that they did it during the pandemic and were, to various extents, doing it already before the pandemic. We have had more than a year of experience to learn whether it is worth continuing. We know roughly what the implications are, and the costs of being wrong are ones we should be able to measure. What is not so clear is the benefits, although experimenting with it would answer those questions.

Artificial intelligence

Far and away the best-known and loudest arguments about the future of work have been those associated with artificial intelligence and what it might be possible to do to the world of work in the future. These are disruptive claims asserting that the future is not like the past, that the new developments in AI will change the structure of the employment relationships such that extrapolations from prior experiences are unlikely to be accurate predictors of the future. We might think of this as a double uncertainty: We cannot say with any certainty what AI innovations will look like in the future, which makes it impossible to assess what is required to introduce them, what the benefits will be from them, and what the costs are if the predictions turn out to be wrong and we follow them.

Arguably the most influential of these prediction arguments is from Brynjolfsson and McAfee, who argued that the technology that is emerging now is different in fundamental ways from what we have seen before and will affect the workplace in different ways than we have seen before (Brynjolfsson and McAfee, 2012[5]; Brynjolfsson and McAfee, 2014[6]). The most attention-getting claim in their book, which appeared at a time of substantial unemployment in the United States, is that this new technology will lead to considerable job loss. So far, there is little if any evidence of it happening.

An effort to quantify such expert judgment, which has had considerable influence, was Frey and Osborne's survey that asked computer experts to assess whether it was possible for computers under the best circumstances to take over the central task of a set of jobs or if it will be possible to do so shortly (Frey and Osborne, 2017[7]).Their conclusion was that this was the case for almost half of jobs.

But the popular conclusion drawn from this study was typically that those jobs will be taken over by computers and soon. The obvious problems with that conclusion begin with the fact that jobs are made up of many tasks where the one that is "central" may not take up a majority of time, may not add the most value, and so forth. Even if computers did take over that central task, the other ones still have to be done. Applying a task-based methodology, the OECD concluded that only 14 percent of jobs are likely to be fully automated, and 32% partially automated.

The fact that it is technically possible for computer systems to take over a task does not mean that they could do it well or that it would be cost-effective for them to do so. Perhaps more important, new IT systems tend to add functionality that was not there before, creating new tasks.

More directly, it is possible to compare what happens to employment levels when IT investments go up. The assumption is often that IT is introduced to eliminate jobs, but there is no real evidence for that. Bessen looks at US data and finds that increased IT use is actually associated with expanded jobs. He also finds no evidence of job polarisation associated with greater IT use (Bessen, 2016[8]). Aum, Lee, and Shin found that IT investments were actually smaller for lower-level jobs doing routine work than for higher-level jobs, inconsistent with the earlier view that IT eliminates lower-level jobs but also inconsistent with the notion that it disproportionately targets middle level jobs (Aum, Lee and Shin, 2017[9]).Gregory, Salomons, and Zierhn (2016) also conclude that IT investment in Europe is associated with increases in employment (Gregory, Salomons and Zierahn, 2016[10]).

In summary, to the extent that there is evidence about the introduction of IT in the past, there is no consistent evidence that it reduced employment. Of course, the claim is that this time it will be different. By 2018, belief that this technology will soon be in place was so wide-spread that one US Presidential candidate made how to deal with the inevitable job loss among truck drivers a centerpiece of his campaign.[10] Two years later, the prospects of it happening in the foreseeable future looked so far away that most of the original players had pulled out of the effort to develop driverless vehicles, including Uber, which appeared to have the strongest interest in replacing drivers (Marshall, 2020[11]).

Because we have no clear idea what the impact of AI will be on public service jobs in a general sense, it is difficult to know how to respond. For example, we know that AI could eliminate many procedural tasks, but this depends on which AI are introduced, and many jobs in the public sector require competencies that are, so far, not easily replaced. Returning to the discussion above, replacing some tasks doesn't necessarily mean replacing entire jobs. For these reasons, public employers can be wary of most sweeping claims of the impact of AI in the abstract, particularly those about entire job families disappearing. Rather they should recognise that digital technologies will transform jobs rather than replace them. Then, governments can employ change management strategies on a case-by-case basis, ensuring that they take the time to assess the workforce impacts of any technological project, and design appropriate training and transition strategies for the employees whose jobs will be changed or replaced. Governments should not underestimate the investments in people that go alongside those in technology. The idea that we should retrain large groups of government workers now for other jobs implies that we know what those other jobs should be, and we do not. AI may also increase the demand for some key jobs, but we do not know what those will be, either, aside from the relatively small number of people who are engaged in developing it. Even if we believed the AI projections, the fact that it is not clear what to do about them creates a strong argument for investigating further, learning by doing, and focusing on specific cases.

A strategy for uncertain times

The arguments above begin with understanding the notion of uncertainty and especially predictions about the future. The second issue is to consider how to respond to uncertainty in ways other than simply going with our best guess.

Beyond assessing the likelihood that different predictions and forecasts will be true, it is important to go further and consider the range of possible outcomes within which particular predictions might be embedded: on what assumptions does a given prediction rely, and what happens if those assumptions are wrong? That takes us to an understanding that we face a menu of possible outcomes rather than simply an up-or-down choice on one. As a result, planning has to move away from the traditional and mechanical process of extrapolating from the past.

From there, we need to consider what the predictions imply for responses. What are the costs of waiting, the costs of acting, the costs of being wrong if the underlying predictions turn out to be wrong or our interventions do not work, and so forth? What tools can we use to help reduce the costs of uncertainty, which centre on our predictions turning out to be wrong. In short, “planning” needs to move from the mechanical exercise of extrapolating from the present to coming to grips in a serious way with the inevitable uncertainty associated with a changing world.

There are many approaches that have been used to get a sense of an uncertain future. The most sensible of these move away from a single prediction to something that recognises the diversity of potential futures. Scenario planning is one tool such tool that allows participants to examine competing predictions of the future and compare their implications. Scenario plans are a kind of expert judgment, ideally done by people who are knowledgeable but not advocates for positions. The approach begins with judgments about factors we believe are relatively certain in the future for the prediction at hand and then judgments about the most important uncertainties. The patterns of certainties and uncertainties coalesce into sets, which represent the scenarios (Shoemaker, 1995[12]). Other approaches as well are useful such as assigning players to debate the pros and cons of different predictions being put forward.

When we review possible candidates that may affect the future of work in the public sector, it is not surprising that the ones describing developments that already exist in some form appear to be the most promising to take seriously because they have the best likelihood of expanding into something meaningful. Those centre on changes in demography within each country and management practices already underway, sometimes in parts of the public sector where we believe they may well grow and sometimes just emerging in the private sector. The projections that have the least merit to be taken seriously are also those that have gotten the most attention, in part because they are so extreme. Those concern AI. The fact that we have little contemporary evidence that the projections are turning out to be true and the fact that the implications as to how to respond are not obvious make them a difficult bet for large scale action. In these areas, public employers would do well to take a well thought-through project management approach as AI is designed and implemented, complete with change management strategies that identify and mitigate its impacts on the workforce each step of the way.

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Notes

[1] National Academies. 2020. Are Generational Categories Meaningful Distinctions for Workforce Management? Washington, DC: National Academies Press.

[2] To illustrate, the National Academy of Sciences in the United States took up the question of whether there was a skills gap because of the presumed rising of skill requirements in jobs. That task was given to them by the Director of the National Institutes of Health, and it came to him from business CEO's. I was a member of that Committee. It concluded that there was no skills gap. See Margaret Hilton (2008[14]), "Skills for Work in the 21st Century: What Does the Research Tell Us?", *Academy of Management Perspectives*, Vol. 22/4, pp. 63-78.

[3] For an account of the academic research on agile, see Dingsøyr et al. (2012[15]), "A decade of agile methodologies: Towards explaining agile software development", *Journal of Systems and Software*, Vol. 85/6, pp. 1213-1221, 033.

[4] Examples of agile projects around the world are detailed in Agile Government: Building Greater Flexibility and Adaptability in the Public Sector. Deloitte Insights March 2021.

[5] For a review of the evidence, see Peter Cappelli and Anna Tavis (2016[16]), "The Performance Management Revolution", *Harvard Business Review*.

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[7] NB from the OECD: As these models are based on statistical averages, they can also have difficulty properly evaluating the potential of candidates whose skills and leadership are expressed in non-conventional ways, outside of the "norm". Care is also required to ensure the tools work equally well for all people, including those with different accents, those with special conditions or disabilities, etc. Certain uses, such as facial recognition technology for emotion detection from facial expression, or to derive other traits such as political affiliation, intelligence or fitness for employment, are being criticized as discriminatory, unreliable and invasive, and should be avoided entirely.

[8] NB from the OECD: Spotting algorithm bias takes proactive monitoring and analysis efforts from those deploying the models. Institutions should ensure that meaningful explanation be provided to those subject to automated assessments, for transparency in the model and the data used, and that they monitor predictions and assessment for unexpected outcomes.

[9] For a review of this research, see Peter Cappelli and Rocio Bonet (2021[13]), "After Covid, Should You Keep Working from Home? Here's How to Decide", *Wall Street Journal,* 22 March 2021.

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3 Special focus: Managing the senior level public service

This chapter presents a selection of comparative indicators on the management of senior level public servants in OECD countries. It provides an update on the OECD Working Paper on Leadership for a High Performing Civil Service, complementing it with new data gathered through the 2020 OECD Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability. It shows that while most OECD countries use competency frameworks to focus on leadership skills, many are still challenged to develop these skills, assess them, and hold managers accountable for effective people management.

Introduction: Leading the future of the public service

The future of the public service will depend on the leadership of senior level public servants. Leaders cultivate an environment in which employees are engaged and supported to find the best ways to achieve the mission of the organisation. At the same time, leaders nurture integrity and ethical behaviour through daily interactions with employees (Detert and Burris, 2007[1]) (OECD, 2020[2]). These two elements – competence and values – are key drivers of trust in government (OECD, 2017[3]). Public service leaders are therefore at the forefront in building an efficient, innovative and trustworthy public sector. In short – the future of the public service will depend on the future of leadership. The OECD's 2020 Working Paper on Leadership for a High Performing Civil Service makes the following predictions:

1. The goal of public service leadership will increasingly be to solve public policy challenges in innovative ways, supported by digital technology. This suggests the need for new capabilities (i.e. skills, behaviours, perspectives, knowledge, mindsets, etc.) within the senior level public service.
2. Public service leaders will lead increasingly diverse organisations with employees from a range of backgrounds on a range of contracts and in a variety of physical locations, flowing more fluidly in and out of organisations. This raises challenges to inculcate public values and an inclusive organisational culture.
3. Public leadership will become increasingly data-driven, with large sets of workforce and performance data driving insights and informing management responses. This suggests increased opportunity for evidence-informed decision making, and the need to invest in skills to support, and sometime challenge it.
4. Leaders will need to be more involved than ever in workforce and organisational development. Leaders will play central role in establishing learning cultures so that existing employees are provided with opportunities to learn as they go. Leaders will also play an increasingly visible role as organisational ambassadors, front and centre in the war for talent, articulating the value proposition of the public sector employer and attracting needed skill sets into the public service.

In order to ensure the leadership needed in the future, governments can put in place a range of policies and tools to develop leadership competencies in current and future leaders, assess these competencies in recruitment and promotion, and ensure they are reinforced in performance and accountability regimes. This chapter provides an update on the OECD Working Paper on Leadership for a High Performing Civil Service (Gerson, 2020[4]), complementing the conceptual frameworks from that paper with relevant data gathered through the 2020 OECD Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability.

Box 3.1. Definition of leadership and senior level public servants

This chapter focuses on senior level public servants (SLPS) who occupy the highest-ranking positions of administrative bureaucracies and who lead public servants in the pursuit of governmental objectives.

The word senior denotes rank, and is not a reference to age or seniority in terms of length of career or tenure. In the majority of countries this group includes the top two levels of the administration under the Minister but in some countries this group includes additional layers beneath.

The chapter sometimes uses a D1 – D4 ranking system to refer to hierarchichal levels of the administration. D1 leaders are the highest ranking SLPS, usually reporting to the Minister. They may be referred to as Permanent Secretaries, or Directors General, or other, depending on the administration. D2 leaders are the rank below them, D3 and D4 follow below those, and my be considered middle management in some administrations.

SLPS are also separate from elected officials, although they may be appointed by them. In this chapter, references to “leadership” refer to administrative and institutional leadership. This chapter does not look at the leadership of Ministers, or their political cabinet.

The concept of leadership, in this chapter, refers to the way senior civil servants work towards governance objectives through/with others. This implies two basic dimensions. First, leadership is about achieving objectives which change and improve upon the status quo, implying some kind of change, innovation and/or transformation. Second, leaders don’t achieve objectives alone. Leadership is an interpersonal phenomenon, and so leadership is about the relationship between individuals or groups.

The authors recognise that many other definitions of leadership exist, and that leadership is often exerted by others within and outside of the traditional civil service hierarchy. However this report focuses on the senior civil service as defined above, since they play a pivotal role in creating the environmental conditions for other kinds of leadership to emerge.

Key messages

- **Leadership competency frameworks are now common practice across OECD countries:** The majority of OECD countries have a standard competency framework for senior public servants, primarily used in job profiles, recruitment processes and performance assessment. Most of these frameworks emphasise competencies related to strategy, vision, results and integrity, while far fewer emphasise inclusion, innovation, digital and crisis management.
- **Recruitment increasingly focuses on leadership competency assessment:** This acknowledges that formal criteria, for example length of experience or educational qualifications are not enough to predict the success of a public manager. However assessing complex cognitive and behavioural competencies requires new skills among recruiters.
- **More emphasis can be put on pipeline development, career management and mobility:** Among OECD countries, it is not yet common to build a pipeline of candidates who have the competencies necessary for leadership by identifying them early in their careers. Doing so ensures a ready pool of potential leaders which is increasingly important in the context of ageing workforces.
- **There is still a diversity gap to close in senior levels of the public service:** Women are underrepresented in almost all senior civil services, and other diversity groups are often not tracked. While the use of diversity targets in recruitment processes has increased, data and tools to assess and strengthen diversity and inclusion in other areas are underutilised. To date, only a few OECD countries include diversity and inclusion as leadership competencies.
- **Accountability for quality of leadership and people management is lacking:** The use of specific performance objectives for senior public servants is widespread among OECD countries. However, managerial accountabilities for senior public servants often focus on financial management and accounting and rarely include specific accountabilities for leadership capabilities and people management.
- **Integrating a range of tools including mobility, is necessary to develop a learning culture:** Investing in learning, offering regular and quality feedback and providing opportunities for mobility can support public leaders in continuously developing the capabilities. While OECD countries offer a wide variety of learning opportunities and peer support to senior public servants, there is a strong focus on training seminars and online learning tools. Other tools could be promoted to provide more individual support to leaders.

Box 3.2. Leadership capabilities for public sector performance

Based on nine case studies, the OECD mapped the core leadership capabilities required of senior civil servants working on complex public sector challenges expected to become more relevant in the future of public work. The identified capabilities are organised in four groups (see Chapter 1, Figure 1.3):

- Values-based leadership
- Open Inclusion
- Organisational Stewardship
- Networked Collaboraiton

At its centre, the capabilities model underlines values-based leadership guiding leaders in their decisions and modelling ethical behaviour. Successful leaders challenge their own internal perceptions through open inclusion and encourage different voices and perspectives and promote an organisational culture in which employees fell confident to contribute to developing innovative solution to public sector challenges. Public leaders also have to act as organisational stewards by reinforcing a trust- and values-based culture and equipping their workforce with the right skills, tools and working environments. Finally, looking beyond their own organisation, successful SCS are adept at collaborating through networks, with other government actors, and beyond.

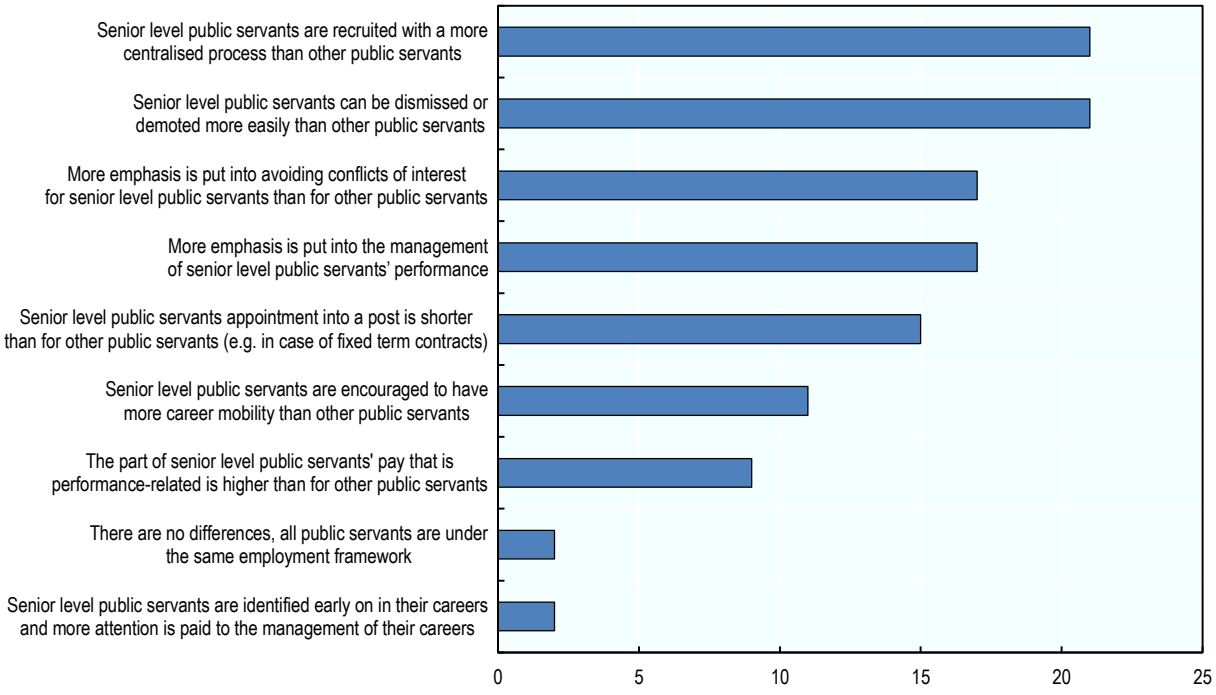
Source: Gerson, D. (2020[4]), "Leadership for a high performing civil service: Towards senior civil service systems in OECD countries", *OECD Working Papers on Public Governance*, No. 40, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/ed8235c8-en.

Senior civil service systems

In recognition of their pivotal role in public service performance and to develop the skills of public leaders, most OECD countries set up a specific system for managing the senior civil service. These systems aim to ensure that the administrative leaders at the top of the organisational hierarchy are equipped with appropriate skills and resources and are supported through an enabling operating environment. Figure 3.1 outlines the main differences of such systems – the most common components include more centralised recruitment, easier dismissal or demotion, and more emphasis put on avoiding conflict of interest and performance management.

Figure 3.1. Differences between Senior Level Public Servants' employment frameworks and those of other public servants

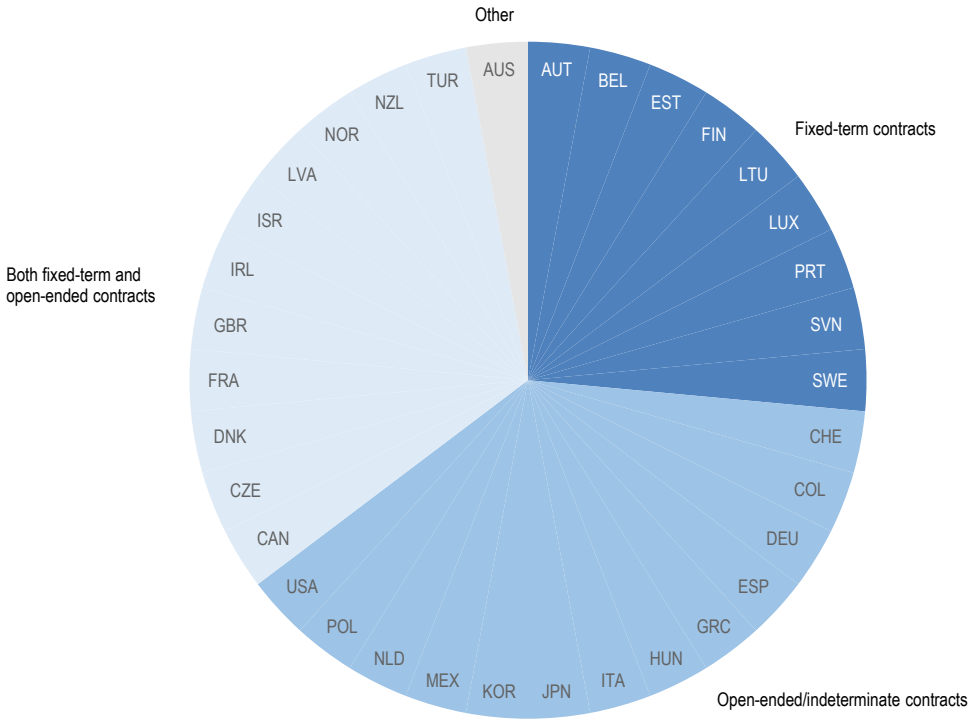
Number of OECD countries, n=32 (2020)



Note: Original survey question: "How different is the employment framework of senior level public servants from that of other public servants?"
Source: OECD (2020), Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability.

Given these different features, senior level public servants (SLPS) are also more often employed on fixed-term contracts than regular public service. Figure 3.2 shows that only about one third of OECD countries primarily use open-ended/indeterminate contracts for their senior level public servants. Some countries use a combination of both open-ended and fixed-term, which are often applied to different levels or specific functions. For example, in Canada, a few select positions at the D1 level (Deputy Ministers) are appointed with fixed terms based on legislative requirements, whereas in Ireland, all D1 positions (Secretaries General) serve a 7 year term which can be extended following a government decision, and lower senior level positions are open ended.

Figure 3.2. Primary legal employment contract type used for senior level public servants



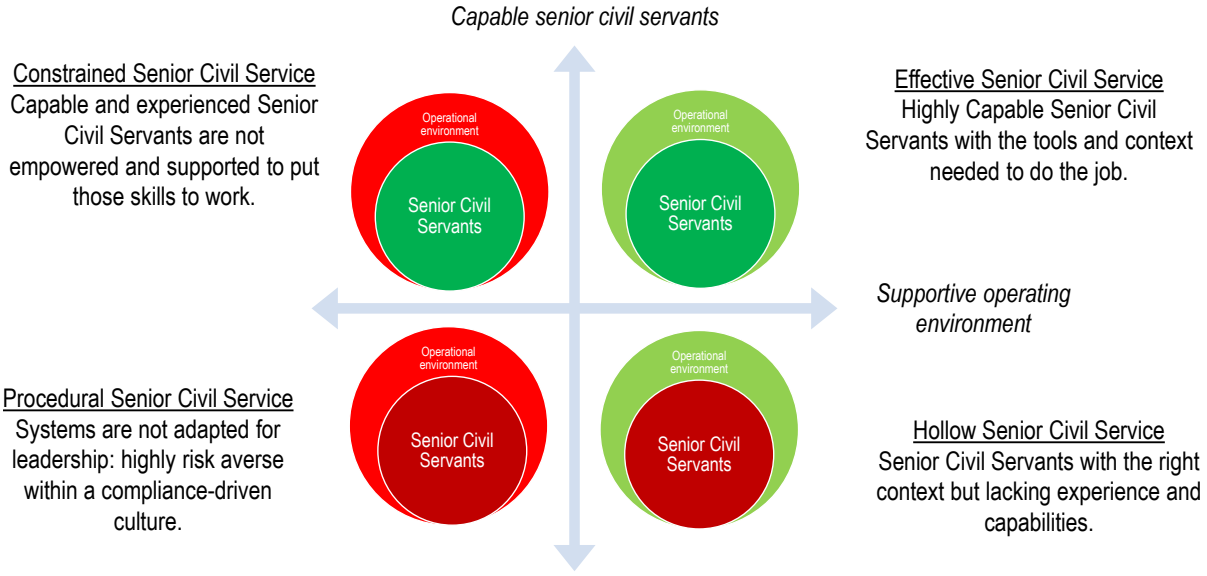
Note: Original survey question: "Which of the following legal employment contracts are primarily used for senior level public servants?"
Source: OECD (2020), Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability.

To asses Senior Civil Service Systems, the OECD has developed a model according to two axes:

- Axis 1 - capable public leaders: policies and interventions should aim to appoint senior leaders with the right skills and competencies for the job. This includes job profiles that clearly identify leadership capabilities (see Box 3.2), recruitment and selection tools assessing those capabilities, pipeline development and diversity and inclusion tools.
- Axis 2 – supportive operating environment: should provide leaders with the autonomy, tools, support and accountability necessary to effectively use their leadership skills and competencies. This means that leadership objectives set a clear sense of direction, learning opportunities and peer support contribute to leadership development, management tools support leaders in their decisions and the political interface is clearly defined ensuring independence.

The Senior Civil Service System matrix (Figure 3.3) developed by the OECD combines these two axes to identify four different types of senior civil service systems. The ideal type of an effective senior civil service means that senior civil servants are highly skilled and capable and are supported by an operating environment that allows them to optimise the use of these capabilities. The remaining three systems are characterised by weaknesses in the operating environment, the skills and competencies of senior civil servants or both.

Figure 3.3. Senior Civil Service System matrix



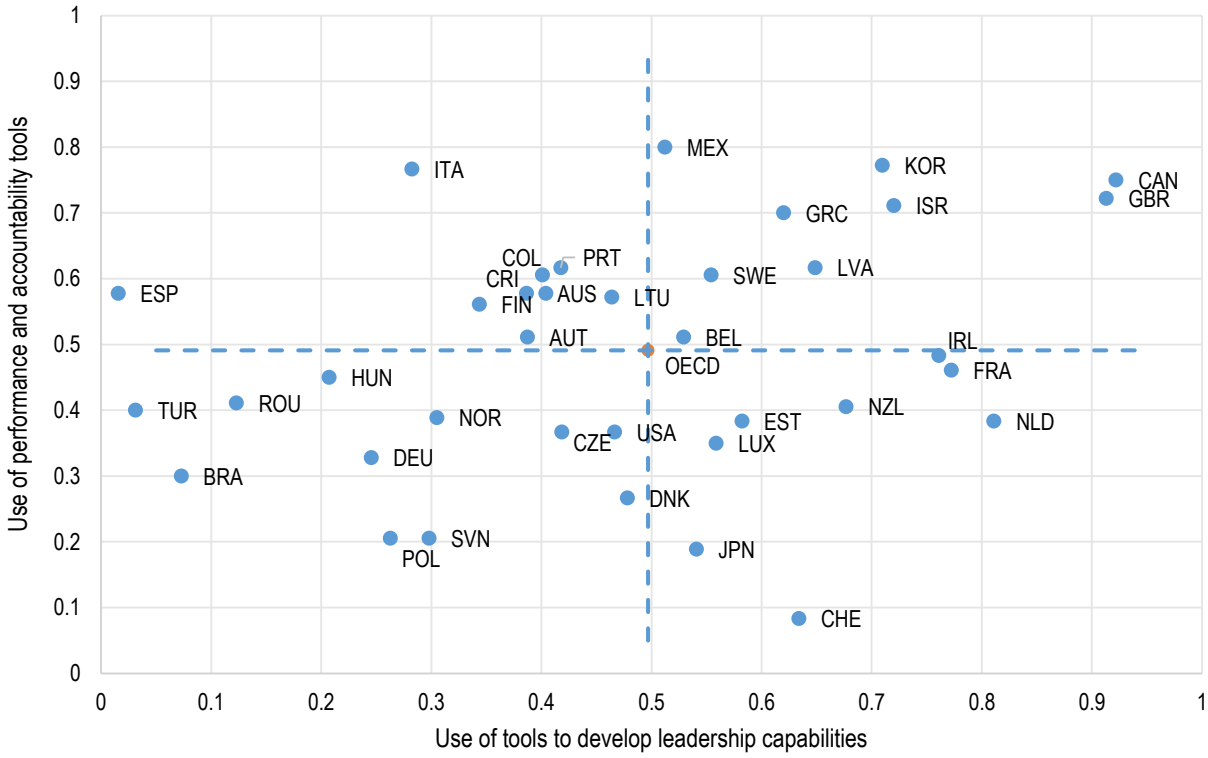
Source: Gerson, D. (2020[4]), "Leadership for a high performing civil service: Towards senior civil service systems in OECD countries", *OECD Working Papers on Public Governance*, No. 40, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/ed8235c8-en.

The OECD recently developed a pilot index that uses data from the 2020 survey to identify the use of policies and tools that contribute to the two axes of the Senior Civil Service System matrix (Figure 3.4). The vertical axis of Figure 3.4 refers to the use of tools to develop leadership capabilities. This includes many, but not all, of the tools that make up Axis 1 of the model above, including defining leadership capabilities through competence frameworks, hiring people with these competences, and providing leaders with the opportunities to learn and develop. The horizontal axis refers to policies to manage performance and accountability of results. This includes a few of the tools that make up Axis 2 of the model above, specifically the use of robust performance management systems and accountability framework. The other aspects of Axis 2 were not measured in the survey.

Countries in the upper right quadrant, such as Canada, the United Kingdom, Israel and Korea make comparatively extensive use of tools to build SCS capability (y axis), and tools to manage performance and ensure accountability (x axis). Conversely, countries in the lower left quadrant make use of fewer tools related to both. Some countries make more use of one set of tools than another. Spain and Italy for example, make more use of performance and accountability tools, while investing less in the capabilty development of their senior civil servants; and vice versa for Switzerland, Japan and the Netherlands.

It should be pointed out that the index looks at the extent to which these tools are used, and not the quality of the tools. Given this, it is an incomplete indicator of the breadth of the system rather than an objective assessment of the quality of the SCS system. Direct comparisons between the indicator and the model above should therefore be made with caution. However, this data can give governments a chance to reflect on the strengths and gaps of their SCS systems.

Figure 3.4. Managing the senior level public service, 2020



Note: Data for Chile, Iceland and the Slovak Republic are not available. Data for the Slovak Republic are not available as the senior level public service is not a formalised group.
Source: OECD (2020), Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability.

The following sections present data from the 2020 OECD Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability to analyse the status quo of senior civil service system in OECD countries according to the two axes identified, starting with Capability Senior Civil Servants, and then considering the operating environment.

Axis 1: Capable senior civil servants

In order to ensure that public leaders have the right skills and competencies to be effective leaders and are able to increase the efficiency and productivity of the organisation, the right people with the right skills need to be selected. The *OECD Recommendation on Public Service Leadership and Capability* underlines merit as the principal criteria for appointment. Merit might take different forms depending on the type of senior civil service system and the responsibilities for appointments. However, even in systems where the degree of discretion in appointments is high, the following characteristics can support an open and transparent process while ensuring the capable leaders are promoted.

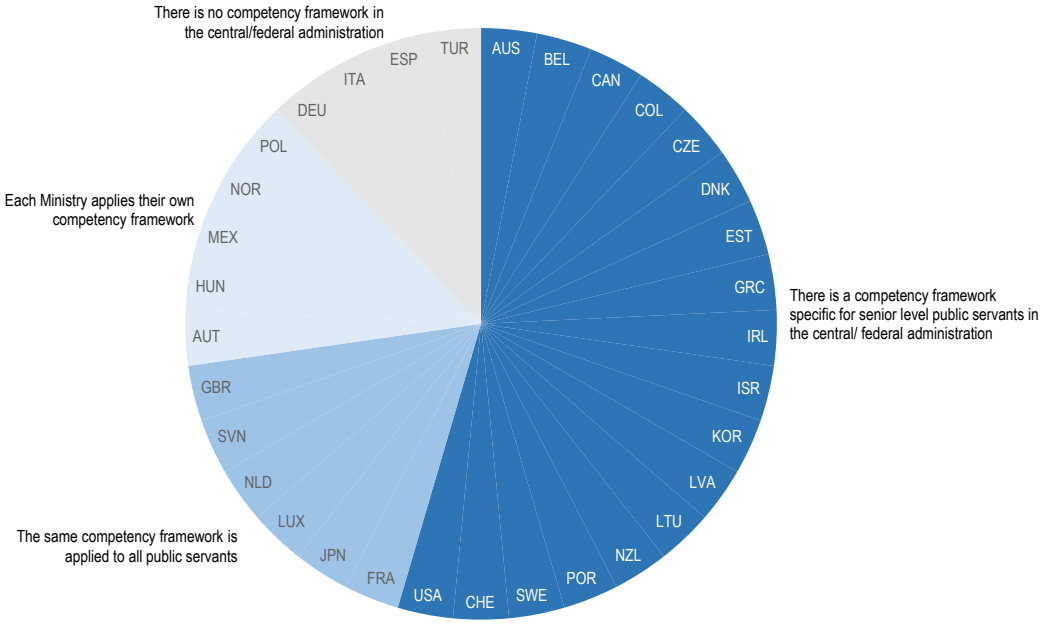
Leadership competency frameworks: Now common practice across OECD countries

The first step to bring the right people and skills in leadership positions is to develop job competences and profiles that identify the requirements regarding skills, competencies and experiences. The OECD framework for senior civil service systems identifies the following key objectives for this area:

- Develop a common understanding and expectation for leadership skills across the public service, through e.g. competency frameworks.
- Define the necessary leadership capabilities in specific SCS job profiles.

The majority of OECD countries have a standard competency framework for senior public servants in the central administration. This sets a common standard of the expectation for leadership capabilities within the public sector. In contrast, in some OECD countries each ministry applies their own competency framework. This may enable them to adapt the leadership profiles to the specificities of the organisation (Figure 3.5).

Figure 3.5. Use of standard competency frameworks for senior level public servants, 2020



Note: Data not available for Chile, Iceland, and the Slovak Republic, other answer for Finland. Original survey question: "Is there a standard competency framework for senior level public servants?"
Source: OECD (2020), Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability.

The competencies included in the frameworks are generally reflective of the expectations set in senior public servants to be effective public managers (see Chapter 1, Figure 1.4). The top three areas included in competency frameworks in OECD countries are vision and strategy, achieving results and public values/integrity. At the same time, competencies in the area of digital technologies, diversity and inclusion, crisis management, resilience, emotional intelligence are only starting to emerge. For example, in Canada, the key leadership competency profile includes the competency "create vision and strategy". This requires leaders to understand the context in which they make decisions, in particular in complex, uncertain and rapidly changing environments. It also asks leaders to solve public sector challenges by building on diverse ideas and perspective and create consensus. France highlights digital capabilities for senior civil servants as one of the core competencies and has also included the strengthening of digital capabilities in its strategy for the future of public service, Action Publique 2022. Lastly, Australia has identified resilience, self-awareness and courage as personal qualities for effective leadership highlighting the role of senior civil servants to mobilise and drive change. The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020/21 highlighted the need for managers to adapt to new challenges, be resilient and find solutions to public sector challenges based on digital tools and innovation. Therefore, this might be an area more countries will focus on in the future.

Apart from using these competency frameworks to design job profiles and descriptions, 27 OED countries use them also during the recruitment process and 21 for performance assessment. 20 OECD countries structure learning for current and/or future senior public servants on the basis of the competency framework.

Recruitment: Increasingly focused on leadership competency assessment

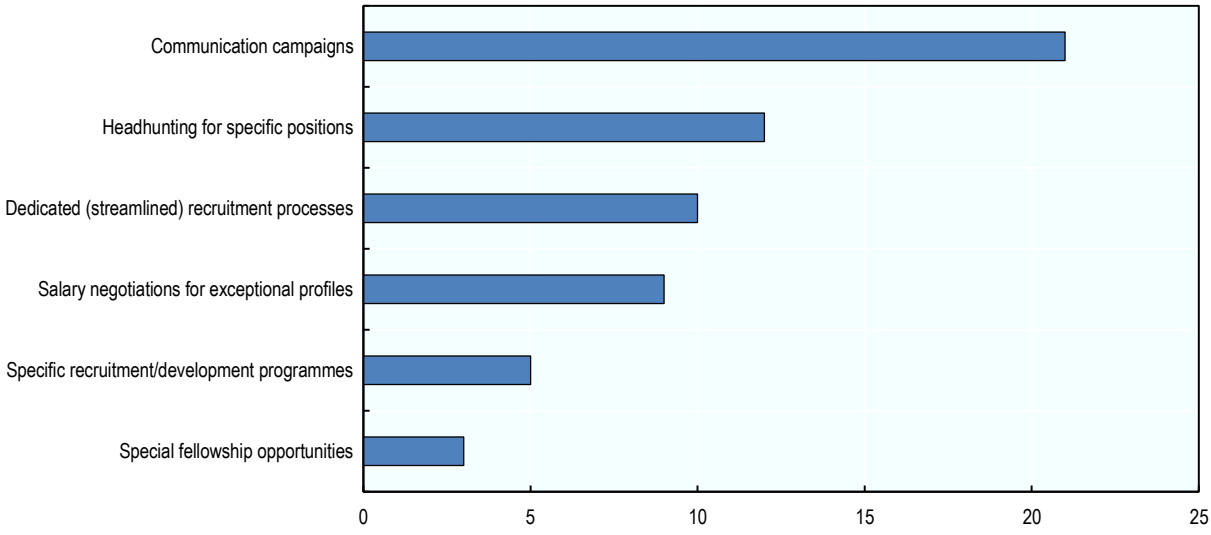
Recruitment processes ensure that the right people get the right senior level positions, and are therefore a fundamental driver of SCS system performance. The OECD framework for senior civil service systems identifies the following key objectives for this area:

- Effectively assess leadership capabilities and use this to inform appointment decisions.
- Ensure an appropriate degree of transparency and accountability for appointment decisions.
- Generate an appropriate level of external and internal candidates for SCS positions.
- Balance the need for political responsiveness with that of merit and stability.

The majority of OECD countries recruit senior civil servants through competition for a specific senior position or through direct appointment. Open competition allows the public sector to bring in senior civil servants from outside the public sector and broaden the skills sets, backgrounds, education and perspectives. Indeed, about half of OECD countries are actively trying to increase external recruitment, while no OECD country reports aims to reduce external recruitment. In order to attract external candidates, OECD countries use a wide range of tools, such as communication campaigns, headhunting or dedicated recruitment processes among others (Figure 3.6).

Figure 3.6. Practices used to attract applicants to senior level positions from outside the public service

Number of OECD countries, n=34 (2020)



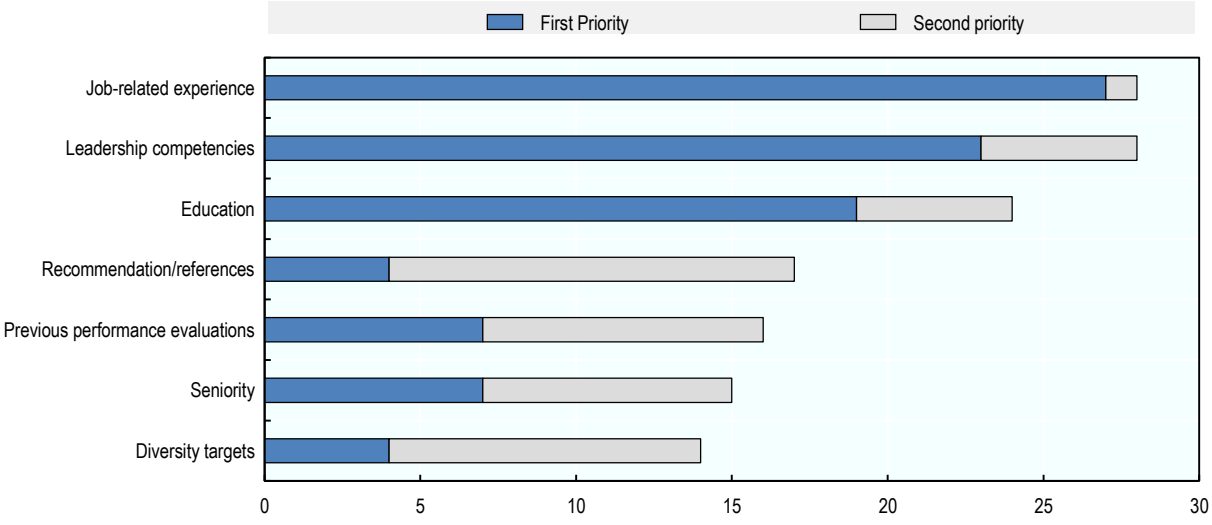
Note: Original survey question: "Which of the following practices are currently used to attract applicants to senior level public servant positions from outside the public service?"
Source: OECD (2020), Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability.

To ensure merit and assess competencies and skills effectively many countries rely on formal criteria, for example length of experience or educational qualifications. However, these are not always effective in predicting the success of a candidate as a public manager and if he or she fulfils the expectations for public leaders discussed earlier. There are ongoing debates on how to find the right balance between subject matter expertise and transversal managerial and leadership skills. Increasingly, OECD countries consider that successful senior civil servants need to possess a deep understanding of the systems of governance and possess enough subject matter expertise and self-awareness to know which technical expertise they need to bring in to support them. While seniority and education are formally assessed during the recruitment phase, job-related experience and leadership competencies are a priority in most OECD countries. Only four countries, namely Canada, Greece, New Zealand and Portugal, set diversity targets as one of their key priorities in recruitment processes (Figure 3.7).

In order to assess the leadership competences, 26 OECD countries rely on experience-based interviews. In 24 OECD countries, it is also common to use situational interview questions to acquire insights in how potential leaders would react in particular situations. Furthermore, in 18 OECD countries reference checks are part of interviews. OECD countries also use simulation exercises, individually (in 13 OECD countries) or in groups (in 10 OECD countries), as a way to assess behaviours and values. Integrity tests are used by only six countries: Canada,[1] Colombia, France, Greece, Korea, and Netherlands. Values-based assessments can also provide insight on the values fit, which can be an important indicator of future performance. The way in which integrity is tested can vary ranging from personality-based integrity tests, testing awareness and knowledge of ethical procedures, and use of situational judgement exams to get a view of the candidates' judgement capacity (Figure 3.8).

Figure 3.7. Aspects formally considered during recruitment for senior level public servants during competitive processes

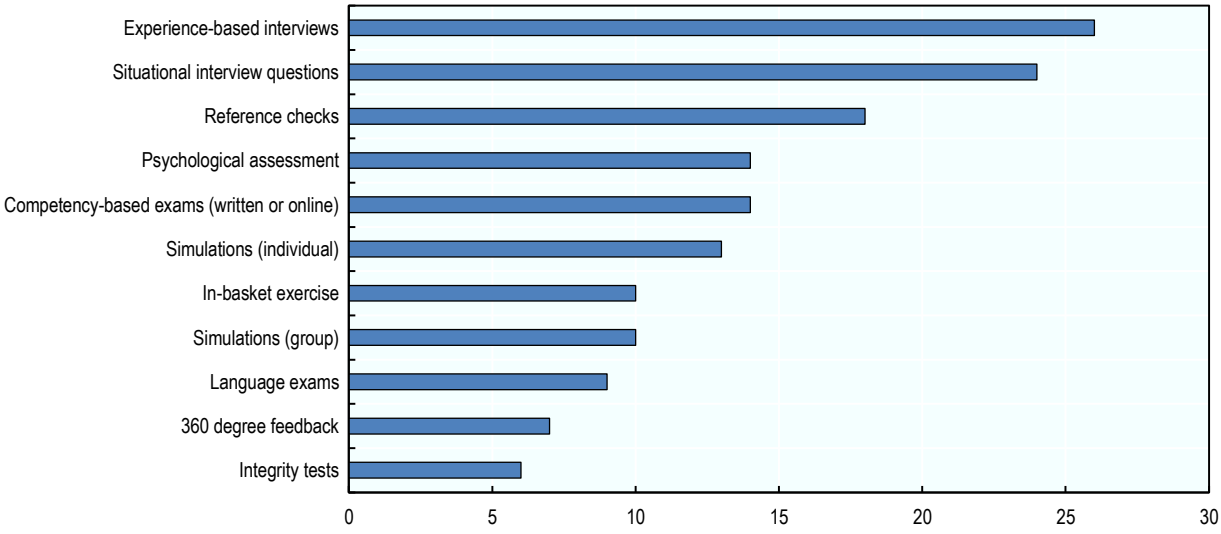
Number of OECD countries, n=29 (2020)



Note: Original survey question: "Which of the following aspects are formally considered in recruiting for senior level public servants positions?"
Source: OECD (2020), Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability.

Figure 3.8. Assessment of senior level public servants' competencies during recruitment

Number of OECD countries, n=33 (2020)



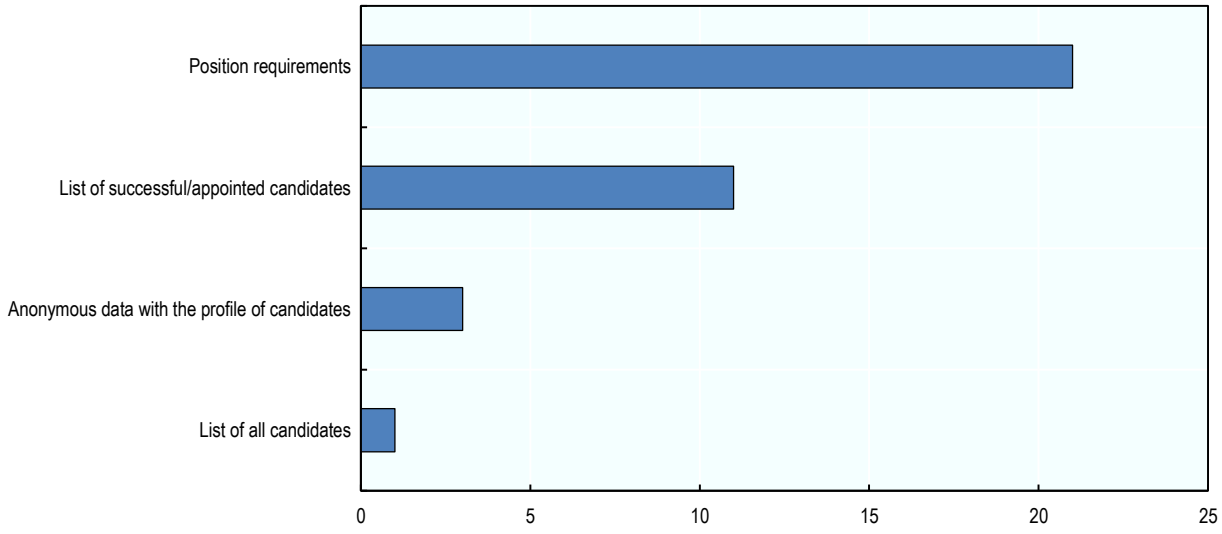
Note: Original survey question: "How are the competencies of senior level public servants assessed during recruitment?"
Source: OECD (2020), Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability.

In a majority of OECD countries, the recruitment panels assessing the skills of candidates consist of senior public servants of equal or higher level and members of the central agency in charge of managing senior public servants, where applicable. At the same time, some countries include external members or employee representatives which can strengthen transparency throughout the recruitment process. For example, in Slovenia, the selection board consists of a member of the Council of Officials, the body responsible for recruitment of senior civil servants, an official employed in the public sector organisation for which the candidate is recruited, an expert in the field of public administration, personnel resources management or the specific area concerned and a representative of the union.

Actively publishing information on the recruitment process can strengthen transparency and openness. It can also build trust in the meritocratic process to recruit senior civil servants. The most common type of information made public is the senior public servant vacancy itself and the position requirements (Figure 3.9). Eleven OECD countries publish the list of successful candidates, while Norway publishes the list of candidates. Austria, Ireland and Israel include anonymous information on the profile of the candidates, such as age, gender and ethnicity. This can reinforce the commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Figure 3.9. Type of recruitment information of senior level public servants published online

Number of OECD countries, n=34 (2020)



Note: Original survey question: "What types of data and information about the recruitment process of senior level public servants are proactively published online?"
Source: OECD (2020), Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability.

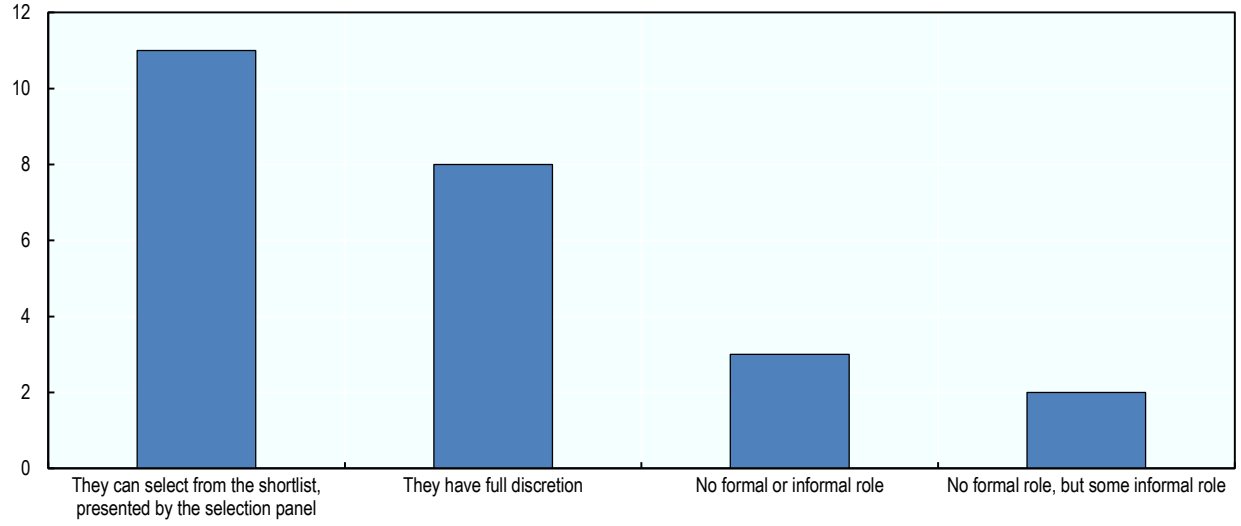
The degree of political influence in staffing decisions is widely debated as it can undermine merit, integrity, professionalism and trust. The assumption is that involving ministers in appointment decisions can help to nurture a close relationship conducive to responsiveness. However, if not managed appropriately, political influence can have negative consequences on merit, independence and stability. It can also create an environment in which senior civil servants do not speak out or provide evidence-based advice in opposition to political priorities out of fear of dismissal.

In OECD countries, the influence political officials have over recruitment processes varies (Figure 3.10). In eleven OECD countries, political officials (e.g. Ministers) can choose a candidate from a shortlist presented by the selection panel. This helps to ensure merit and accountability within the process. A recruitment panel ranks candidates according to merit-based criteria, while giving political officials the choice to make the final choice according to specific criteria. At times, the appointment also needs to be confirmed by the legislature. In eight OECD countries, political officials have full discretion in the recruitment. At the same time, it is more common for political officials to have a higher influence on D1 positions than on those below the top hierarchical level.

Political influence can also be exerted through politically motivated dismissals (Figure 3.11). Dismissals at the discretion of the minister (i.e. without any specific cause) are very limited, in particular at the lower hierarchical levels. In 16 OECD countries it is not legally possible to dismiss senior public servants at D1 level at the discretion of ministers.

Figure 3.10. Role of political officials in the recruitment/selection of senior level public servants

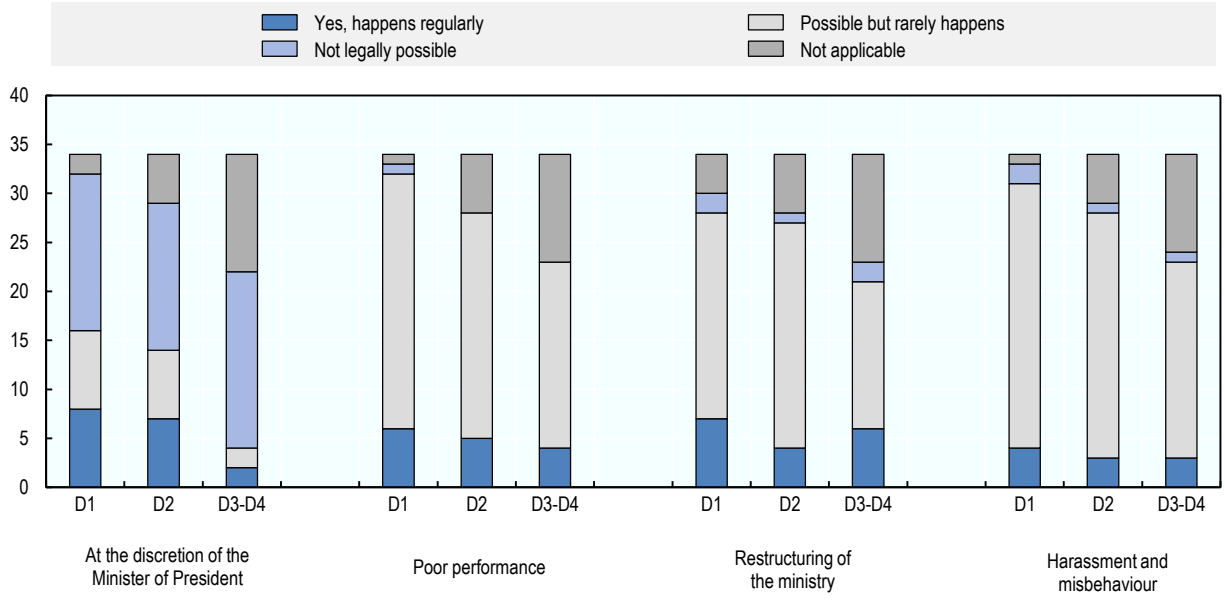
Number of OECD countries, n=34 (2020)



Note: 10 OECD countries indicated 'other' as a response to the question given that the role often varies according to the level of senior civil servant recruited. For New Zealand, ministers have no formal role, but some informal role. They may not always have this informal role though.
Original survey question: "What role, if any, do political officials (president, prime minister, ministers, etc.) have in the recruitment/selection of senior level public servants?"
Source: OECD (2020), Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability.

Figure 3.11. Reasons for dismissing senior level public servants before the end of tenure

Number of OECD countries, n=34 (2020)



Note: Original survey question: "Can a senior level public servant be dismissed before the end of his/ her term, for any of the following reasons?"
Source: OECD (2020), Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability.

Career management and mobility: Scope to develop the pipeline

An effective senior civil service system reaches beyond the current top hierarchical level, to build a pipeline of candidates who have the competences necessary for leadership. The OECD framework for senior civil service systems identifies the following key objectives for this area:

- Develop and maintain a pool of candidates with the capabilities and experience necessary to take up SCS positions.
- Identify and support future leaders from within and outside the public service.
- Use a range of talent management tools for future SCS, such as mobility and career path planning, to develop the right kinds of experience needed.
- Position senior management as people developers and hold them accountable for developing the leadership pipeline in their organisations.

While it is not yet common in OECD countries to identify potential senior public servants early in their careers, a few countries do so using a combination of tools. For example, the United Kingdom trains some future senior civil servants as a separate group from the start of their career. The Civil Service Fast Stream is a graduate development programme aiming to equip participants with the knowledge, skills and experience needed to be future leaders in the civil service. Participants' personal development is achieved through a programme of carefully managed and contrasting postings, supplemented by formal learning and other support such as coaching, mentoring and action learning (OECD, 2020[2]).

Other countries develop specific strategies and tools for lower levels of civil servants to provide the learning opportunities necessary for developing leadership skills. Australia combines various tools in building a pipeline of future leaders. The workforce strategy '*Delivering for tomorrow: APS Workforce Strategy 2025'* deliberately highlights leadership development as one of its three areas of action. The strategy sets out a broad framework to develop future leaders based on a clear understanding of leadership capabilities, a strategic approach to attracting, retaining and deploying senior civil servants, promoting collaboration and work across the APS, effective talent management, succession planning for critical senior roles, mobility to gain broad experiences early in employees' careers and investing in a culture that encourages learning and development. The Secretaries Talent Council and Deputy Secretaries Council are responsible for leading this work and building a pipeline of qualified and diverse future leaders.

Lastly, some countries build a pool of potential external candidates. In Estonia, the Top Civil Service Excellence Centre invests resources on tracking potential candidates and approaching them with potential opportunities when appropriate positions open up. Such an approach may be in particular interesting for smaller countries where private sector leaders are relatively well known.

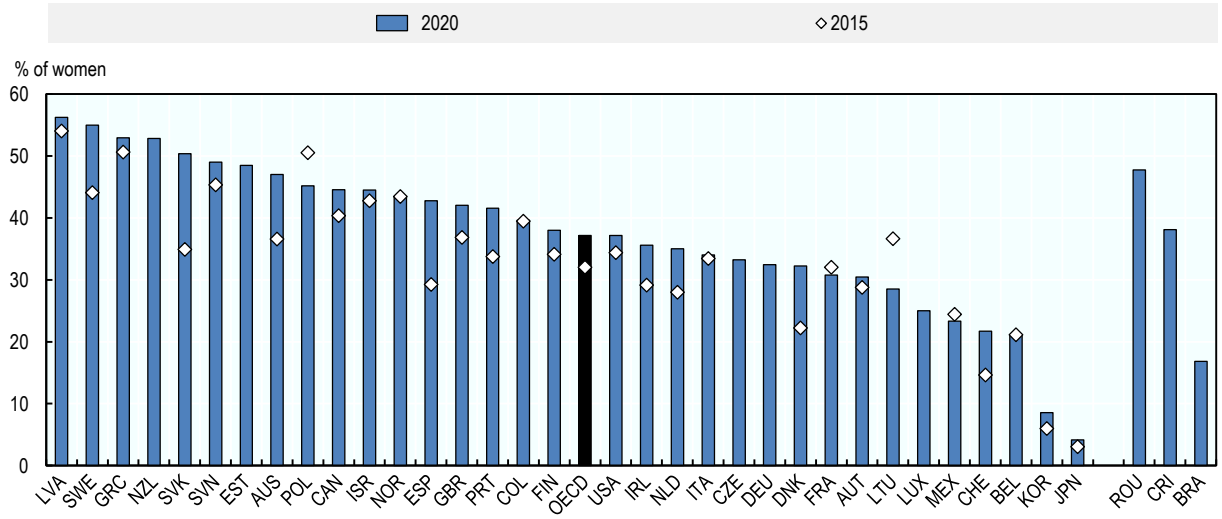
Diversity and inclusion: Still work to do to fill the gap

A diverse and inclusive senior civil service can contribute to strengthening organisational performance by boosting innovation and enhancing core public service values, such as fairness, transparency and impartiality. Ensuring that the leadership of public organisations reflect the society they serve can also improve dialogue and send a signal of valuing all communities. The OECD framework for senior civil service systems identifies the following key objectives for this area:

- Highlight diversity (gender, ethnic, linguistic and social) as a fundamental objective of an effective SCS.
- Track diversity in the SCS and in the pipeline using appropriate data.
- Make HR decisions with appropriate transparency and accountability to reduce bias risks.
- Intervene when analysis shows weak diversity.

In OECD countries, the share of women in senior civil service positions is lower than in central government positions. On average, women represent more than 56% of employees in central and federal administrations while only 38% of senior civil service positions are filled by women in the OECD (Figure 3.12) (OECD, 2021[5]).

Figure 3.12. Gender equality in senior management positions in central governments, 2015 and 2020



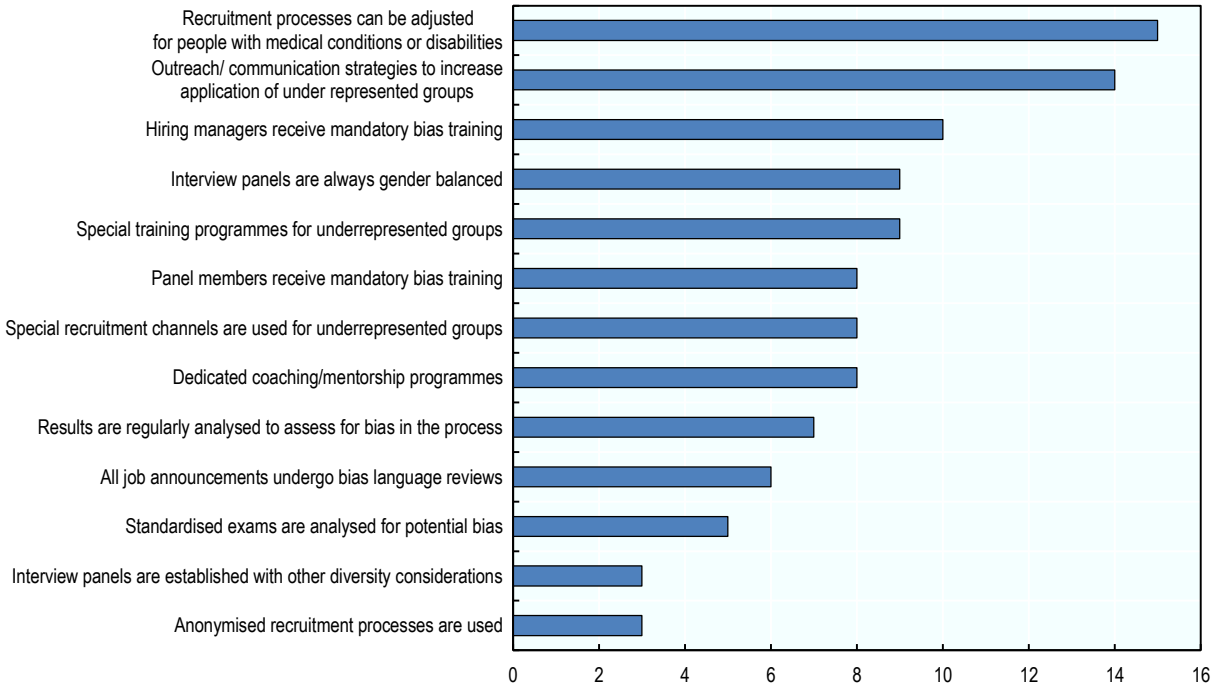
Note: Data for Hungary are for 2018. Data for France refer to 31 December 2018. Data for Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Poland refer to December 2019. Data for Denmark and Finland refer to February 2020. Data for Colombia refer to March 2020. Data for Korea refer to December 31 2020. Data for Chile, Iceland and Turkey are not available. Senior management data for Austria refer only to D1.
Source: OECD (2021[5]), *Government at a Glance 2021*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/1c258f55-en.

OECD countries have adopted different tools to increase the representation of underrepresented groups in recruitment processes to the Senior Civil Service (Figure 3.13). Among the most common measures are to adjust recruitment processes for people with medical conditions or disabilities and design specific outreach strategies to increase the application of underrepresented groups. Similarly, some OECD countries have started offering bias training for hiring managers. Other measures include diversity of the hiring panel or dedicated training programmes for underrepresented groups. In Australia, guidance provided on recruitment highlights that selection committee members should reflect a diverse range of backgrounds and experience to facilitate an inclusive recruitment process. Belgium has developed a skills programme to offer women the possibility to perform a test assessment and receive coaching. Similarly, the Public Service Commission in New Zealand has set up a leadership mentoring programme for Pasifika public servants and has developed a Maori Emerging Leaders Development Programme in 2020. Less common tools used among OECD countries are anonymised recruitment or reviewing standardised exams for potential bias.

However, it is not enough to focus on the recruitment process as a way to increase diversity and inclusion among public leaders. A diversity and inclusion lens should also be applied to other HR processes and workplace policies to identify potentially discriminating practices, spot biases and spot areas for further efforts to strengthen diversity and inclusion among senior civil servants. Similarly, collecting data through employee surveys can support organisation to identify drivers of a more inclusive workforce culture (Nolan-Flecha, 2019[6]). In fact, diversity and inclusion is one of the lowest scoring elements in leadership competencies (see Chapter 1, figure 1.4) and in only a few countries a priority throughout the recruitment process (Figure 3.7). This suggests that diversity and inclusion is not seen as a fundamental leadership role throughout OECD countries.

Figure 3.13. Tools used to increase the representation of underrepresented groups in the senior level public service

Number of OECD countries, n=34 (2020)



Note: Original survey question: "Does the central/ federal administration use any of the following tools to increase the representation of underrepresented groups?"
Source: OECD (2020), Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability.

Axis 2: Enabling operating environment

The Senior Civil Service System matrix developed by the OECD underscores that the right skills and competences among senior civil servants can only flourish in a conducive operating environment. It is crucial to build an awareness of the operating and contextual elements that support or impede senior civil servants in being effective public managers. The following section discusses these and common OECD practices in detail.

Objectives, autonomy, accountability: Scope to improve accountability for leadership capabilities and people management

An enabling environment for senior civil servants sets clear goals and objectives according to which senior civil servants act and lead. These help to set expectations and define accountabilities in accordance to political objectives. The OECD framework for senior civil service systems identifies the following key objectives for this area:

- Ensure senior civil servants have tailor-made objectives, which promote change-oriented leadership, in line with government priorities.
- Hold senior civil servants accountable for working towards their objectives in a way that respects public service values and the complexity and uncertainty of their environment.
- Delegate an appropriate level of autonomy and trust aligned to senior civil servants objectives.

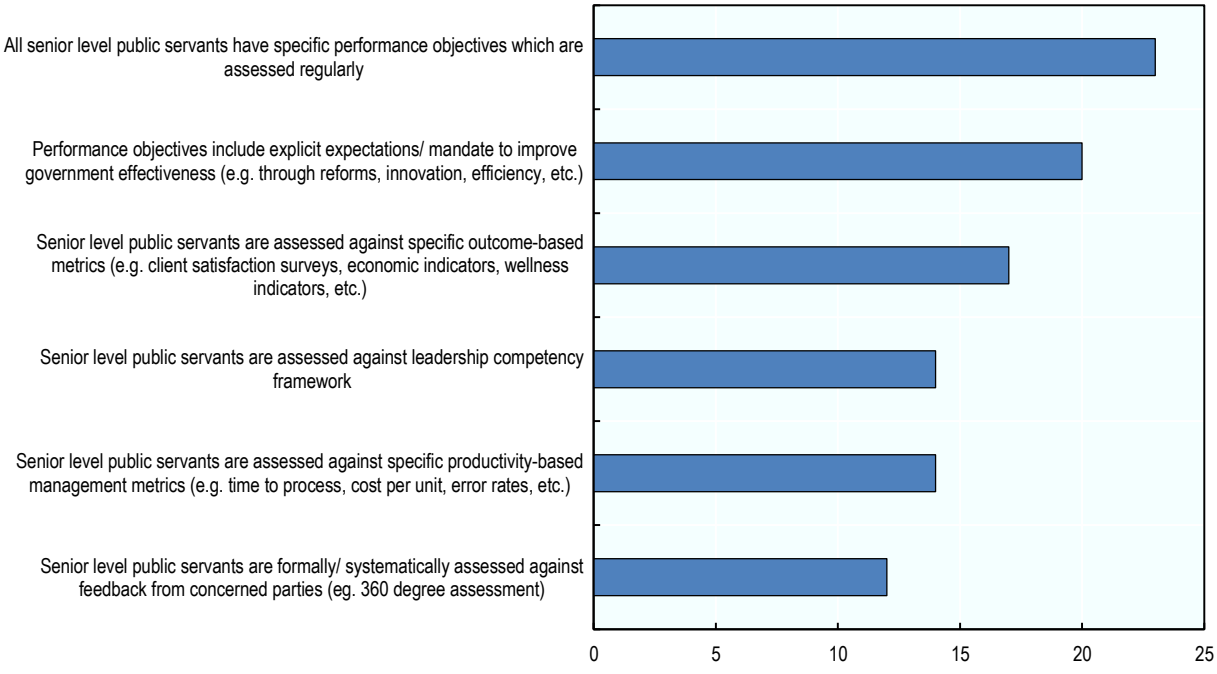
Most OECD countries use specific performance objectives for senior public servants (Figure 3.14). Objectives should ideally be visionary and challenging, to push leaders to advance the organisation or area they are responsible for. In the majority of OECD countries, performance objectives for senior civil servants include expectation to improve government effectiveness. However less than half of OECD countries assess leaders against their leadership competency framework, suggesting a missed opportunity to reinforce the importance of good leadership in the senior civil services of many OECD countries.

In comparison to public servants in general, the objectives and goals of senior civil servants are often more complex and challenging due to the involvement of stakeholders and partners. Performance objectives should, therefore, be interpreted as potential milestones, but allow for revisions in case of new information or changing situations. Overly rigid objectives may also increase the risk of senior public servants merely concentrating on achieving the determined objectives without taking into consideration ethical considerations or integrity on how objectives are achieved. It may also reinforce organisational silos if senior civil servants are only held accountable for the objectives within their organisation's authority. To counteract this, OECD countries commonly assign objectives that require collaboration to multiple senior civil servants. In few occasions, collaboration objectives may also be assigned to a senior public servant on a temporary assignment who leads the project full-time (Figure 3.15). In addition, some countries, such as Ireland, assess senior public servants against feedback from concerned parties, such as employees, peers or stakeholders (Figure 3.14).

A performance assessment system can also introduce incentives, such as performance related pay or dismissal in case of low performance. 16 OECD countries provide senior public servants with financial rewards for high performance. 42% of OECD countries dismiss senior public servants for low performance.

Figure 3.14. Performance assessment of senior level public servants

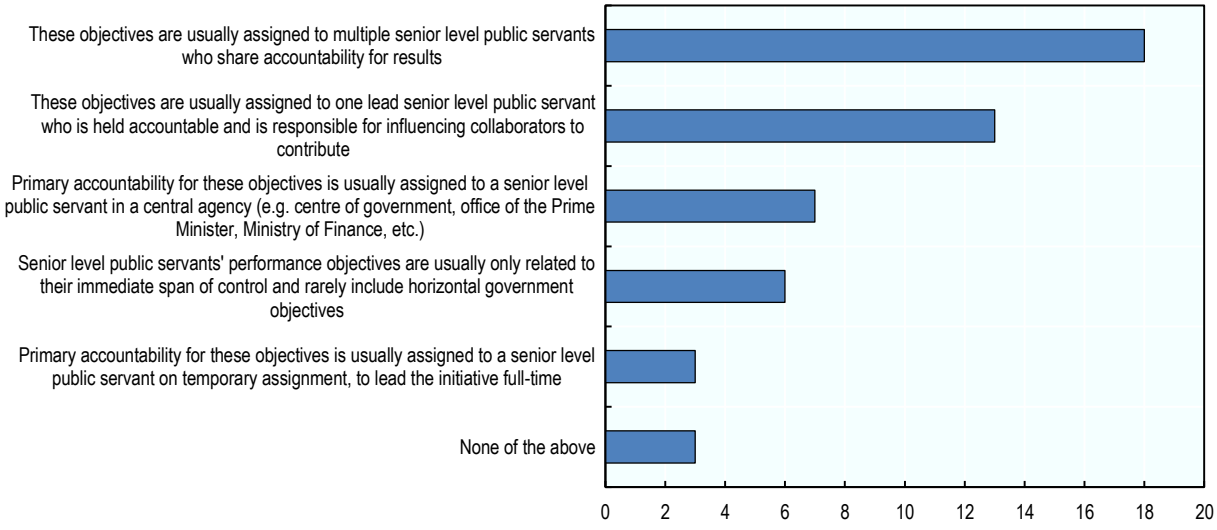
Number of OECD countries, n=34 (2020)



Note: Original survey question: "Which of the following apply for performance assessment of senior level public servants?"
Source: OECD (2020), Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability.

Figure 3.15. Accountability for collaboration across ministries and agencies

Number of OECD countries, n=31 (2020)

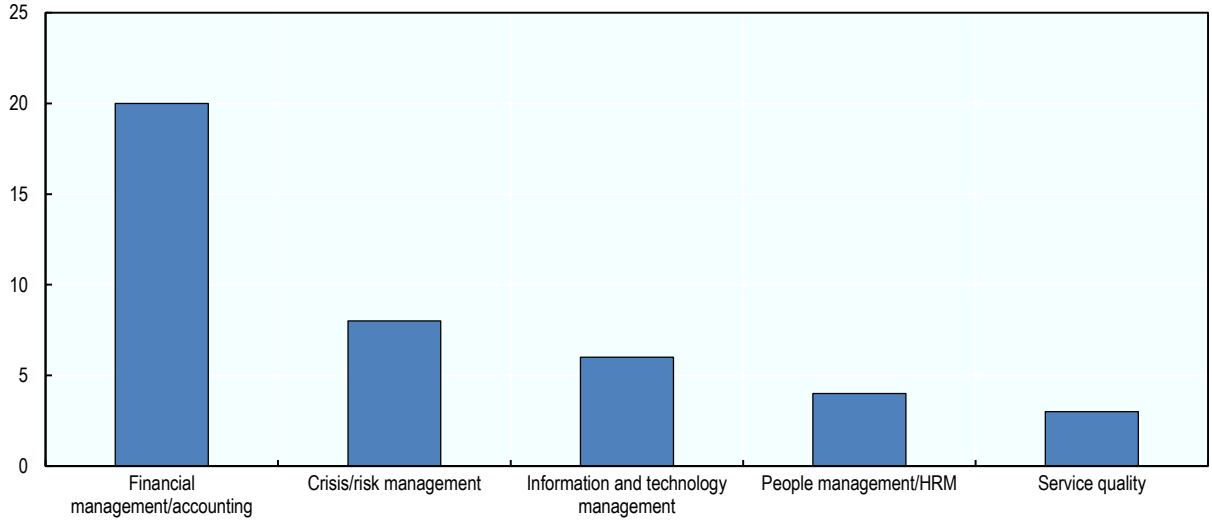


Note: Original survey question: "How are senior level public servants held accountable for objectives that require collaboration across ministries and agencies?"
Source: OECD (2020), Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability.

In achieving the objectives and advancing the mission of their organisation, senior civil leaders need to count on the necessary level of autonomy over resources and organisation of work. Managerial accountabilities can help to build trust that the autonomy granted is used effectively. 24 OECD countries have a law or a comparable document in place laying out specific managerial accountabilities for senior public servants. These principally refer to financial management and accounting, but also include crisis and risk management. However, in only 4 OECD countries it also includes specific accountabilities for people management (Figure 3.16). Emphasising accountability for people management across senior civil servants, and not only within the HR department, can help to reinforce this fundamental leadership capability among the senior civil service.

Figure 3.16. Type of managerial accountabilities of senior level public servants

Number of OECD countries, n=24 (2020)



Note: Original survey question: "Is there a law or other document that explicitly lays out specific managerial (financial, HR, etc.) accountabilities of senior level public servants? If yes, do these accountabilities include:"
Source: OECD (2020), Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability.

Learning: Integrating a range of tools including mobility, to develop a learning culture

Senior civil servants benefit from structured opportunities to reflect on their experience, learn and adapt to evolving public challenges, however learning opportunities must fit into busy schedules and be relevant to the highly specific challenges SCS face. To encourage public leaders to continuously develop, the public sector needs a learning culture that values investment in learning, and offers regular and quality feedback. This includes mobility opportunities that allow SCS to develop their skills by working on new challenges. The OECD framework for senior civil service systems identifies the following key objectives for this area:

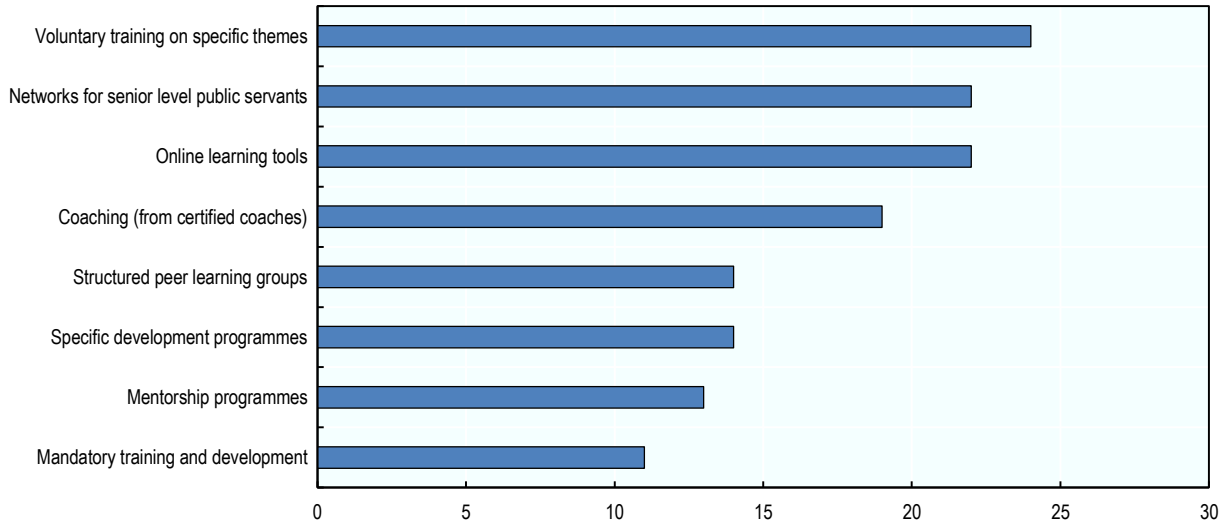
- Structure opportunities to build senior civil servants networks and enable peer support.
- Provide senior civil servants with tailored coaching.
- Design senior civil servants development programmes to fit the specific contexts and needs of this senior group.
- Manage mobility for individual and organisational learning.

OECD countries offer a wide variety of learning opportunities and peer support to senior public servants (Figure 3.17). 22 OECD countries have put networks for senior level public servants in place. These can strengthen an environment of continuous learning, boost network collaboration and help build connections across organisational siloes. It can also confront senior civil servants with different voices and perspectives not common in their area and inspire new solutions to problems. 19 OECD countries offer coaching opportunities for senior leaders. Coaching opportunities can provide leaders with very specific learning, tailored to their needs and availability, which may strengthen leaders´ commitment to learning. Specific development programmes or structured peer learning groups, used in 14 OECD countries, invite senior civil servants to reflect on their experience and receive specific advice from others who can understand their context. They can also provide a safe space to reflect on mistakes, identify success factors or receive peer support. It may also make senior civil servants aware of new skills or areas to develop.

Despite these advances in training methods, a majority of countries focus on training seminars and online learning tools. 24 OECD countries offer voluntary training on specific themes. These can be good opportunities for leaders to meet with their peers and be exposed to new ideas and tools. However, since it is hard to target generic trainings to the particular needs of an individual leader, these risk being less effective.

Figure 3.17. Learning opportunities and peer support available to senior level public servants

Number of OECD countries, n=34 (2020)



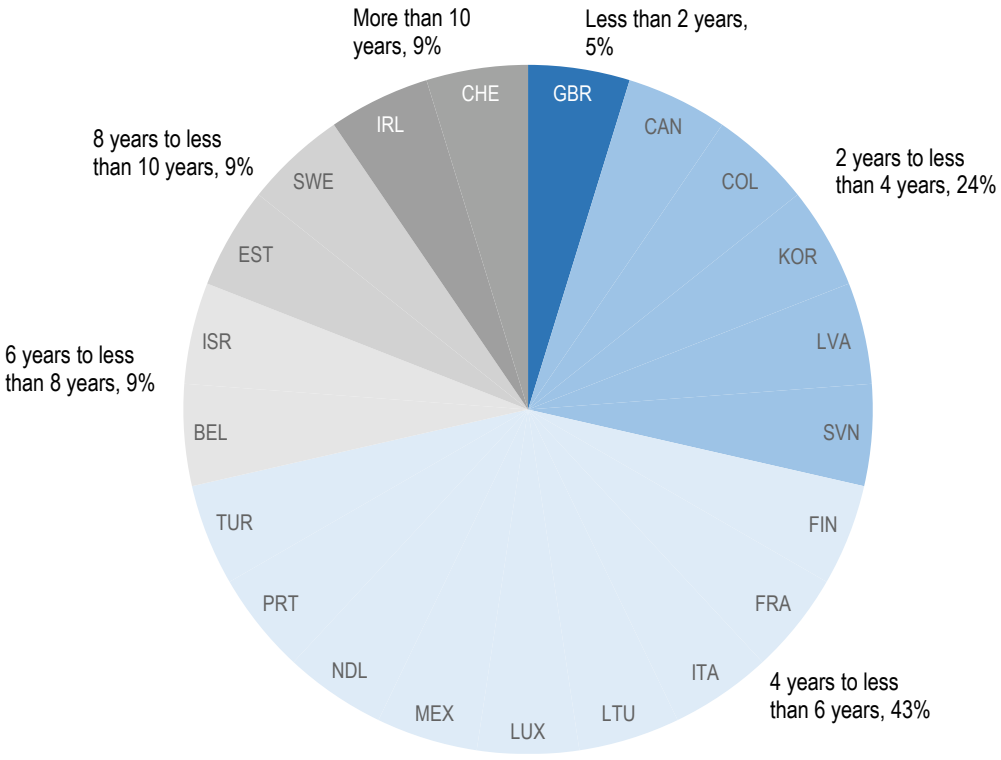
Note: Original survey question: "Which of the following learning opportunities and peer support are available for senior level public servants?"
Source: OECD (2020), Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability.

Mobility of senior civil servants can also contribute to a learning culture. Mobility can generate new ideas by bringing new perspectives, opportunities for career development contributing to the motivation of the senior civil servants, and it can help to break down organisational silos. At the same time, it takes time to build the relationships and trust necessary for cultivating organisational culture. In OECD countries, the average tenure of senior public servants in a particular position varies between less than two years in the United Kingdom to more than ten years in Ireland and Switzerland (Figure 3.18). Between four and six years in a position is most common. In nine OECD countries the average tenure is the result of a specific policy. In the Netherlands, senior civil servants spend at least three years in a certain position and are encouraged to look for a new position after five years. Seven years is the maximum amount most senior civil servants can remain in one position.

While there is discussion on the optimal number of years to spend in a position, mobility should ideally be organised in a staggered manner within an organisation to avoid too much movement at the same time. Similarly, decoupling the tenure from the political cycle may limit the degree of dependence on political leaders, while also ensuring institutional memory is not lost between one cycle and the next.

Figure 3.18. Average tenure of senior level public servants in a position

Number of OECD countries, n=21 (2020)



Note: Original survey question: "What is the average tenure of senior level public servants in a given position?"
Source: OECD (2020), Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability.

Conclusion

In addition to the elements discussed, an effective operating environment for senior civil servants also equips them with the right tools to do their job and fulfil their responsibilities. This includes financial tools to use budgets, HR tools to recruit, develop and allocate skills, data and information to make decision based on evidence and communication tools to reach out to stakeholders. Furthermore, political-administrative interface between senior civil servants and the elected government should be characterised by stability, trust and mutual recognition of roles and responsibilities between political and administrative decision making guided by public service values.

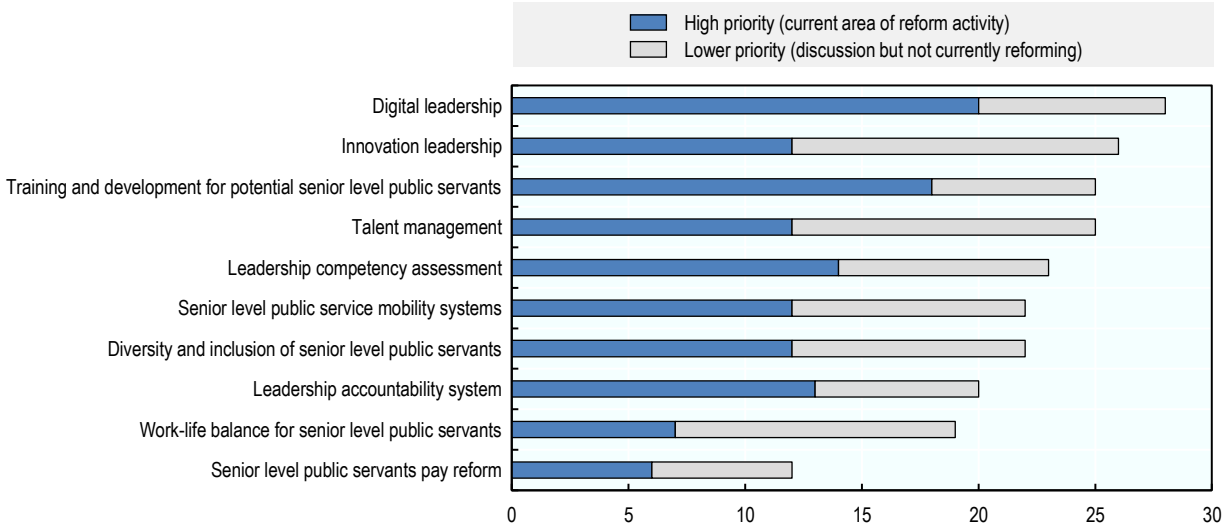
Developing a mature senior civil service systems requires a long-term and systemic perspective. As evident from the wide-ranging practices among OECD countries, it is not one specific intervention or tool that enables effective leadership, but rather the interaction between different elements building capable leaders who are able to put their skills to best use in an enabling operating environment.

At the same time, it is essential to underline that the priorities for senior civil servants develop alongside the challenges and opportunities presented. As can be seen from Figure 3.19, OECD countries consider a wide breadth of priorities for reform of the senior civil servant system. While digital and innovative leadership might not have been a priority several years ago, the current circumstances require countries to take action in these areas to ensure an effective civil service able to deliver. However, it is curious that more countries do not highlight these in their leadership competency frameworks. Therefore, an effective

senior civil servant system needs to be built on a long-term strategy, while allowing flexibility to address emerging areas and challenges.

Figure 3.19. Reform priorities of the senior civil servant system among OECD countries

Number of OECD countries, n=34 (2020)



Note: Original survey question: "Please indicate priorities from among the following:"
Source: OECD (2020), Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability.

Returning to the question of public service leadership for the future, the OECD framework suggests that Senior Civil Service Systems will need to be:

- **Forward-looking**: Building the Senior Civil Service of the future requires action today, so there needs to be a sense of what competencies and skills those leaders require. The gap between the high priority given to digital and innovation leadership in Figure 3.19 and low rates of incidence of these in existing competency frameworks suggests opportunities to update countries' visions of public service leaders, taking into account lessons learned from the pandemic and increased need for leadership that is able to manage change and innovation in a context of uncertainty and ambiguity. This also requires alignment with the rest of the SCS system, and in particular, building a pipeline of people with the right skills.
- **Flexible**: Senior Civil Service Systems require flexibility in various ways. Mobility can be used to ensure the right SCS can be assigned to the right tasks, particularly as issues emerge quickly and require rapid response. They require flexibility in their performance systems, to ensure that SCS are able to meet ambitious targets that take into account unforeseen shifts in the operating environment. They also require flexibility in management tools, such as HR and Financial management, to enable adjustment within sound management frameworks.
- **Fulfilling**: The public service will have to compete for talent by offering fulfilling work, attracting senior civil servants who are motivate by the mission of the public service. Senior civil servants need to be given challenging and exciting goals and the right tools to engage their workforce and support their achievement.

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Note

[1] The use of personality tests as part of staffing processes is still considered contentious in the Canadian Public Service. Federal departments subject to the Public Service Employment Act must seek the permission of the Public Service Commission before using a personality test as part of a staffing process.

4 Special focus: Recruitment in the public sector

This chapter presents a selection of comparative indicators on attraction and recruitment practices in OECD countries. The data were gathered as part of the OECD survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability in 2020-2021. The chapter presents the context for the survey, explains the importance of attraction and recruitment in the future, and discusses insights from data analysis. The chapter concludes with questions for further consideration.

Introduction: Recruiting the future public servants

Across the OECD, the public sector is increasingly competing for talent. This can be seen in the context of the public sector response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, which illustrates many of the features of the 'Future of Work' explored by the OECD. Sudden and highly complex policy challenges call for skilled and motivated public servants, as well as public employment and management systems able to attract, recruit and retain the best talent. However, potential candidates with in-demand skills, such as in digital or science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields, have a great variety of choice of employers.

In this context, this chapter explores recruitment in the public sector, so that governments can attract and hire the workforce they need. The COVID-19 pandemic may be an opportunity to change the image of government as an employer, emphasising innovation, agility and impact. Government-run innovation hubs are popping up, bus shelters carry engaging advertisements for public sector jobs, and candidates with professional and academic backgrounds outside the relatively narrow list of 'traditional' backgrounds are finding that there can be a place for them in public sector work.

With increasing competition for certain skill sets, the public sector has scope to learn from organisations where competition for jobs is tough. Many candidates apply to big companies not only because they feel that they have good compensation packages, but also because working there provides a level of status that suits their personal image and values, and might be helpful for their future career development. Companies in this bracket invest energy and resources in understanding what makes them appealing to the types of people that they want to hire. In other words, they see recruitment as a proactive marketing activity – rather than wait for candidate to come to them, they actively promote their image to those they want to target and seek out the employees they want to hire. Like a good sales pipeline, effective marketing practices have a distinct impact on the quality of candidates.

Organisations then have to be sure that their recruitment processes are able to test and select candidates for the types of things that will add value to day-to-day work and longer-term organisational effectiveness. Why invest more in attracting better candidates if recruitment doesn't deliver?

Attraction and selection are two key aspects of recruitment that build public service capability: without effective strategies to reach candidates, recruitment processes will suffer from lack of candidate quality and volume. And without regular updates and reviews, selection processes risk not keeping pace with changing skills requirements. In practice, this calls for public sector recruitment systems that align the full end-to-end range of activities: employer branding, job advertising, application, testing and selection processes – and employee on-boarding and induction. This is why the 2019 OECD Recommendation on Public Service Leadership and Capability (PSLC) includes two specific provisions on recruiting public servants (OECD, 2019[1]). The first emphasises the need to be an attractive employer, and the second focuses on the important of rigorous, well aligned merit-based selection processes.

This chapter analyses the results of the survey on Public Service Leadership and capability conducted in 2020, in order to provide insight on how countries address the two principles of the PSLC Recommendation on recruitment. The first part presents and discusses data relating to various aspects of attraction; the second focuses on recruitment systems. The chapter concludes with reflections on how public sector attraction and recruitment systems can be more forward-looking, flexible, and fulfilling.

Key messages

- **Skills gaps are common in the public sector.** Most governments across the OECD find it hard to recruit candidates with specific skills, usually in IT or Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics-related fields (STEM). This may be because these skills are in-demand in the private sector, suggesting that the public sector will have to get better at reaching out to and recruiting these candidates.
- **Some countries are beginning to use more proactive recruitment practices.** This illustrates the shift from an administrative approach to candidate recruitment to one involving proactive marketing, sourcing, networking, evaluation and adjustment. This may call for up-skilling in the HR function.
- **There is scope to improve data on attraction and recruitment.** While many countries use different tools to improve attractiveness, fewer countries measure how effective these tools are. This may be an area that public employers can focus on and collaborate in the future.
- **Most selection processes test for analytical and behavioural competences** in addition to traditional areas based on knowledge and experience. This is important as these skill sets are fundamental to the future of the public sector – however these tests can be complex and require new skills among recruiting managers.
- **There is an increasing effort to attract under-represented groups** through a variety of tools and practices – but measurement is patchy and use of various bias mitigation tools is limited.

Attracting high quality candidates to public service positions

Convincing the right candidates to consider and apply for a public service job is the first step in recruiting needed talent. In the past, recruiters acted as the arbiter of information – centralised career websites described the job and conditions, allowing them to set the tone for much of the exchange between the organisation and the person applying to it. Now, prospective employers are ranked and reviewed across multiple online platforms (e.g. Glassdoor and LinkedIn) or through third-party accreditation ('Great Place to Work'). Ultimately, candidates have to select a potential employer before an employer gets the chance to select a candidate. As such, the balance of power has swung in favour of the candidate.

The public sector does lots of different things, so there is an urgent need to attract a diverse range of skills. Moreover, this urgency is underlined by a context in many countries of ageing workforces, uncompetitive wages for some professions, negative public sector image, and relatively slow recruitment practices. Following the global financial crisis in 2008, many public sector workforces suffered falls in trust levels as well as substantial cuts and freezes to recruitment and learning and development (OECD, 2016[2]). These may have contributed to reinforcing the image of some public services as less attractive career options. With the COVID-19 pandemic, public administrations across the OECD are currently in the spotlight as arguably never before through provision of economic support, healthcare and vaccine rollout. This means that public administrations have an opportunity to show the impact of a public sector career and the range of personal and professional opportunities it entails. To do this, they may have to consider aspects such as the following:

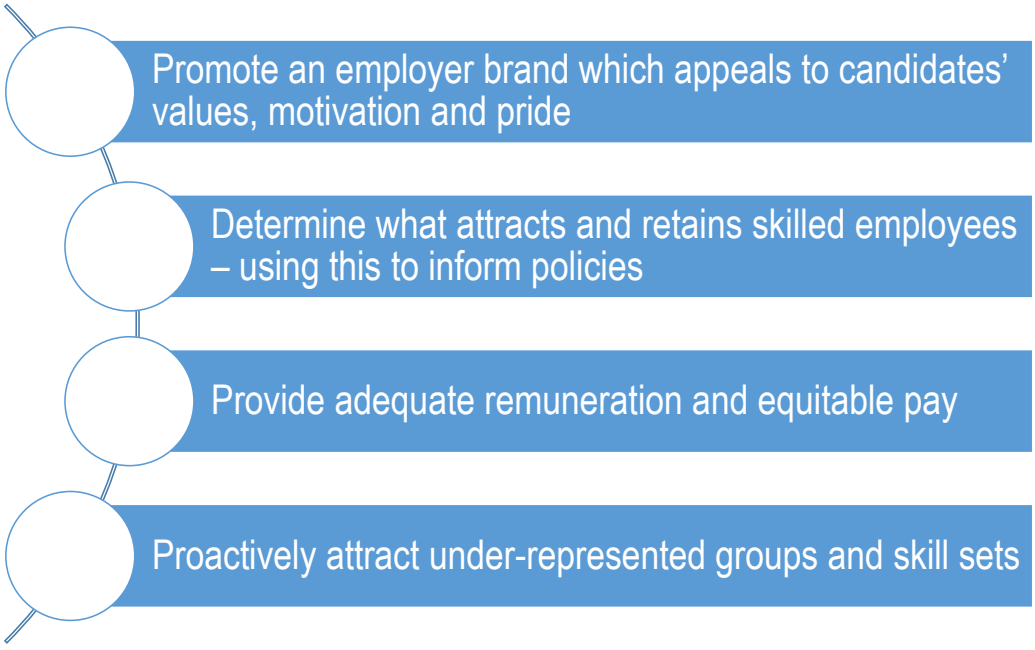
- Employer brands have multiple components: one way to frame them is as "the package of functional, economic, and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the

employing company" (Ambler and Barrow, 1996[3]). Promoting this brand to candidates is a key part of attracting candidates with the right skills.

- Effective employer branding thus builds on insights into what attracts skilled candidates. Public sector recruiters can survey existing staff as well as prospective candidates (e.g. groups of university students who will soon be on the job market) to identify aspects of work in the public sector that matter to them. Identifying these aspects in a systematic manner and integrating them into advertising and recruitment campaigns can help increase employer-candidate fit and improve an employer brand.
- Uncompetitive pay is often cited as a barrier to hiring the right people in the public sector, particularly for in-demand skill sets and leadership positions. Some public administrations are working to embed flexibility in their pay and reward systems so that, under certain conditions, compensation for some key positions and skill sets can come closer to matching relevant market rates. Administrations can also explore non-pay elements of attractiveness, such as working conditions and opportunities for career development.
- Attracting more candidates with the right skills depends on making recruitment as inclusive as possible. This might call for going beyond traditional recruiting grounds, such as top-ranked universities, and developing new ways of reaching out to, and engaging with candidates from backgrounds that are less represented in the public service.

As illustrated in Figure 4.1, these points are codified in the OECD Recommendation on Public Service Leadership and Capability (PSLC).

Figure 4.1. Principles relating to employer attractiveness



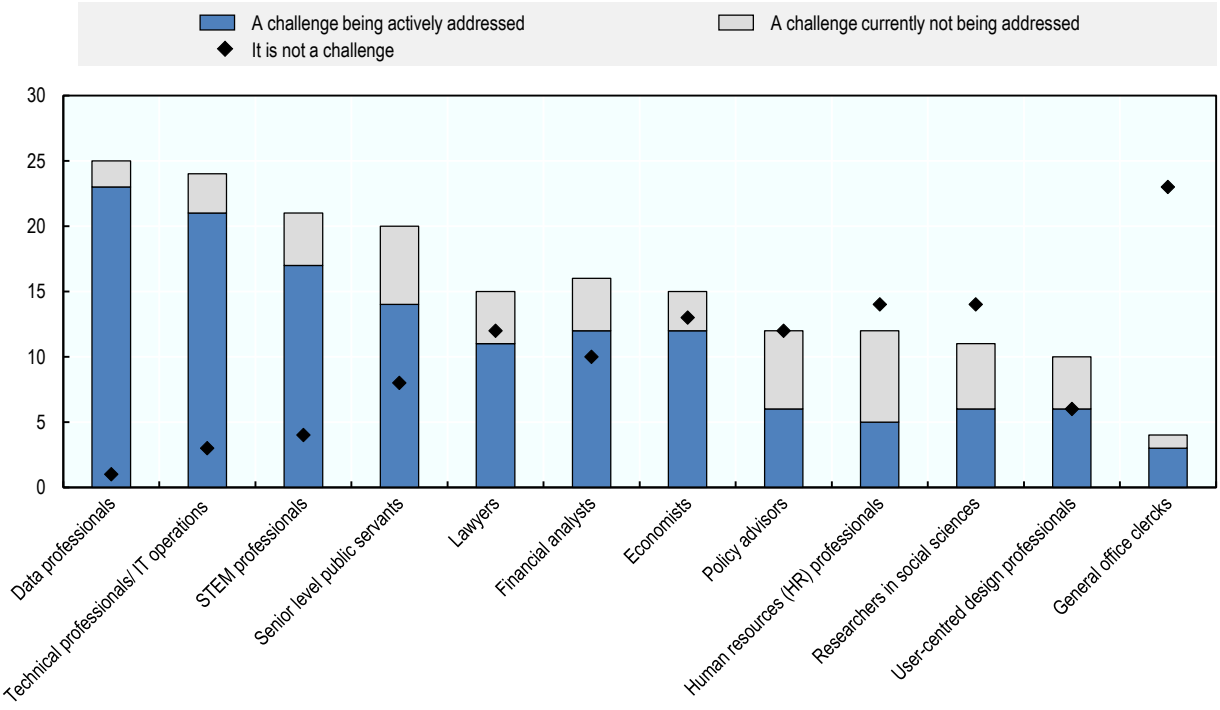
Source: OECD (2019[1]), *Recommendation of the Council on Public Service Leadership and Capability*, OECD/LEGAL/0445, OECD, Paris, https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/en/instruments/OECD-LEGAL-0445.

OECD countries face challenges attracting specific skill sets

Countries across the OECD face challenges attracting candidates. However, lack of attraction is not uniform: candidates with specific professional backgrounds and distinct types of experience are harder to attract to a government job than others. Figure 4.2 illustrate that the main difficulties lie with people who have backgrounds in data and technology: 23 countries are actively trying to attract more data professionals and candidates with specific technical and IT expertise. Fourteen countries indicate challenges in attracting senior public servants. At the other end of the spectrum, most countries have little difficulty attracting clerical officers. While relatively few indicate challenges attracting candidates with skills in user-centred design, this may be because this field has only recently come into play for the public sector. Human resource professionals are a different case – just less than half of the responding countries indicate challenges in this area, many indicate these are not being addressed. Given the increased importance of quality HR professionals in the public service, this may a particular issues to track.

Figure 4.2. Attraction challenges in the public sector

Number of OECD countries, n=33, 2020



Note: N varies depending on the option, as some options were unknown by some OECD countries. Original survey question: "Does the central/ federal administration experience particular challenges in attracting any of the following groups of applicants/ skills?"
Source: OECD (2020), Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability, Module 2.

These types of skills gaps matter because of the nature of the policy and service delivery challenges that the public sector faces: data professionals in government, for example, have been able to work with third-party providers to frame the need for technology solutions, like developing smartphone apps to facilitate travel or notify of contact with a suspected Covid case.

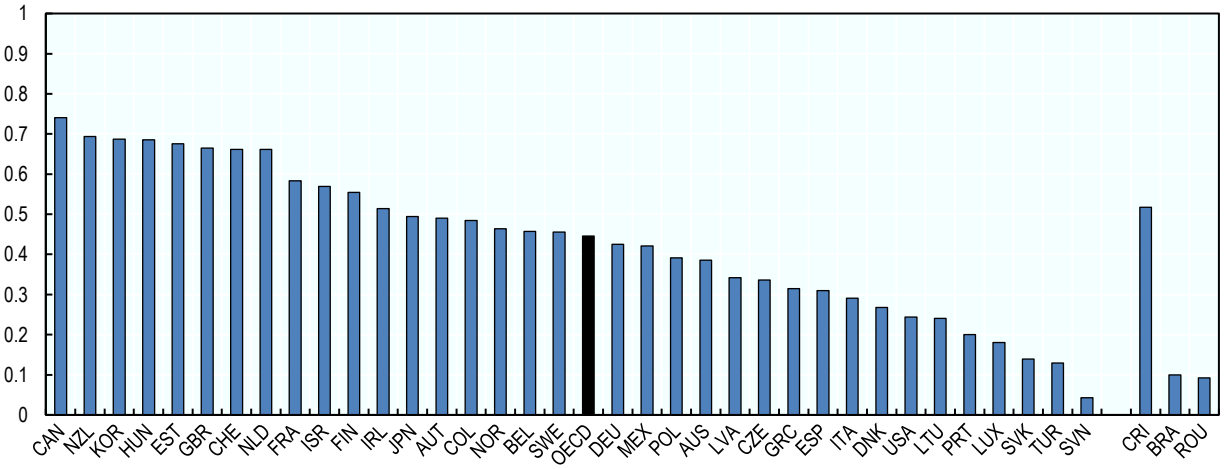
In the context of specific skills gaps, effective communication and branding can help countries attract the talent they need. But doing these activities successfully may require a change of mind-set to go beyond existing talent pools and ways of finding candidates. Candidates with skills in data and IT may not necessarily think of a public sector job in the first place, especially if they are highly sought-after in the private sector. And if they do apply, they may have markedly different attitudes toward recruitment processes than candidates from more traditional public policy backgrounds. Experience from an OECD case study involving attracting candidates with cyber-security skills in Israel suggests that the best candidates expect highly personalised recruitment processes with access to information on their future managers, colleagues and career development opportunities.[1]

The challenge for public sector recruiters is then to identify new ways to meet the expectations of candidates with specific skill sets while still upholding the principles of fairness, transparency and merit. For example, the UK civil service has launched the 'No. 10 Innovation Fellowship' programme specifically aimed at bringing digital and technology talent into government. This programme aims to reach people that do not usually apply for government jobs and who tend to work mainly in the private sector. The recruitment conditions, tasks and branding of the programme set it apart from regular recruitment to government.

Proactive recruitment practices can help fill skills gaps

The ability of public administrations to fill skills gaps is related in part to how proactively they recruit, as well as the variety of tools they have at their disposal to do that. As illustrated in Figure 4.3, public administrations in OECD countries use a variety of tools to attract candidates. It is important to note that the data do not measure relative attractiveness from one administration to another. Rather, countries that score well on this indicator – like Hungary, Canada and New Zealand – use a broad variety of methods to proactively reach out to desirable candidates to promote the public service as a good place to work, and to convince them to apply.

Figure 4.3. Use of proactive recruitment practices



Note: this composite indicator is made up of weighted responses to questions regarding the following aspects of employer attractiveness: (1) elements highlighted in recruitment material; (2) the policies to attract more and better candidates with in-demand skills; (3) the use of methods to determine what attracts skilled employees; (4) adequate pay systems to attract good candidates; (5) the actions in place to improve the representation of under-represented groups. The variables composing the index and their relative importance are based on expert judgements. They are presented with the purpose of furthering discussion, and consequently may evolve over time. Missing data for countries were estimated by mean replacement. Data for Chile and Iceland are not available.
Source: OECD survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability (2020).

This indicator captures the most important and widely-used tools to improve employer attractiveness. The key message is that attracting candidates is a complex task that involves a variety of tools and methods that can be reasonably adapted to meet the needs of specific groups that the public sector is trying to recruit. The traditional practice of placing long, jargon-heavy job descriptions on government websites and waiting to see who applies is not effective to fill skills gaps (for a useful study on France, see (Profil Public, 2019[4]).

Countries that score well on this indicator periodically assess their 'offer' to candidates and develop communication strategies to communicate that message. These practices are strongly related to the concept of an 'employee value proposition', defined by the UK Government Digital Service as "everything that matters to employees at work, and […] the things they proudly talk about to friends and family away from the workplace and across social media (Shamsi, 2015[5])." This reflects both the inward-looking and outward-facing aspect of 'Talent Acquisition' (see Box 4.1): a clear employee value proposition can provide the basis for communication strategies and material, and hence an employer brand. Use of employee surveys can be a valuable tool to gather data on what staff enjoy about their job.

Box 4.1. Talent Acquisition in government

The Human Resource function has gone through various stages of evolution, from the admin-heavy 'personnel' departments of the 1960s through to the emergence of sub-disciplines in their own right such as Learning and Development, Talent Management – and Talent Acquisition. In its broadest sense, 'Talent Acquisition' refers to the spectrum of activities like deciding what types of skills are needed, how candidate with those skills can be encouraged to apply, and then developing assessment and interview methodologies before hiring and onboarding the candidate. Talent Acquisition as a discipline has also been heavily affected by the rise of social media, blogs, podcasts, and professional networking sites like LinkedIn – all rich areas of information for the recruiter eager to find talented candidates.

By its nature, talent acquisition is selective: recruiters make conscious decisions about encouraging specific individuals or groups from specific backgrounds (like high-ranking universities) to apply. This has a direct effect on the candidate pool and ultimately on the quality of candidate hired. If done right, organisations can benefit from greater match between the candidate and the organisation; if done poorly, talent acquisition can skew diversity and harm the organisation by creating perceptions of unfairness.

A key question for human resource professionals in the public sector is to consider how proactive – or not – their recruitment strategies are, and what resources they have available to develop more strategic engagement with the types of candidates they need. In some cases, this may call for a review of procedures for job posting as well as greater co-ordination of messaging and brand across multiple platforms like government career websites and LinkedIn/Twitter. This might suggest the need for public sector human resource professionals to develop additional skills like candidate sourcing, survey techniques, community management, campus recruiter, etc.

Employer branding based on what attracts candidates to work for the government

> *As organisations seek both to attract new employees and retain existing staff, employment advertising and employment branding will grow in importance. This can only be done effectively once organisations understand the factors contributing towards 'employer attractiveness' (Berthon, Ewing and Hah, 2005[6])*

The starting point for a successful recruitment strategy is to understand what candidates are likely to find attractive about working for a particular organisation, and then using this to communicate an employer brand. Berthon, Ewing and Hah's (2005[6]) framework for measuring employer attractiveness focuses on understanding how individuals or groups of candidates are likely to prioritise aspects of attractiveness based on their own circumstances (see Box 4.2.)

Box 4.2. Measuring employer attractiveness

Berthon et al. (2005[6]) propose five factors for assessing employer attractiveness:

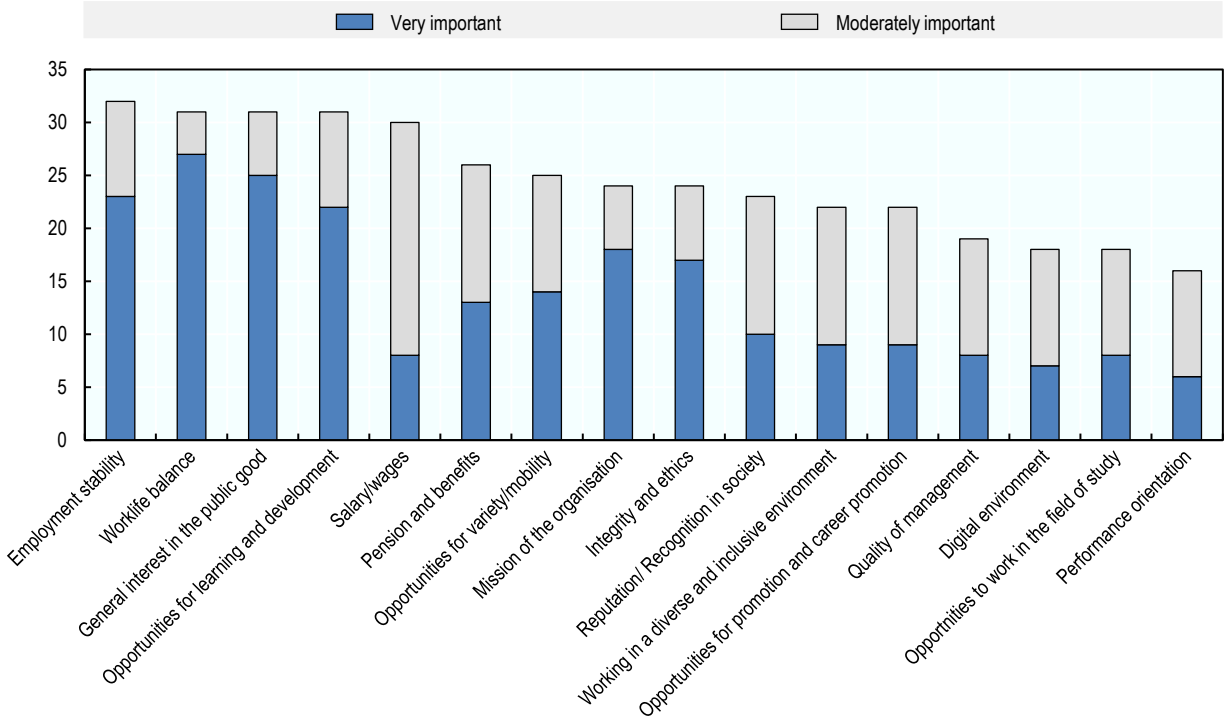
- Factor 1, labelled '**Interest value'**, assesses the extent to which an individual is attracted to an employer that provides an exciting work environment, novel work practices and that makes use of its employee's creativity to produce high-quality, innovative products and services.
- Factor 2, labelled '**Social value'** assesses the extent to which an individual is attracted to an employer that provides a working environment that is fun, happy, provides good collegial relationships and a team atmosphere.
- Factor 3, labelled '**Economic value'**, assesses the extent to which an individual is attracted to an employer that provides above-average salary, compensation package, job security and promotional opportunities.
- Factor 4, labelled '**Development value'**, assesses the extent to which an individual is attracted to an employer that provides recognition, self-worth and confidence, coupled with a career-enhancing experience and a springboard to future employment.
- Finally, factor 5, labelled '**Application value'**, assesses the extent to which an individual is attracted to an employer that provides an opportunity for the employee to apply what they have learned and to teach others, in an environment that is both customer orientated and humanitarian.

Source: Berthon, Ewing and Hah (2005[6]), "Captivating company: dimensions of attractiveness in employer branding", *The Quarterly Review of Marketing Communications*, Vol. 24/2, pp. 151-172, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2005.11072912.

Research on public sector attractiveness has typically focussed on 'Public Service Motivation' (PSM) – defined as "an individual's predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organisations" (Perry and Wise, 1990[7]). The theory suggests that candidates with higher degrees of PSM are likely to find public service jobs attractive and thrive in them, and to respond favourably to communications that emphasise the public and value-driven nature of work.

Figure 4.4. Aspects of public sector attractiveness

Number of OECD countries, n=33 (2020)



Note: N varies depending on the option, as some options were unknown by some OECD countries. Original survey question: "Based on the methods above, what are the main aspects that make the public service an attractive employer?" Respondents were asked to base this rating on available studies and data. Therefore the quality of the assessment will differ from country to country.
Source: OECD (2020), Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability, Module 2.

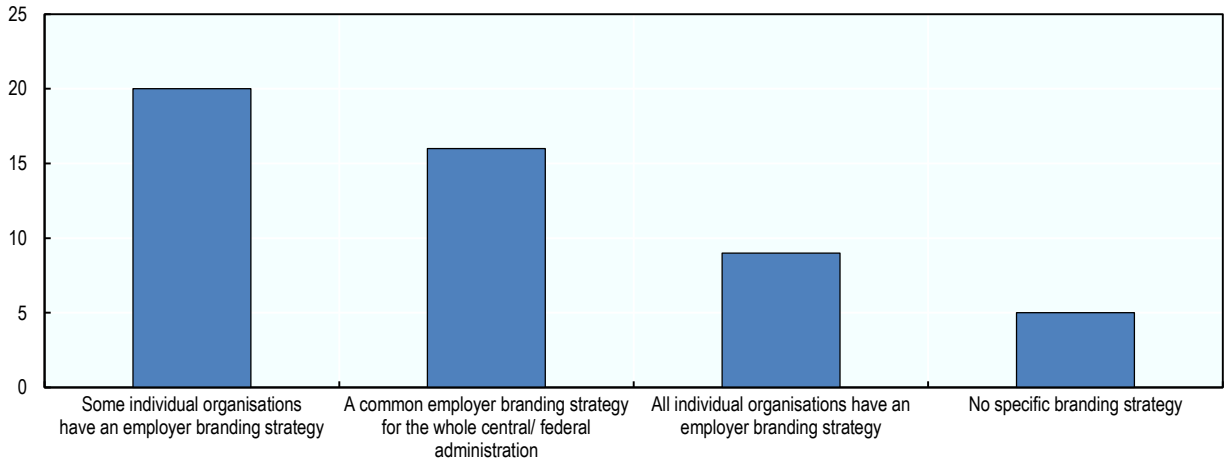
Data in Figure 4.4 add to the picture by identifying tangible aspects of employment in government and the degree to which they are seen to contribute to employer attractiveness. The figure shows how many countries rate each element as very important or moderately important. While salary is frequently cited as a barrier, data in Figure 4.4 show that work-life balance, general interest in the public good and the stability of employment are the three most important factors behind public sector employer attractiveness. 22 countries also indicated that learning and development opportunities were 'very important'.

Interestingly, only eight countries rate the quality of management as a 'very important' aspect of attractiveness and just seven rate a digital environment as 'very important'. This likely reflects the current situation in public services, and less an ideal state needed to attract top talent. Various studies have suggested that these two criteria are likely to resonate with younger candidates eager to work in technology-rich environments with managers who are able to coach and develop their skills, (see, e.g. (Gallup, 2016[8]).

Building on these aspects of attractiveness, there has been a growing recognition of employer branding strategies in the public services of OECD countries. In 2016, 14 member countries had no employer branding strategies or action plans in place, whereas just five countries in 2020 indicated that this was still the case (Figure 4.5). For the rest, employer branding is mostly left to individual organisations or is part of an administration-wide strategy.

Figure 4.5. Employer branding strategies

Number of OECD countries, n=34 (2020)



Note: Original survey question: "Which of the following employer branding strategies exist in the central/ federal administration?"
Source: OECD survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability, module 2, 2020.

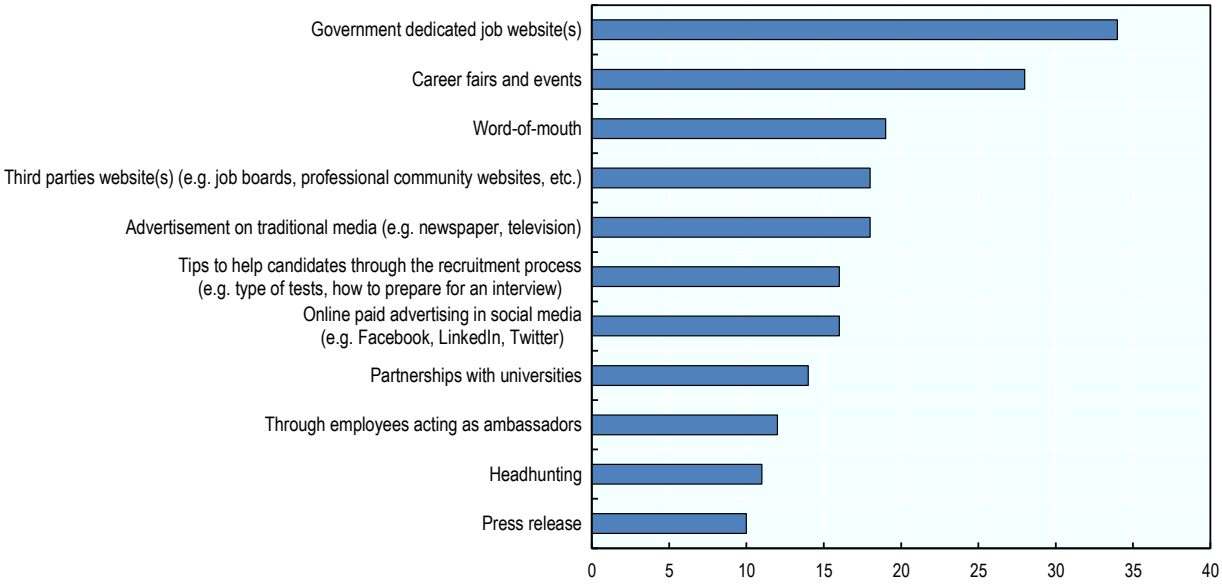
A strong employer brand is an important part of convincing prospective candidates to apply. This may be particularly true when recruiting young candidates, who usually apply to many places at the same time. Coherent and well-used employer brands that promote public service values may also contribute to better fit between a person and an organisation by clearly signalling the values the job and organisation espouses and improving candidate self-selection (Kim, 2012[9]). So given the need to fill skills gaps, employer branding can help recruiters attract the people they need. Many public administrations provide communication and employer branding guides and tools to support line ministries in adapting messaging while still maintaining overall coherence.

A variety of channels available to communicate employer brands

A good employer brand is only as effective as its communication to prospective candidates a variety of communication channels are increasingly important to promote a coherent, attractive message. As indicated in Figure 4.6, OECD countries use a variety of channels to attract candidates. Almost all OECD countries have dedicated government websites where they post their job openings, and most are also present at career fairs and recruiting events. While government job portals are an essential tool to communicate job openings and an employer brand, they are not very proactive – government can use other tools, online or in-person, to convince prospective candidates to visit the website. Career fairs and recruitment events are one such tool for public employers, enabling them to meet relevant candidates, gain information about the employment market, and actively promote their career opportunities and employer brand.

Figure 4.6. Use of communication channels to attract candidates

Number of OECD countries, n=35 (2020)



Note: Original survey question: "How does the central/ federal administration communicate about its recruitment campaigns and job openings?"
Source: OECD survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability, module 2, 2020.

However, the shift to online recruitment during the Covid pandemic has the potential to change the way governments think about candidates, communication and place-based recruitment events. If remote working and virtual teams become more common, governments may be able to expand their labour market across the country or even internationally. In these cases, recruiters have more work to do in using online tools to communicate to prospective candidates. Only about half of OECD countries report using third-party websites and social media to get the word out.

There is also the question of *who* recruits – in a forward-looking public service, employees and managers are themselves 'scouts' for talent and ambassadors of the employer brand. Only a third of OECD countries actively use employees as ambassadors. Moving online has the potential to bring more people into this process.

Finally, 16 OECD countries make use of special recruitment programmes targeted at in-demand skills. Programmes such as the United Kingdom's fast stream, are more than communications strategies – they provide special recruitment channels and development pathways aimed at specific skillsets the public service requires. Only six OECD countries report using short-term fellowship opportunities. Often framed as prestigious opportunities for high potential elites, short-term fellowship opportunities can be useful ways of bringing in needed skills from other sectors to work on high-impact projects for a specific period, without raising salaries.

Public sector recruitment processes for the future

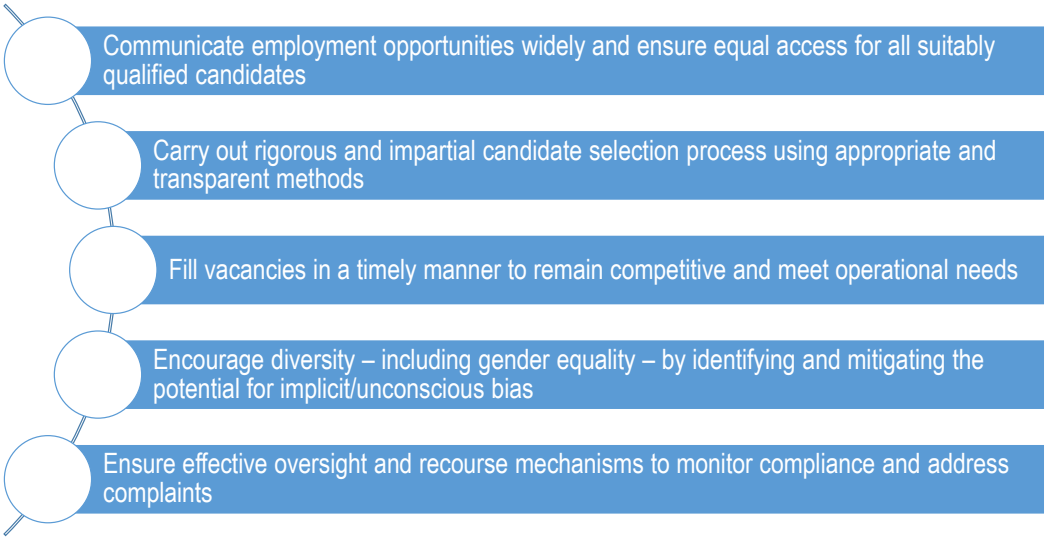
A merit-based public service is at the core of government effectiveness. Meritocratic recruitment processes ensure that professional and impartial civil servants occupy fundamental positions throughout the public service in order to provide reliable and competent service to citizens in all political contexts. A meritocratic civil service is a fundamental driver of trust in the public sector, since citizens will trust institutions run by people who are seen as competent, and not just close friends of political power. Finally, merit-based recruitment is a fundamental attractor of good talent, or put conversely, good talent will not apply to a process that is seen as politicised and less objective.

However, many of the merit-based recruitment systems used today were put in place by governments a long time ago and could be refreshed with new approaches. The goal of investing in employer attractiveness is to improve the quality and diversity of applicants, thereby helping to achieve better organisational outcomes. But what happens if recruitment systems are not able to test for relevant competencies, like the ability to problem-solve or develop innovative solutions to challenges? What if they are too slow and the best candidates drop out? The following points could be considered as a basis for merit-based recruitment for the future:

- The first step to ensuring merit is by having open processes that ensure equal access to all potential candidates. This suggests the need not only to communicate job opportunities broadly and proactively, as discussed above, but to also remove barriers to those who may be qualified, such as people with disabilities, or those living in remote areas of the country. It also means revising job requirements to focus as much as possible on competencies rather than historic indicators such as education, recognising that people can acquire competencies through a wide range of methods and trajectories, and educational opportunities may be more limited to certain elite profiles.
- One key question is how well recruitment systems can be adapted to assess specialised skills needed. The public sector often has recruitment systems and processes developed to ensure standardisation of testing/assessment rather than identification of specific specialist skills. ‘One-size-fits-all’ generalised recruitment methods will tend to result in generalist staff, when the future will likely require greater specialisation. Standardisation is sometimes done in the name of equality of treatment, which is an important principle that can be applied in a more nuanced way, job category by job category, to make methods more suitable to specific skills and competencies needed.
- A second key question is whether they are able to be adapted to meet candidate expectations around recruitment speed. Experience from some countries suggest that candidates – especially ones with in-demand skills – simply drop out of the recruitment process when competitors offer jobs more quickly.
- Recruitment systems also play a key role in improving diversity in the public service. As the filter for entry to the public service, controlling for bias at different stages of assessment is essential. Broadening the scope of assessment beyond education and theoretical knowledge can help identify candidates with much-needed competences from non-traditional backgrounds.
- As public sector recruiters look to adjust and trial new ways of recruiting candidates, a critical concern is to make sure that increased flexibility does not come at the expense of transparency and merit. Reinforcing ways for candidates to seek more information on the outcome of their recruitment process and challenge the results if they perceive unfairness is an important part of building trust in government.

As indicated in Figure 4.7, these concerns are recognised in the OECD Recommendation on Public Service Leadership and Capability.

Figure 4.7. Principles relating to recruitment systems



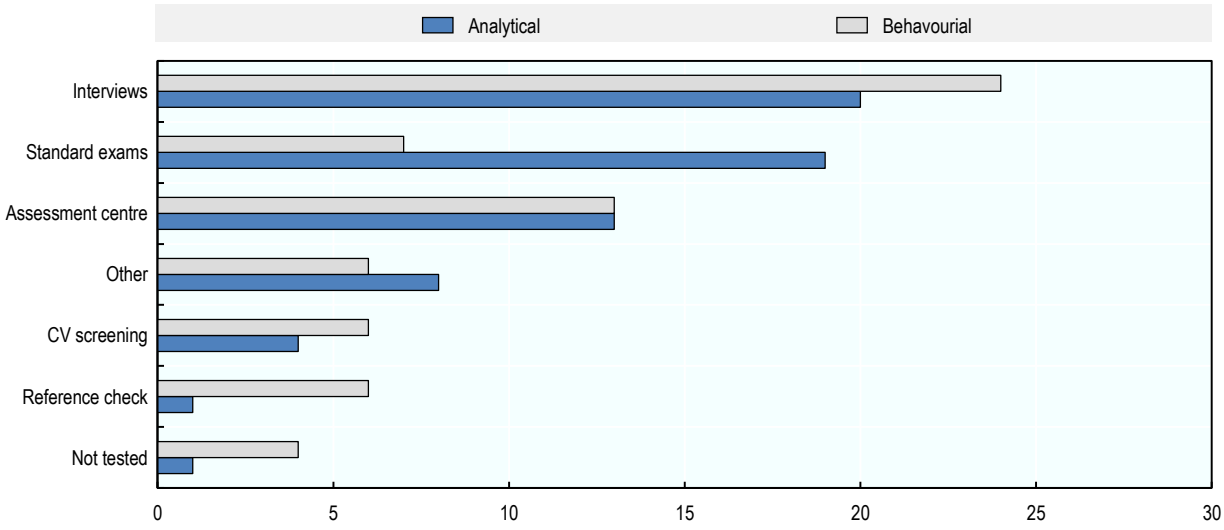
Source: OECD (2019[1]), *Recommendation of the Council on Public Service Leadership and Capability*, OECD/LEGAL/0445, OECD, Paris, https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/en/instruments/OECD-LEGAL-0445.

Countries are testing for analytical and behavioural competencies – not just theoretical knowledge

Public sector recruitment systems have been around for a long time. In some countries they are regulated by law, meaning that substantial changes to how things are done can take time. They may also include types of recruitment not found in the private sector, such as civil service-wide exams or 'concours'. Treating candidates fairly and equally is at the core of public sector employment systems. As such, many are structured to assess factors such as educational experience and legal knowledge. Increasingly, however, some countries are re-thinking how they assess candidates and what they test them for. France and Spain, for example, are reviewing the content of their entrance examinations for elite public sector corps to make them more relevant for the future. As indicated in Figure 4.8, countries are putting emphasis into testing analytical and behavioural competences through a variety of means.

Figure 4.8. Testing for analytical and behavioural competences

Number of OECD countries, n=32 (2020)



Note: Original survey question:"How are the following criteria tested for applicants to the civil service?"
Source: OECD (2020), Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability, Module 3.

Assessing analytical and behavioural competences is an encouraging sign. Static indicators of ability like educational qualifications are imperfect predictors of how candidates will perform in an uncertain future. Most countries test for analytical competences in interviews or through exams, and some in more in-depth assessment centres. Methods included under the 'other' category to assess analytical and behavioural competences include computer-based tests, psychological assessment and simulation games. Encouragingly, all but four OECD countries test for behavioural competences

It is important to emphasise, however, that assessing these types of competences is not as obvious as assessing theoretical knowledge and education. In most administrations, core competences are clearly established in competency frameworks. These frameworks list which competences are relevant for different functions and for different hierarchical levels. However, hiring managers may find it difficult to assess these competences in hypothetical situations like interviews. Recruitment in many cases in the public sector is carried out by line managers who are not highly trained in recruitment techniques. Moreover, framing questions and rating candidate responses uniformly to analytical and behavioural-type questions can prove complex. This points to the need for using more than one data source in assessing candidates, and for targeted support to line managers in assessing behavioural competences. This may be particularly relevant for high-impact or senior positions, where psychologists and trained recruiters can complement the insights of line managers. To address this issue, Poland has developed a guide to help managers and recruiters define and test candidates for 'soft skills' relevant to their roles.

Most governments still rank candidates and pick the highest

When well-designed, assessment and selection processes can tease out key predictors of performance in an appropriate and cost-effective manner (CIPD, 2015[10]). The assumption of many recruitment systems is that a sequential process of testing and elimination will enable recruiters to choose 'the' best candidate by revealing intrinsic attributes about each of the candidates. This is reflected in the data in Figure 4.9, which indicates that 17 countries rank candidates. Eleven countries give managers wide scope to choose based on 'best fit' among those who perform above a required high standard, and nine countries do an initial ranking following which managers can chose from among the top performers.

Figure 4.9. Candidate selection

Number of OECD countries, n=31 (2020)



Note: Original survey question: "Candidate selection: which of the following apply:"
Source: OECD (2020), Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability, Module 3.

In the field of recruitment in general, there is increasing emphasis placed on "hiring for organisational compatibility", as a complement to traditional recruitment models designed to assess knowledge, skills and ability (Morley, 2007[11]). The issue of how much leeway managers are allowed in their choice of hire matters for the integrity of the recruitment process (i.e. avoiding nepotism and bias) but also for ensuring a good fit with the organisation as a whole and team or unit in particular. The role of recruitment systems is to strike a balance between both.

Rankings may be in place to ensure a high degree of merit, however in practice they may be less objective than they appear. For example, what is the difference between a candidate ranked first and ranked third when there have been dozens of high-quality candidates? Individual selection tools are limited in their ability to provide recruiters and hiring managers with a complete, objective view of candidates. Introducing scope for hiring managers to have some decision-making discretion can work, as long as the process up until that point has been rigorous. Moreover, when managers are offered no official discretion, they may actually seek to distort the assessment phase itself – referring to the potential for "particular power and politics games that are likely to go on in selection decision meetings" to distort the results of the assessment process (Bolander and Sandberg, 2013[12]). Giving managers some discretion, within the right transparent frameworks, can help to ensure the integrity of the assessment process and ensure accountability for the final decisions taken.

However, it is also important to point out that 'fit' can be a problematic term if in practice it means 'people like me' to the exclusion of 'people who are not like me' – whether in terms of gender, academic background, professional experience or motivation. In other words, care must be taken to ensure that "good fit" is not just a way to express (conscious or unconscious bias). It is good practice to guarantee that hiring managers justify their choices on the public record, and that appropriate oversight and data is used to track hiring decisions and identify trends that point towards bias in the system.

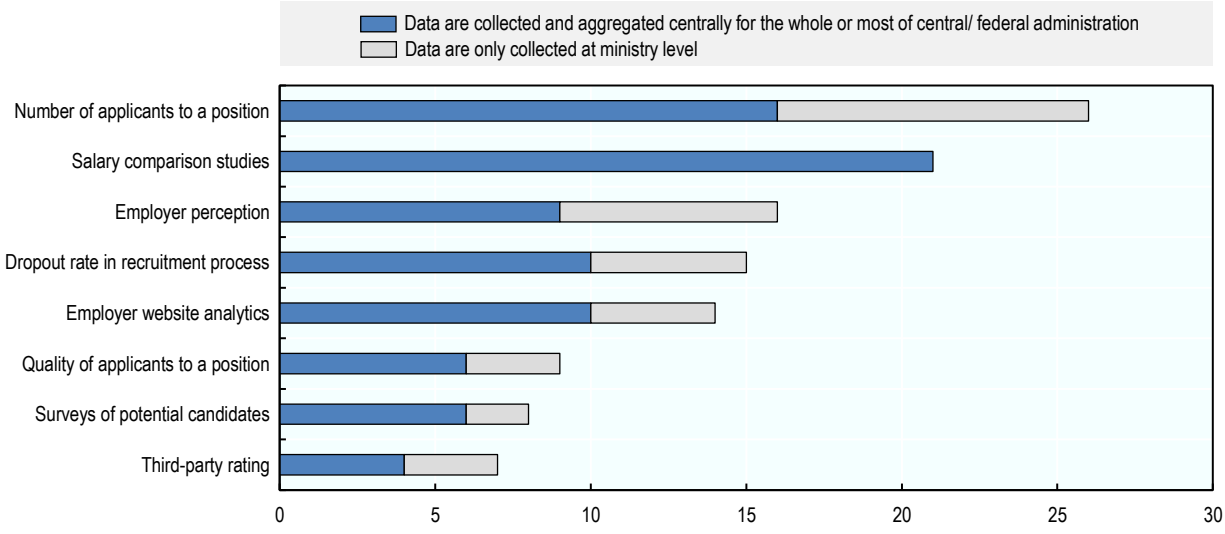
There is scope to improve measurement of recruitment processes

Recruitment processes have the potential to generate a wealth of data that can be used to inform important insights about an organisations' attractiveness, the effectiveness of the recruitment processes and potential biases in the system. Data on employer attractiveness is important in order to adjust communication and recruitment strategies. It can also help build the business case for investing in new ways to secure talent. France's military, for example, has invested in data skills in order to analyse traffic to its website. This analysis feeds into algorithms which further personalises communication to candidates in order to increase the 'conversion' of website views into job applications.

However, Figure 4.10 illustrates that public administrations in the OECD do not collect very much data on attractiveness. Regarding salary, often cited as a barrier to hiring talent, salary benchmarking tends to be carried out at the central level in 20 OECD countries and is not carried out at all in 12 countries. Basic quantitative data are collected in some countries but there is scope for improvement to generate deeper insights, For example, 16 countries report collecting data on candidate volume centrally, but only ten of those collect data on the dropout rate in the recruitment process.

Figure 4.10. Indicators used to measure employer attractiveness

Number of OECD countries, n=35, 2020

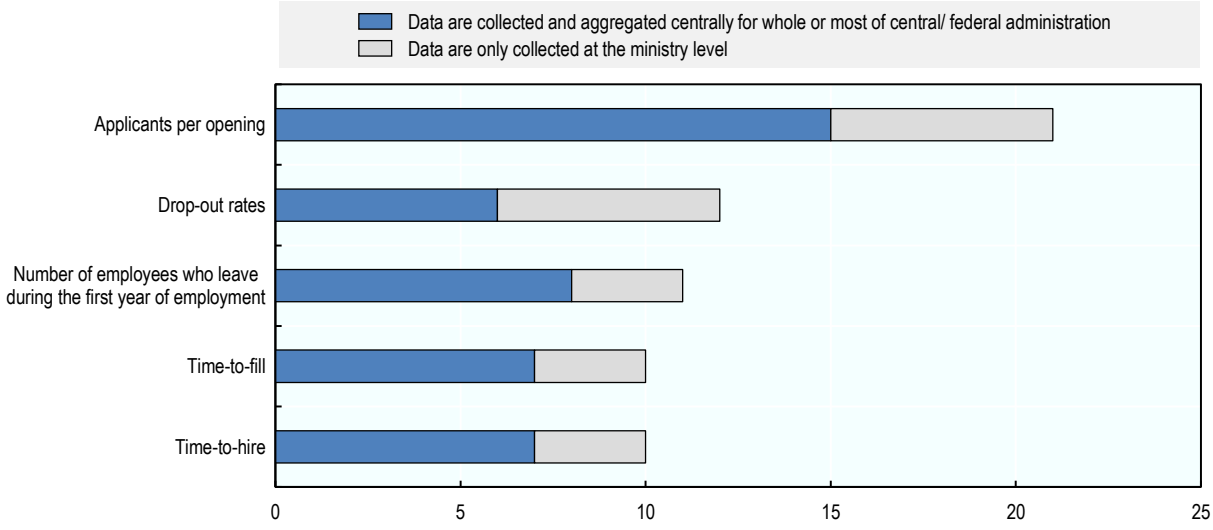


Note: N varies depending on the option, as some options were unknown by some OECD countries. Original survey question: "How is employer attractiveness measured in the central/ federal administration?"
Source: OECD (2020), Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability, Module 2.

When it comes to the recruitment process, Figure 4.11 shows that the most-measured aspect is the number of applicants per opening. Measuring candidate volume can be a good first step in improving recruitment strategies and skills gaps, but there are other indicators of recruitment quality that could be tracked. Methodologies to assess time-to-fill (once a vacancy is created) and time-to-hire (once the candidate applies) can measure how quickly recruitment systems and actors (people involved) are able to meet a specific gap.

Figure 4.11. Metrics used in the assessment of recruitment processes

Number of OECD countries, n=34 (2020)



Note: N varies depending on the option, as some options were unknown by some OECD countries. Original survey question: "Do you assess the speed and quality of your recruitment process using the following metrics?"
Source: OECD (2020), Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability, Module 3.

Given the increased efforts to improve communication and candidate attraction, more substantial measurement of recruitment processes can also help identify parts of the recruitment process that could be improved. When disaggregated by demographic indicators, the same data can show biases in the system. For example, if candidates tend to drop out after a certain period of time, that can point to efforts to adjust or shorten the recruitment process or to improve communication and engagement with candidates during the process. Communication with candidates during the process is an important part of keeping them engaged with the recruitment process: candidates with a wide variety of employment options have little patience to wait months for government recruiters to update them on the status of their application.

Previous OECD work has highlighted that basic HR data is collected and aggregated centrally, but that there is scope to go deeper (OECD, 2017[13]). Two key issues may be skills and systems – or both. Data may be scattered across multiple parts of the public administration, fragmented across platforms with multiple corporate users (e.g. LinkedIn, Facebook) or there may be privacy concerns about sharing and analysing data. It may also be the case that public sector recruiters are simply not accustomed to tracking their system's performance, nor is there pressure to do so coming from managers and business units. The key takeaway for governments is that recruitment are essential and, as with any business process, require evidence and data to know what works, what doesn't, how it can be improved.

There is an increasing effort to build diversity through recruitment systems

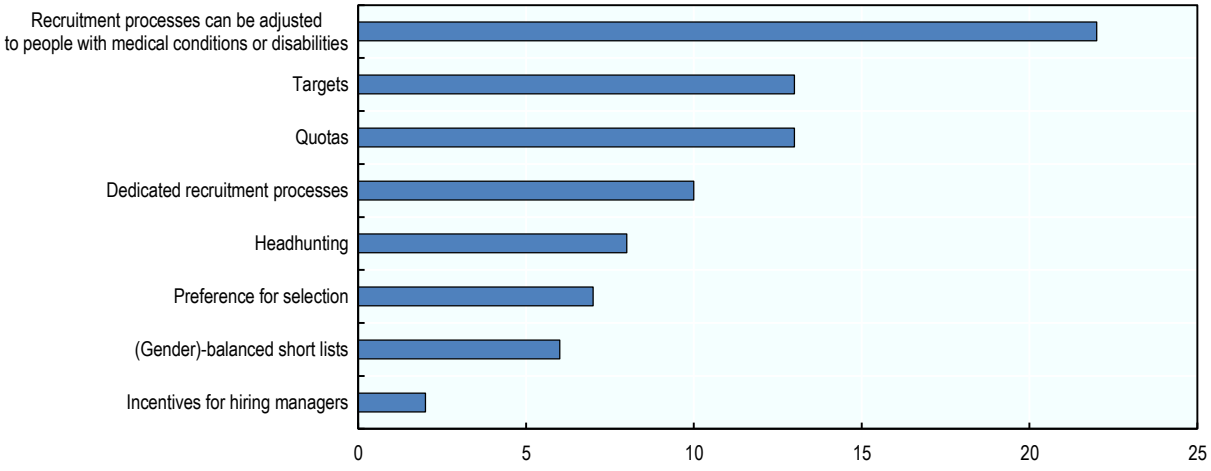
Recruitment systems can help improve diversity in the public sector by tailoring strategies to attract applicants from under-represented groups and then assessing competencies in ways that avoid bias and ensure equal treatment. A majority of OECD countries (19) have developed specific outreach strategies to communicate opportunities to under-represented groups, aiming to increase their application. Japan, for example, targets communications to women and graduates from regional universities to improve the gender and regional representation of the public service. Nine OECD countries go further, with dedicated coaching or mentor programmes for under-represented groups, and 6 countries provide special training programmes for taking entry exams. For example, France provides special preparation courses for

candidates from disadvantaged social backgrounds who aim to take entrance examinations to the French School of National Administration (ENA).

Figure 4.12 highlights some of the measures that countries are using to increase the participation of underrepresented groups in recruitment processes. Most countries (22) are able to adjust recruitment processes to the needs of candidates with medical conditions or disabilities. Recruitment targets are used by 13 countries, and 13 countries also use quotas. Austria, for example, gives preferential treatment to female candidates when they possess the same qualifications as male candidates and the percentage of female employees in the organisation is lower than 50%. Ten OECD countries use special internship programmes. For example, Canada has established a dedicated internship programme for persons with disabilities (PwDs) which offers two-year internship opportunities in the federal public service as part of a goal to hire 5 000 PwDs by 2025. The programme includes support to both interns and hiring managers in the form of assessment advice, coaching and training. Only 7 countries have a specific preference for selection – also known as affirmative action.

Figure 4.12. Tools used to increase the participation of underrepresented groups in recruitment processes

Number of OECD countries, n=34 (2020)



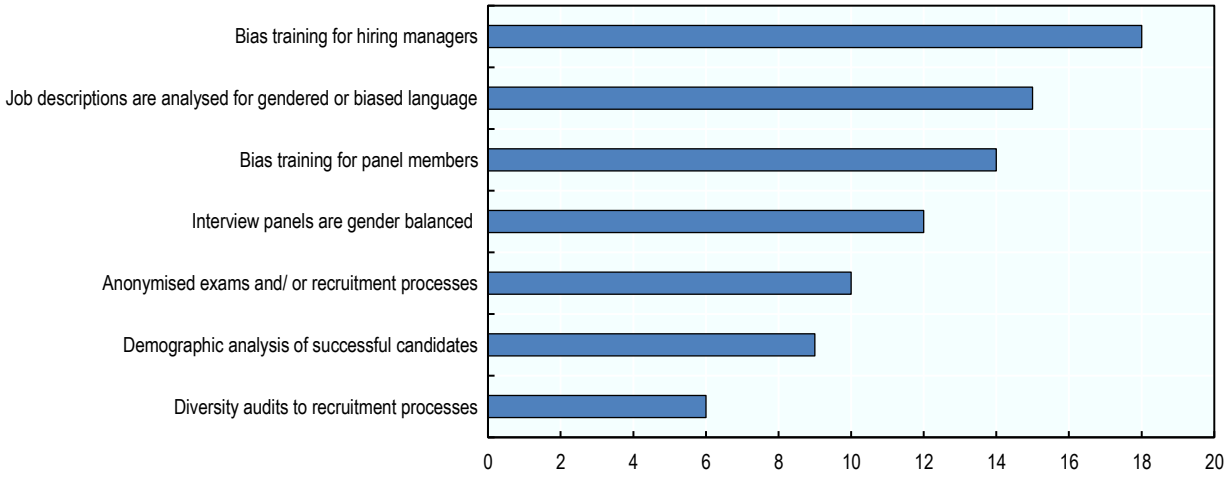
Note: Original survey question: "Which of the following are used to increase the participation of underrepresented groups in recruitment processes?"
Source: OECD (2020), Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability, Module 3.

Recruitment systems and candidate evaluation methodologies reflect the unconscious biases of those who designed them. This is why many public sector organisations invest in measures to mitigate the potential for unconscious bias to affect recruitment. Although widespread use of Artificial Intelligence for recruiting in the public sector may be some way off, measures to prevent algorithms replicating human biases are also important. As Figure 4.13 shows, most public sector organisations use training to make managers and recruiters aware of common unconscious biases. The question is whether this is effective: a recent paper by the UK Behavioural Insights Team found that while some types of unconscious bias training can produce short-term effects at the individual level, there is little evidence to suggest that such training changes behaviour or improves the representation of under-represented groups (Behavioural Insights Team, 2020[14]). An academic study from 2018, which concluded the same thing, suggests five reasons for why such training fails: short-term educational interventions have little impact; anti-bias training may actually activate stereotypes or make employees complacent about their own biases. There is the risk that some groups (predominantly whites) may feel marginalised, and finally, that people generally react

negatively to efforts to control them (Dobbin and Kalev, 2018[15]). The main message is that bias training may have a role within a larger strategy, but if it's the only tool being used, it runs the risk of not working.

Figure 4.13. Use of the tools to reduce bias in the recruitment process

Number of OECD countries, n=33 (2020)



Note: Original survey question: "Which of the following are used to detect and minimise bias throughout recruitment and selection processes?"
Source: OECD (2020), Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability, Module 3.

The data show that OECD public administrations use a mix of measures to mitigate bias, including training. Keeping long-term behaviour change in mind, evaluating the appropriate mix of tools will be key to improving diversity. Data are an essential element in identifying the impact of bias in the workplace. A smaller number of countries are using data and people analytics to assess their recruitment processes for potential bias in the context of diversity audits and demographic analysis of successful candidates. Analytics can help identify stages of recruitment where candidates may have particular difficulties compared to over-represented groups, or patterns in career development for some groups compared to others. This could include, for example, tracking the profiles of recent recruits and promotions in order to ensure that a diverse range of experiences and backgrounds are valued. Tracking these and other types of data can help assess the impact of bias mitigation measures.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that recruitment processes in many OECD countries are being updated and reformed, to compete in the war for talent. More and more countries are recognising the important place of employer attractiveness and branding within public sector recruitment strategies. Some public administrations are adapting their message to different types of audience, and are using a greater variety of communication channels and techniques to do so. Leading public administrations are then trying new tools to speed up and fine-tune their recruitment processes, so that they are better at testing for the skills and competencies that are needed, while maintaining a high standard of merit, objectivity and equality. While the direction of travel is encouraging, there is scope for greater investments in this area, including the testing of new structural tools (e.g. special development programmes, fellowships, streamline recruitment processes, competency testing), and increasing the collection and use of data to track performance and improve recruitment strategy design.

It is also important to recognise that good communication with candidates is not only for branding, but can have positive effects throughout a recruitment process, and particularly when it comes to on-boarding. Badly aligned recruitment efforts can have negative effects later on. A recent study notes that 43% of Federal employees hired between 2011 and 2017 left the US Federal workforce after less than one year, and 60% after less than two (Government Accountability Office, 2020[16]). This suggests that governments need to invest particular care in structuring recruitment systems so that there is a good fit between the candidate and the organisation, and that the organisation must be able to deliver a work experience that is fulfilling. This statistic also highlights the importance of effective candidate on-boarding, which in some countries takes the form of a structured programme and series of activities for new hires to meet their colleagues and learn more about the organisation. On-boarding is especially important for integrating employees who joined the public sector during the pandemic and may only have had a chance to meet their colleagues on Zoom.

One of the main points to emerge from these data is the evolving skill set required of public sector recruiters. For some of the skills that recruiters try to attract there are few established career fairs and little in the way of a 'traditional' candidate profile. As with niche sourcing and recruitment skills in the technology industry, public sector recruiters will in some cases need to build their own pool of talent using innovative search techniques and professional and personal networks to find candidates. They will need to be accomplished public speakers and have strong internal networks in order to understand the business needs. Assessing candidates from non-traditional backgrounds may require re-engineering of recruitment processes while still ensuring compliance with merit-based principles.

Returning to the question of a public service recruitment for the future, the OECD framework suggests that proactive recruitment will need to be:

- **Forward-looking**: Public service recruitment has to be guided by a vision of the skills and competencies it will need in the future, and not just those needed in the past. Candidates with the types of skills needed to address tomorrow's policy challenges do not expect to be assessed through yesterday's recruitment techniques. Public sector recruiters have an increasing variety of tools at their disposal to reach diverse audiences and communicate the value of a public sector career. Candidates are also thinking about the future, in particular about how jobs in the public sector can support their own long-term career development.
- **Flexible**: One-size-fits-all recruitment techniques are ill-suited to recruiting an increasingly specialised public sector workforce of the future. Proactive recruitment draws on a range of data points to adapt messaging to different audiences, and assess candidates using a range of techniques appropriate to the function and hierarchical level. It also requires flexibility to be able to ensure open access to an increasingly diverse range of applicants – to level the playing field regardless of location, socio-economic background, level of (dis)ability, etc.
- **Fulfilling**: The public service will have to compete for talent by offering fulfilling work, attracting people who are motivate by the mission of the public service. Proactive recruitment requires branding that can promote this message and organisations that can deliver a fulfilling work experience. The public sector has struggled in some countries to develop a reputation as an employer of choice, particularly for under-represented groups. In this context, proactive recruitment offers the tools to build a more diverse and fair public workforce.

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Note

[1] Case studies on leadership can be accessed here: https://www.oecd.org/gov/pem/public-sector-leadership-implementation/pem-leadership/

5 Future of the public service: Case studies

This chapter presents six case studies which illustrate various approaches governments are taking to prepare for the future of the public service. It shows how Australia is building workforce planning capabilities; how Belgium is experimenting with online recruitment; how France is improving its management of digital talent; how the United States is reskilling its federal public workforce; how Israel is identifying public sector jobs that will be reshaped by technology, and how Korea is embedding digital tools to improve workforce management.

Workforce planning in the Australian Public Service

Strategic workforce planning supports organisations in getting the right people in the right job or position at the right time. It enables organisations to assess and prepare for current and future needs such as the size of the workforce, deployment of the workforce and the knowledge, skills and competences available and needed to achieve its mission and strategic objectives. A forward-looking public sector conducting business-linked workforce planning on a regular basis can proactively anticipate workforce needs instead of merely reacting to any crisis or other challenges. Throughout the COVID-19 crisis the need for strategic workforce planning became evident to be able to leverage a workforce in moments of crisis and deploy the workforce where and when needed.

Strategic workforce planning, done right and in close partnership with business areas and leaders, can deliver the required workforce transformation for public sector entities. Mindful of the value of strategic workforce planning, in 2020 the Australian Public Service (APS) initiated a long-term strategic programme of work to strengthen workforce planning in APS agencies and shift it from an operational to a future-focused skill and capability based strategic activity. In practice, this programme takes the form of the APS Centre of Excellence (CoE) for Workforce Planning. Strengthening strategic workforce planning capability across the APS supports the implementation of Delivering for Tomorrow – APS Workforce Strategy 2025[1] - the first whole-of-service workforce strategy, launched in March 2021.

Work in building the CoE and workforce planning capability in the APS commenced in April 2020, leveraging the momentum for workforce planning created by the COVID-19 crisis, and in anticipation of the release of the APS Workforce Strategy. Strategic workforce planning capability in APS agencies will allow the service to adapt to changes within the future workforce such as digital-driven transformation, data and evidence based policy and service delivery, and data driven regulatory models.

Establishing the APS Workforce Planning CoE was underpinned by evidence and data from several studies, audit reports and independent reviews of the APS. For example, the 2015 Report on “Unlocking potential- APS workforce management contestability review (2015)” finds “talent practices are not sufficiently linked to the long-term needs of the business”. It finds opportunities to improve the sophistication of talent management practices, connect them to other business planning processes. One of the opportunities identified is to link talent management more closely to succession planning. APS senior executives and senior HR leaders also raised the lack of capability to conduct workforce planning.

The report sets out a vision for HR redesign which positions strategic workforce planning as a core function in a well-functioning HR system, that is “an architect of high performance, a driver of agility and a lever for lifting workforce engagement”. To achieve this, the HR function requires the right skills mix, increasing focus on analytical and consulting skills, and a much better understanding of business strategy and operations. It also requires technology and data to measure HR performance and drive decision-making insights. The report suggests that 76% of organisational capability reviews conducted in the APS identify strategic workforce planning as a specific concern, often due to lack of workforce planning skills and insufficient data. Without these, workforce planning remains a “budget-planning headcount approach” rather than a strategic tool to address critical future risks (e.g. scenario planning, workforce affordability).

The COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted the need for workforce planning capability across the APS. The challenge for agencies was to identify critical functions and staffing availability to assist in creating a surge capacity in the system to deploy staff fast. In some instances, APS agencies needed to conduct critical workforce planning exercises and make decisions in a crisis environment within a couple of days, sometimes a few hours, as opposed to months.

In order to develop a more strategic approach to workforce planning across the APS the APS Workforce Strategy & Planning team was established within the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) in mid 2019. The mandate of the team is to develop, implement and measure *Delivering for Tomorrow – APS Workforce Strategy 2025* - a sector-wide workforce strategy supported by strategic workforce planning

capability across the APS, providing tools and resources to support agency-level workforce planning, and partnering with agencies to support workforce planning capability development. In this way, a decentralised approach was taken in which the central team at the APSC develops standards, recommendations, tools and strategic workforce foresight, and advises agencies how to implement these.

Developing a strategic programme for building workforce planning capability

Collecting evidence from agencies

As a first step, the Workforce Strategy & Planning team analysed the capability of workforce planning practitioners and APS agencies as assessed through agency surveys in 2017 and 2018. These are annual surveys of agencies that the APSC are running, to collect information for the annual APS State of the Service Report. Whole of service data on workforce planning capability gaps was supplemented by a survey of workforce planners, and conversations with the APS Chief People Officers Working Group.

In addition, the team reviewed the existing workforce plans from agencies, assessing them against a framework for good practice workforce plans, looking to find certain elements in those plans such as, for example, the identification of workforce impacts from digital transformation and the resulting workforce transition planning. As a result of the analysis, strategic workforce planning gaps could be identified across the APS. These included:

- Limited use of skill and capability based strategic workforce planning;
- Low strategic utilisation of whole of APS workforce datasets, both quantitative and qualitative data;
- Limited skills in workforce planning and data analysis and insights across the group of HR practitioners performing workforce planning and insights roles in the APS;
- Perception of workforce planning as an isolated activity in HR; and workforce planning activities being conducted in isolation of business strategy and planning, and general workforce management processes;
- Limited follow-through on workforce plans resulting in static approaches to workforce planning. The resulting workforce plans were many times not translating through to implementation to drive workforce transformation;
- Static workforce plans were updated infrequently, not aligned to changes in the business environment and strategy- these plans lost their relevance within the first 6 months of being produced;
- Limited change management expertise to support implementation of workforce planning strategies
- Low awareness of the benefits of strategic workforce planning, including at senior leadership level. Senior leaders found the process cumbersome and too technical, without any practical, immediate outcomes being delivered; and
- Limited opportunities for strong accountability for strategic workforce transformation in the APS. By and large, strategic workforce planning was seen as a HR responsibility, with limited involvement of senior leaders throughout the process.

In order to build support and gather further input, the APSC team organised individual discussions with senior workforce planners of the five largest APS agencies, and held discussions with workforce planners from smaller agencies through the APS Workforce Planning community of practice. All this evidence supported a current state analysis, to inform the longer term programme of work to build APS workforce planning capability through the Workforce Planning CoE. The programme concept and the minimum viable product were then tested with senior workforce planners and the Chief People Officers' Working group.

Building a maturity model to draw a clear path

As the principal guiding framework, the APSC team designed a maturity model which rates strategic workforce planning capability across four dimensions: business strategy, people and culture/implementation, reporting and data/workforce analytics and governance & tools, in four maturity levels (Table 5.1). In this way, the model looks beyond the work of workforce planners and analysis, taking into account the broader ecosystem that supports their work in agencies, including senior leadership capability and buy-in, business alignment and a culture of implementing workforce strategies and plans to drive business-aligned workforce transformation. Overall, the APS was categorised as reaching level two (of four) of maturity for business strategy, people and culture/implementation, and governance & tools. In the dimension of reporting and data/workforce analytics, the APS reached level one.

Table 5.1. Simplified APS Maturity model on workforce planning capabilities

Level 1 Ad hoc/initial	Level 2 Foundational	Level 3 Competitive/Organised	Level 4 Differentiating/Mature
Limited strategic approach to workforce planning. May occur at a local level, is conducted in an ad-hoc manner with no formalised process, and is disconnected from business planning processes	Formal workforce planning processes in place and deployed in at least part of the organisation; not yet fully embedded across the entire organisation or integrated into the business planning cycle.	Workforce planning is developed and deployed throughout the organisation, fully integrated into the business planning cycle. Senior leaders and the HR team have the skills needed to engage in (strategic) workforce planning. Focus tends to still be on output and not outcome.	Workforce Planning developed and deployed throughout the organisation as an ongoing process of continually aligning the workforce to organisational deliverables and strategy. It is fully integrated into the business planning and risk management cycles & contributes to organisational performance. Formally evaluated and incorporated into continuous improvement processes

Source: Information provided by APSC. Detailed maturity model can be accessed from the APS Centre of Excellence for Workforce Planning at apswfp@apsc.gov.au.

Based on the maturity assessment, the APS Centre of Excellence for Workforce Planning was set-up. The CoE delivers initiatives and services across four streams:

- Capability: focused on workforce planners, leaders and managers, including building the capability pipeline for workforce planning roles
- Leadership: building leadership accountability for workforce planning outcomes
- Tools & Technology: supporting workforce planning in agencies and across the APS at the highest level, through policy advice and frameworks, tools and resources, and technology solutions
- Analytics & Insights: data-driven workforce and labour market insights to inform evidence based strategic workforce planning in individual agencies and across the APS.

One of the prioritised deliverables of the CoE was a Workforce Planning Capability Development Programme targeted at workforce planning and insights practitioners. This programme will build both foundational and specialist workforce insights and planning skills for employees undertaking workforce planning roles. Implementing the programme.

The delivery of the APS Workforce Planning CoE offering is organised across five years through to 2025. This includes the roll out of the Workforce Planning Capability Development Programme through:

- Start Up (foundational) and Boost (specialist) workforce planning capability development modules alongside recognition of learning resources for Continuing Professional Development credits and a certification pathway for participants, in partnership with the Australian HR Institute. This will further incentivise staff to build their workforce planning capability.
- A Workforce Planning community of practice with regular forums, including hackathons and design/ co-design workshops delivered virtually, for workforce planners to come together and learn from each other.
- A digital portal of resources for workforce planners, including an APS workforce planning guide for agile delivery, the latest relevant research, data and curated bite-sized learning, workforce planning case studies from other APS agencies or domestic or international jurisdictions, or from the private sector, a workforce planning career development blog, and a news/ interaction channel for workforce planners to link in and learn from each other.
- Building talent pipelines into workforce planning roles, including through partnerships with education institutions, skill assessments and career pathways for workforce planners, an intensive workplace coaching programme to advance specialist workforce planning capability and mentoring, coaching and peer review services for workforce planners.
- Building the APSC's strategic workforce insights function, to generate strategic workforce planning insight from APS and labour market datasets.

A strong evaluation approach for each of the components of the programme and more broadly, for the APS Workforce Planning CoE offering has been built into the operation of the CoE, to ensure that initiatives aimed at building workforce planning capability deliver outcomes, and, longer term, business benefits. In the design and implementation of the programme, the APSC team concentrated on three guiding principles to ensure engagement from the agencies:

- **User-centred design**: Using digital tools and methods to engage APS workforce planners in co-designing solutions to workforce planning capability gaps. Ideas are tested before full adoption through open beta releases to the community. In this way, trust is being built and a cohort of early adopters/ champions are prepared for formal launch of the various products and services. By engaging agencies in design sessions, challenges in implementation can be identified from the start, feedback is gathered from the ground and ownership among the agencies strengthened.
- **Behavioural Insights:** Using behavioural insights to advance workforce planning capability development and design simple and effective workforce planning approaches and interventions that deliver outcomes in agencies. The APSC team is also applying behavioural insights and nudges to actively seek ideas from the agencies and seeking an exchange on challenges and opportunities for workforce planning through regular meetings
- **Strategic Business Partnering**: Ongoing engagement with senior workforce planners and Chief People Officers to understand needs across the system, inform central initiatives and support their workforce planning work. Given that the agencies are the ones implementing the policy advice developed centrally at the APSC, it is essential to build relationships with them and engage them in the process. To be able to provide the best support to agencies, the Workforce Planning CoE team seeks to understand deliverables against business strategies, challenges and opportunities for support across the client group.

The APS Chief People Officers' Working Group oversees the programme of work, and are consulted at critical decision points throughout programme development and implementation. Reporting on the deliverables of the Centre of Excellence will be done annually, as part of the yearly reporting on the implementation of the APS Workforce Strategy.

Success factors

Ultimately, the successful implementation of *Delivering for Tomorrow- APS Workforce Strategy 2025* depends on workforce planning capability uplift delivered through the APS Workforce Planning CoE. Concerning the design and the implementation of the Centre of Excellence, and in particular of the workforce planning capability development programme in the APS, crucial success factors can be identified:

- **Leveraging evidence and data and detailed gap analysis**: Before designing the workforce planning capability programme, the Workforce Planning Centre of Excellence team analysed the available data and collected further inputs through discussions with staff. This allowed drawing a clear picture of opportunities and challenges as well as being able to pinpoint priorities.
- **Building a common understanding of workforce planning**: Throughout the agencies, workforce planning was often perceived as a task done by HR without acknowledging it as part of the organisational strategy. It was essential to build a common understanding of workforce planning as part of the organisational strategy of the agency to be able to anticipate future trends.
- **Moving beyond silos**: In line with workforce planning as part of the organisational strategy, workforce planning will be integrated and mainstreamed in other areas within APS. For example, each digital transformation plan in agencies will have to be accompanied by a workforce transition plan taking into account the interlinkages of digital transformation and workforce planning.
- **Taking into account the broader context**: While traditionally workforce planning might aim simply to strengthen capabilities of workforce planners, the maturity model on which the programme builds takes into account the broader context within the APS. In this way, it includes factors such as the organisational culture, business strategy, the need for data & analytics and governance tools to ensure effective implementation.
- **Engaging leadership through clear communications and accountability**: In order to ensure take-up within the agencies of the workforce planning programme, the engagement and ownership of leaders is essential. The Workforce Planning Centre of Excellence team focussed on developing outputs that could be easily communicated, such as the maturity model providing leaders with a snapshot of the current and desired status. Furthermore, one key theme for interventions was to strengthen accountability of leaders for advancing workforce planning. To achieve this, the team is co-ordinating with the Department of Finance – who oversee corporate planning processes in the APS, to build accountability mechanisms for workforce planning/ workforce transformation for senior leaders.
- **Nudging agencies towards implementation**: Given that the Workforce Planning Centre of Excellence team can consult and advise agencies, but not enforce implementation of its advice, it collaborates with the Behavioural Economics Team in the Prime Minister´s Office to shape guidelines, tools and communications to encourage uptake and engagement of agencies.

Conclusion

The workforce planning programme in the APS, while still one year into its implementation, offers insights on how to build the systems to be able to plan for a more resilient workforce. It underlines the need for a solid understanding of the organisational operating model of the public sector. Given the decentralised nature of the APS, the Workforce Planning Centre of Excellence focusses on supporting and equipping agencies with the skills to be able to align initiatives with high-level directions on workforce planning as outlined in *Delivering for Tomorrow – APS Workforce Strategy 2025*. These skills include understanding business strategies and deliverables, promoting strategic foresight, building data analysis skills and better utilising data sets and establishing enterprise resource planning systems. Furthermore, it makes evident how workforce planning is not an isolated activity, but needs to co-ordinate with other areas within

agencies, and across the service, such as the Department of Finance to build accountability mechanisms for leadership at the highest level through whole of system frameworks.

The APS Workforce Planning Centre of Excellence programme is a key component of a future-ready public service workforce aligning with the three pillars of the OECD Future of the Public Service Framework:

- It builds a **forward-looking public service** that has the tools to plan ahead by developing a solid understanding of the current workforce and future needs based on data and evidence and planning actions to address gaps.
- It can also contribute to a more **flexible public service** by developing a better understanding of the overall workforce and available skills. By overcoming organisational silos, it allows the public service to react to changing situations and placing people with skills where needed. In this way, it can support building a resilient that can anticipate crisis and changes within the public service better.
- Lastly, it may also lead to a more **fulfilling public service**. Workforce planning and data can help to determine where further actions is needed to advance diversity and inclusion to reinforce a variety of skill sets, professional backgrounds, experience and ways of thinking. Workforce planning can also identify where skills need to be developed offering opportunities for staff development and training. It can also reinforce purpose and meaning of positions by clearly identifying employees´ role in building a future-ready workforce aligned to the mission and vision of the public service. This may increase employee engagement and motivation.

Moving recruitment online in the Belgian Federal Public Service of Finance

Public services around the world face challenges attracting and recruiting people with specific skill sets. Some of these skill sets are in established fields such as law or IT; others relate to relatively new and emerging professions such as cyber-security and artificial intelligence. Recruitment challenges may also refer to specific demographics, such as recent university graduates or experienced managers. Perception of better-paid jobs in the private sector is a factor, but it is not the only factor. Governments are addressing recruitment and retention challenges through a variety of practices.

Public administrations have had aspects of their recruitment procedures online for years: online application portals and some degree of online testing and assessment are considered well-established practices across OECD public administrations. But frequently, the end goal of recruitment procedures involving an online component is to filter candidates to arrive at a small enough candidate pool that can be invited for further in-person testing and/or interviews. In this broad sense, this type of ‘online recruitment’ can be understood as the partial digitalisation of some of the steps involved in attracting, assessing and recruiting candidates.

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has given rise to a new, more holistic form of ‘e-recruitment’. Widespread remote working in the public sector has interrupted many planned and in-progress recruitment processes. This has given public administrations the space to re-think how recruitment can and should work – not just to maintain continuity, but to be used more strategically as a tool to attract, assess, recruit and on-board candidates with the types of skills and experience valuable for the public sector.

The development and testing of e-recruitment practices is one area of public sector reform of particular interest for the future of the public service. This is because successful end-to-end e-recruitment involves a wholesale re-think of what recruitment looks like, from improving employer branding and investing in social media outreach to re-evaluating the skill set and profile of a recruiter or hiring manager in the public sector. Modern and future-oriented e-recruitment is so much more than the digitalisation of a previously analogue process. The pilot project on e-recruitment developed by the Belgian Federal Public Service of

Finance (FPSF) aligns explicitly with the call of the OECD Recommendation on Public Service Leadership and Capability (PSLC) to develop future-oriented public employment systems (OECD, 2019[1]):

- Continuously identify skills and competencies needed to transform political vision into services which deliver value to society.
- Attract and retain employees with the skills and competencies required from the labour market.
- Recruit, select and promote candidates through transparent, open and merit-based processes, to guarantee fair and equal treatment.

Background to e-recruitment in the Belgian Federal Public Service of Finance

The e-recruitment project was launched in 2019. E-recruitment was intended to broaden the reach of the FPSF and make it easier for recruiters to assess different types of skill sets. However, it is a good example of a project whose development and impact was accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. For context, the FPSF has around 20 000 public servants. In 2019, it hired 1 170 staff members, of which 350 were first employment contracts. In 2020, 705 public servants were recruited of which 400 contracts were first employment (Table 5.2).

Table 5.2. Number of interviews in real life in 2019 vs. digital interviews in 2020

	Total
Interviews for public servant positions, 2019	2 647
Interviews for public servant positions, 2020	1 838
Interviews for public servant positions held virtually, 2020	483
Promotion interviews, 2019	805
Promotion interviews, 2020	829
Promotion interviews held virtually, 2020	374
Horizontal mobility interviews, 2019	1 218
Horizontal mobility interviews, 2020	854
Horizontal mobility interviews held virtually, 2020	632
Total 2019	**4 670**
Total 2020	**3 521**
Virtual interviews, total 2020	**1 489**
Interviews held for first employment, 2020	683

Source: Belgian Federal Public Service of Finance.

The FPSF uses a variety of recruitment methods. External candidates usually sit a computer-based test and have an interview (and in some cases role-play exercises or assessment centre). Candidates for internal promotion sit a computer-based test, assessment centre, and interview. For internal mobility programmes (i.e. horizontal), there is an interview and in some cases a computer-based test or technical presentation. These three ‘streams’ were moved almost exclusively online in 2020 and will be expanded in 2021.

Adapting a phased approach to e-recruitment in the Belgian Federal Public Service of Finance

On 16 March 2020 in reaction to the rising cases of COVID-19 infections, the Belgian government introduced extensive restrictions on public mobility, social movement as well as restrictions affecting the public workforce. As part of these decisions, teleworking became the norm in the Belgian public service and selection and promotion procedures were put on hold.

Phase 1

In April 2020, the Federal Public Service of Finance began a pilot exercise of the e-recruitment tool for internal mobility. As a first step, this included the roll-out of virtual interviews conducted via Skype for business (later Microsoft Teams). In order to support candidates, the Human Resources department of the FPSF developed a candidate handbook to guide candidates through the technical process. The code of ethics was also provided electronically and candidates were asked to sign the code digitally (a good example of priming techniques and 'nudging' to compensate for the impossibility to verify).

As such, the entire process was rolled out paperless and online. Similarly to interviews held in person, the interviews were conducted by recruiters and the hiring manager. In order to enable the recruiters to assess the candidates in this virtual format, recruiters received training on digital interview techniques and non-verbal communication.

Phase 2

During the second phase of the pilot, online interviews were further rolled out and applied to all vacancies/functions where technical skills were to be evaluated. In most cases, technical skills are evaluated during the interviews, although at times the candidate has to complete a technical test sent via encrypted e-mail and within an allotted time.

Regarding the organisation of the interviews, the handbook for candidates was improved to better reflect common issues and a helpline for candidates was set up. While technical issues were not frequent, the manual does describe how to react to any issues arising. In case a candidate cannot participate in an interview due to technical issues, the interview is rescheduled. To mitigate the risk of discriminating against some candidates, decentralised job partners offer training to help candidates for the online interviews. Overall, this led to a high satisfaction on the user-friendliness of the tool according to a survey conducted by the Federal Public Service of Finance.

Phase 3

In the final pilot phase, CV-screening to assess the motivation of candidates and digital assessments consisting of an exercise for a mock presentation and/or a roleplay exercise were introduced. As such, the standard e-recruitment process now consists of three phases: cv-screening, written test and interview. HR oversees the entire recruitment process, while managers only participate in the interview. After the successful pilot, e-recruitment will also be used for external recruitment (foreseen for august 2021) and promotions (starting from June 2021).

Overall, the advantages of e-recruitment, namely increased transparency, flexibility, efficiency and participation outweigh the challenges related to supervision of candidates during the examination phase, possible technical problems, lack of IT skills and security concerns. Candidates rated the experience very well. The feedback stressed in particular the reduced travel time, higher efficiency, lower levels of stress, and flexibility of the recruitment process.

Branding and on-boarding

Going beyond the interview process, the FPSF also launched a digital job fair as part of the e-recruitment pilot. Using social media helped create a high awareness of vacant positions and brand the FPSF as an attractive employer. The FPSF held 'Facebook live' events and webinar teams which had over 7 700 views with more than 25 000 people reached. Each department presented its key functions and role, followed by a Q&A session. Overall, the digital job fair allowed the FPSF to advertise more than 200 vacant position, for which ultimately 4 300 candidates applied. While in total fewer candidates were recruited in 2020 than 2019, the general impression within the FPSF was that the quality of candidates had increased given the

in-depth process in designing the new e-recruitment tool with a focus on the needs of the departments and candidates. To further increase attractiveness and better target candidates, the FPSF worked with an external partner to define an employer branding strategy which will be launched throughout 2021.

The strength of the Belgian experience was also the broad understanding of e-recruitment, including actions related to on-boarding of new recruits. Conscious of the challenge to integrate new recruits into the public service during the COVID-19 pandemic, the FPSF redesigned the on-boarding model. While prior to the pandemic, a physical welcome day would have been organised, the new model foresaw a virtual welcome day and e-training. Furthermore, the importance of the manager for integrating new recruits into the team and public service was highlighted and an onboarding toolkit developed with mangers receiving a checklist prior to any new employee arriving.

Success factors

- Providing clear information upfront about the recruitment process to candidates facilitates the recruitment process and ensures a higher quality of candidates.
- Developing a phased approach in line with capacities helps adapt the process to challenges and opportunities encountered.
- Ensuring buy-in from recruiters and mangers helps involve them throughout the recruitment process and can result in better candidate match.
- Supporting managers who are not used to doing online recruitment is important to ensure that they adapt their questions and techniques to the online tool being used.
- Building awareness throughout the organisation that introducing e-recruitment will initially have to be accompanied by additional investment for example training, data protection software and proctoring software (to verify the identity of the test-taker), in case of technical tests.
- Considering the development of new roles within HR to drive forward the introduction of e-recruitment, such as data protection officer, and new HR roles such as proactive candidate sourcing.

Conclusion

This case study illustrates that e-recruitment is a potentially valuable tool for public services eager to attract a greater number and quality of candidates. A key conclusion of the pilot study carried out by the Federal Public Service of Finance is that strategic e-recruitment calls for the re-examination of candidate needs and expectations at each stage of the advertising, assessment, recruitment and on-boarding processes. With multiple operational, procedural and technical barriers to overcome, e-recruitment involves the need to gain the buy-in of a large range of stakeholders. It may also require targeted up-skilling in order to make sure that recruiters and managers have a shared vision for the advantages – and limitations – of e-recruitment.

In the public sector across the OECD, many recruitment processes still require in-person presence for testing and/or interviews. The switch to widespread remote working in the public service during the Covid pandemic interrupted many of these processes. The example of the pilot project from Belgium has shown that it is possible to move many – even most – parts of the recruitment process online. However, e-recruitment in this sense is about much more than the digital version of analogue or in-person processes. Online assessments are possible, for example, but may come with privacy concerns. Online interviews have been in use even before the crisis – but come with a trade-off in terms of what competences can be tested.

Resolving these challenges and developing new or adjusted processes can help Human Resource departments fulfil their mandate to be true business partners and add value in finding and hiring great candidates. Administrations that already use aspects of e-recruitment in an ad-hoc manner – such as through LinkedIn job postings or sporadic use of video interview tools – may find themselves better placed to stitch these practices together into a coherent strategy.

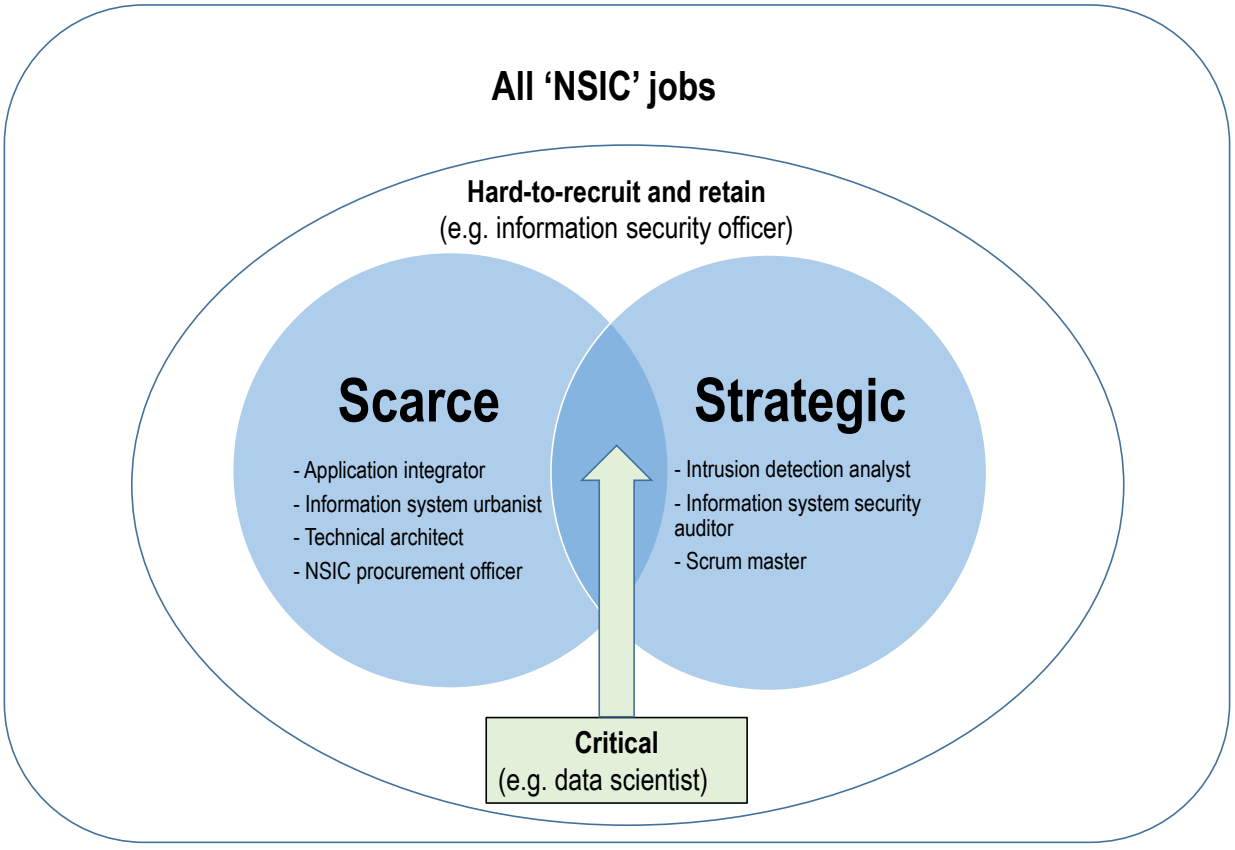
Despite security concerns such as proctoring and data retention, and limitations in terms of assessing or taking non-verbal communication into account, the experience of the Belgian pilot has shown that the advantages of e-recruitment outweigh the disadvantages. The next steps for the Federal Public Service of Finance is to accelerate the integration of e-recruitment into a broader variety of recruitment processes and accompany the scaling up of the pilot team with targeted training and increased engagement across the Federal public service.

Recruiting digital talent in the French Public Service

Across many OECD countries, the public sector faces strong competition from the private sector to attract certain talents and skills, particularly those related to digital technology. This challenge underlines the need to tailor approaches to recruitment while ensuring fairness across jobs in the public sector. In practice, a balance must be found between equal treatment of candidates who apply to public service positions and tailor-made human resource management policies to attract hard-to-recruit profiles – such as in sectors like digital, data and technology, accounting for 18 000 public servants in France.

To overcome this challenge, the French Directorate for Administration and the Public Service (*Direction génerale de l'administration et de la fonction publique, DGAFP*) set up an inter-ministerial working group to identify jobs where there is either a current or forecast lack of talent. By analysing different indicators, the group categorised professions that are hard-to-recruit and to retain as either scarce or strategic. Scarce professions (*'rare* in French*'*) are those which are currently challenging to fill in house with current civil servants. The strategic professions are those expected to significantly increase in demand (Figure 5.1 and Figure 5.2).

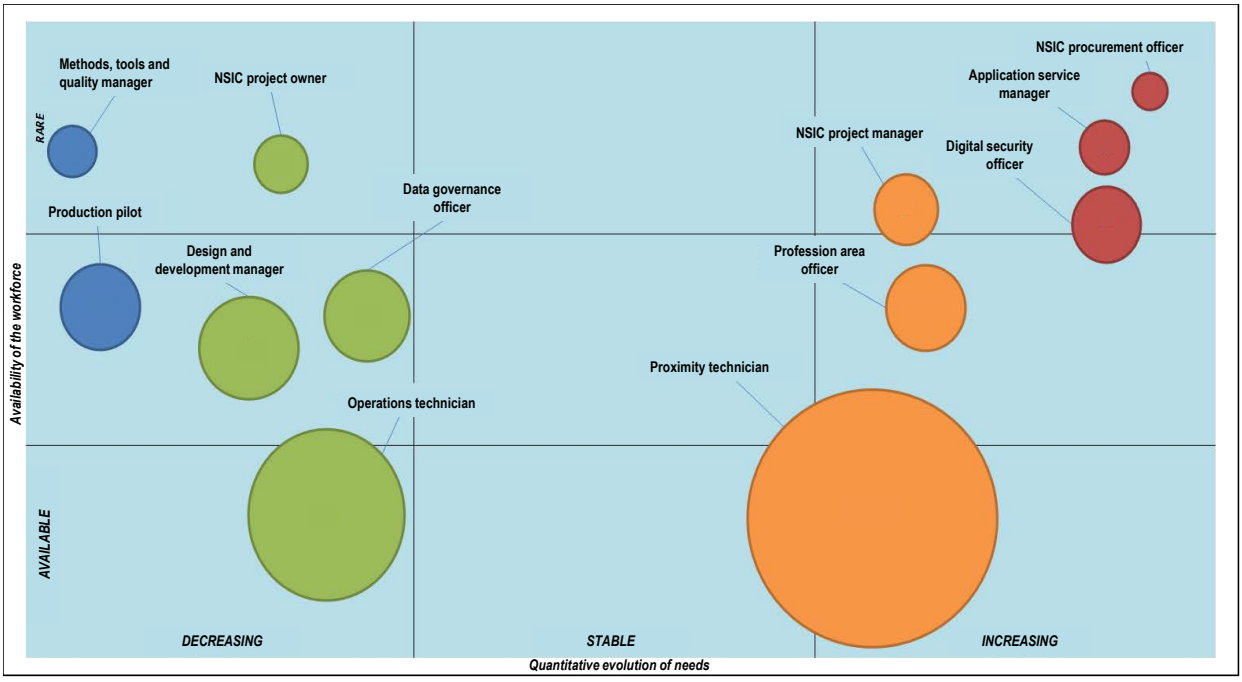
Figure 5.1. Diagram of the characterisation of digital, data and technology jobs



Source: DGAFP (2017), Synthèse Matrice GPEEC métiers NSIC en tension

Figure 5.2. Mapping of digital, data and technology jobs in the services of the French State Territorial Administration

Magnitude of jobs considered hard-to-attract and to retain in the State territorial administration (*Administration Territoriale de l'Etat)*



Source: DGAFP (2017) Enquête GPEEC sur la filière NSIC dans les services de l'administration territoriale de l'Etat (ATE)

This working group established an action plan with 37 measures to develop a response to this skills shortage. Collaboration between the Interministerial Directorate for State IT systems and Communication (*Direction interministérielle des systems de communication de l'Etat)* and the DGAFP enabled the analysis and feasibility for each measure.

The action plan resulting from this collaboration aims to reinforce the attraction and retention of digital talents, in particular by tailoring HRM practices to take into account the scarcity and specialisation of the skills sought. This is partly based on a change in managerial culture for the digital and technology sector, and greater contractual flexibility, both of which are considered in the next sections. This case study is an example of how the French administration is adapting recruitment practices to the needs of specific groups.

The role of managers in supporting a digital culture

The first action of the action plan was to conduct a study on the image of the French public sector employer brand in the digital sector. This study identified the drawbacks and concerns of potential candidates, highlighting that management style, working methods, autonomy and the possibility of gaining responsibilities were among the most important to the candidates, while also the lowest-rated elements of public employment opportunities. These elements are fundamentally linked to human resource management practices and the prominent role of managers.

For example, in 2020, and in connection with two actions of the action plan, the Interministerial Digital Directorate (DINUM) launched the "*Partagez vos talents numériques* !" (Share your digital talents) programme, an experiment aimed at providing digital experts with opportunities to work on short-term projects outside their current Ministry. This programme was intended to introduce a greater level of

flexibility and encourage people to work outside silos. It was enthusiastically received by digital and technology employees, and 111 of them applied to the talent pool. However, none of the seven projects under this programme were able to see the light of day due to hierarchical refusals motivated by fears of loss of talent, or because managers were not convinced of the advantages of temporarily sending a team member to work elsewhere.

Faced with this challenge, the working group took additional measures including better communicating about the advantages of such a programme and developing a study to frame the programme in a positive light rather than as a potential 'loss' of talent. This experiment is a good illustration of the extent to which the management culture can affect the success of projects; in this case trying to adapt to the needs and expectations of talents.

Part of the action plan therefore focuses on specific training programmes for managers making recruitment decisions relating to candidates from digital and technology backgrounds, as well as HR professionals in charge of recruitment. These training courses are essential to inform managers of the merits of tailoring practices for these hard-to-recruit professions, and on the other hand to improve the perception of candidates that the public sector can be a good match for their expectations.

For example, participatory management training has already been set up by DINUM in order to allow middle managers to familiarise themselves with 'participatory management' methods, i.e. the greater involvement of staff in decision making alongside their manager. This type of management is common in the digital sector. Moreover, this training is only the first step in a long journey around this topic. Indeed, a complete training offer based on a skills/competence database ('réferentiel de compétences') will be available to managers recruiting digital and technology profiles during 2021, enabling them to develop a better understanding of these issues.

Contractual mechanisms to meet specific needs

France, like many OECD countries, has a career-based public employment system built around '*corps'* or distinct professional groups with long-term development prospects. In this system, candidates usually become civil servants through a competitive examination giving access to a specific group of the civil service, rather than through direct application to a job. This allows the creation of a pool of qualified public workers motivated to work for the common good while maintaining fairness in the processing of applications.

However, this system sometimes conflicts with adaptation to the needs of administrations, candidates, and citizens. In the digital and technology sector, two recruitment systems coexisted in 2019; the first being a career system, mainly with the appointment in the corps of Information and Communication Systems Engineers (*Ingénieurs des Systèmes d'Information et de Communication,* ISIC) - generally following a competitive examination. However, the ISIC corps experienced challenges regarding upward mobility, and presented a lack of attractiveness for potential candidates to in-demand jobs. The second recruitment system was for contractual workers hired on short-term contracts that were renewable under some conditions. The limitations of the two systems have discouraged potential candidates and have been seen as a barrier to candidates who may be more attracted by more stable and potentially more rewarding opportunities in the private sector.

In order to try to solve this situation, France had to develop a third way to convince potential future employees to join the public sector. While keeping the ISIC body as it is, the French administration has decided to expand the use of contractual staff through recently adopted legislative measures. The law on the transformation of the public service, adopted on August 6, 2019, aims to introduce greater flexibility in the public service while preserving its career-based approach. The law now states that candidates with specialised or new technical skills can be recruited on open-ended contracts. This law provides a greater variety of employment tools when it comes to hard-to-recruit digital and technology jobs.

However, given the pace of digital evolution, the technical skills currently in demand today might face rapid obsolescence tomorrow – potentially counteracting the positive effect of open-ended contracts. The DGAFP is therefore working on a mapping of jobs and competencies in order to identify where further action may be needed to mitigate the effect of change, e.g. through re-/up-skilling or internal mobility.

A reform of this magnitude in a country used to career-based systems has encountered certain difficulties, in particular linked to the important role of social dialogue in France, the desire of staff already hired to review their status and renegotiate salaries, and the risk of salary competition between ministries which will likely be limited by the introduction of a salary benchmark. In the short term, reforms risk creating discord between staff who remain on old types of contracts and staff to whom new conditions apply. This will likely be counterbalanced by the growing implementation and normalisation of the new contractual mechanism.

Conclusion

The relevance of such an extensive project can only be maintained if the mapping of digital jobs that are hard to recruit for takes place regularly and anticipates the future needs of the public service. Each ministry is therefore asked to produce a mapping of jobs that are at risk – or about to be – every two years. This practice is divided into short, medium and long term actions. In the short term, the DGAFP has a central role in the assessment of the needs, since it is responsible for the projected management of jobs, personnel and skill matrices related to digital and technology jobs. The medium-term objective of this practice is for the human resources department of the ministries to produce their own mapping through their human resources management system. Finally, the main long-term objective is to develop a provisional inter-ministerial management tool added to the ministerial Human Resources Management Information System to enable public sector-wide data collection and analysis.

Even if most of the work carried out has been supported by the stakeholders involved, this project was not without challenges. For example, the establishment of a compensation framework has led to difficulties of ownership between HR and budget departments, and a disruption of social dialogue with unions. These elements are all challenges that call for new paths of reflection and consultation.

Through several pillars, including cultural change management and contractual mechanisms focused on in this study, France is demonstrating that the revision of practices to attract groups that are difficult to recruit is also possible for career-based systems. By establishing a higher degree of flexibility and rethinking more satisfactory job opportunities for target audiences, the French public service is acquiring the necessary tools to be competitive with the private sector, and to provide the digital skills necessary for a forward-looking public service.

Workforce mapping in the Israeli Civil Service to prepare for the future

In 2017, the Israeli Civil Service Commission began a project to identify roles and functions across the Israeli civil service at risk of substantial change due to automation, digitalisation, and changing skills requirements. The purpose was to develop a methodology to enable line Ministries and agencies to understand where and how broad labour market, technological and socio-economic changes could be expected to affect their workforce. The CSC developed a two-stage approach.

First, the CSC built a workforce mapping model based on human capital research and existing people analytics data held by the CSC. The outcome was an Excel-based tool that enabled the CSC to classify jobs in individual Ministries and line agencies on a three point-scale according to their risk of change. Jobs classified as substantial risk of change or even elimination were flagged as ‘red jobs’.

Second, the CSC worked with Ministries on the results of the mapping to develop workforce management strategies, especially for 'red jobs'. The goal was to move away from a passive strategy of attrition (workers retiring) toward a more proactive engagement with affected staff focussing on up-skilling, re-skilling and mobility to other areas of the civil service.

Over time, the project is expected to provide greater clarity to the leadership of the Israeli public sector on how their staff and organisations will be affected by change. Developed initially as a pilot with the Immigration Authority and the Tax Authority, the project has strong potential to be expanded to other areas of the civil service. This case study captures the steps involved in launching the project. It outlines the methodology involved and discusses the success factors and lessons learned that could apply to other OECD members

Background to the project

This project built on several years of workforce planning by the Israeli Civil Service Commission. It represents a bridge between changes that were intuitively felt but not yet empirically mapped (at least in the context of the Israeli public sector) and a more future-oriented, data-driven, and client-oriented approach to workforce planning. From the beginning, the CSC drew on existing workforce data to emphasise the urgency of the project.

The CSC identified three main stakeholder groups whose buy-in was crucial to launching the pilot. First, the Ministry of Finance was focused on the cost element of excess or underutilised workforce capacity. It primarily saw the issue as a challenge to be addressed through tools such as redundancy packages. Second, line Ministries and agencies were broadly aware of the impact of changes on their workforce, but were unsure of how to proceed other than through a natural process of attrition through retirement of workers whose skills were of diminishing value. Finally, key stakeholders in the Civil Service Commission itself were important to bring on board.

Each of these groups had distinct concerns and perspectives that the pilot project was designed to address. The CSC was also keenly aware of the need to engage with Israel's powerful public sector unions. In this sense, one of the key insights to developing the pilot project was that it should be framed as much as a cultural and change management exercise as a substantive policy reform effort.

The initial stages of the pilot were designed as a 'proof of concept' and funded from existing resources. The CSC selected the Immigration Authority and the Tax Authority as pilot Ministries based on the following criteria:

- Likely impact of automation and new technologies on Ministry functions and tasks
- Buy-in from senior leadership and support from the Human Resources department
- Headcount (on the assumption that more staff meant a greater potential for change)

Getting the project off the ground

Mapping

The first step was to identify partners inside the Tax Authority as well as 'veto-wielders', or people with blocking power. The CSC considered launching the project with a large conference involving multiple stakeholders, but decided instead to start small in order to build an evidence base before substantial communication. This was also partly due to alleviate Ministries' concerns about alarming staff and unions before the project reached maturity.

Early on in the pilot, the CSC decided to focus on skills rather than on roles. This meant asking managers in the Immigration and Tax Authorities to articulate what skills underpinned roles across their workforces. The CSC worked with Lotem, an Israeli consulting company, to carry out background research to develop the framework used. Figure 5.3 shows the skills model they developed, based on (Benedikt Frey and Osborne, 2017[2]) and other background research.

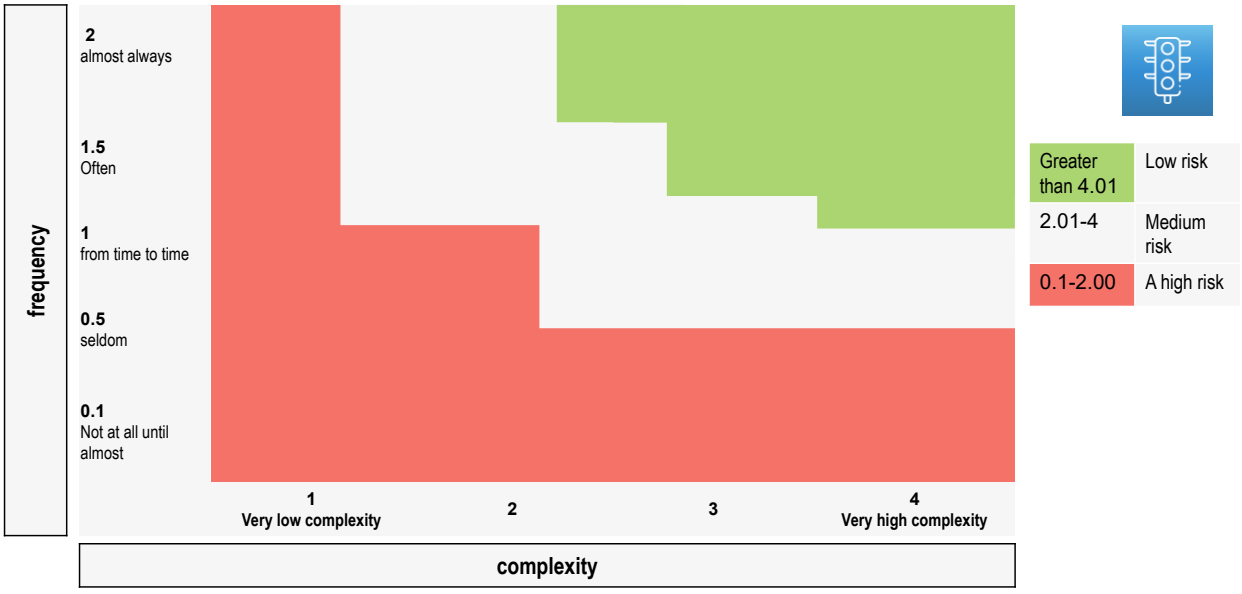
Figure 5.3. Skills model for examining the effect of automation in the Israeli Civil Service



Source: Based on material provided to the OECD by the Israeli Civil Service Commission.

In the Tax Authority, the skills model was applied in two stages. First, a small team took a range of positions and assigned a rank to each skill involved in that position. Then, a workshop was held with senior managers to understand the position in more detail, especially how these skills were being used in their teams and departments (see skills model in Figure 5.3). Using an online questionnaire, managers rated the level of *complexity* of each skill as it related to the position, as well as the *frequency* of its use on a four-point scale. In parallel, staff assessed their own position using the skills model on a five-point scale. Overall, this involved 23 distinct roles across nine job families. The results were displayed on a matrix as shown in Figure 5.4. A similar process was followed for the Immigration Authority.

Figure 5.4. Matrix for manager's assessments of staff role complexity



Source: Based on material provided to the OECD by the Israeli Civil Service Commission.

The first phase of mapping also included a component examining how digitalisation affected existing and emerging roles (Figure 5.5). The mapping isolated the discrete tasks this involved as well as the skills that underpinned these tasks. Using a 'traffic-light' framework, the CSC ran a workshop where participants were asked to identify roles in which the scope changed significantly or where roles could be consolidated in terms of skills and processes.

Figure 5.5. Stages of mapping the effect of digitalisation on roles



Source: Based on material provided to the OECD by the Israeli Civil Service Commission.

Toward solutions

The purpose of creating a list of 'red jobs' was to make it easier to identify what parts of the civil service should be prioritised for specific initiatives to mitigate the effect of automation, such as up-skilling, re-skilling, and mobility to other parts of the public service. A secondary consideration was that the list of red jobs could serve to inform other workforce development issues, such as recruitment, succession planning, and pay reform – as well as engagement with unions on these and other issues.

Once the list of red jobs was finalised for the Immigration and Tax Authorities, the focus of the pilot turned to what to do with this list. One of the key findings for the CSC was that while the list was useful as a basis to move toward solutions, it was also highly politically sensitive. Without appropriate communication and consultation, the pilot Ministries expressed concerns that unions would strike over fears of job losses, or that the Ministry of Finance would use the list as a reason to cut their budget.

As a way to overcome these concerns, the CSC contacted a bank which had gone through a similar exercise previously. This engagement was to demonstrate that workforces with considerable percentages of jobs at risk of automation are not necessarily doomed. Engaging with an external partner helped build trust between the CSC and the Ministries and shift.

Success factors

- Importance of having and using existing workforce data to build a business case.
- Getting stakeholders on board beforehand – consensus building and regular dialogue, not just when there is a problem.
- Having a champion inside the Ministry convinced of the business case and willing to convince others.
- Background research from a variety of sources to complement internal data.
- Doing what the client wants – can't impose a vision without taking the time to build trust.
- Awareness of political sensitivity: workforce mapping is not a dry academic exercise, it has a real impact on people's lives and performance. Need to be sensitive about communication.
- Resources need to follow at some point in order to deliver on the promise of solutions and go beyond highlighting the need.

Conclusion

At the time of drafting this case study, the CSC's focus was on (i) accelerating work on the solutions to roles identified on the red list and (ii) on expanding the pilot project to a wider range of Ministries. On the first issue – moving toward solutions – the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic interrupted the rhythm and frequency of meetings which had helped to build and maintain a sense of urgency during the mapping phase.

The pilot project demonstrated that hard-to-quantify megatrends such as automation and digitalisation can be translated to a workforce development setting and presented in an accessible way for senior leaders, managers, and external stakeholders such as unions. The mapping tool is a concrete success that has the potential to be used in a variety of contexts.

Anticipating future challenges for the workforce through the re-skilling toolkit of US Office of personnel management

The US Federal workforce is, like many workforces across the OECD, affected by digitalisation, globalisation and ageing workforces. In particular, the impact of major workforce changes such as automation is already being felt in a number of areas of the Federal workforce. Against this background, the US Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has developed a re-skilling toolkit to help Federal agencies meet their objective of strategic workforce management and skills development in line with the President's Management Agenda (Office of Personnel Management, 2019[3]).

The toolkit is a compendium of information, guidance and other resources for managers to use in designing ways to help employees affected by the automation of parts of their jobs to improve their skills or develop new ones. The toolkit is also designed to be used by employees, and helps bridge the gap between widespread recognition of broad changes and concrete tools to help workforce managers plan and adapt. The development of the toolkit was strongly driven by the recognition that:

> *[w]hen employees' duties are modified through reassignment, relocation, or increased workloads, it is imperative that they receive the proper training and development to address new and augmented assignments and acclimate to new environments and modes of operation (Office of Personnel Management, 2019[3]).*

Background

The Partnership for Public Service, a think-tank, suggests that more than 80 different federal occupations are likely to be affected by automation (Partnership for Public Service, 2019[4]). With a recent study suggesting that 60% of all new hires leave the US Federal workforce after less than two years, preventing skills gaps is a key priority for Federal employers. Up-skilling and re-skilling is one way to do this (Government Accountability Office, 2020[5]). While the Federal workforce can be expected to see some jobs disappear entirely, the big change is the alteration to existing roles as technology replaces and alters discrete functions. This places a premium on the ability of Federal workforce managers to conceptualise how change will affect their mission and teams. It means they must provide opportunities to up-skill and re-skill their staff – but this is easier said than done.

- **Reskilling**: training for employees who have shown they have the aptitude to learn a completely new occupation. For example, an office clerk whose job has become obsolete might be reskilled to learn web development.
- **Upskilling**: training employees in a particular occupation with new skills to improve how they perform their jobs. For instance, employees who use the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet programme in the grant administration process might be upskilled to use robotic process automation instead (Partnership for Public Service, 2019[4]).

In 2018, OPM identified four major trends shaping the Federal workforce: (i) the evolving role of workers in the context of automation, (ii) the impact of digital technologies, (iii) employee health and wellbeing, and (iv) shifting demographics (Office of Personnel Management, 2019[3]). As technology continues to advance, digitalisation and automation is expected to eliminate or lead to changes of work roles or tasks within positions. Some of the top labour-intensive Federal activities with automation potential are roles related to:

- Retrieving and synthesising data
- Providing some customer service activities

Performing some administrative activities
Many public services across the OECD face similar challenges, and the OECD Recommendation on Public Service Leadership and Capability (PSLC) urges adherents to:

- Continuously identify skills and competencies needed to transform political vision into services which deliver value to society
- Develop the necessary skills and competencies by creating a learning culture and environment in the public service
- Develop a long-term, strategic and systematic approach to people management based on evidence and inclusive planning (OECD, 2019[1]).

Getting the project off the ground

The toolkit was developed by OPM in collaboration with agency partners, the National Science Foundation and the Department of Homeland and Urban Development (HUD). From the beginning, OPM engaged with the Chief Human Capital Officers across agencies to build engagement. An important starting point was recognition of the need to update multiple paper-based processes across government. For example, the IRS has been closing down a number of their facilities that processed tax returns manually – but this means the need to find new work and new types of work for staff in these centres (who are mainly clerical officers) (Box 5.1).

Box 5.1. Internal Revenue Service Re-skilling Academy

The IRS has been closing down a number of their facilities that did manual processing of tax returns and finding these clerical staff new work in areas that are less prone to automation.

The Reskilling Academy is designed to assist IRS Submission Processing employees in Fresno, CA, in transitioning to a new career path within the Service. The primary goal is to support these employees in developing the skills necessary to qualify for higher grade opportunities in the customer service and tax examining fields. To achieve this, these employees will choose a path based on their interests and skills, participate in and complete multiple phases of structured training and assessments, and emerge fully certified and qualified to enter into a continuing position in a new area of expertise.

Source: USA Jobs (n.d.[6]), "Contact Representative & Tax Examiner (Customer Service Reskilling Academy) *12 Month Roster*", https://www.usajobs.gov/GetJob/ViewDetails/576228400

One of the tools used in the development of the toolkit was the *Competency Exploration for Developments and Readiness* (CEDAR) tool.[2] This is an online competency assessment tool that can be used by employees and at organisation-wide level to better understand where there are specific competency strengths and gaps. CEDAR provides employee-specific results of a comprehensive assessment based on supervisor and employee input. Agencies can use the aggregated results of their assessments to support their competency gap analyses, personnel training and development efforts, and to identify the employee competency strengths in an organisation.

Use of the CEDAR tool at organisation and agency level provided a clear indication of areas of the Federal workforce that could benefit from using OPM's re-skilling toolkit. The development of the toolkit and its initial use in practice built on quantifiable data gathered through the CEDAR tool. In other words, while the starting point for an up-skilling or re-skilling intervention might be based on observable trends – e.g. 'jobs involving a lot of paper-based processes will probably change substantially' – the CEDAR tool allows managers to calculate the degree to which such hypotheses applies to their workforces.

The toolkit is divided into four sections: the first explains the concepts of re-skilling and up-skilling and provides guidance to identify key stakeholders involved. The next section develops a logic model (Figure 5.6) before focussing on implementation and subsequently evaluation of reskilling models.

Figure 5.6. Reskilling and upskilling logic model example

Drivers	Inputs	Activities		Outputs	Outcomes
		Planning	Implementation		
Agency goals and plans Mandate Major change in agency or workforce Different work or change in how work is accomplished Employee desirer or need PMA	Time Financial resources Federal partners Equipment Facilities Staff Technology Data	Conduct job analysis Position management review Identify agency skills and performance gaps Develop and communicate a reskilling or upskilling strategy	Mentoring programmes Coaching programmes Rotation opportunities Details training – internal and external Shadowing programmes Blended learning & Online training Career paths	Percent of competency and skills gaps closed Percent of employees who participate in training Percent of employees who participate in mentoring, shadowing or coaching programmes Manager satisfaction with quality of reskilled/upskilled employees Employee overall satisfaction	*Short term* Position agency for the Future Reduced skills gaps New opportunities New career Improved performance *Long term* Mission achievement Continuous learning culture Engaged workforce
Assumptions *What unexamined beliefs about people involved, leadership support and agency context influence the inputs, outputs and outcomes?*					
External influences *What in the external social, economic, etc. environment could positively or negatively interact with and/or influence outcomes?*					

Source: U.S. Office of Personnel Management (n.d.[7]), *Reskilling Toolkit - Accerlerating the Gears of Transformation*, https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/workforce-restructuring/reshaping/accelerating-the-gears-of-transformation/reskilling-toolkit.pdf

Initial use of the tool has shown positive results, though data are still being gathered. One of the most encouraging and high-profile examples has been the development of the Cyber Reskilling Academy (Box 5.2). The Government Accountability Office (GAO) – often referred to as the 'Congressional watchdog' – is preparing a study that will use data gathered through various projects where the upskilling toolkit has been used.

Box 5.2. Re-skilling in action: the Cyber Reskilling Academy

In November 2018, as part of the president's management agenda, the CIO Council announced the government-wide Federal Cyber Reskilling Academy to address the shortage of cybersecurity talent in the federal government. The programme, run by the council's workforce committee and the Department of Education, aims to develop new IT and cyber talent to fill open cybersecurity positions in government. The Academy was designed to fill a gap by targeting existing Federal employees eager to move into new roles but lacking structured opportunities to do so.

Interest in the programme was primarily from federal employees who wanted an opportunity to expand how they might work for the government. The academy attracted more than 1 500 applicants from across government to fill 30 spots in its inaugural class. The finalists who completed the three month training programme in July 2019 received two Global Information Assurance Certification credentials in cybersecurity and are hoping to either transition into new cybersecurity roles or apply their new skills to fill existing gaps at their current agencies. While the first cohort was restricted to current employees who did not work in the IT field, the second cohort was expanded to admit federal employees with IT backgrounds.

Source: Partnership for Public Service/General Assembly (2019[8]), *Looking Inward for Talent: Retraining Employees for Tomorrow's Jobs*, https://ourpublicservice.org/publications/looking-inward-for-talent-retraining-employees-for-tomorrows-jobs/

Early observations suggest that not everyone wants to take advantage of opportunities for re- or upskilling. Taking the psychological state of employees on board is important – many employees who have worked for long periods in particular agencies or teams may feel scared by the prospect of change and unwilling to leave long-established relationships – even identities – behind. Taking this as a starting point, OPM has built in ways to engage employees and help them understand that upskilling is not about forced change but about finding "something they can see themselves doing" in the long term.

Building on research on the future of work, OPM also observed that it is rare for entire roles to simply be replaced by automation. In the majority of cases, certain tasks will change but not the whole role. In these cases, it can be tricky to make the case to managers and staff for the need to upskill or reskill. In professions that are going to disappear entirely – such as the IRS example in Box 5.2– upskilling and reskilling is an easier 'sell'.

Use of the toolkit also served to highlight gaps in learning and development: sometimes the type of training that staff need is not easily available in 'off-the-shelf' modules, and learning and development journeys need to be created from scratch. The ability of agencies to meet these learning needs differs across government, indicating the usefulness of some centralised support from OPM.

Finally, upskilling and reskilling are frequently referred to as the natural consequence of displacement of labour, but that is not always the case. When labour is displaced, OPM encourages managers to think in terms of four broad ways to address skills gaps, of which upskilling/reskilling is just one option. The other three are contracting a service provider (for example for some IT needs), finding an employee from another government department or agency (like through a secondment or short-term placement), or hiring a new government employee. All options are valid and should be considered alongside upskilling and reskilling.

Success factors

- The Toolkit identifies several pre-conditions to successful re-skilling, such as leadership support, appropriate resources, and the existence of workforce plans and policies to support reskilling and upskilling.
- The Toolkit notes that agency policies, including collective bargaining agreements, can also affect success.
- Feedback from OPM also centred on the presentation of the Toolkit and how it is framed for agencies. It is important to show how it is different from previous reskilling and upskilling effort, as well as to support management implement a change management process. This may include a focus on the psychological aspects of change and supporting employee wellbeing.
- Because the Toolkit consolidates many types of resources, OPM sought to avoid 'content-dumping' and instead developed a narrative and structure for how the Toolkit should be used. This is a key success factor – curating the information and making it accessible and digestible.
- Re-skilling is perceived differently to up-skilling: initial use of the Toolkit suggests staff may percieve up-skilling negatively if they feel that their new skills will simply add more tasks to their to-do lists. On the other hand, the sentiment around re-skilling was more clear-cut: employees felt that they were making a career change due either to push factors (their old job will soon cease to exist) or pull factors (chance to find meaning in a new professional field while continuing to serve the public interest).
- Begin with jobs where there is clear evidence that job is disappearing or changing substantially

Conclusion

At the time of writing, the tool was still in an experimental phase, meaning it is hard to draw concrete conclusions. OPM acknowledge the need to keep measuring progress and gathering more data. OPM also framed the Toolkit as just one element of a successful 'playbook', or situational checklist that managers can draw on to identify when up- and re-skilling is the best option – and when it is perhaps more appropriate to recruit or 'borrow' talent.

Digital Human Resource Management in South Korea

Introduction

Many OECD countries have tried to leverage digital human resource management (HRM) tools to respond to COVID-19 and prepare for the future. However, most countries struggle to use them effectively. For example, they lack the skills and capabilities to conduct scientific analysis, to drive insights and proactively use HR data for better management decision making and HRM policy development. As mentioned in the first chapter of this volume, 'data scientist' is not yet a common job profile within HR departments in the public sector.

To address this, the Korean government has established and implemented strategic policies for digital HRM. This case study shows how Korea has set up and utilises their electronic HRM system, secures competent digital talents, and improves digital skills and capabilities in the civil service.

Electronic human resource management system: "e-Saram"

Since 2000, the Korean Government has established and developed a standardised electronic HRM system called "e-Saram". "e-Saram" supports government-wide personnel administration and personnel policy tasks of the Ministry of Personnel Management (MPM), by digitising the overall personnel

administration from recruitment to retirement. The system is cloud-based and shares servers and databases, generating ministry-level HR information and integrating databases physically and logically. It integrates and manages data related to HR decisions, salary, performance evaluation, education and training, and services for about 300 000 public officials in 72 central administrative agencies and the electronic processing of overall civil service management. Provided, however, technological security systems allow each ministry to access only its own HR database.

The system provides reliable statistical HR data by occupation, grade, organisation, gender and age on a timely basis to facilitate effective and scientific decision making. In particular, the system offers a feature with its information analytics service based on policy statistics to analyse the current status of personnel, forecast the results, and reflect them in the HR policies. For example, the responsible officials use "e-Saram" to revise HR policies or conduct a simulation of the as-is and to-be of the salary table renewal to understand its impact and as a result save time and energy.

Moreover, "e-Saram" enables each government agency to manage a variety of HR-related tasks electronically. The civil servants in charge of HR of each agency can deal with all HR services including recruitment, promotion, salary, education and training, and welfare benefits with the system. Managers can use the system to manage their division or agency efficiently. The HR data of the affiliated staff can be identified directly and if necessary, managers can use the talent search function to discover the right person for a specific task. In addition, overall civil service management such as work schedule, compensation, and overtime management can be processed on the system. The accumulated HR information in the system is linked with the business systems of different ministries including the National Human Resources Database (NHRDB), the Resident Registration System, National Human Resources Development Institute (NHI), Government Employees Pension Service (GEPS), Korea Financial Telecommunications & Clearings Institute (KFTC) and major administrative information systems.

"e-Saram" has played an important role in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic in an effective and resilient way. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the remote work service has been provided on the system so that civil servants can handle essential tasks. Furthermore, the Special Guidelines for Civil Service Management Code for the prevention of the spread of the COVID-19 were reflected into the system promptly to support teleworking, sick leave and official leave. "e-Saram" also provided support for the transfer of about 1 300 public servants by providing data and information about health officials scattered in each government agency while the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency (KDCA) was launched in 2020.

Digital skills and capabilities

As digital transformation speeds up, it is getting more and more crucial to secure competent digital talents in the government and cultivate digital skills and capabilities of civil servants. The promise of new technology to improve government service delivery will only be achieved with a commensurate investment in the capabilities of civil servants, as argued in the first chapter of this report. In this respect, the Korean government has implemented a variety of recruitment and training policies to improve digital skills and capabilities of civil servants.

The digital talents of the Korean government are selected through various recruitment channels. First of all, they are mainly selected through 'open competitive recruitment' and 'career competitive recruitment'. In open competitive recruitment, the selection of digital talents is made through a written test including data structure theory, database theory, software engineering and information system security as the test subjects and an interview. Career competitive recruitment is generally conducted through document screening and an interview for digital experts with private sector careers, certificates or degrees. In addition, government headhunting is carried out based on the National Human Resources Database[3] to discover and recruit top digital talents. It mainly targets manager-level or higher positions for which it is difficult to recruit suitable talent through the two other recruitment channels. Recently, the Korean

government has selected the Director of the Big data & Statistics Division in the Statistics Korea (KOSTAT) and the Director of the Big Data Analytics Division in the Ministry of the Interior and Safety (MOIS) through government headhunting or career competitive recruitment. Furthermore, a new job category for data-base administration under the job group for computing was created in the government in 2020 to discover and utilise professional digital talents for the government.

The Korean government has provided systematic education and training to enhance the digital skills and capabilities of civil servants that are necessary for whole-of-government digital transformation. The NHI provides a digital training package including pre-learning courses through the government e-learning platform, main learning courses through regular training curricula, and post-learning through the online community for training graduates. The digital training courses the NHI provides can be categorised into three main types: DNA Academy, Information Capability, and Information Security. The courses are aimed at improving digital literacy focused on data analytics. These customised digital training courses appropriate for different digital capability level, jobs and roles are offered to civil servants.

Table 5.3. Main types of digital training courses provided by the NHI

Types	Main Content
DNA Academy	• Understanding changes in the future society centred on Information and Communications Technology (ICT) • Artificial Intelligence (AI), and big data technology
Information Capability	• Information business management • Web programming
Information Security	• Personal information and information security policy • Cyber threat and attack trend

In 2020, the NHI signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) for innovation of public human resources development with the Korea Advanced Institute of Science & Technology (KAIST) to foster talents who lead digital government transformation. According to this MOU, civil servants can take online education of the KAIST reflecting new ICT trend such as AI, big data and network through the government e-learning platform.

Conclusion

In response to digital transformation, the Korean government has made strenuous efforts to establish a smart electronic HRM system and secure and foster competent digital talents in the public service. As a cloud-based integrated information system, “e-Saram” has offered innovative efficiency and convenience over personnel management and also made data-driven HRM possible by managing HR data from ministries on a real-time basis. The Korean government has discovered and selected competent digital talents through various recruitment channels such as the open competitive recruitment, career competitive recruitment, and government headhunting. Systematic education and training has been provided to enhance the digital skills and capabilities of civil servants through the customised digital training courses and the government e-learning platform. This case shows how Korea’s digital HRM is implemented in harmony between “people” and “system”.

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Notes

[1] https://www.apsc.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/aps-workforce-strategy-2025

[2] https://www.opm.gov/information-management/privacy-policy/privacy-policy/cedar.pdf

[3] The National Human Resources Database is a national personal information management system that collects and manages information on public office candidates to ensure the recruitment of top talents for major public positions. The MPM is operating it with about 350 000 specialists in a wide range of areas, including academia, business, the legal community, and NGOs.

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