

14. Central government recruitment systems

The objective of recruitment systems is to ensure that government organisations have the right number of people with the right skills and values at the right time.

This index looks at the type of recruitment system in place in central governments. A career-based system is characterised by competitive selection early on in the public servants' career with higher-level posts open to public servants only. Career-based systems may cultivate a dedicated, experienced group of civil servants. In contrast, in a position-based system, candidates apply directly to a specific post and most posts are open to both internal and external applicants. In general, recruitment systems that are open to external candidates at any point in their careers provide managers with the possibility to adjust their workforce more quickly in response to a changed environment. However, while these systems offer managers flexibility, they make it difficult to maintain cross-government values. For example, central bodies must pay more attention to recruitment processes to guarantee merit-based selection at all position levels. The index does not take into account the recruitment of contractual or casual staff or, in many cases, exceptions to recruitment processes that have been introduced in some OECD member countries with career-based civil services.

The index displays a long-standing distinction between career-based and position-based systems in place in OECD member countries. In Finland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden, Switzerland (except for diplomatic careers) and the United Kingdom, all posts below senior management and even some senior management positions are open to external recruitment, and applicants apply directly to a specific post. In other countries with career-based systems such as France, employees are recruited almost exclusively at lower levels and move up to higher positions throughout their time in their civil service. In some countries with relatively career-based systems, such as Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, Mexico and Portugal, recruitment for top managers and special experts is open to external candidates.

Countries with more position-based recruitment systems also appear to grant line ministries more authority to make HRM decisions. In Australia, New Zealand and Sweden, line managers have more flexibility in determining both who they hire and the conditions of employment. However, there are exceptions; while the Netherlands and Japan grant line ministries similar levels of authority to make HRM decisions, the Netherlands uses a position-based system whereas Japan uses a career-based system to recruit employees.

Methodology and definitions

Data refer to 2005 and were collected through the 2006 OECD Strategic Human Resource Management in Government Survey. Respondents were predominately senior officials in central government personnel departments. Countries missing from the figures are those for which the OECD had incomplete or inconsistent data.

Data refer to HRM practices at the central level of government for the civil service. Definitions of the civil service, as well as sectors covered at the central level of government, differ across countries and should be considered when making comparisons.

The index focuses on the possibilities individuals have to become part of the civil service throughout their careers at all seniority levels. It includes the following variables (weights in parentheses): policies for becoming a civil servant in general (e.g. competitive examination or direct application) (25%) and for recruiting senior civil servants (25%), and systems for appointing entry-level positions (25%) and for allocating posts across departments (25%). The index ranges between 0 (career-based system) and 1 (position-based system). See Annex C for a description of the methodology used to develop the composite index. The variables comprising the indexes and their relative importance are based on expert judgements. They are presented with the purpose of furthering discussion, and consequently may evolve over time.

Further reading

OECD (2008), *The State of the Public Service*, OECD, Paris.

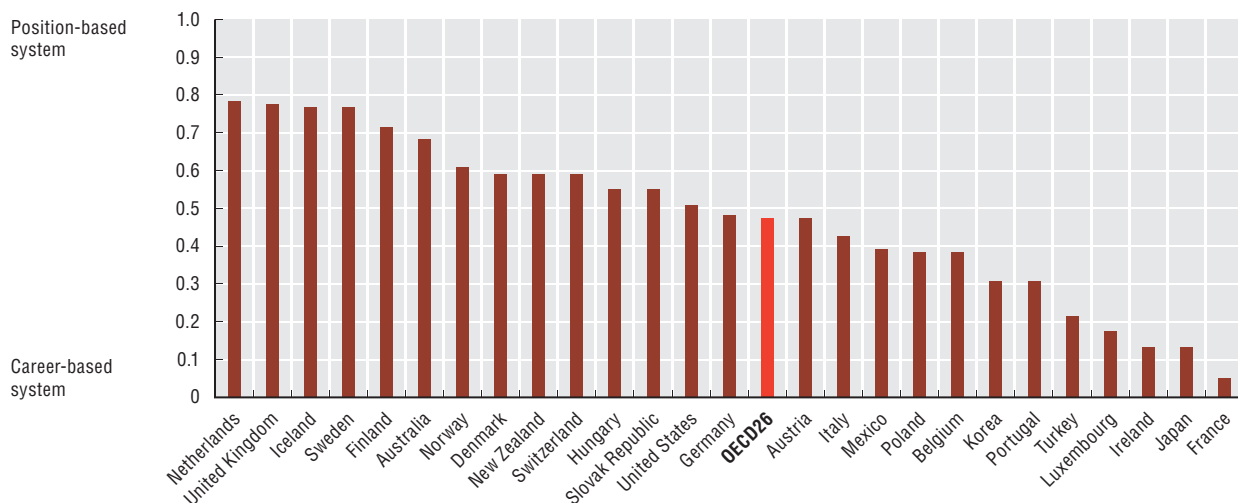
Notes

14.1: Data are not available for Canada, the Czech Republic, Greece and Spain. A very small change to the composite index has been made to Norway and Poland since the publication of *The State of the Public Service*, slightly affecting their ranking.

14.2: Data are not available for Canada, the Czech Republic, Greece, Poland, the Slovak Republic and Spain. The coefficient of correlation is 0.672.

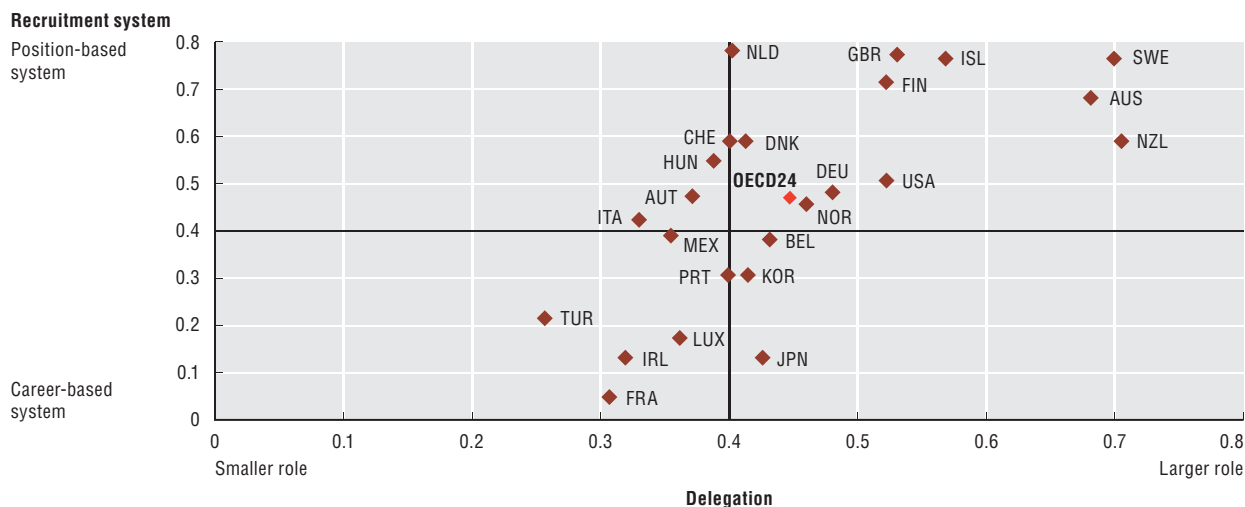
A corrigendum has been issued for this page. See: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/59/28/44251675.pdf>

14.1 Type of recruitment system used in central government (2005)



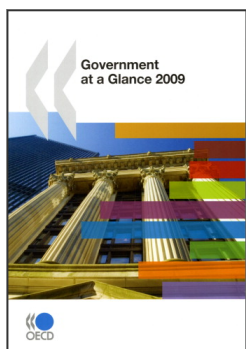
Note: This index describes a spectrum of recruitment systems in place in OECD member countries. It does not evaluate the performance of different systems.

14.2 Relationship between type of recruitment system and delegation in HRM in central government (2005)



Source: OECD Strategic Human Resource Management in Government Survey (2006).

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