

General government employment across levels of government

The proportion of staff employed at sub-central levels of government is an indicator of the level of decentralisation of public administrations. In general, larger shares of government employees at the sub-central level indicate that more responsibilities are delegated to regional and local governments for providing public services. Although decentralisation can increase the responsiveness of government to local needs and priorities, it can also result in variations in service delivery within countries.

In 2014, most countries had more employees at the sub-central level than at the central level of government. Federal states employ around one-third of all government employees at the central level, indicating higher levels of decentralisation. The variance in the proportion of government employees at the central level of government is much larger in unitary states, ranging from less than 20% in Japan and Sweden to about 90% in Turkey and Ireland.

Between 2009 and 2014, the percentage of government staff employed at the central level has remained relatively stable. This suggests that in countries that experienced adjustments to public employment levels over this period (see previous page), these adjustments were, on the whole, equally shared at central and sub-central levels. Only Hungary has experienced significant change over this period, where the share of government staff employed at the central level has increased by almost 30 percentage points. This increase was due to the reorganisation of the territorial public administration during this period. The central government reorganised service delivery in key areas – notably in health and education – to improve service standards in poor areas and render these standards more uniform across the country. Hungary did so by “re-concentrating” service delivery responsibility in the deconcentrated sub-central administrations, by uploading service delivery responsibility from the local authorities.

Methodology and definitions

Data were collected by the International Labour Organization (ILO), *ILOSTAT* (database). The data are based on the *System of National Accounts* (SNA)

definitions and cover employment in central and sub-central levels of government. Sub-central government is comprised of state and local government including regions, provinces and municipalities. Together the central and sub-central levels comprise general government. In addition, countries provided information on employment in the social security funds component of general government, which include all central, state, and local institutional units whose principal activity is to provide social benefits. As social security funds refer to different levels of government, employment in this category has been recorded separately unless otherwise stated. However, in most countries, with the exceptions of France, Mexico and Germany, social security funds employ a small number of staff and represent a small percentage of the total workforce. Data represents the total number of persons employed directly by each of those different institutions.

The following countries are federal states in the dataset: Canada, Germany, Spain (considered a quasi-federal country), Switzerland and the United States.

Further reading

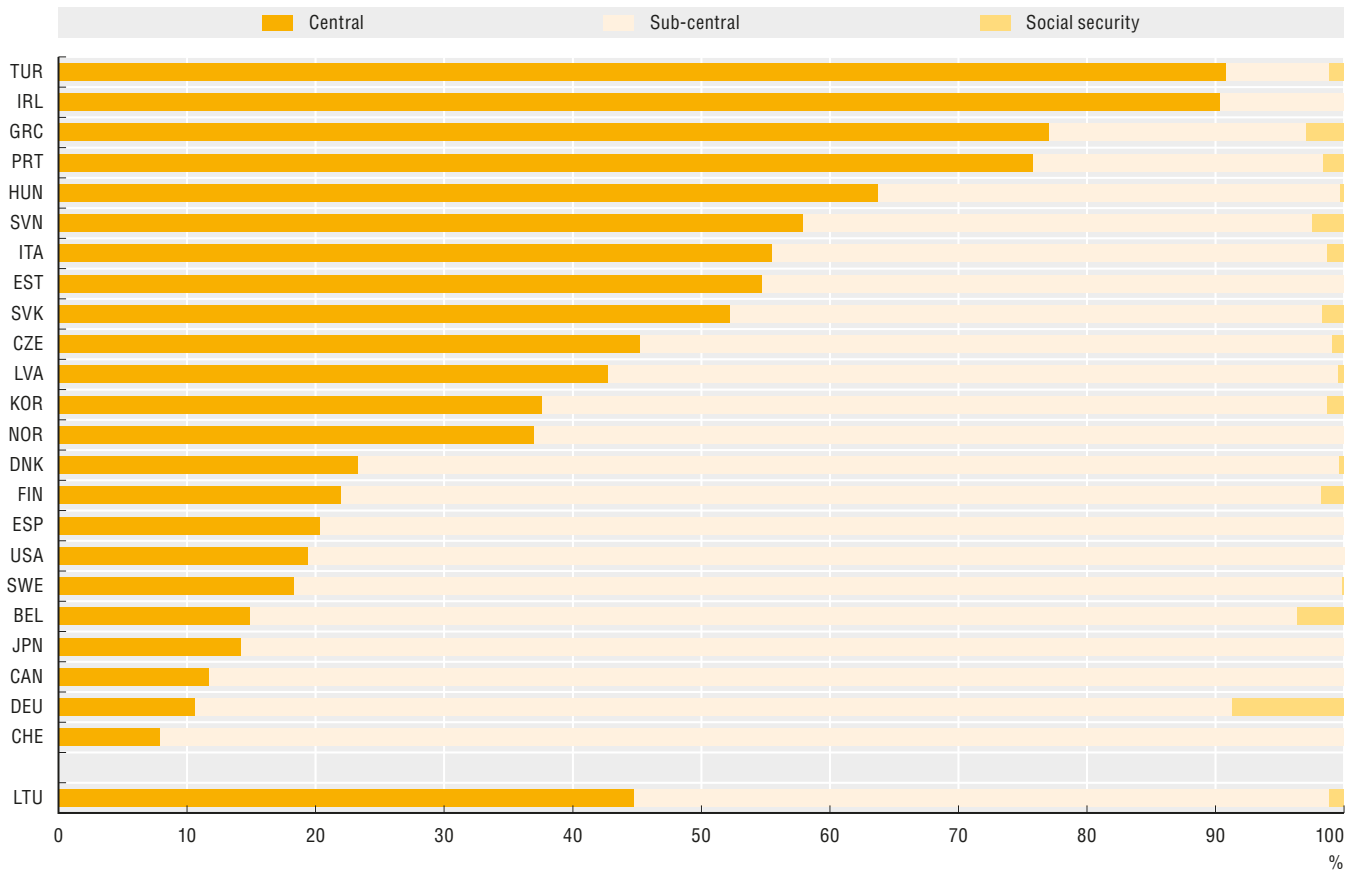
OECD (2016), *Engaging Public Employees for a High-Performing Civil Service*, OECD Public Governance Reviews, OECD, Paris.

Figure notes

Data for Denmark are for 2013 rather than 2014. Data for Korea are for 2015 rather than 2014. Social security funds are not separately identified (i.e. recorded under central and/or sub-central government) for Canada, Estonia, Ireland, Japan, Norway, Spain, Switzerland and the United States.

3.3: Data for Lithuania are for 2010 rather than 2009.

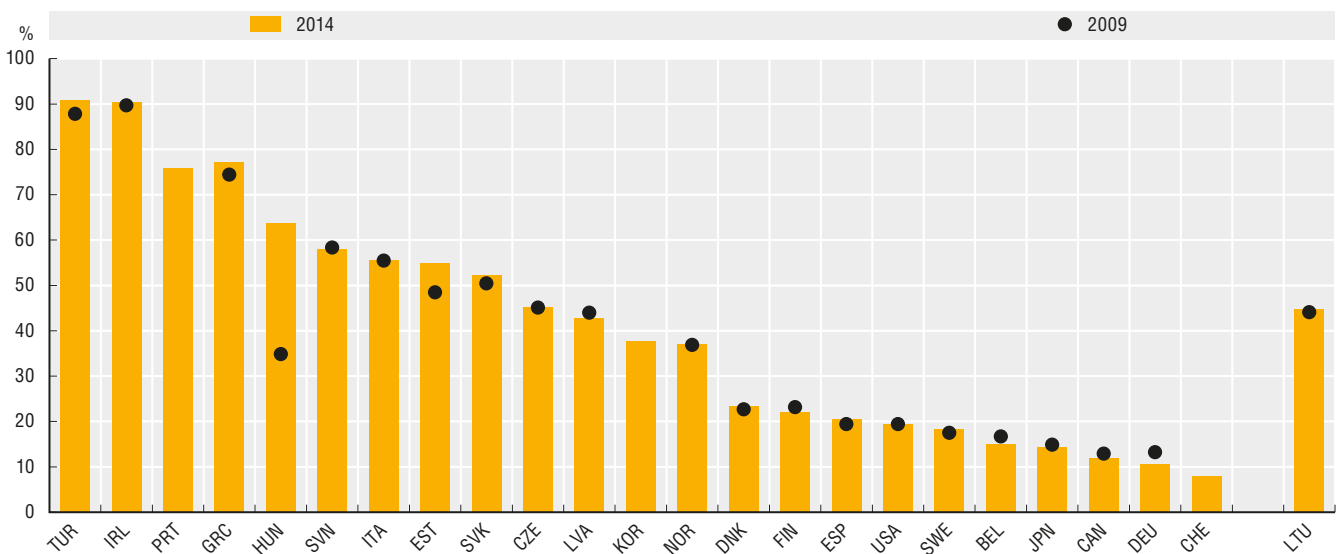
3.3. Distribution of general government employment across levels of government, 2014



Source: International Labour Organization (ILO), ILOSTAT (database), Public employment by sectors and sub-sectors of national accounts. Data for Korea and Portugal were provided by national authorities.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933532086>

3.4. Percentage of government staff employed at the central level, 2009 and 2014



Source: International Labour Organization (ILO), ILOSTAT (database), Public employment by sectors and sub-sectors of national accounts. Data for Korea and Portugal were provided by national authorities.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933532105>

