

### 3. PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT

## General government employment across levels of government

The proportion of staff employed at sub-national levels of government is an indicator of the level of decentralisation of public administrations. Larger shares of government employees employed at the sub-national level suggests that local and regional governments have greater responsibility for providing public services. While decentralisation allows for greater responsiveness to local needs and priorities, it can also result in variations in service delivery within countries.

In 2019, general government employees employed at the sub-national level made up more than half of all general government employees in 17 OECD countries for which data were available. Federal states, such as Belgium, Germany, Spain and Switzerland, are among the countries with the largest share of general government employees working at the sub-national level. In contrast, unitary states, such as Ireland, Israel and Turkey, tend to have most general government workers concentrated at the central level. However, unitary but decentralised countries, such as Finland, Norway or Sweden, also prove to have a small share of central government employees (Figure 3.3).

Between 2013 and 2019, 19 OECD countries experienced increases of general government staff employed at the central level. On average across OECD countries with available information, the average annual growth rate in central government employment was almost stable at 0.6% over this period. The highest average annual growth rates were in Turkey (3.3% per year), Luxembourg (2.7%) and the United Kingdom (2.4%). Conversely, the number of general government staff employed at the central level fell the fastest in Estonia (by 3% per year), Spain (1.2%) and Lithuania (0.9%) (Figure 3.4). In the United Kingdom, the growth is specific to central government, as sub-national government employment has fallen since 2013, keeping the overall numbers of general government staff almost stable over this period. There are a variety of reasons for such changes in employment at the central level, for example they could be due to the age composition of the government workforce, capacity building, political decisions or administrative reforms.

#### Methodology and definitions

Data are from 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-national levels

of government. Sub-national government is comprised of state and local government including regions, provinces and municipalities. Together the central and sub-national 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, Germany and Mexico, social security funds employ few staff and represent a small percentage of the total workforce. Data represent the total number of persons employed directly by each of those different levels of government and social security funds institutions. The following countries in the dataset are federal states: Belgium, Germany, Mexico, Spain (considered a quasi-federal country), Switzerland and the United States.

#### Further reading

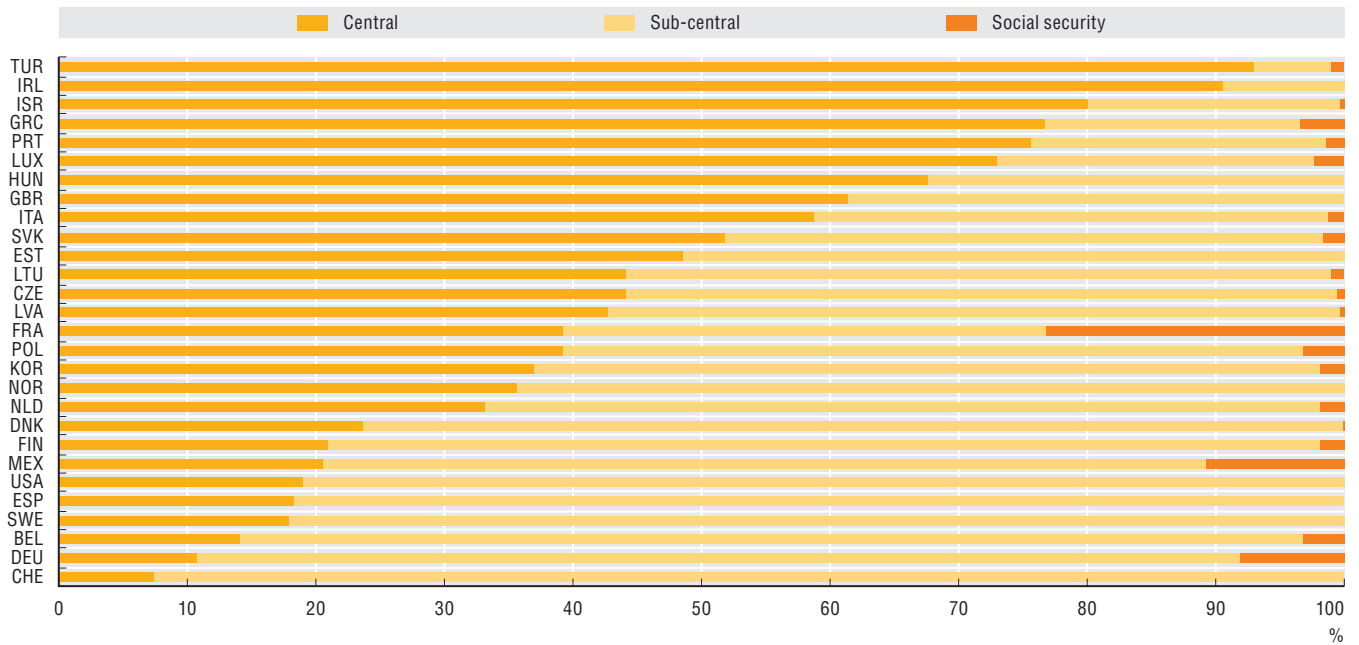
- OECD (2019), *Recommendation of the Council on Public Service Leadership and Capability*, OECD, <https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/%20en/instruments/OECD-LEGAL-0445>.
- OECD (2017), *Skills for a High Performing Civil Service*, OECD Public Governance Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264280724-en>.
- OECD (2016), *Engaging Public Employees for a High-Performing Civil Service*, OECD Public Governance Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264267190-en>.

#### Figure notes

Data for Australia, Austria, Canada, Chile, Iceland, Japan, New Zealand and Slovenia are not available. Data for Estonia, Greece and Spain are based on the Labour Force Survey. Social security funds are not separately identified (i.e. recorded under central and/or sub-national government) for Estonia, Ireland, Norway, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States. For Poland other non-profit institutions (NPIs) have been redistributed between central and sub-national levels of government. Data for France, Hungary, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal and Switzerland are for 2018 rather than 2019. Data for the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Latvia and Spain are for 2017 rather than 2019.

3.4. Data for Korea are not available.

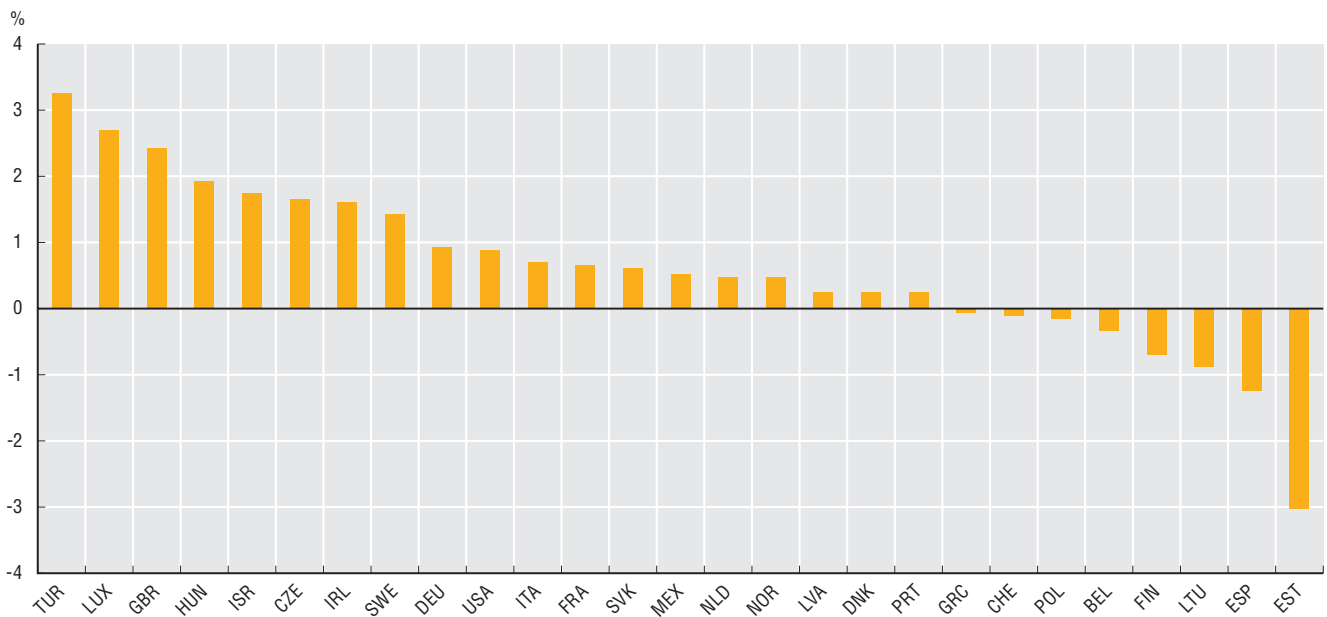
3.3. Distribution of general government employment across levels of government, 2019



Source: International Labour Organization (ILO), ILOSTAT (database), Public employment by sectors and sub-sectors of national accounts.

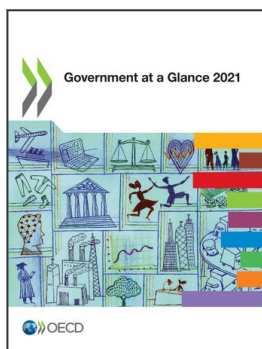
StatLink <https://doi.org/10.1787/888934257375>

3.4. Average annual growth rate of general government staff employed at the central level, 2013-19



Source: International Labour Organization (ILO), ILOSTAT (database), Public employment.

StatLink <https://doi.org/10.1787/888934257394>



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