

### Political influence in senior staffing

A professional and politically impartial civil service ensures a high level of competence, integrity and continuity in developing policy advice and implementation that serves the public interest. Exerting political influence in senior staffing decisions can stem from a government's desire to ensure responsiveness from the civil service by staffing the management with people who share their political views. However, without appropriate levels of transparency and accountability (e.g. open confirmation and vetting by elected officials), high levels of political influence can also result in the spread of patronage and favouritism that may undermine the professionalisation of the civil service. Political influence can also result in higher levels of turnover at senior management levels, which contributes to a lack of management stability and continuity required to oversee long-term improvement and reforms. Furthermore, political influence in civil service staffing decisions may result in a preference for political agents rather than public managers with the skills and competencies necessary to be effective leaders. This can ultimately result in a loss of trust in public institutions if citizens perceive public managers to be appointed based on political affiliation rather than leadership and policy competence.

The level of politically influenced turnover in OECD countries is one indication of the extent to which politics and/or political affiliation play a role in staffing the civil service. Among the four levels of senior civil servants (with level D1 representing the most senior staff and D4 representing the least senior), the lower levels (levels D3 and D4) tend to experience little if any turnover with a change of government. On the other hand, politically motivated turnover is relatively higher in the upper levels (levels D1 and D2). The group with the highest turnover is advisors to ministries' leadership, who are often appointed by the minister.

In Chile, Spain and Turkey all positions change systematically in the two top echelons of senior civil servants after the election of a new government. The government of Chile has recognised the challenges associated with this high level of turnover and is taking steps to address the issue by strengthening the National Civil Service Directorate and the Senior Executive Service. All public service positions change in the top echelon (D1) with a new government in Hungary and the Slovak Republic.

In 17 OECD countries (Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Japan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States), there is no or very few turnover in any of the four levels of senior civil servants when there is a change in government. These tend to be countries with parliamentary systems, or with long traditions of stability and professionalisation at the top levels.

#### Methodology and definitions

Data refer to 2016 and were collected through the 2016 OECD Survey on Strategic Human Resources Management. Respondents were predominantly senior officials in central government HRM departments, and data refer to HRM practices in central government. The survey was completed by all OECD countries, as well as the OECD accession countries Colombia, Costa Rica and Lithuania. Definitions of the civil service, as well as the organisations governed at the central level of government, differ across countries and should be considered when making comparisons. The terms public and civil service/servants are used interchangeably throughout this chapter.

The classifications used to define the four levels of senior civil servants (D1 to D4) for which data is presented here are adapted from the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-08) developed by the International Labour Organization (ILO). For detailed definitions of each of the levels, please see the Annex online. Advisors to the ministry's leadership refer to political advisors who provide ideas or plans that are used by a government as a basis for making decisions.

#### Further reading

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

#### Figure notes

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

## 6.7. Staff turnover with a change of government, 2016

	Advisors to the ministry's leadership	Senior management		Middle management	
		D1	D2	D3	D4
Australia	■	⊙	○	○	○
Austria	■	○	○	○	○
Belgium	●	○	○	○	○
Canada	○	○	○	○	○
Chile	●	●	●	■	■
Czech Republic	●	⊙	○	⊙	⊙
Denmark	●	○	○	○	○
Estonia	■	○	○	○	○
Finland	●	○	○	○	○
France	●	⊙	○	○	○
Germany	○	⊙	○	○	○
Greece	●	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
Hungary	●	●	■	⊙	⊙
Iceland	●	○	○	○	○
Ireland	●	○	○	○	○
Israel	■	■	⊙	○	○
Italy	●	■	○	○	○
Japan	○	○	○	○	○
Korea	●	■	⊙	○	○
Latvia	●	⊙	⊙	○	○
Luxembourg	○	○	○	○	○
Mexico	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
Netherlands	○	○	○	○	○
New Zealand	○	○	○	○	○
Norway	○	○	○	○	○
Poland	●	■	⊙	⊙	○
Portugal	●	○	○	○	○
Slovak Republic	●	●	■	⊙	⊙
Slovenia	■	⊙	○	○	○
Spain	●	●	●	⊙	○
Sweden	●	○	○	○	○
Switzerland	⊙	⊙	○	○	○
Turkey	●	●	●	■	⊙
United Kingdom	●	○	○	○	○
United States	●	○	○	○	○
<b>Total OECD</b>					
All (95-100%) ●	21	6	3	0	0
Many (50-94%) ■	5	3	2	2	1
Some (5-49%) ⊙	2	9	6	8	6
None (0-5%) ○	7	17	24	25	28
Colombia	●	●	■	⊙	⊙
Costa Rica	●	■	○	○	○
Lithuania	●	⊙	○	○	⊙

Source: OECD (2016), Strategic Human Resources Management Survey, OECD, Paris.

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933535031>

