Women in public sector employment

Equal representation of women in public sector employment helps achieve fairness, openness and representativeness. It also improves the quality of service delivery through a better understanding of the citizenry. In the OECD countries for which data are available, women represented, on average, 58% of the total public sector workforce in 2013 going from more than 70% in Sweden to 42% in Japan. Japan reported establishing targets for women at the sectoral level in areas where women are underrepresented. On average in OECD countries, women are more represented in the public sector (58.2%) as compared to the whole economy where women employment as a share of the total employment reached only 45.3%. It is important to note that the data don't demonstrate the extent to which women hold managerial leadership positions within the public sector.

Public sector employment is often more attractive for women because of its employment conditions. Women usually find the flexible working hours, diverse career paths and options, relative job stability, good pay and benefit packages attractive. Public service modernisation and strengthening fundamental public service values and principles, such as merit and diversity, may have also contributed to the increase of women in public sector employment (OECD, 2014a).

On average in OECD countries between 2009 and 2013, women employment in the public sector grew faster (+0.6 p.p.) than in the whole economy (+0.3 p.p.) with an increase in countries such as Luxembourg, Switzerland, Spain and Mexico. Women's employment in the public sector also grew significantly in Colombia. Counter to the general trend, the share of employed women in the economy in Estonia decreased by 1.6 p.p. over the same period. This decrease is also seen in the share of women in the public sector (-3.6 p.p.) over the period. It is important to note, however, that reaching gender equity between men and women in the public sector goes beyond numerical balance. Evidence still suggests that women continue to face major difficulties in accessing management and leadership positions, are still more frequently employed in part-time and contractual jobs and that there is still an important gap in earnings between men and women (OECD, 2014a). Governments can play an important role in removing these barriers. Policies that support women's equal representation in the public sector include positive action policies such as diversity targets and employment equity laws, coaching, sponsorship and leadership development and awareness raising programmes, initiatives to ensure pay equity, equal pay and work-life balance.

Methodology and definitions

Data were collected by the International Labour Organization (ILO), *ILOSTAT* (database). Public sector employment covers all employment of general government sector as defined in the System of National Accounts (SNA) plus employment of public corporations. The general government sector comprises all levels of government (central, state, local and social security funds) and includes core ministries, agencies, departments and non-profit institutions that are controlled by public authorities. Public corporations are legal units producing goods or services for the market and which are controlled and/or owned by government units. Public corporations also include quasi-corporations. Data represent the total number of persons employed directly by those institutions, without regard for the particular type of employment contract. Total employment comprises all persons of working age who, during a specified brief period, such as one week or one day, were in the following categories: paid employment or self-employment. For purposes of international comparability, the working age population is commonly defined as persons aged 15 years and older, although this might vary in some countries.

Further reading

OECD (2014a), *Women, Government and Policy Making in OECD Countries: Fostering Diversity for Inclusive Growth*, OECD, Paris, *http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264210745-en*.

OECD/CAWTAR (2014b), *Women in Public Life: Gender, Law and Policy in the Middle East and North Africa*, OECD, Paris, *http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264224636-en*.

OECD (2012), *Closing the Gender Gap: Act Now*, OECD, Paris, *http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264179370-en*.

Figure notes

3.3: Data for Austria, Czech Republic, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Korea, the Netherlands, Portugal, Turkey and the United States are not available. Data for Australia, Germany and Sweden are not included in the OECD average due to missing time series. Data for New Zealand are expressed in full-time equivalents (FTEs). Data for Australia, Greece, Hungary and Slovenia are for 2012 rather than 2013. Data for Denmark, Luxembourg and New Zealand are for 2011 rather than 2013. Data for Switzerland are for 2008 rather than 2009.

3.3. Share of public sector employment filled by women and men, 2009 and 2013

Women ■ Men
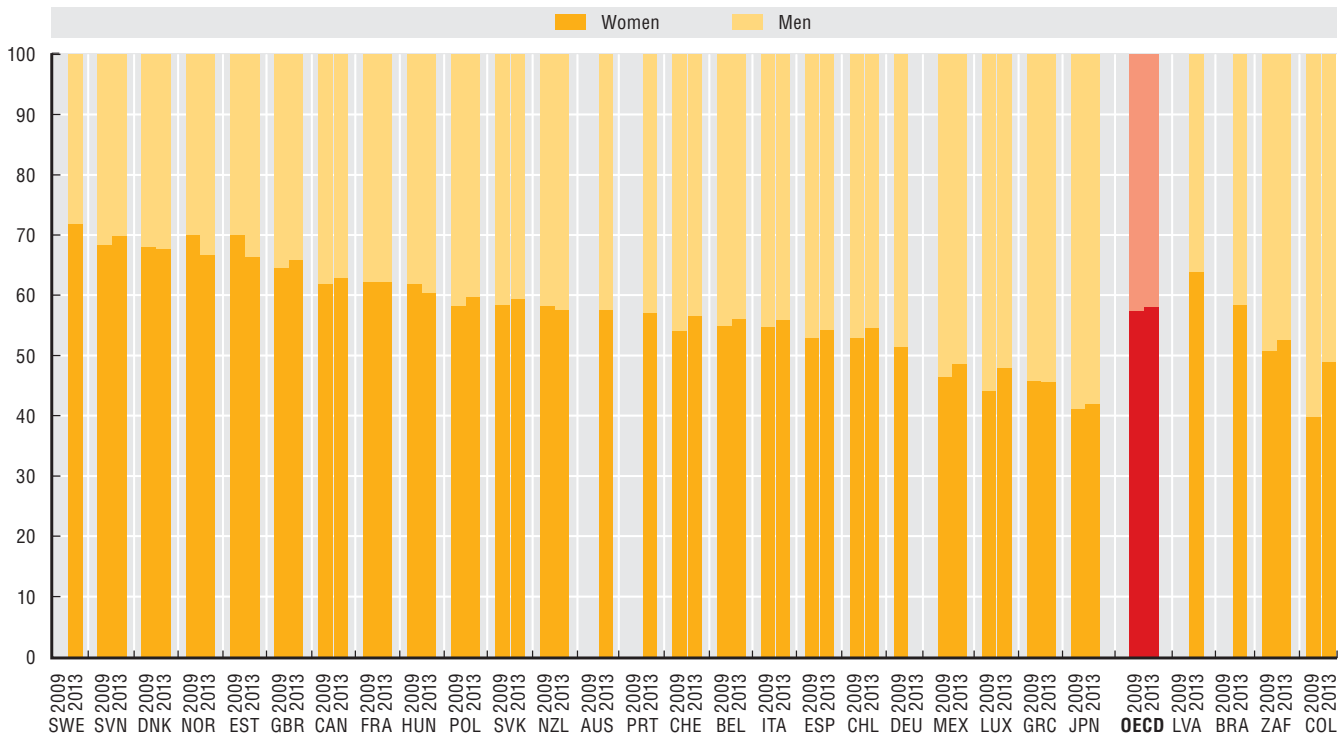
Source: International Labour Organization (ILO), *ILOSTAT* (database). Data for Italy are from the National Statistical Institute and the Ministry of finance. Data for Portugal are from the Ministry of Finance.

StatLink ⬛≋⬛ *http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933248622*

3.4. Share of employed women in total employment, 2009 and 2013

■ 2013 ◇ 2009
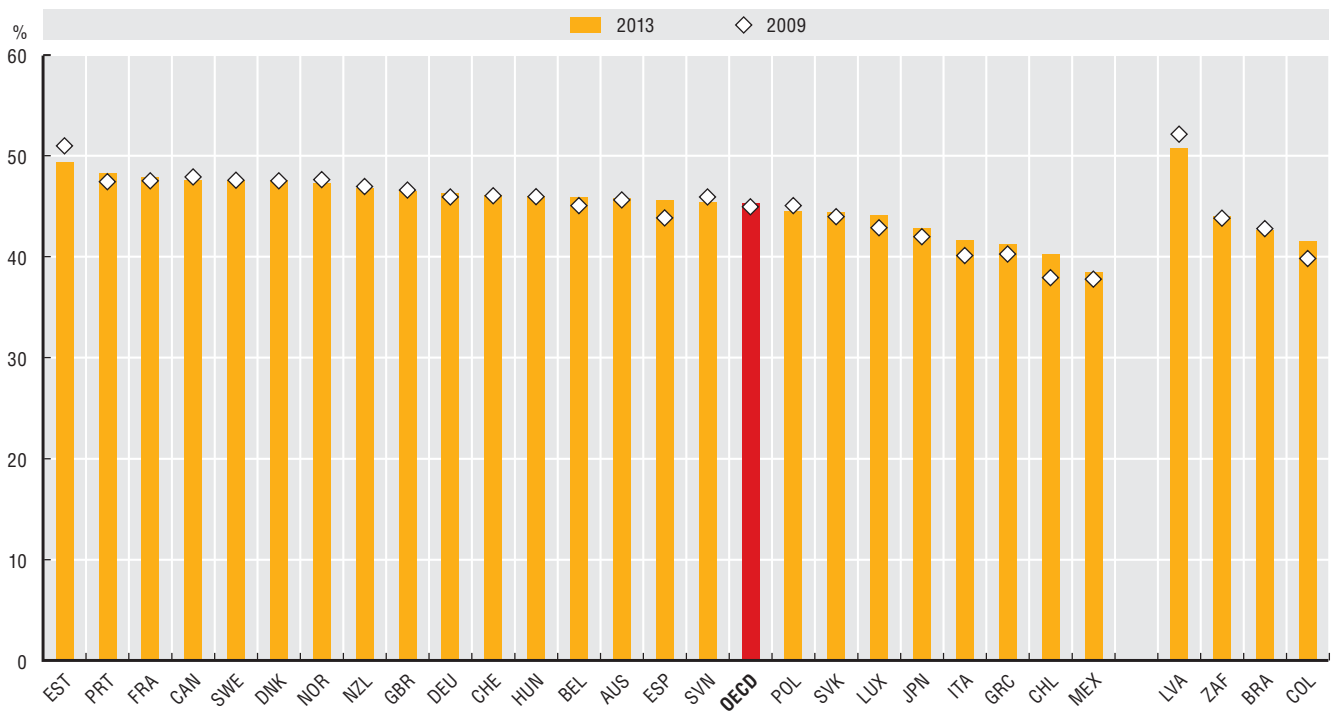
Source: International Labour Organization (ILO), *ILOSTAT* (database).

StatLink ⬛≋⬛ *http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933248632*

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