

**PUBLIC GOVERNANCE DIRECTORATE  
PUBLIC GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

**Cancels & replaces the same document of 7 December 2020**

**Working Party on Public Employment and Management**

**The Future of Work in the Public Service**

**Preparing the workforce for change in a context of uncertainty**

Draft for discussion:

Public Employment and Management working party

Virtual Meeting, December 15 2020

This draft paper is for discussion at the Public Employment and Management working party. It builds on conversations that took place at the Civil Service Leaders' Roundtable on the Future of Work in the Public Service on November 13 2019, and offers an analytical framework structured around three themes for a future of work in the public service that is: forward-looking, flexible, and fulfilling to an increasingly diverse workforce.

It also presents a number of case studies that are still under development, which will be completed in the following weeks to complement the main points of the paper.

PEM delegates are invited to review and discuss the main points raised at the meeting on December 15, 2020. Delegates are also invited to contact the secretariat if they have interesting practices that could help to illustrate the points raised, which could be included in a final version. Comments and examples are welcome until January 8, 2021.

Daniel Gerson

[daniel.gerson@oecd.org](mailto:daniel.gerson@oecd.org)

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# 1 Introduction: The Future of Work is already on our doorstep

1. In a context of increased uncertainty and disruption, public service workforces are surmounting numerous challenges and leveraging significant opportunities. Today's COVID-19 crisis has placed the public service at the centre of the greatest global disaster response effort experienced in recent memory. Public servants are being called on to ensure the resilient delivery of health services under particularly challenging circumstances, provide economic relief to businesses and families, and ensure that fundamental social services remain in place for those who count on them. At the same time, public servants are impacted themselves by the crisis, often working remotely with new technologies and implementing new ways of working. The crisis has sped up flexible working, agile and joined-up governance responses, and innovations from within public administrations. In many ways, the future of work is arriving in our public services faster than many had expected. This presents opportunities to review and renew civil service development and policies to ensure public servants are supported in the essential roles they play in society.

2. However, uncertainties about the future raise many questions in various areas of public employment. In the short to medium term, public servants will be called upon not only to help manage the health and economic impacts of the crisis, but to also find innovative solutions to help rebalance budget deficits in the immediate aftermath of recessions. The opportunity and policy challenge is to find a way to use budgetary pressure to spark transformation in the public sector rather than making short-term cuts that freeze renewal and stunt progress, as was often the experience resulting from the 2008 financial crisis.

3. This paper contributes to a vision of what could be possible and desirable for the future of work in the public service so that governments can align policies with that vision as they emerge from the crisis. The paper builds on discussions held in November of 2019, when civil service leaders from OECD countries gathered in Paris to explore the forces that are reshaping the work of the civil service, and the employment policies needed to support this work. These leaders generally agreed on the following points:

- The promise of new technology to improve government service delivery will only be achieved with a commensurate investment in the capabilities of civil servants.
- Change is not new but is happening at a pace that requires constant reconsideration of what civil servants know, and how they learn and acquire new knowledge.
- Civil services need to become more flexible, agile and responsive in the way they organise, reward and employ.
- There are important new possibilities to re-centre people management on the experience of work, public service values, mission and the public good to attract and retain diverse employees.

4. Together, these common considerations create the backbone of a vision for a public service that is forward looking, flexible and fulfilling to a diverse range of public employees. In many ways, the Covid-19 crisis has reinforced the importance of these principles that ring true in new circumstances, and if anything have become even more pressing and relevant.

5. This report presents a vision of the possible – a public service of the future that is able to attract, retain and develop talent that can direct new technology and innovation to areas of pressing public need, and respond quickly to fast changing global circumstances. By way of introduction, this section explores some of the trends affecting the future of work in the public sector: digitalisation, changing career expectations, and an ageing workforce.

### Automation can replace some public sector jobs and transform many others

6. Digitalisation is driving the transformation of society, the economy, the government, and the world of work. While the potential benefits of this transformation are immeasurable, many researchers also discuss potentially negative impacts, the destruction of jobs in particular, and the potential for such transformation to exacerbate growing levels of inequality.

7. Technologies will affect the way public servants perform many jobs. While most economists believe that new technologies will create more jobs than they will destroy in the long-run, automation is expected replace many tasks that people do today. The focus on tasks is an important distinction, as most jobs include some tasks that may be automated, and others that will likely not be. Therefore, the OECD's research estimates 14% of jobs across the economy are at high-risk of automation (i.e. they may disappear completely) while 32% of jobs may see from 50 -70% of their tasks automated and will therefore be radically transformed (OECD, 2019<sup>[1]</sup>). More specifically, routine manual tasks will likely be replaced by non-routine tasks performed alongside technologies. This trend is not new, as clerical jobs used to represent more than 19% of the public workforce in the United States in 1985, versus 4.3% in 2017 (US Bureau of Labour Statistics), but the potential scale of the impact could be unprecedented.

8. When it comes to public sector workforces, governments will choose which jobs to automate and which to transform – they are in control and set the pace of change. An important difference between the public and private sectors is that market forces will not apply the same pressure to automate. Other pressures, such as the expectations of citizens, and desire to benefit from possibilities of new technologies will surely exist, but the public sector will benefit from time to consider when and where to use automation. Alongside this planning, successful transformation will depend on careful planning and work redesign at the organisational level, as well as reskilling and upskilling strategies at the individual level. Workforce planning and digital transformation need to happen in a joined up and integrated fashion, and this is further explored in the next chapters.

### Diverging career paths and job expectations

9. In many professions, individual careers diverge from traditional paths. This may be particularly true in those high-tech professions most typically associated with the future of work, but this is also apparent in the public sector. The typical public sector career, in which public employees would climb the hierarchical ladder of a secure lifetime job, is already showing signs of erosion. Horizontal moves, pauses for learning and development, etc., will become the norm.

10. One of the widespread myths in this area is the idea that new generations of employees have completely different expectations than previous generations – that they want more independence or more meaningful experiences. A 2016 study (Gallup, 2016<sup>[2]</sup>) showed that when applying to a job, millennials and baby boomers<sup>1</sup> usually sought the same aspects – the quality of management and interest in the type of work. Baby boomers were less interested in opportunities for advancement while millennials more on

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<sup>1</sup> The definition of Millennial usually refers to people born between 1980 and 1995, not to be confused with Gen Z, the latest cohort. Baby boomers are usually defined as those born between 1945 and the beginning of the 1960s.

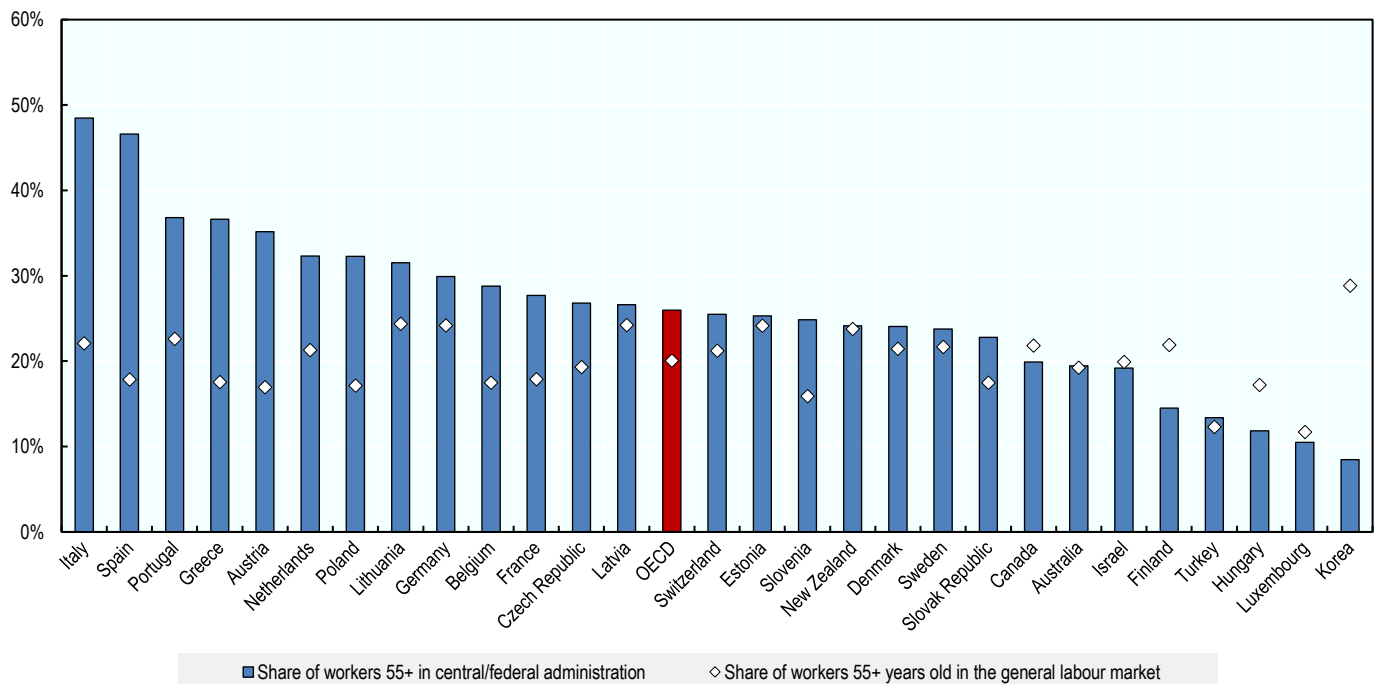
opportunities to learn and grow, which is likely a function of age rather than generation. This does not mean these generations are not different, but they often have misunderstood expectations.

11. Considering their size, public employers are very well suited to embrace non-linear career paths through internal mobility and the creation of flexible project-based workforces using “talent pools” of public workers to manage in-demand skills and fluctuations of activity. However, many OECD countries report lower attraction rates to their public services, especially for in-demand skills. This is probably the result not only of salary mismatch, but also of reputation and communication problems. There are also associated risks. For example, the use of non-standard forms of employment can lead to under-employment, lower hourly wages and worse working conditions. This trend is on the rise across the labour market including in public services.

### An ageing public workforce

12. Most OECD countries are experiencing an ageing of their population, translating into an ageing of their workforce. In many OECD countries, the share of central government employees aged 55 years or older is significantly higher than the broader labour market (Figure 1.1); and moderate or high austerity measures prevented hiring for several years following the global financial crisis in 64% of OECD countries (OECD, 2016<sup>[3]</sup>).

**Figure 1.1. Difference between the share of workers older than 55 years old in central/federal administration and general labour market in 2019**



Notes: Preliminary data – not for quoting or circulation.

Source: OECD Composition of Central/Federal Administration Workforce Survey; OECD.Stat (2020), Labour Force Statistics by sex and age

13. The ageing of the public sector workforce will shape the future of work in the public service. Older workers may be more exposed to the risks brought by digitalisation than younger cohorts. Indeed, on top of lower levels of digital readiness than other segments of the population, workers aged 55-64 are less

engaged in job-related training than others. This learning gap reaches almost 25 points across OECD countries compared with workers aged 25-34 (OECD, 2016<sup>[4]</sup>). The future of work in the public service will have to make the most of the knowledge of older cohorts. New special roles as advisers or coaches, with flexible working conditions, can strike a balance between retaining the capacities and knowledge of older workers and the need for younger workers to enter the public workforce.

## Conclusion

14. Public service workforces across the OECD are facing similar challenges and trends, and much uncertainty. Taken together, these suggest a future of work in the public sector that will need to be more forward-looking in order to identify the way the work will change, the skills and talents that will be needed and plans to get from a current to future state of readiness. It will need flexible workforce management to be able to access the skills it needs to meet fast emerging, often-unforeseen challenges. And it will need to provide fulfilling work experiences to attract, retain and motivate an increasingly diverse workforce. Each of these themes are explored in the next pages.

Figure 1.2. A future-ready public workforce



# 2 A Forward-Looking Public Service

15. A forward-looking public service understands how the work of public servants is changing, and knows how to transform its workforce to get the work done. It is a public service that can anticipate the skills it will need and has the tools to plan ahead so that skilled workers are ready to be deployed at the moment they are needed. The COVID-19 crisis reminds us that the future is highly uncertain;. This places a special emphasis on how to plan for uncertainty and support public service resilience. In addition to emerging technical skills, cognitive, social and emotional skills such as the ability to learn, adapt and manage through ambiguous situations will likely increase in importance across all public service professions.

## Emerging skillsets

16. The OECD has done extensive research on workforce skills in general (OECD, 2019<sup>[5]</sup>) and the public service skills more specifically (OECD, 2017<sup>[6]</sup>). The 2017 report on Skills for a High Performing Civil Service identifies four ways the civil service workforce delivers public value, and some of the emerging skills associated to each:

- **Policy advice and analysis:** Civil servants work with elected officials to inform policy development. New technologies, a growing body of policy-relevant research, and a diversity of citizen perspectives demand new skills for effective and timely policy advice. Emerging skillsets in this area include the use of foresight techniques, experimental policy design, data-driven policy development, open policymaking, design and systems thinking.
- **Service delivery and citizen engagement:** Civil servants work directly with citizens and users of government services. New skills are required for civil servants to effectively engage citizens and co-create better services. Emerging skillsets in this area include nudging, social media management, prototyping with the public, crowdsourcing, challenge prizes, digital services and user analytics.
- **Commissioning and contracting:** Not all public services are delivered directly by public servants. Governments increasingly engage third parties for the delivery of services. This requires skills to design, oversee and manage commissioned arrangements with other organisations. Emerging skillsets in this area include using commissioning to achieve secondary objectives (e.g. environmental, social, etc.), agile product development, social finance, impact investing, and the design of social impact bonds.
- **Managing networks:** Civil servants and governments are required to work across organisational boundaries to address complex challenges. This demands skills to convene, collaborate and develop shared understanding through communication, trust and mutual commitment. Emerging skillsets in this area include incubating social innovation, leveraging government as a platform, building partnerships around open government data and systems approaches to public problems.

17. Two additional categories of skills will be fundamental enablers of the emerging skills identified above. First, a digital future requires a workforce with digital skills. The second category is the cognitive, social and emotional skills that render people effective in their work, and that are foreseen to become even

more prominent in a future where increased automation takes over many of the routine tasks previously performed by public servants. These are explored in turn.

### **Digital skills**

18. Digitisation creates an opportunity to reconsider the work of civil servants and focus it on innovation, transformation and value-added effort. In this context, public services will likely need to appeal to different skillsets than in the past. In a 2020 survey conducted by the OECD, a large majority of countries identified significant challenges in attracting people to their central public administration with skills in digital, data and STEM (Science Technology Engineering, Math) areas; followed by senior level leaders and managers.

19. In a forthcoming analysis, the OECD (OECD, 2021<sup>[7]</sup>) argues that the digital transformation of the public sector cannot be carried out by the “IT department” alone. All civil servants in a digital government require a multi-faceted understanding of the potential for digital, data and technology to transform the functioning of government and better meet the needs of the public. The OECD identifies a foundational set of competencies for digital government that go beyond basic digital literacy and the ability to use digital tools. These competencies are discussed across the following five areas:

1. *The potential of digital transformation*: establishing a shared vision and mindset across the public sector for the possibilities provided by digital and data to respond to the needs of the public.
2. *Understanding users and their needs*: identifying service users, understanding the extent to which needs are being met and how to reconfigure or redesign a better approach.
3. *Collaborating for iterative delivery*: involving the public as early and often as possible, to ensure service design and delivery reflects their needs; and appreciating the benefits of open source code and ‘working in the open’.
4. *Trustworthy use of data and technology*: Managing information and digital security and data handling or processing.
5. *Data-driven government*: understanding the potential for applying data in one’s daily work to and equipping all public servants with the abilities to source data, carry out analysis and define actionable metrics for measuring success, outcomes or impact.

20. In addition to these baseline skillsets, a forward-looking public service will also require investments in digital specialisations. These specialisations, outlined in Box 2.1 go beyond many public servants’ perceptions of the traditional roles found in IT departments. They include a range of design and management professions that need to be embedded in multidisciplinary teams with policy and service delivery experts to redesign digital services. While these skills do not apply to all civil servants, managers of services will need to understand their application and how to access them as they integrate digital services into their delivery channels.

### Box 2.1. Digital Government Professionals

A digital government will need to draw on multi-disciplinary teams composed of a variety of professions, including the following digital and data specialisations. Honing and developing the skills of each of these disciplines requires targeted training and a set of skills that are already well defined.

- User-centred design professionals cover a variety of disciplines including service design, interaction design, content design, and user research. At the most senior level they include Heads of Design and Research who provide strategic direction and vision as well as professional leadership for these different disciplines. Proficiency in these roles concerns understanding the needs of users and presenting that research to others in the team to allow for testing and prototyping material in order to make the experience of using government services as smooth as possible.
- Product professionals work at the intersection between the different disciplines in a team to ensure a balance between the understood needs of users, the technical feasibility of solutions and the broader organisational context. At the most senior level is the Head of Product taking a broad perspective across multiple products and services. Whether someone is responsible for a single product, or many, the role of product management in government is to be responsible for the services that add value to users.
- Delivery professionals contribute to successful digital government teams by supporting delivery through activities that involve others in the organisation like financial management and hiring into the team. They are also responsible for using Agile or Lean practices to help the team keep a rhythm of delivery and learning that ensures value. At the most senior level is a Head of Delivery who is often responsible for supporting all disciplines in an organisation improve their delivery culture.
- Data professionals include at the most senior level the Chief Data Officer who will provide strategic direction and vision for establishing an effective data governance model and ensuring the application of data builds public value and trust. It also includes roles such as data analyst and data scientist whose operational activities include managing the data collected through the activity of government, monitoring the performance of public services and drawing insights to inform ongoing delivery or new policy development.
- Technology professionals cover a wide range of essential skills. At the most senior is the Chief Technology Officer who has responsibility for consistent architectural decisions and the direction of technology practice in an organisation. At an operational level, roles may include Technical Architects and Developers. Technical Architects work with teams to ensure the resilience, scalability and security of the work that teams are doing and helping to make decisions that are consistent with the wider organisation. Developers are needed to build accessible software but to also support the wider activities of the team through advising on technical feasibility, maintaining and documenting code, running production services and solving technical problems.

Source: OECD (forthcoming), The OECD Framework for Digital Talent and Skills in the public sector.

21. The United Kingdom's Government Digital Service (GDS) provides an interesting example of how a government can map digital skills across a wide-ranging civil service. When GDS was formed, there was not a recognised digital profession in government with a defined framework of roles and skills. Civil servants with similar responsibilities had different titles, different pay, and varying levels of expertise.

Box 2.2 provides a short summary of the work they undertook to map skills across the ministries and develop a common structure that has become the Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT) profession of the UK civil service.

### Box 2.2. Developing the Digital Data and Technology framework of the UK Civil Service

The United Kingdom's Government Digital Service (GDS) has developed a framework based on a mapping of digital skills across the civil service. When GDS was formed, there was not a common approach to identifying digital jobs and skills in the civil service – different ministries and agencies had their own approach. This resulted in challenges for developing a workforce with enough digital skills and lead the digital transformation of the government.

In 2015, GDS began to scope the skills needed to improve digital services and conduct government transformation. To start, GDS created an outline of the defined jobs they wanted to be a part of the new framework. The team first agreed on the initial roles via user research and a series of focus groups with departments' capability teams and specialists. In total, 37 jobs were mapped to the new framework with the name "Digital, Data, and Technology (DDaT) Capability Framework."

With the jobs mapped out, GDS spent the next 9 months gaining feedback and building coalitions by co-creating the competencies within the frameworks with other government departments. At the end of the process, there were 37 jobs roles defined with skills outlined for each level of role. This created defined skills and attributes within each job and a more formalised career path that added hierarchy to the process.

In March 2017, the first version of the framework was published on GOV.UK as a beta to make them accessible to all across government and in order to continue to iterate based on wider user feedback. The framework was then rolled out alongside GDS' Government Transformation Strategy. One of the pillars of the strategy was to make the UK Civil Service the most digital civil service in the world. This involved not only skills, but organising in the most appropriate way to help drive digital adoption. By combining the Government Transformation Strategy with the rollout of the DDaT Capability Framework, GDS was ready to start realising its vision and help government implement the framework. This framework is now used to develop communities of practice, training and career paths, and to guide recruitment.

Source: OECD (2018) HR and Leadership Strategies for Building Innovative Public Sector Organisations. Alpha version: <https://oecd-opsi.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/HR-and-Leadership-Catalyst-for-Innovation-Capabilities.pdf>

### **Cognitive, social and emotional skills**

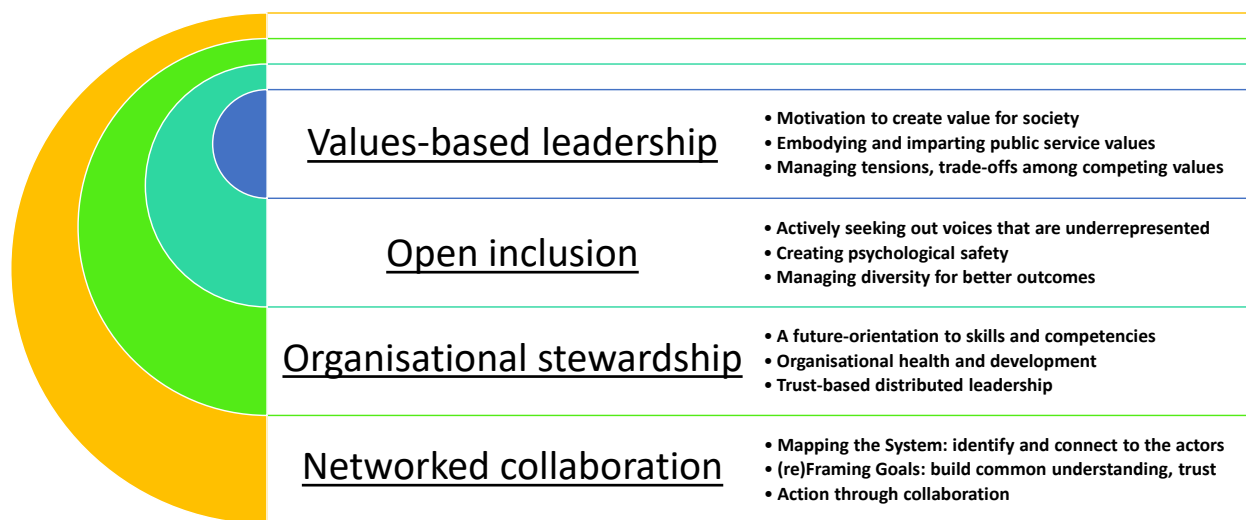
22. Technical skills will have to be complemented with social, emotional and cognitive competencies. Cognitive skills are sets of thinking and reasoning strategies that support, for example, creative thinking and problem solving. These also include higher-order skills (sometime called meta-cognitive skills) that enable learning, critical thinking and the self-awareness to recognise one's own knowledge and skills, including their limitations. Social and emotional skills include peoples' abilities to develop empathy, cultivate relationships, effectively manage group dynamics, and accept personal accountability and responsibility. These will be especially important in an increasingly diverse and multi-disciplinary public service workforce.

23. Adapting to fast-changing work environments and ways of working requires different sets of competencies. For instance, project-based work requires strong social and emotional competencies, to establish rapport and enable cooperation with different stakeholders over a certain timespan. It also

requires metacognitive competencies to enable collective learning within a dynamic process. These skills are particularly complicated to develop and assess within a workplace, as they refer to emotions, behaviours, values and ways of reasoning. This is a key challenge for the future of the public service.

24. These cognitive, social and emotional skills are especially important for public service leadership. The OECD has identified four leadership capabilities (Figure 2.1) that effective senior level public servants are using to address complex public service challenges (Gerson, 2020<sup>[8]</sup>). Each of these capabilities focuses these skills in different directions. Although based on observations specific to senior level public servants, these capabilities are likely applicable to most professional disciplines in the public service, particularly those involved in multidisciplinary and project-based work. Leadership is not only for those working at the highest levels of the organisational hierarchy.

Figure 2.1. Four leadership capabilities

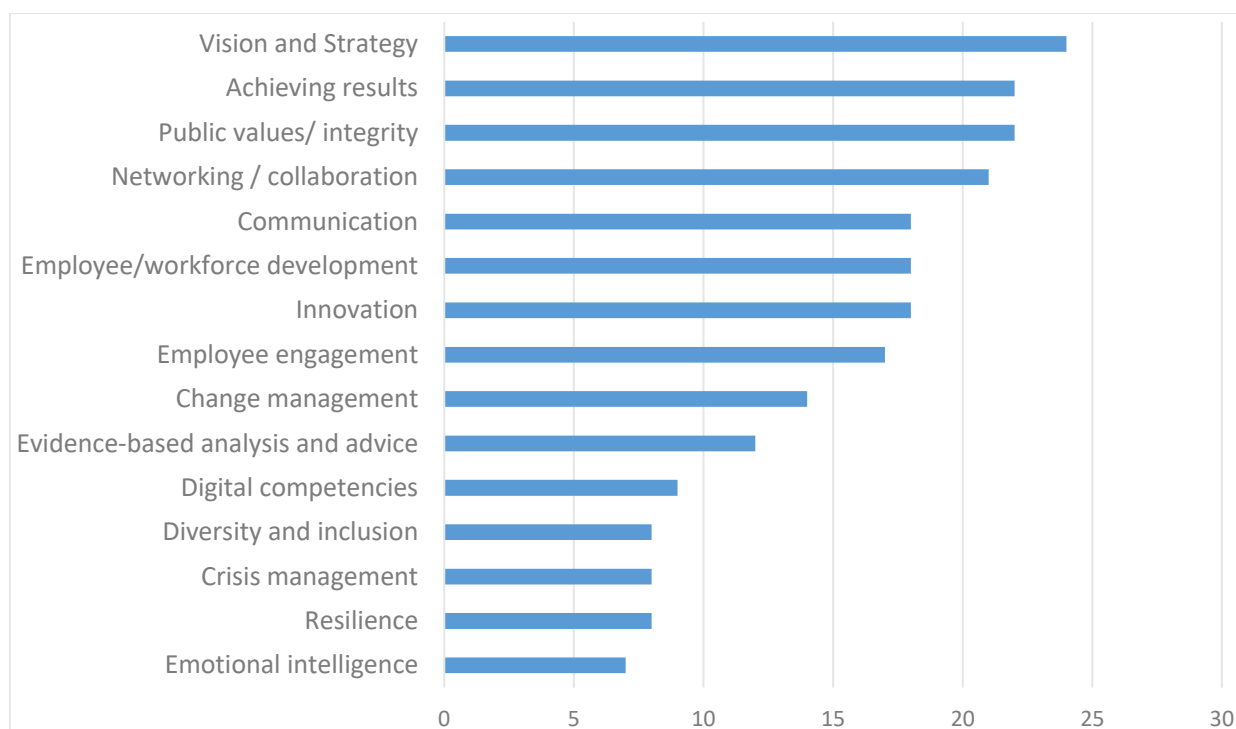


Source: Gerson, D. (2020), "[Leadership for a high performing civil service: Towards a senior civil service systems in OECD countries](#)", OECD Working Papers on Public Governance, No. 40, OECD

25. In 2020, the OECD also conducted a survey of its member countries to determine which skills and competencies were prioritised in leadership competency frameworks (Figure 2.2). Competency frameworks set expectations for behaviour among senior level public servants and those who aspire to those positions, and they usually determine training and development priorities and criteria for selection. The results suggest that countries expect their public service leadership to communicate a vision and strategy for achieving results through public values, integrity and networked collaboration. However, many of the future-oriented competencies identified in the paper are less emphasised in these frameworks, such as emotional intelligence, resilience and crisis management, inclusion and digital competencies. This raises questions as to whether and how these competencies are prioritised in the development of current and future public service leaders.

**Figure 2.2. Areas included in the competency framework for senior level public servants**

Number of OECD countries (2020)



Source: OECD (2020) Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability (preliminary data)

**Skills for a resilient public service**

26. Resilience is a key capability for the future, to address uncertainty and the sense of increasing rates of change. The COVID-19 crisis reminds governments of the importance of resilience, defined by the OECD as, “the capacity of systems to absorb a disturbance, recover from disruptions and adapt to changing conditions while retaining essentially the same function as prior to the disruptive shock”. Since the workforce is at the heart of public service delivery systems, resilient public service systems depend upon resilient workforce management (discussed in the next chapter) and resilient public servants. There is no one skillset that makes workers resilient, nevertheless, public services can focus on developing a workforce rich in skills that could contribute to resilience. This may include the following:

- **Motivation and commitment to mission:** committed employees will be the first to find new ways of delivering the mission when the environment shifts around them.
- **Anticipation and foresight:** public servants who systematically take into account a variety of plausible future developments can design systems that are ready to withstand shocks.
- **Creative problem solving:** Even with foresight, not all problems will be foreseen. Regardless of an employee’s technical expertise, creative problem solving can enable public servants to apply their skills to unpredictable challenges.
- **Learning as a skill:** learning to learn is at the heart of innovation, resilience and future proofing. Innovation is primarily a learning experience, and resilience is innovating in real time, managing through unforeseen crises, and learning with imperfect data and information.
- **Systems thinking and collaboration:** resilience requires connections across organisational boundaries. This requires public servants who understand the machinery of government and

complex service delivery systems, and already have the relationships needed to coordinate response with the different key actors.

### Strategic workforce planning, data and uncertainty

27. A forward-looking public service requires coherent and robust workforce planning. In a fast-changing employment environment, with scarce skills and resources on one side and unpredictable future changes on the other, strategic workforce planning based on foresight capabilities has the potential to become a cornerstone of public employment policies. Good workforce planning requires:

1. A good understanding of the organisational operating model, transformation strategies and objectives, and the broader operating environment, including the socio-political context and the labour market.
2. High quality mapping of current workforce in terms of numbers, skills, performance and potential.
3. Determination of future workforce needs based on factors such as the transformation strategies and objectives of each government organisation, changing skills needs, motivation and engagement of employees, numbers and expenditure (not just in terms of salary, but also hiring, development, retiring, etc.).
4. Identification of workforce gaps, including gaps in profiles that are lacking and those that are oversupplied. This would have to be done with a specific view to each profession and each competence area, since no two skills sets are alike.
5. Actions to address the gaps – which require flexibility in the management of the workforce; a whole-of-government perspective on allocations across sectors and coordinated implementation approaches that work in lock step with other transformation exercises.
6. Monitoring, evaluation and accountability from the highest levels of management (not just HR).

28. Australia's Public Service Commission has recently launched a workforce planning capacity development programme that aims to develop workforce planning skills in all of its central government HR offices:

### Box 2.3. Developing workforce planning capabilities for Australia's Public Service

The Australian Public Service (APS) Commission has prioritised the development of workforce planning capabilities across its federal administration in order to develop a more forward-looking approach to workforce management. The COVID-19 crisis underlined the importance of having workforce planning that can enable a better understanding of the workforce, its critical functions, and staffing availability for surge capacity. The programme under development is based on a thorough maturity assessment conducted by the APSC, and focused on the 4 core pillars:

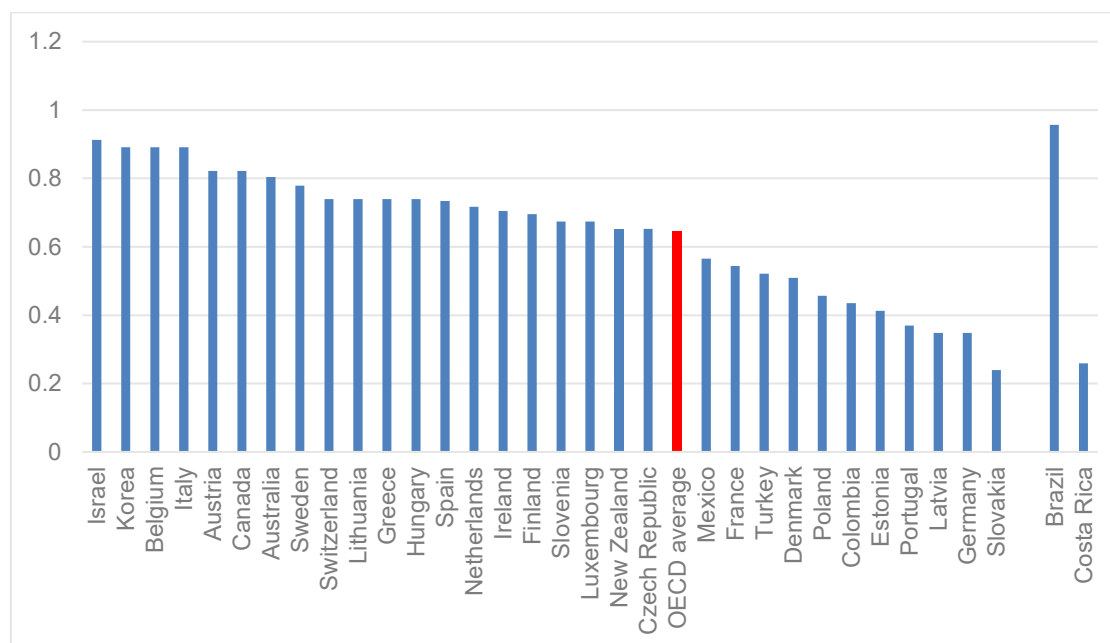
- **Capability:** focused on workforce planners, leaders and managers, including building the capability pipeline for workforce planning roles
- **Leadership:** leadership accountability for workforce planning outcomes
- **Tools and technology:** designed centrally to support workforce planning in agencies and across the APS.
- **Analytics and insights:** data-driven workforce and labour market insights to inform better planning

Note: This will be the subject of a more detailed case study to follow

29. A forward-looking workforce plan should begin with a solid understanding of the current workforce – their skills, activities, potential, motivations and engagement. But how much do governments really know about their workforce? Figure 2.3 shows the extent to which the collection and centralisation of administrative data varies across OECD countries. Many public services are collecting more data on their public employees today than ever before. This can and should contribute to better workforce planning. (OECD, 2019<sup>[9]</sup>). This includes:

- Demographic and employee profile data can give a snapshot of the workforce. These data and enable a better understanding of skill sets, workforce diversity and age, and ideally map available skills and identify gaps.
- Administrative data show employment trends and patterns that can indicate organisational health through, for example, job attractiveness, efficiency of HR processes, and mobility/turnover rates.
- Employee surveys data can provide rich indications of employees' engagement and satisfaction with their work and working environment, as well as the use of their skill sets, and employee's perceptions of their opportunities to develop emerging and necessary skills.
- Labour market data focus on key skills availability in the labour market and contribute to decisions around the way emerging skills can be incorporated into the workforce.

Figure 2.3. Collection and centralisation of administrative HR data



Source: OECD (2020), Survey of the composition of the central/federal public administration workforce

30. Using the data to inform workforce planning requires increasingly sophisticated people analytics – bringing all the data areas listed above together to form a deeper understanding of workforce strengths, gaps, and trends. For example, people analytics can help to understand:

- current workforce strengths and gaps by providing a granular understanding of employees in posts and the skills they possess, their likelihood to stay or advance, and the general quality and quantity of their work output.
- future workforce needs and gap analysis by mapping employees to (future predicted) activity levels, benchmarking with other organisations, forecasting based on past trends and workforce modelling, workflow transformation analysis (e.g. when implementing new digital tools), and informing scenario planning.
- actions to address future needs by assessing the availability of needed skills in the labour market and determining potential attractiveness, cost-benefit analysis of recruiting versus developing skills in-house, developing reskilling plans to move employees from one area to another, conducting risk analysis on various options.

31. However, most countries struggle to use workforce data effectively. They lack the skills and capabilities to conduct scientific analysis, to drive insights and proactively use HR data for better management decision-making and HRM policy development. ‘Data scientist’ is not yet a common job profile within HR departments in the public sector. The Korean government is taking active steps to address this problem (Box 2.4).

### Box 2.4. Data-driven Human Resource Management in Korea

Many of OECD countries have leveraged digital systems and improved digital capabilities in order to respond to the COVID-19 crisis and prepare for the future of work. The Korean government is one of the leading countries that has established and implemented strategic policies for digital HRM. The Korean Government's standardized electronic HRM system supports government-wide personnel administration and personnel policy tasks of the Ministry of Personnel Management, by digitising the overall personnel administration from recruitment to retirement. Various data and statistics available in this system are used for personnel policy-making such as diversity management, placement of personnel in the right place and human resource development.

Moreover, the Korean government has also improved digital skills and capabilities of public officials through recruitment and training. A public position category for data-based public administration in the government has been newly created in 2020. The Korean government has recruited digital talents, such as the Director of the Big data & Statistics Division in the Statistics Korea (KOSTAT) and the Director of the Big Data Analytics Division in the Ministry of the Interior and Safety (MOIS), through headhunting or career competition recruitment. The Korean government provides various education programs related to digital literacy, AI and big data, cooperating with the Korea Advanced Institute of Science & Technology (KAIST), in order to foster talents who lead digital government transformation. The Korean government also operates an e-learning platform for government employees with courses available anytime and anywhere.

Note: This will be the subject of a more detailed case study to follow.

Digitalisation presents specific and unique challenges that need to be addressed by workforce planning. Technology enables the automation of tasks (mostly routine and manual for now) conducted by humans, and therefore any transformation plan that contains these technologies needs to be accompanied by a careful workforce plan that identifies the tasks that will disappear and redesigns jobs around those that will stay. It must also include analysis of the changing numbers of employees needed to do the redesigned job, and plans for those who will no longer be required to help them move to new jobs (see more in the discussion on reskilling in the next chapter). Israel's civil service commission has been developing a method to do this (Box 2.5)

### Box 2.5. Planning for the impacts of automation in Israel's civil service

In 2017, the Israeli Civil Service Commission (CSC) began a project to identify roles and functions across the Israeli civil service at risk of substantial change. The purpose was to develop a methodology to enable line Ministries and agencies to understand where and how broad labour market, technological and socio-economic changes could affect their workforce. The CSC built a workforce mapping model based on human capital research and existing people analytics data. The outcome was a tool to classify jobs in individual Ministries and line agencies according to their risk of change. The CSC worked with Ministries on the results of the mapping to develop workforce management strategies. Over time, the project is expected to provide greater clarity to the leadership of the Israeli public sector on how their staff and organisations will be affected by change.

Note: This will be the subject of a more detailed case study to follow

32. Furthermore, the recent crisis illustrates that workforce planning should not give a false sense of security over a future that is increasingly uncertain and difficult to predict. Rather it can be used to plan for a resilient workforce and to build up better data on the workforce that can be leveraged in moments of crisis. Indeed this was part of the motivation for Australia's investment in their workforce planning capacity development programme (Box 2.3). Planning for an uncertain future could include:

- Planning in two time perspectives: In the longer-term, a strategic plan should be aligned to a vision of the kinds of public service needed in the future. It also requires shorter-term operational HR planning that is revised and recalibrated regularly to adjust to ensure responsiveness to unforeseen changes in the operating environment.
- Workforce data can help manage uncertainty, providing a better view of skills availability in times of crisis.
- Scenario planning is a well-developed tool to map various plausible futures and inform plans that take these into account.
- Workforce planning can also be used to identify potential flexibilities in the workforce, including talent pools for surge capacity when needed, mobility tools to link internal supply to demand in emergency situations, and the identification of essential functions and jobs that can be done at a distance, and the supports needed.
- Finally, workforce planning for uncertainty should include investments in resilience skills as discussed above.

**Table 2.1. Forward-looking public service: summary table**

From	To
One dominant generalist profession (e.g. public administration, law)	A wider diversity of technical professions and skills
Task-based focus on jobs and skills	Focus on behavioural competencies and meta-cognitive skills
Hierarchical focus on leadership skills	Generalised distribution of leadership skills
Rigid operational planning processes	Strategic planning with flexible operational processes
Rudimentary workforce data	Complex workforce data used for management decision making

# 3 A Flexible Public Service

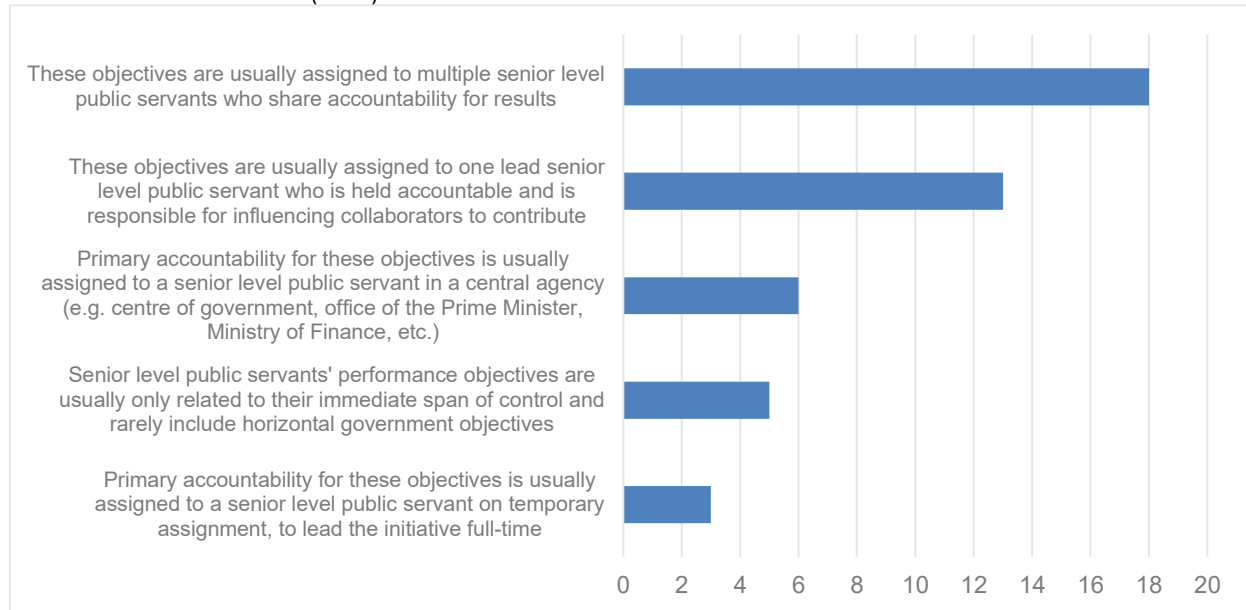
33. A flexible public service can move people with the skills it needs to the places it needs them in reaction to fast changing circumstances, regardless of organisational or programmatic silos. It can stop doing things that are no longer needed and move that talent to places that are emerging priorities. It is able to upskill and reskill the existing workforce to make use of new technologies and respond to new challenges, and it promotes a culture that encourages experiential learning, reflection and improvement. A flexible public service can also access skills from the labour market quickly and effectively. Finally, it recognises the individuality of public servants – that each comes with their own sets of skills, knowledge, personal lives, and needs. This flexibility means that the public service is able to provide work arrangements that reflect these – including time and place of work, and terms and conditions of employment. A flexible public service recognises that ‘one size fits all’ solutions and policies are of the past.

## **Flexible ways of working: for anyone, from anywhere, at any time.**

34. The need to work across policy and organisational silos will only increase. The problem of policy silos is already well known, and the OECD has launched key work on delivering results across organisations. However, public employment systems tend to reinforce silos, as workers’ positions are usually attached to specific organisations with vertical reporting relationships. This is a common challenge, one that is often addressed through senior management performance and accountability systems, as demonstrated by Figure 3.1, which shows that in almost all cases, senior level public servants are made accountable for cross-government objectives through either shared or individual accountability structures. This a promising first step, however the challenge of resource flexibility remains: how to ensure that people, and their skills, can be made available to support leaders in achieving these cross-governmental objectives? This will be a key challenge to resolve in the public employment systems of the future.

**Figure 3.1. How senior level public servants are made accountable for collaboration across ministries and agencies**

Number of OECD countries (2020)



Source: OECD (2020) Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability (preliminary data)

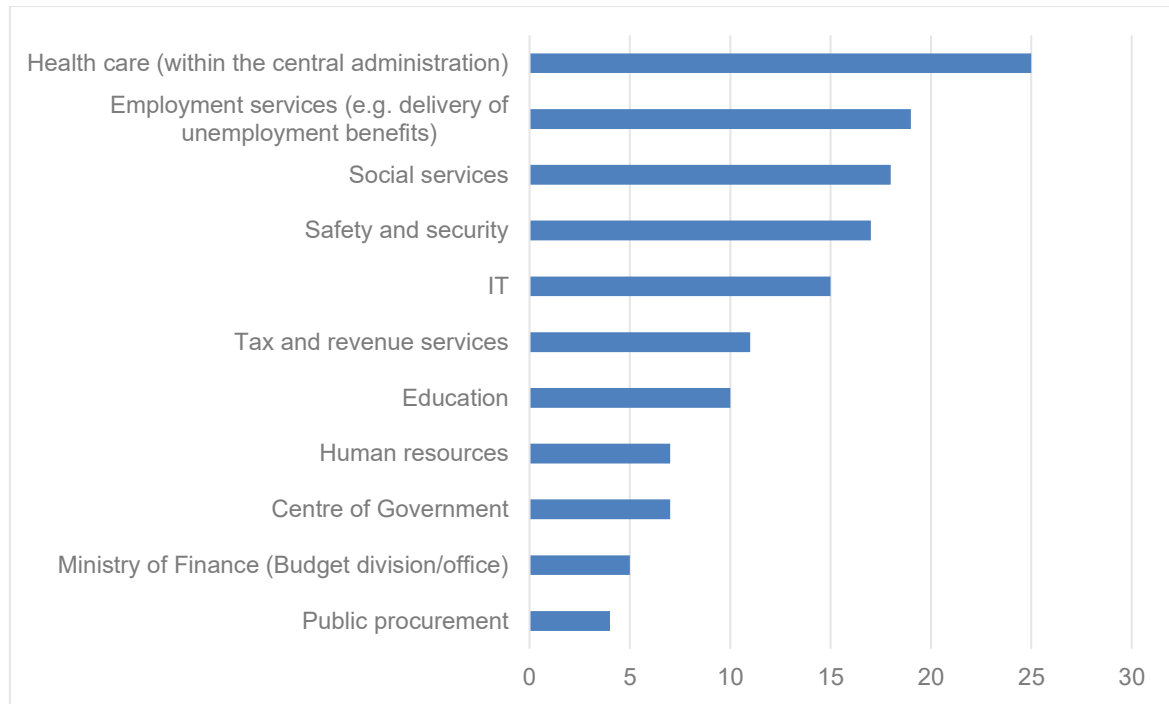
35. One promising response is Canada's Free Agents programme, which was developed to address some of these issues. Free agents<sup>2</sup> are employees who are hired by one host ministry and then lent out to others who require their specific skill sets to develop time-bound projects. Free agents are usually embedded into an existing team and work with them to support a project for a period of six months to a year. This model has been considered a success for both the free agents, who enjoy working on specific time-bound projects in different ministries, and to the teams that benefit from their support.

36. Rigid silos also present barriers to resilience in the face of unforeseen shocks and crises. Those public services which already had flexible structures in place to redeploy staff for short-term assignments tended to fare better in terms of people management during the COVID-19 pandemic, which enabled a more resilient response. Figure 3.2 shows the scale of the resourcing challenges faced across OECD countries' central public administrations. Most countries identified pressing needs to deploy surge capacity to their health, employment, social and security services. Figure 3.3 shows the various tools that were used, which consisted primarily of temporary reallocations within and across ministries, and the accelerated use of existing hiring procedures. A minority of countries repurposed existing online tools to manage staff reallocations and hiring during the crisis. This underlines the importance of knowing where employees with needed skill sets are located and having the tools to redeploy them in short order. The experience of those countries that used these tools and processes will likely provide a path forward to a more flexible public sector workforce in the future.

<sup>2</sup> For more information, see: [https://wiki.gccollab.ca/Canada%27s Free Agents/FAQ](https://wiki.gccollab.ca/Canada%27s%20Free%20Agents/FAQ)

**Figure 3.2. Areas that required additional staffing during first wave of the COVID-19 crisis.**

Number of OECD countries (2020).



Source: OECD (2020) Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability (preliminary data)

**Figure 3.3. Tools used to manage surge capacity in the central public administration during the first wave of the COVID-19 crisis**

Number of OECD countries (2020)

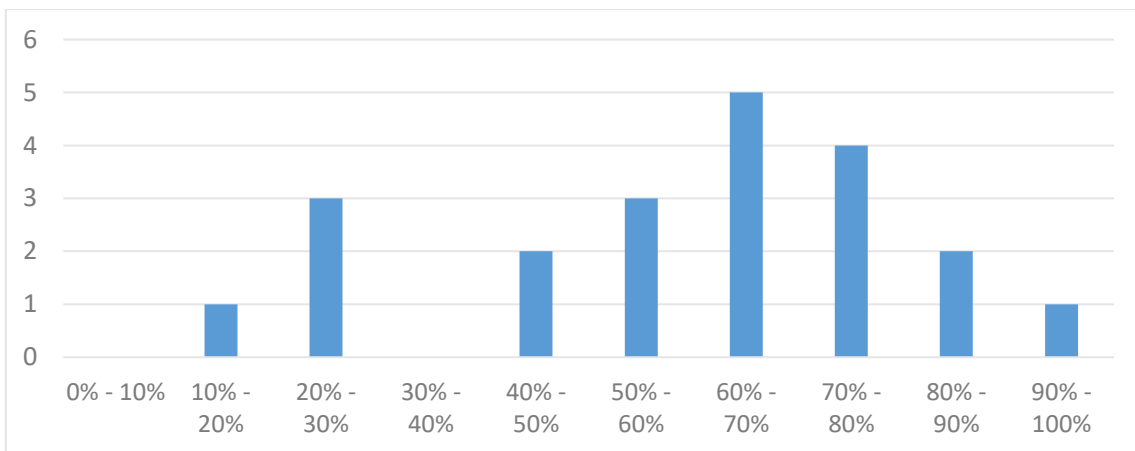


Source: OECD (2020) Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability (preliminary data)

37. Remote working is another important aspect of workforce flexibility that was implemented in unprecedented levels during the COVID-19 crisis. Most OECD countries reported that a large majority of their central government employees worked remotely during the first wave (Figure 3.4). Those governments that already had the tools, policies and practices in place to enable this were able to quickly and easily transition to maintain employee productivity and meet the needs of the moment. Furthermore, the vast majority of countries expect that remote working will continue, and expect to embed this practice in the future operating models of the public service (Figure 3.5).

**Figure 3.4. Approximate share of central government employees working remotely during the COVID-19 crisis**

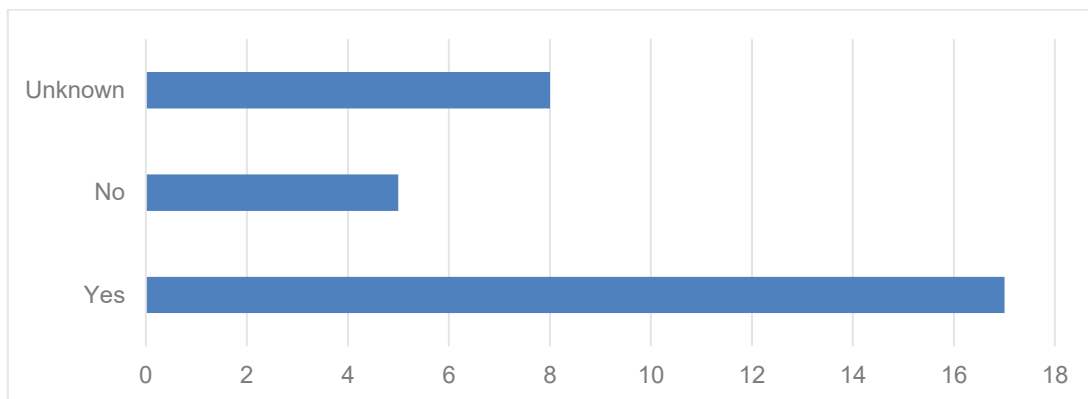
Number of OECD countries (2020)



Source: OECD (2020) Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability (preliminary data)

**Figure 3.5. Public administrations that expect to increase remote working in 2021.**

Number of OECD countries (2020)



Source: OECD (2020) Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability (preliminary data)

38. The COVID-19 crisis has shown that when conditions allow, employees can be moved quickly to work on high-priority issues regardless of their physical location. Therefore, it is possible that a future-ready flexible workforce will not be employed by any single ministry or agency, but rather by the government as a whole, and available for the needs of the moment regardless of their physical location.

Before the crisis, there was already a trend towards an increasing individualisation of working arrangements for public servants. This included tailor-made arrangements in terms of working hours, workplaces, and sometimes work content. The COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated that this is not only useful for employees, but also for government response to crisis and uncertainty.

## Developing skills in the existing workforce

39. Developing the skills discussed in the previous chapter will not happen without deliberate attention and investment in upskilling employees to keep up with new tools and developments, and reskilling for those employees whose jobs become redundant. Most public services do not use redundancies to replace their workforce with the skills they need to the same extent as private firms. Instead, they must rely to a greater extent on learning and development tools and strategies to prepare the public service for the future.

40. A flexible workforce requires a culture of continuous learning. In addition to formal training programmes, public servants need space for experimentation and learning-by-doing. In the fast-changing landscape of work, lifelong learning will become increasingly important in public sector employment policies, allowing people to adapt and enhance the potential of the future of work.

### **Upskilling**

41. Regardless of their particular role and specialisation, public servants will need to upgrade their understanding, skills and competencies regularly to ensure they keep up with societal and technological change. This may mean learning to use new digital tools, making use of emerging data sets, keeping track of national and international development and good practice, and taking regular training to update their skill levels.

42. This can be achieved by developing structured professions within the public service that provide a career path for specific functions – HR, Data, Digital, Finance, Policy, Science, etc. In the UK civil service, there are 28 recognised civil service professions, each led by a designated head. Each of these professions clearly states the kinds of skills and training one should have at each level of the professional development path, including skills developed on the job and through training programmes. This can help to develop a pipeline and track skills availability across public service organisations. In this sense, the future may not be a professional civil service, but rather a civil service of many professions (united under a common set of core values and sense of common purpose).

### **Reskilling**

43. Reskilling aims to help people transition from one job type to another. People who are doing work that will no longer be done in the future, due to social and/or technological changes, or who wish to change the work they are doing for personal reasons, require careful consideration. Effective reskilling requires an organisational and individual approach.

44. At the organisational level, consideration can be given to the job type that is impacted and jobs at similar skill level that are potentially suitable for impacted employees. Automation replaces specific tasks, rather than whole jobs, so a fine-grained analysis is required to determine which tasks within jobs will be automated, how that job will evolve (which tasks remain and how can they be reorganised?) and what training and accompaniment is required.

45. At the personal level, it is important to consider the specific skill sets of an individual – their technical and behavioural/cognitive competencies, and their potential and desire to learn and transition. Motivation, coupled with the right learning supports, is likely more important than the technical skills they

have. This is not to imply that clerks can become data scientists, but if an administrative clerk has excellent Excel and organisational skills, they may well find a supportive role to play within a data-driven profession.

### Box 3.1. The Reskilling Toolkit of the United States' Office of Personnel Management

The US government has estimated that about 30 percent of work in the federal government today could be automated in the coming years. This does not mean that 30 percent of federal jobs will disappear with automation, but rather that employees will feel the impact of automation in terms of how their tasks will change and be performance, and how their positions themselves will evolve to meet changing agency missions. To adapt, employees will need to acquire new skills that include technical knowledge along with new types of social or “people” skills. Continuous reskilling and upskilling also contributes to fostering a culture of continuous learning. The OPM's new [Reskilling Toolkit](#) describes what agencies should consider when deciding to reskill or upskill their employees — and how they should communicate those plans to the workforce. It includes steps and guidance for planning, implementing and evaluating reskilling initiatives, each from the point of view of managers/agency leaders, supervisors and employees.

Note: This will be the subject of a more detailed case study to follow

Source: information provided by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management.

The bottom line is that the reskilling challenge in the public sector has the potential to be significant and costly<sup>3</sup>. However, training for civil servants was subject to significant funding cuts in the aftermath of the 2008 crisis in 62% of OECD countries (OECD, 2016<sup>[3]</sup>). Indeed, it is often the first thing cut when public services look to identify cost savings. However, any transformation strategy that includes investments in digitalisation should also consider the commensurate investments needed in workforce development. The two will have to be addressed together, to prepare the public workforce for the future of work. The good news is that the pace of change will be set by the government itself, and therefore can be accompanied by a structured and deliberate approach to reskilling that works on organisation and individual levels.

### ***Developing a learning culture***

46. Formal up/reskilling programmes should exist within, and reinforce, a culture of continuous learning. The popular 70/20/10 framework, where only 10% of learning is done in classrooms, 20% through social interaction, and 70% by the experience of the work itself, is a reminder that a learning culture must extend far beyond the classroom. Experiential learning provides a great wealth of possibilities if supported and structured in a way that enables it. Often, operational demands of work reduce the opportunities to design learning into it.

47. Blackman et al (2019<sup>[10]</sup>) suggest the use of Bandura's social learning framework to think through the full range of learning opportunities that an organisation can offer. Social learning theory positions the workplace as the primary venue for learning, and the direct supervisor and teammates as the primary teachers. It also identifies four distinct elements of a complex process that adults require to learn and adopt new behaviours to build capability or respond to change:

- Attentional – observing role models who exemplify desired behaviours – this is often a direct supervisor in a workplace, but an also be influential colleagues or senior management (although

<sup>3</sup> According to World Economic Forum, the 1.37 million workers projected to be displaced within ten years could be reskilled for a cost of US\$34 billion, almost US\$25,000 per worker.

proximity is important, suggesting that senior leaders have less influence than direct supervisors in many cases).

- Retention – processing and recalling behaviours for future use
- motor-reproduction – mastering behaviours through practice, self-correcting activities and constructive feedback, which suggests a role for work assignment, and regular feedback in informal settings, from the direct supervisor and other stakeholders when possible.
- Motivational – identifying clear benefits from adopting certain behaviours to motivate ongoing practice and eventual mastery

48. Developing a learning culture requires that all people managers have the skills to not only organise work, but to develop their employees. Managers need to be role models and coaches, providing space for collective reflection, practice with new tasks and tools, frequent constructive feedback, and rewards for learning achievements.

### ***Accepting risk and experimentation***

49. Managers also need to support an environment allowing for experimentation, iteration, and learning by doing, and provide safe spaces for group reflection on successes and errors. Too often, a culture of risk aversion limits public employees from trying new things for fear of breaking the complex rules that guide public sector activity, or concerns that failure will result in punishment rather than being seen as a learning opportunity.

50. Public services have, in most cases, higher accountability and transparency standards than the private sector, and these, coupled with politically sensitive working environments, produce additional disincentives. This puts an even higher premium on the need to take active approaches to support innovation and experimentation in safe and controlled ways; to enable the safe testing of new approaches at small scale; and to celebrate the lessons learned from testing new approaches, even when they do not produce the results that were expected.

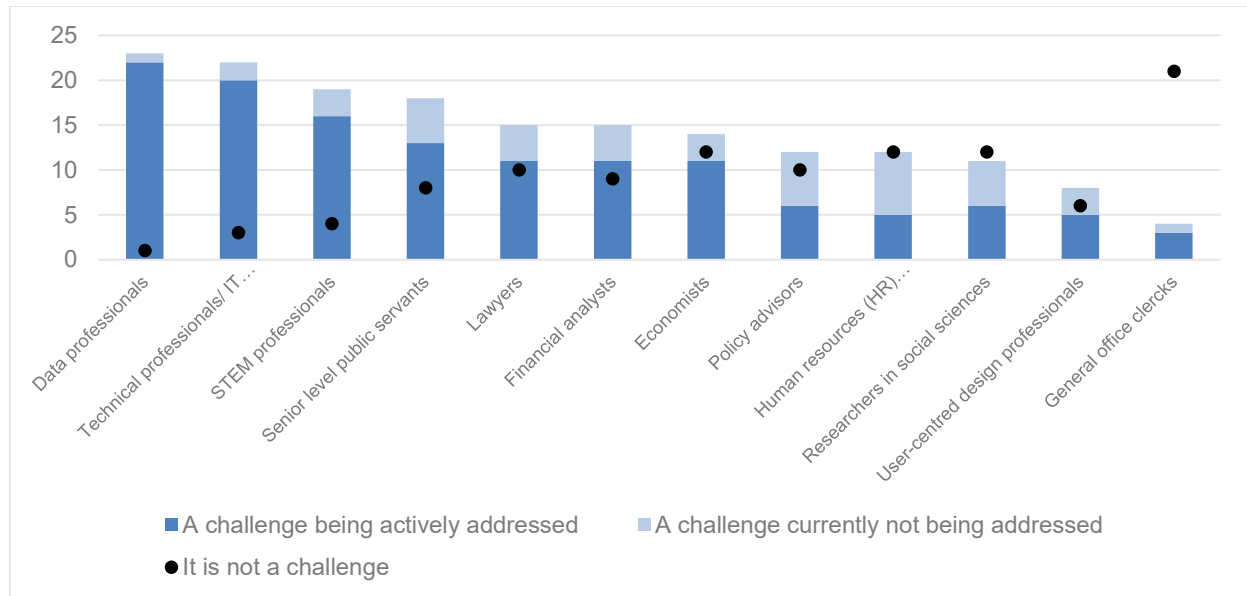
51. Moreover, a culture of continuous learning is essential in the ever-increasing pace of change characterising the future of work, and for pathfinding in unforeseen crises. It is a fundamental aspect of resilience.

### **Accessing skills from the labour market**

52. Recruitment in the future of work needs to be fast, and targeted to the right skills and profiles. The public sector across OECD members is facing growing pressure to attract, recruit and retain candidates with much-needed skills. Figure 3.6 shows which profiles are identified as being particularly challenging to recruit – with data, digital and STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) professions most often identified. These professions are also in high demand in the private sector, against which the public sector must compete.

**Figure 3.6. Hard-to-attract groups to the civil service**

Number of OECD countries experiencing challenges in attracting said groups (2020)



Source: OECD (2020) Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability (preliminary data)

53. In a context where the needed skills, competencies and behaviours are only emerging, government recruitment should be strategic and targeted. Hiring specialists requires tailoring recruitment processes to attract specialists and assess their skills. Figure 3.6 indicates that most OECD countries are taking steps to attract needed skills. For example, France has been systematically identifying problematic job profiles and tailoring recruitment strategies to each.

**Box 3.2. Tailoring recruitment strategies to specific profiles in France**

Throughout OECD countries, the public sector faces direct competition with the private sector to attract talents and skills. In the meantime, in an increasingly digital public service, public workforces need the right digital skills to adapt to a constantly evolving service delivery. In order to tackle this issue, France has mapped the digital jobs that present current and future hiring challenges, and established an inter-ministerial working group to address them. This working group has established a 37-measure action plan divided into specific practices across ministries, focused on the attraction and retention of digital talents, notably by enabling the individualisation of human resources management practices, taking into account the uniqueness of the skills needed. To face this skills shortage, the French administration aimed to be more flexible in adapting to the needs of these groups which are used to participative work fostering innovation and working in communities across silos.

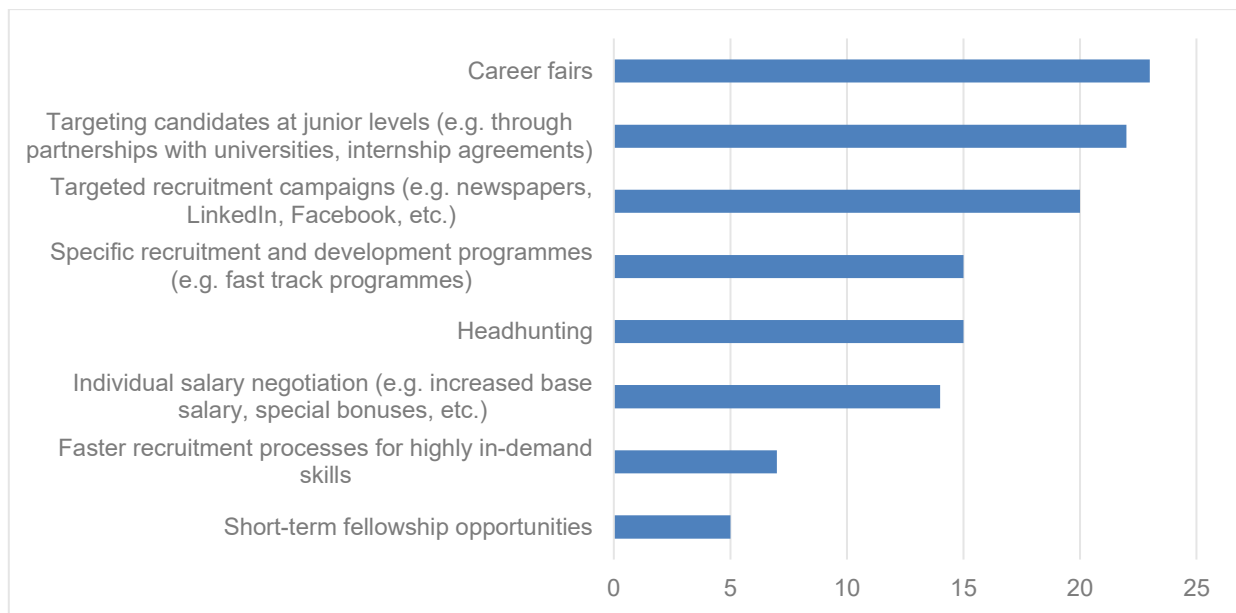
Note: This will be the subject of a more detailed case study to follow

54. Figure 3.7 shows which tools are most often used to attract the profiles highlighted above. Most countries have developed awareness-raising strategies, including presence at career fairs, and the use of targeted recruitment campaigns communicated through traditional and social media. Many have also developed strategies to reach out to universities to target potential candidates early in their skills development. A sizeable minority of countries have also developed more active programmes including

headhunting and specific fast-track development programmes. For example, the United Kingdom’s fast stream programme now has 15 different streams specifically targeted to profiles that are hard to recruit, including data and digital, commercial, and even HR specialists. A number of countries have also developed more flexibility in their salary systems to address pay gap issues for these specific profiles. The use of short-term fellowships, where candidates are given prestigious opportunities to work on high-impact projects for shorter periods of time, are perhaps under-utilised and could be considered as tool for further development in a future of work context.

**Figure 3.7. Tools to attract more and better candidates with in-demand skills to the central/federal administration**

Number of OECD countries doing the following (2020)

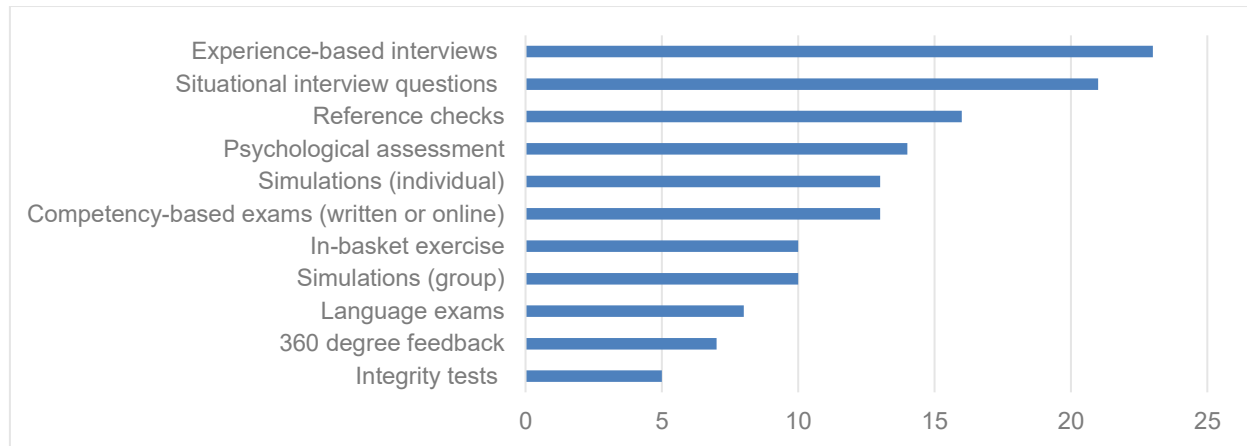


Source: OECD (2020) Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability (preliminary data)

55. Recruiters also need new tools to assess cognitive, social and emotional skills that are essential for building resilience: including learning potential, management and leadership capabilities, and collaboration. Figure 3.8 shows that most OECD countries still rely on interview questions to assess leadership capabilities. These are most effective when combined with other methods, such as simulation exercises and 360-degree feedback. The increasing sophistication of these assessment methods suggests that recruiters themselves may be targets for professionalisation in a future-ready public service.

**Figure 3.8. Methods to assess competencies of senior level public servants during recruitment**

Number of OECD countries employing these methods (2020)



Source: OECD (2020) Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability (preliminary data)

56. Speeding up often-lengthy recruitment processes is a long-standing goal for many OECD members. Slow hiring processes are less competitive – the best candidates drop out of the process when they are offered jobs from others first. A small number of OECD countries indicate faster recruitment processes for specific profiles. Additionally, many OECD countries indicated the use of faster recruitment to manage surge capacity during the COVID-19 crisis, including the development of new online recruitment tools (Figure 3.3). These experiences could potentially be considered as pilots for reforming recruitment systems for improved speed, efficiency and accessibility, charting a path toward a future-ready recruitment system. This may mean confronting issues such as legacy recruitment systems, legislative frameworks, professionalising the recruitment function and empowering managers to act with greater discretion while still ensuring transparency and accountability. The example of Belgium’s Ministry of Finance illustrates this opportunity and some of the challenges faced.

### Box 3.3. Moving recruitment online, in Belgium's Ministry of Finance

E-recruitment offers the public service and candidates a way to design and participate in a flexible and agile recruitment process. The Covid-19 pandemic acted as a catalyst for the trend toward e-recruitment. Following the Belgian government's decision to make telework the norm in the public sector, the Ministry of Finance initiated a pilot exercise to conduct recruitment online, first for internal mobility and later expanding to selected external vacancies. The e-recruitment process consisted a holistic process from employer branding to candidate assessment and onboarding. Initial feedback from the pilot highlights the advantages of e-recruitment such as increased transparency, flexibility, efficiency and participation that outweigh the challenges related to supervision of candidates during the examination phase, possible technical problems and the reduced possibility for non-verbal communication. The experience hints at the evolving skills needs of public sector recruiters to make e-recruitment work: pipeline development, sourcing, participating in virtual career fairs, digital marketing, etc. It also provides lessons learnt such as biases emerging throughout the process in new ways and highlighting positions for which e-recruitment may be more relevant.

Note: This will be the subject of a more detailed case study to follow.

### ***Flexible employment modalities***

57. Traditionally, public servants are employed through a specific legal status that emphasises stability and lifelong employment: this generally entails high levels of job security, stable but limited (seniority-based) pay and benefits, and a decent pension at the end, based on years of employment, etc. These were put in place to ensure the independence of the civil services from interference by political authorities, and to identify those positions that exercised power on behalf of the state. From an employment perspective, this may work well for occupations that are specific to the public sector, that do not benefit from a high level of movement in and out, and for those that require protections, such as judges and the heads of law and order agencies.

58. However, the future of work brings a need for a wider variety of skills and backgrounds than ever before. With this greater diversity of skills comes the need for a greater diversity of employment models. Traditional civil service employment may not be so attractive for all profiles in the labour market – for example, some in-demand tech professionals may be less interested in being a lifelong civil servant. They may be more interested in taking shorter-term contracts (with higher pay options) that enable them to work on interesting projects with high visibility and impact.

59. For jobs or situations in which this kind of employment is deemed unsuitable, governments often look to consulting contracts and third party providers. The problem in these situations is that governments often lack the internal skills and expertise to be smart buyers of complex products and services, resulting in wasted spending and lack of skills transfer.

60. However, these options are only two ends of a spectrum – lifelong civil service employment at the one end, and service-based contracts at another. In the middle, there is a whole range of often untapped potential for shorter-term employment, project based employment, and prestigious fellowships that all can be used in cases where governments have shorter-term skills needs and want to find more flexible ways of integrating skills from the labour market. The goal is not to end traditional civil service contracts, but to define when and where they provide the most value, and expand the range of tools available to access the skills needed, particularly when they are in short supply in the existing pool of civil servants.

61. Flexible employment modalities can also enable surge capacity to address fluctuations in demand, including in emergencies. The COVID-19 response in many countries involved the use of more streamlined and temporary employment modalities in some countries, including the use of volunteers, students, and innovative partnerships with stakeholders, including civil society, academia and the private sector.

62. Pay and salary structures are another aspect of the employment package that could benefit from more flexibility in the future. Pay flexibility can often help to attract and retain employees with the skills discussed above. Employees also increasingly expect to be hired, managed, and compensated according to their unique sets of skills, performance and personal priorities. This could provide an opportunity for public employers to provide more individualised and flexible sets of terms and conditions to match, allowing for a more equitable approach to compensation. Compensation should be envisioned with a total reward approach, encompassing wage as well as other benefits the public sector has experience in providing. From that perspective, shorter-term contracts could accompany higher pay levels since they carry less long-term liability, making them more suitable to hire key skills from the labour market.

63. However, this complex issue can prove extremely challenging. While the public sector may be better able to access a broader pool of skills and have greater flexibility in deploying them, divergences across organisations without clear criteria and guidelines could create unintended consequences, such as inequities in pay levels between organisations resulting in internal competition and possibly wage inflation. This introduction of further flexibility therefore requires clear and coherent guidelines, oversight and social dialogue with all the stakeholders involved. The degree to which private employment models can be adapted for public sector use merits further debates.

**Table 3.1. Flexible public service: summary table**

From	To
Working for one specific unit within a hierarchical organisation	Working for the government as a whole, prioritising horizontal mobility
Working in the office, at set hours of the day	Working from anywhere (remotely) at any time
A professional public service, where most public servants have the same career path and learning opportunities	A public service of professions, where different professions are on different career tracks, with clear development opportunities
Little consideration of retraining redundant employees	Tools and plans to reskill the existing workforce
Focus on traditional training, Rule-based repetitive work	Learning culture, trying new things, experimentation, risk acceptance, learning from experience
Slow and generalised recruitment processes	Faster and better targeted recruitment processes
One standard employment modality based on lifelong employment	A variety of employment modalities that align to an increasingly diverse workforce and individualisation of employment relationships

# 4 A Fulfilling Public Service for a Diverse Range of Public Employees

64. The public service of the future will attract, retain and make best use of the skills it needs by providing fulfilling work experience. One of the main themes of this paper has been the need for increased diversity across the public service workforce – not only demographic diversity so that the public service reflects the society it serves, but also in terms of skill sets, professional backgrounds, experience, and ways of thinking and solving complex problems. Therefore, the public service needs to provide fulfilling work in many different ways, to different kinds of people. A fulfilling public service is one that understands employee experience by tracking data and employee behaviour. It uses this understanding to improve management and leadership to generate fulfilling work experiences in inclusive environments; to improve job design to increase autonomy and sense of achievement; and to design employment policies that enable individualised support - one-size-fits-all solutions are not the answer.

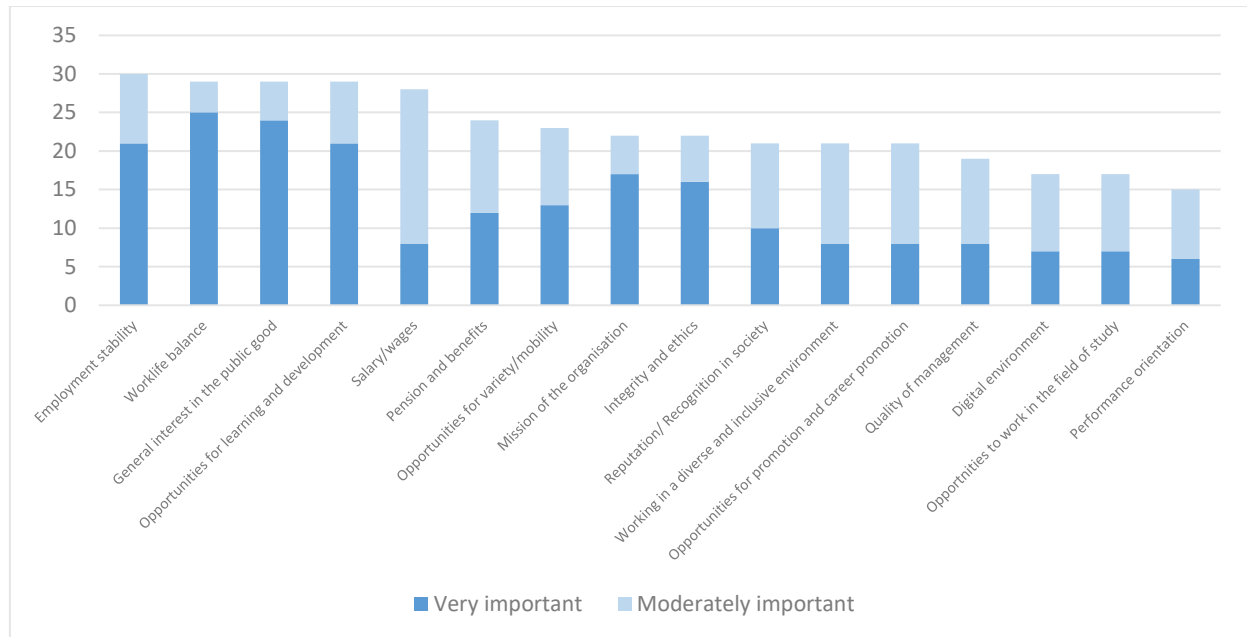
## Fulfilling work: purpose and motivation

65. For work to be fulfilling, it should provide both a sense of purpose, and a positive work experience. A sense of purpose can be achieved by emphasising the mission, impact and values of an organisation and aligning those to develop a sense of employee pride. A positive work experience begins with looking at the working environment and aligning management tools to support employee motivation.

66. Public sector organisations are purpose-driven, and can use this purpose to attract, retain and motivate employees. Employees are increasingly attracted to job opportunities that align with their values and sense of purpose. Given the mission-orientation of public sector organisations, this should be a benefit. Indeed, in a recent OECD survey on attraction, most OECD countries highly rated a general interest in the public good, and the mission of their organisation (Figure 4.1). However, employees often appear to get lost in the bureaucratic requirements of their job, and express a sense of removal from the impact of their work. With increasingly sophisticated performance data, public employers can find new ways of communicating achievements and bringing employees closer to the impact of their work.

**Figure 4.1. Aspects making the public service an attractive employer**

Number of OECD countries (2020)



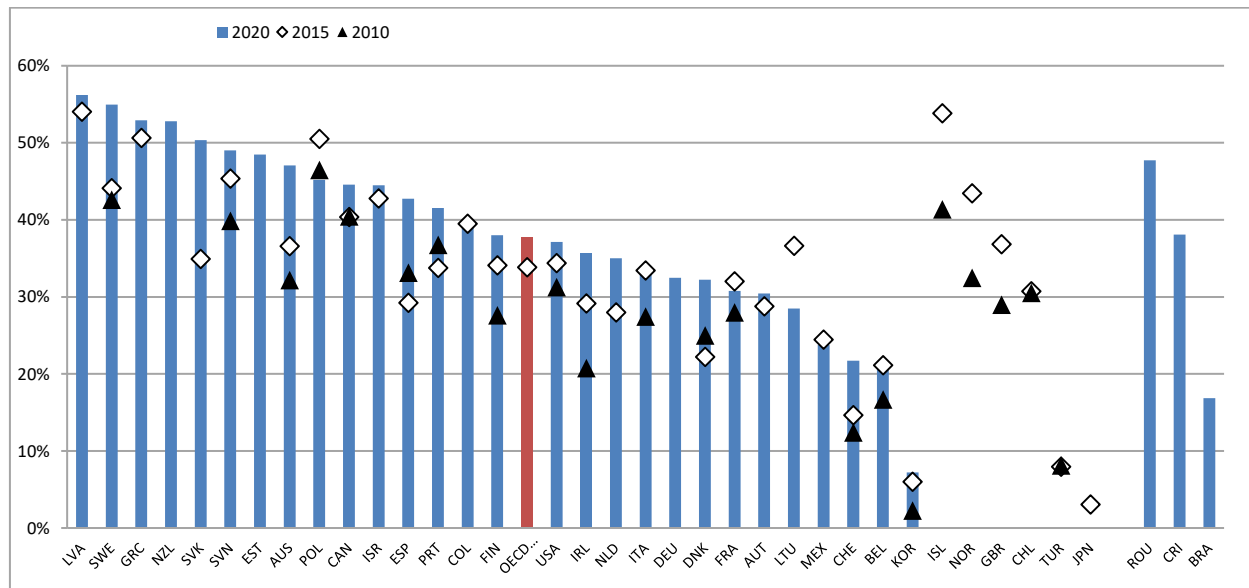
Source: OECD (2020) Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability (preliminary data)

67. While purpose is important, the everyday experience of work also matters. Research shows that factors that motivate include a sense of achievement, recognition, the experience of the work itself, responsibility, advancement and growth (Herzberg, 2003<sup>[11]</sup>). Therefore, the future of work should emphasise these elements in the design of jobs and the management of employees. This has to be done by giving more space and autonomy to employees to use their skills in effective ways. It requires trust between management and employees (and between the political and administrative layers) in order to ensure employees feel some control over their work and are given the opportunity to develop in their roles. The future of work in the public sector will have to move away from jobs defined by rules towards jobs defined by objectives, autonomy and accountability for results; where employees feel empowered to test new approaches and innovate. Rules-based work is the kind of work that is increasingly easy to automate.

### Managing an increasingly diverse public service

68. Diversity is a clear and ongoing trend in the public service workforce. While women’s representation in senior levels has continued to grow (Figure 4.2. Share of women in senior management positions in central government (2010, 2015, 2020)), many OECD countries have extended their diversity targets and policies beyond gender. In fact, most countries report specific targets for people with disabilities, while some (but fewer) also include people from disadvantaged backgrounds, ethnic minorities and LGBTI in their targets and policies. This reflects not only a moral imperative to develop a workforce that reflects the diversity of the societies they serve, but also a business imperative to access skill sets that may be less activated in the workforce. Furthermore, diverse teams in an inclusive environment have been shown to contribute to innovation and better policy and service design. As such, it is safe to assume that diversity will continue to grow in the future of work, suggesting a great need for inclusive work environments.

Figure 4.2. Share of women in senior management positions in central government (2010, 2015, 2020)

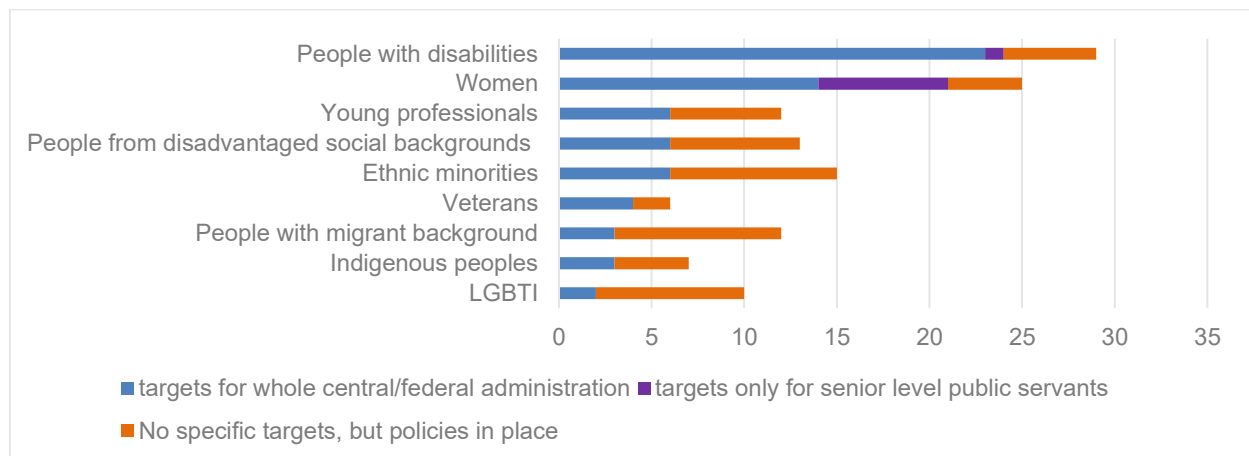


Note: OECD average excludes Luxembourg, Turkey, Czech Republic, Hungary, New Zealand, Estonia, Germany, Iceland, Norway, the United Kingdom, Chile, and Japan due to missing time series.

Source: OECD (2020), Composition of Central/Federal Administration Workforce Survey  
 OECD (2017), Government at a Glance

Figure 4.3. Diversity targets and policies in central public administrations

Number of OECD countries (2020)



Source: OECD (2020) Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability (preliminary data)

69. Managing a diversity of skills, backgrounds and career paths reinforces the need for individualised approaches to competency-based people management. While there is great value in analysing under-represented groups together, the concept of intersectionality is a reminder that individuals belong to multiple identity groups that can include gender, nationality, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, professional roles, family roles, community roles, and so on. Therefore no two members of any one group are the same, hence the need to also focus on individuals.

70. Managing diversity requires a greater focus on skills and competencies than ever before. Hiring managers, for example, tend to rely on proxies for skills, such as university degrees and/or number of years in a similar position. These are blunt instruments that often have the effect of reducing the diversity of candidates. People acquire skills in different ways, through different combinations of training and experience, and through various and divergent career paths. This suggests the need to refocus assessment tools on skills and competences.

#### Box 4.1. Testing competency based hiring to expand the diversity of applicants in Canada's public service

The future of work will require a better and more fine-grained approach to assessing the existence of skills and competencies acquired through a greater diversity of experience and career paths. Canada's Talent Cloud project has been experimenting a new approach to bias reduction, and skills recognition.

The experiment gives applicants significant control and opportunity to express their individual skills and experiences. This includes allowing them to enter experiences as skills evidence from a wide range of sources, including personal and community based learning (with a targeted effort to better recognize and help managers value the learning journeys of women and Indigenous communities.) These are verified through evidence and corroborated by partners and/or previous colleagues. To reduce bias, the experiment also uses behavioural sciences to "nudge" or prime hiring managers in advance of key decision points (poster development, initial screening, interview, references, final selection, etc.). Outcomes suggest a greater diversity of applicants to the small number of test positions advertised this way.

Note: This will be the subject of a more detailed case study to follow.

71. Previous OECD work on the themes of diversity and inclusion (D&I) identifies the following necessary elements of next-generation D&I strategies: (Nolan-Flecha, 2019<sup>[12]</sup>).

- **Address employees' and employers' deeply engrained views and assumptions:** Developing an inclusive organisational culture means changing attitudes and behaviours at all levels of the organisation. This can be an extremely challenging undertaking as many unconscious (and conscious) biases can often work against well-intentioned D&I initiatives. Policy interventions based on findings from behavioural sciences have aimed to responsibly "nudge" inclusive views and behaviours in public sector organisations.
- **Build inclusive leadership competencies across all levels of the organisation:** Senior officials and team leaders should display inclusive leadership skills aimed at making employees feel accepted, respected and enabled to contribute at their full potential. Ensuring leaders receive effective learning opportunities on inclusive competencies, integrating inclusive leadership skills in existing competency frameworks, and rewarding inclusive leaders through performance evaluations are still emerging policies in the public sector.
- **Leverage data and evidence to inform and monitor D&I initiatives:** Countries have various resources at their disposal including administrative data, data from employee surveys, or specific analytical tools (i.e. "inclusion indices, diversity trackers, etc.") to support benchmarking or examine particular groups or processes in greater detail. Emerging data driven methodologies demonstrate potential to capture intersectionality and better inform policies. A general shortage of data science skills in the public administration, and legal constraints about the types of data that can be collected may hinder some countries more than others.

- **Establish the adequate governance mechanisms for more effective and accountable D&I policies:** To be successful, D&I strategies must be supported by effective governance mechanisms that serve to promote coherence across agencies while respecting the individual inclusion needs of individual organisations. Governance mechanisms that balance a top-down with bottom-up approach help ensure accountability for results while also ensuring that the concerns of employees are continuously reflected in policies.

## Rethinking management, engagement and performance

72. Higher levels of employee engagement improve the quality of public services and public sector innovation. Employee engagement is assessed and tracked through employee surveys, and can provide important tools for building evidence on employee experience and segmenting this across different aspects of the workforce (OECD, 2016<sup>[3]</sup>). Some research suggests that engagement, performance and learning are intrinsically linked through goal setting, frequent and informal feedback from managers, and efficient performance management that can track progress. Goals that are clear, specific and challenging can also be encouraging and drive personal learning outcomes, creating a virtuous cycle in a learning culture (see previous chapter), and making the public service a more attractive employer (Figure 4.1). As learning becomes more important and widespread, well-designed performance management systems will take learning into account as much as performance (CIPD, 2016<sup>[13]</sup>).

73. Engaging a diversity of employees also requires leaders and managers who are not just hierarchical superiors but also coaches enabling change. Effective coaching is based on the establishment of expectations, continuous support and accountability. Such an evolution in the role of managers in the public sector might require training and the development of new skillsets to recognise the unique strengths of each employee and how to support them to achieve objectives, contribute to the success of the team, and develop. This is an intrinsic part of diversity management and of developing a learning culture.

**Table 4.1. Fulfilling public service: summary table**

From	To
Treat everybody the same	Recognise diversity and individuality of public servants
Focus on job stability	Focus on purpose and meaning
Rules based management	Trust, autonomy, and accountability for results
Managers as hierarchical supervisors	Managers as coaches enabling change

# 5 Conclusion: Designing a New Future of Work in the Public Service

74. The future of work in the public service will be enabled by new technologies, and shaped by changing expectations of workers young and old. However, it will be designed by governments. Governments will choose which tasks to automate, where to invest in needed skills and how to develop a workforce that is forward-looking, flexible and fulfilling. For this reason, the future of work in the public sector will be different than in private sector, and will advance at its own pace, ideally learning from successes and failures in other organisations and sectors. This future will not come about naturally. Governments will have to take an active role in setting a vision for this transformation and making the necessary investments to achieve that vision.

75. The COVID-19 pandemic has the potential to act as a catalyst for change. Most of the elements highlighted in the sections above have been adapted or radically transformed to manage in an unprecedented and unexpected situation. Sometimes almost overnight, the public sector found itself under pressure to ensure public service continuity. It has generally responded with exceptional agility and resilience. This crisis has also acted as a stress test, exposing many of the strengths and weaknesses of public services, highlighting the need for a flexible public sector that can engage its public servants in times of ambiguity and uncertainty.

76. The capacity of public services to be more resilient to face the megatrends linked to the future of work and the next set of crises will rely on the design of post-pandemic policies in many areas, including people management. As governments design and implement recovery plans impacting most sectors of national economies, there is an important opportunity to reflect on the public service workforce that is needed to deliver these effectively today and into the future. The following questions could help spark this reflection:

- A forward-looking public service is one that is able to identify the emerging technical skills will be increasingly needed, and the competencies needed to ensure resilience in an increasingly uncertain future. What are these competencies, and how can workforce planning be used to recognise uncertainty and prepare for the next shocks?
- A flexible public service in the future will be one where different kinds of people work from more locations at different times, contributing their skills and experience to projects, across multi-disciplinary teams, learning as they go. How can this flexibility and learning be wired into the core of public employment systems so that public services generate a culture of learning, better risk management and experimentation?
- The public service of the future will attract, retain and make best use of the skills it needs by providing fulfilling work experience to an increasingly diverse range of employees. How can governments improve job design to increase autonomy and impact, and design employment policies that recognise employees as individuals?

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