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# Civil Service Management in Slovakia: Evidence from a survey of more than 11,000 civil servants

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SLOVENSKEJ REPUBLIKY

# Motivation

- Importance of civil service for effective governance
  - Economic development & public trust in government
  - Participation in EU policy-making & implementation of EU policies
- Civil service reform in Slovakia
  - Adoption of the new Civil Service Law in 2017
  - Lack of evidence regarding quality of implementation and staff experience with civil service management

# This project

- Survey of civil servants across state public administration in Slovakia
  - To provide evidence of civil servants' attitudes (e.g. job engagement) and experience with civil service management
  - To identify areas of reform to improve civil service management
  - To present civil service surveys as regular monitoring and diagnostic tool for the Government of Slovakia

# Context

- Civil service surveys as a management tool
  - Staff engagement and satisfaction surveys in the private sector
  - Increasingly popular in the public sector (see OECD 2016)
- Recent experience
  - DfID funded project, 2016 – 2018
    - 4 regions, 10 countries, 23.000 participants
  - National Surveys of Public Servants, 2019 – 2020
    - Chile (21,400), Croatia (7,000)
- Towards a Global Survey of Public Servants

# Survey in Slovakia

- Employees (civil service, public service, public employees) of ministries, other central offices, district offices, and other state administrative bodies
- Online survey
  - Slovak language
- Survey period
  - February – April 2020
- 11.595 respondents
  - Response rate, ca. 20 – 25% (check)
  - Broad spectrum of civil servants
  - 66 institutions with more 20 respondents

# Demographics of respondents in Slovakia

62323		Proportion of survey respondents
<b>Gender</b>	Female	71%
	Male	29%
<b>Education</b>	No University Degree	13%
	University Degree (BA, MA, PhD)	87%
<b>Age</b>	Average number of years	44.2 years
<b>Years of service</b>	Average number of years	16.5 years
<b>Status</b>	Management	13%
	Lower management	11%
	Technical-professional	59%
	Administrative support	10%
<b>Type of institution</b>	Ministries	26% (2091)
	District offices	23% (1854)
	Other state administration	40% (2410)
	Central central offices	11% (740)

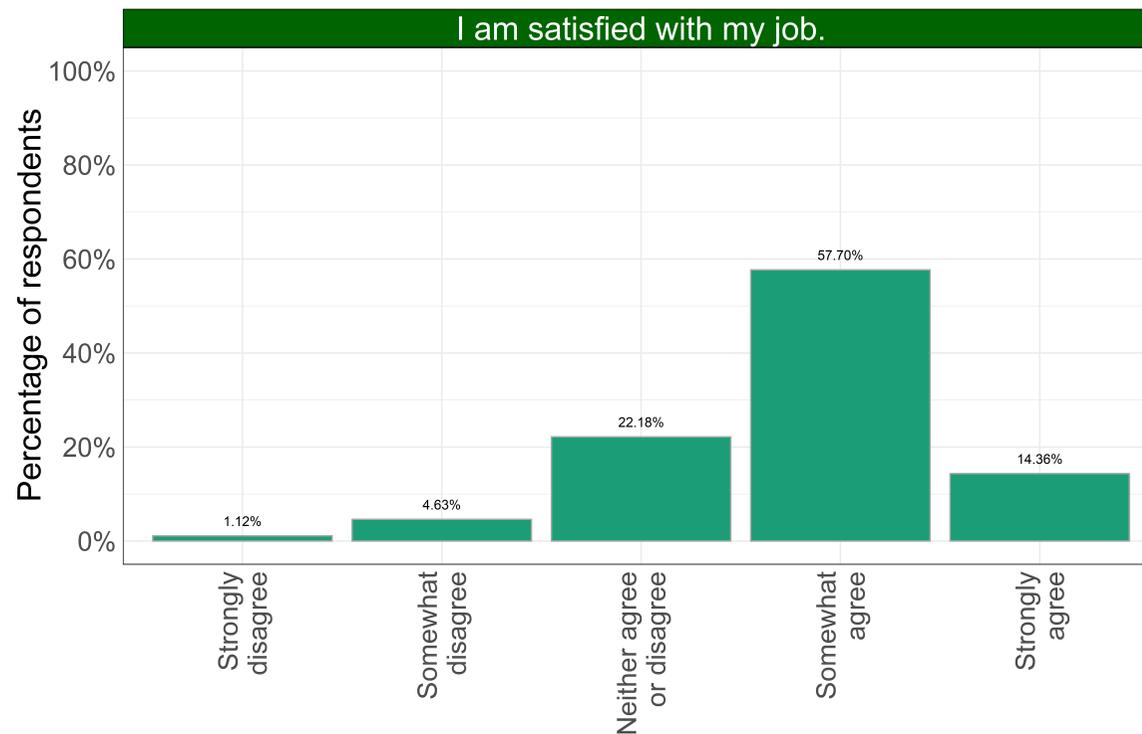
# Overview of results

1. Work motivation, job engagement, job satisfaction and pro-social motivation are high but there is scope for improving integrity among civil servants
2. Recent turn towards formal channels of recruitment but informal channels remain important
3. Merit recruitment has increased in importance, especially since adoption of new Law, but there remains scope for expanding written exams
4. Job mobility and competitive advancement are rare
5. Performance evaluation processes tend to be in-complete and with limited consequences for salaries and career progression.
6. Job protection is perceived to be low and affected by political cycles
7. Competency levels and training participation are high but scope for expanding training and knowledge sharing activities
8. Ethical leadership practices and feedback by superiors receive critical evaluations from staff
9. Civil servants' attitudes and experience with HRM vary across groups and institutions
10. The National Survey of Public Servants in Slovakia provides a basis effective benchmarking of institutions and regular evaluations in the future

# Desirable attitudes and behaviour of civil servants



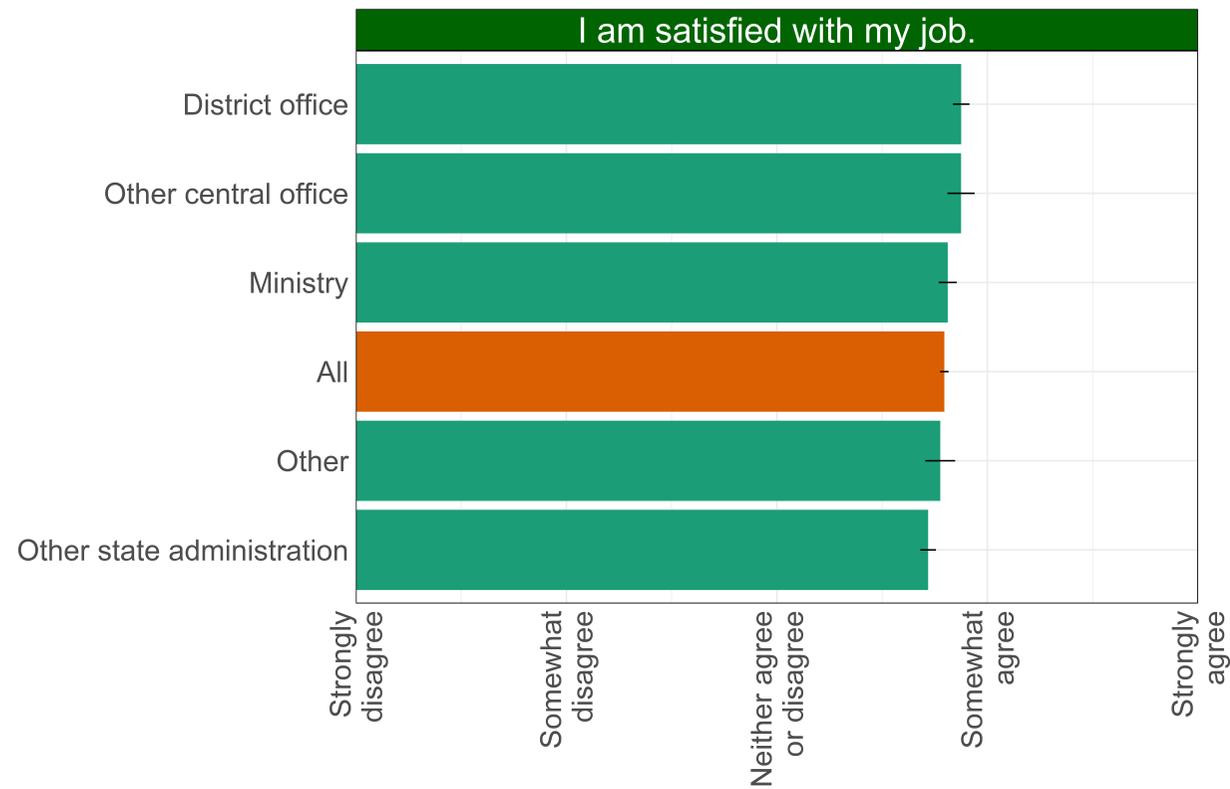
# Job satisfaction: 72% of civil servants agree or strongly agree that they are satisfied with their job



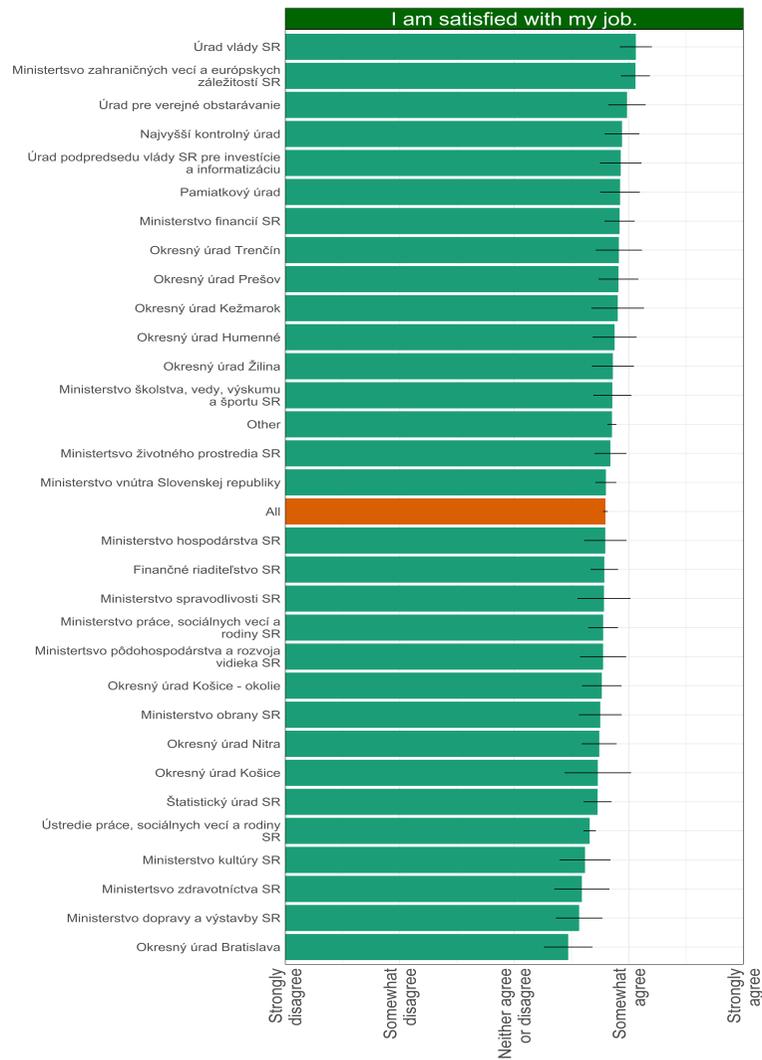
Job satisfaction is higher in Slovakia than in Croatia (66%) and lower than in Chile (79%).

Explore variation in job satisfaction across institutions and groups of staff

# Job satisfaction differs across the state administration



Job satisfaction is higher in district offices than in other types of administrative institutions

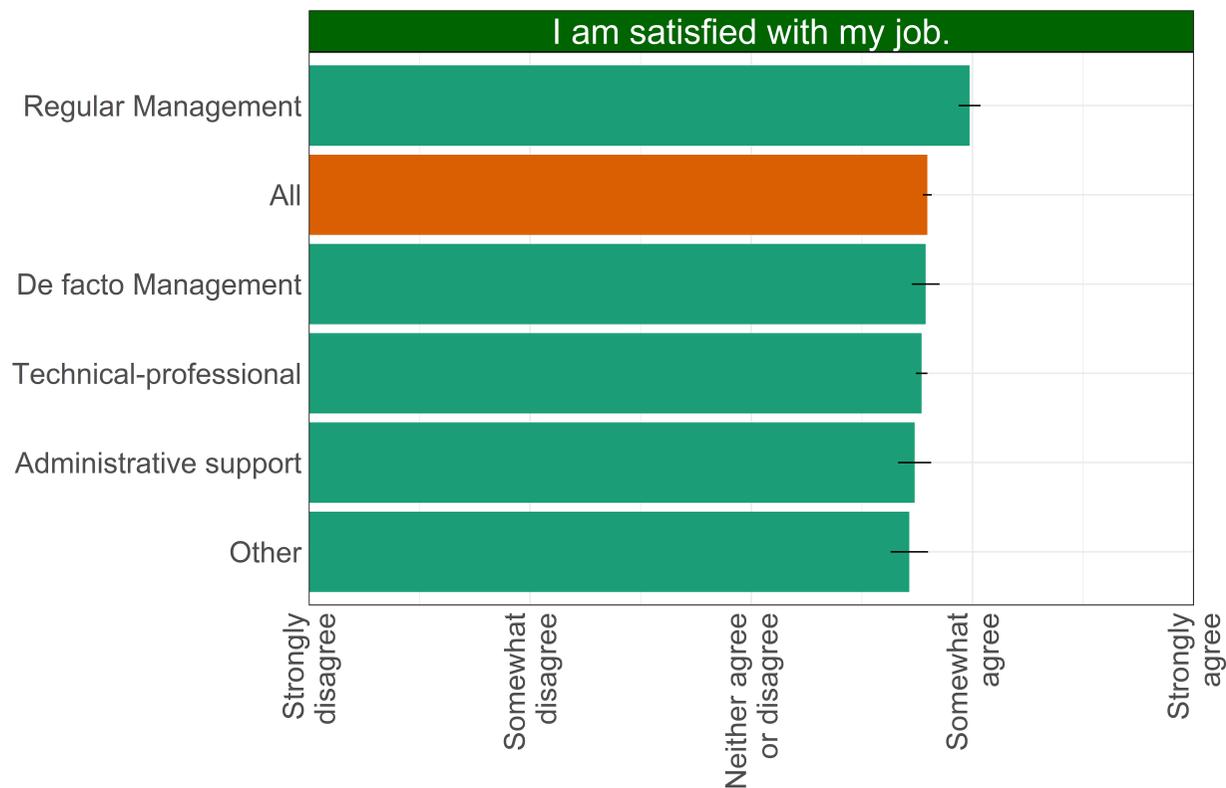


# Job satisfaction varies across individual institutions

Variation in job satisfaction is highest in the Government Office and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration.

Job satisfaction is lowest in the District Office of Bratislava.

# Job satisfaction is higher among high ranking managers compared to other ranks



82% of regular managers agree or strongly agree that they are satisfied with their job versus 72% for civil service average

# Job satisfaction remains stable with years of service and increases slightly with age



Minor differences  
between female and  
male civil servants.

# Lessons from studying job satisfaction in Slovakia

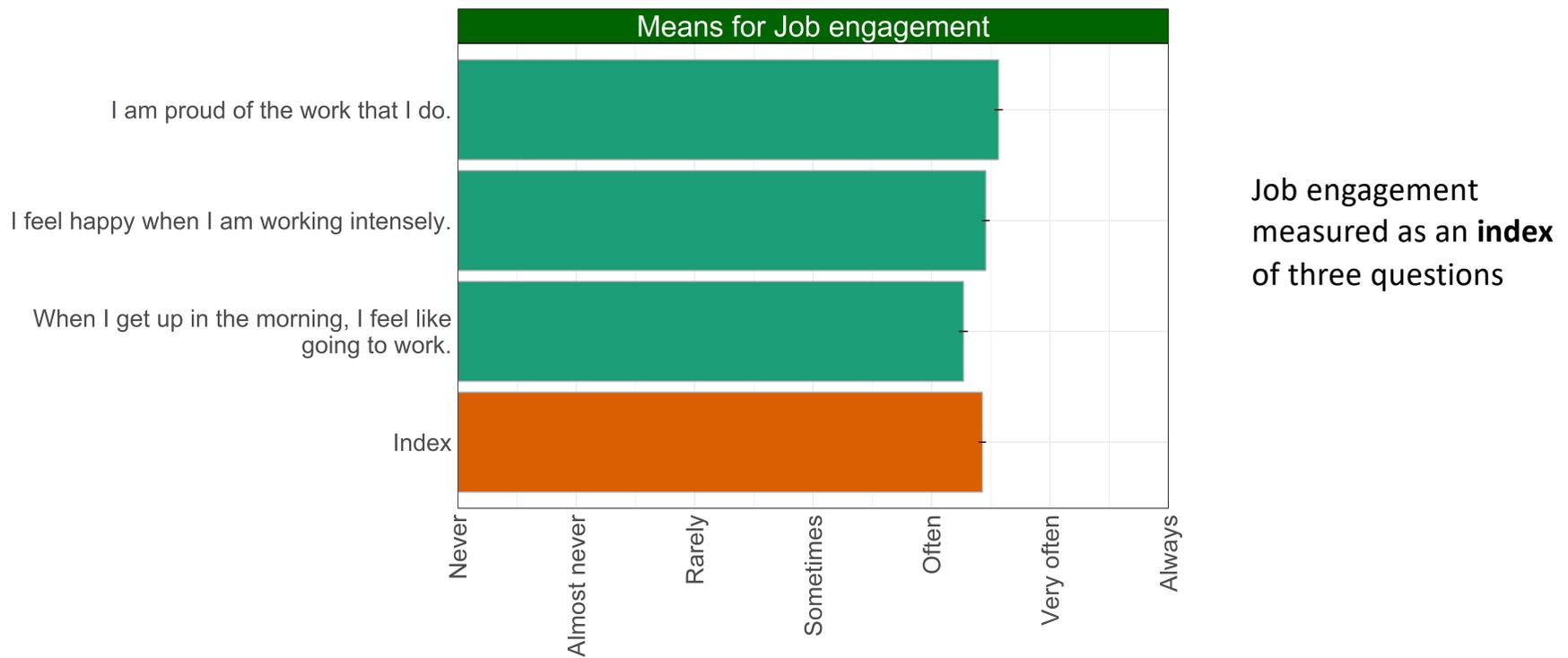
- Job satisfaction in Slovak civil service is moderately high

But

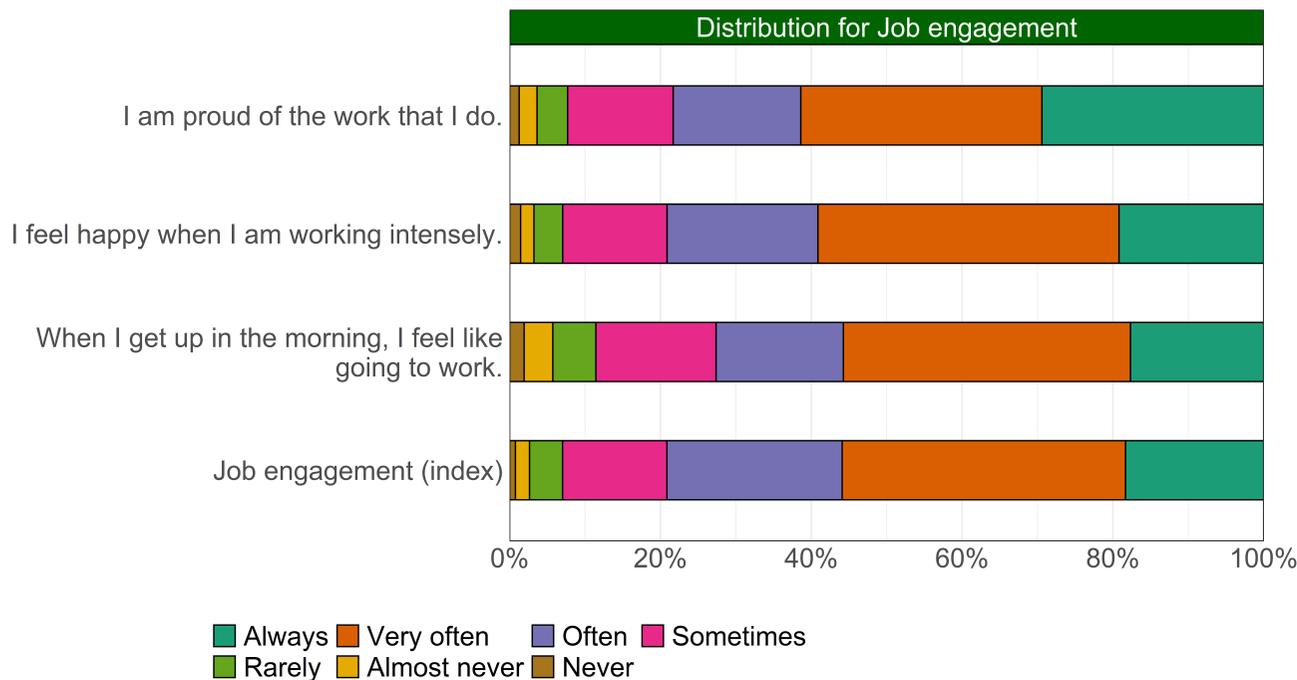
- Job satisfaction varies across
  - Levels of the state administrations
  - Individual institutions
  - Hierarchy

⇒ Need to work closely with leadership of institutions when seeking to change civil servants' attitudes

# Civil servants feel, on average, 'often' engaged by their job



# Identifying the un-engaged staff: Nearly 80% of civil servants are often or always engaged. Less than 10% are rarely or never engaged by their job

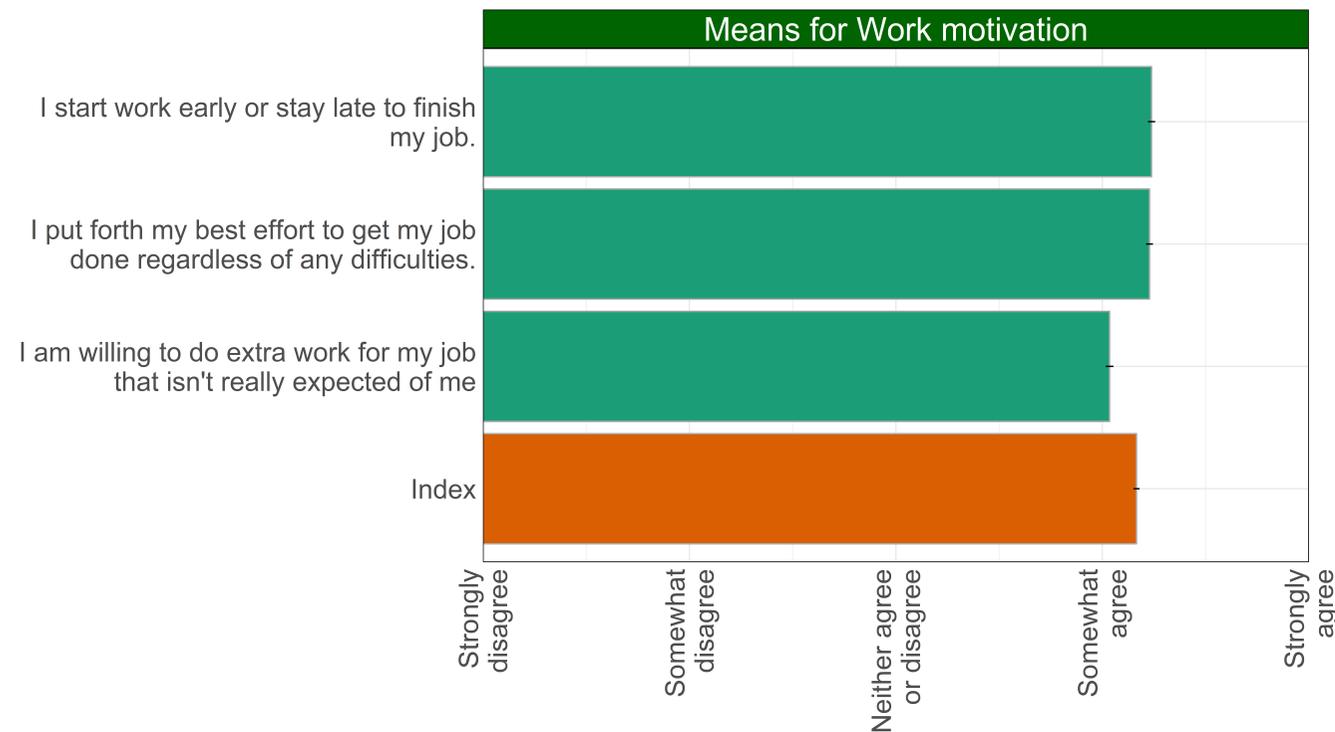


Job engagement is higher in district offices compared to other types of institutions.

Among ministries and central offices, the Ministry of Foreign and EU Affairs and the Government Office have the highest degree of job engagement.

Regular management is relatively more engaged.

# Slovak civil servants are motivated to work hard

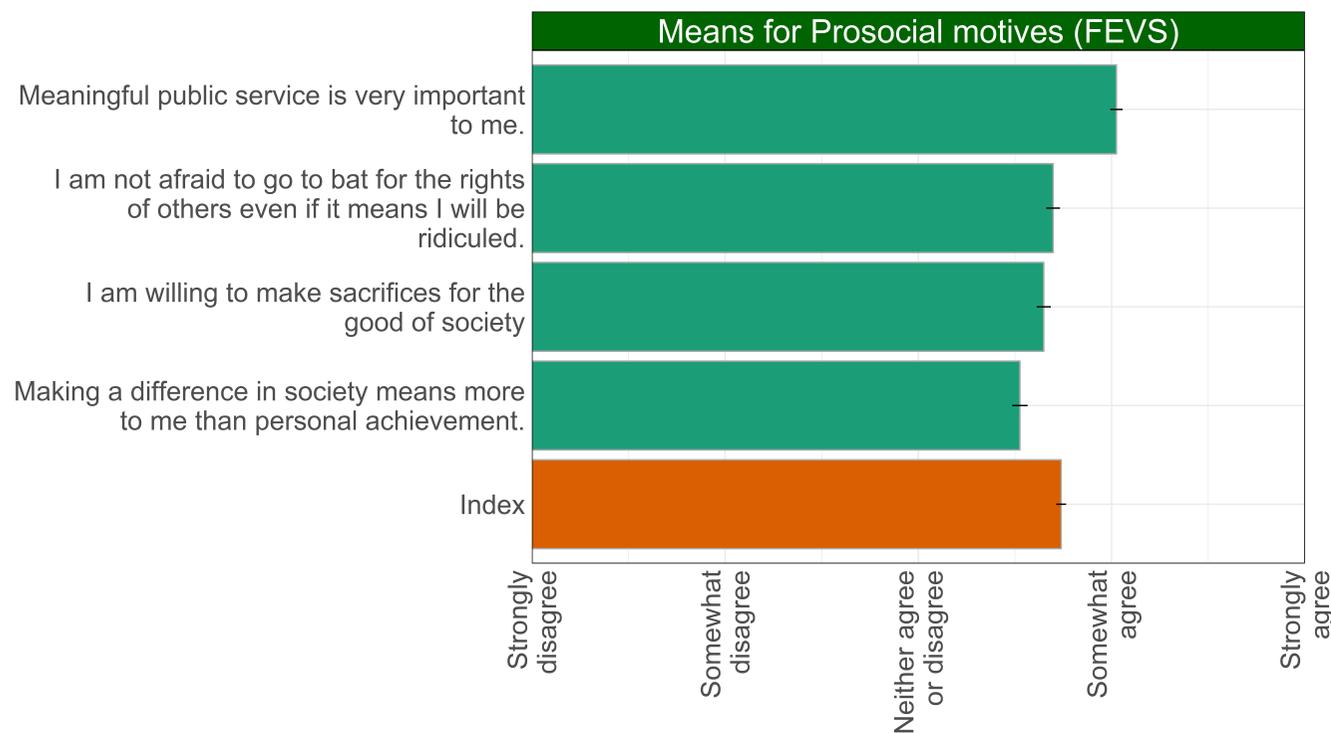


On average, more than 80% of civil servants agree with statements that indicate their willingness to work hard.

Work motivation is comparatively higher in ministries.

Regular management is more motivated to work hard than other ranks.

# Civil servants are motivated to serve society: 64% are willing to sacrifice themselves for the good of society

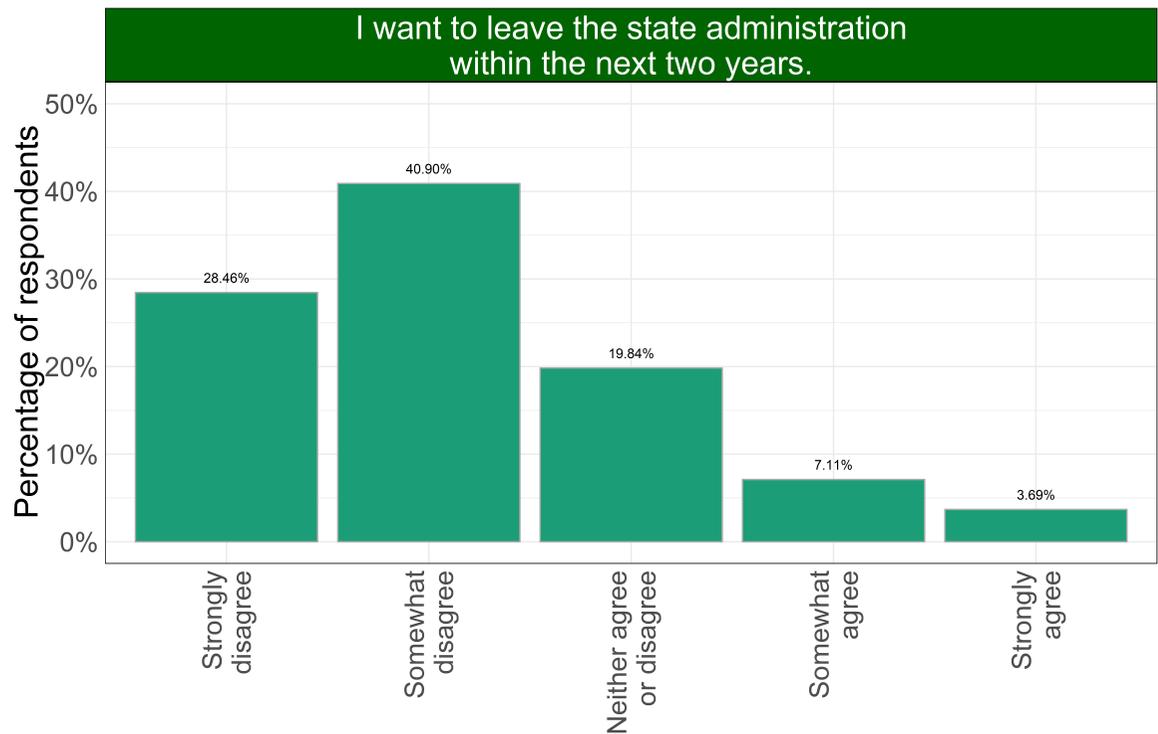


For comparison, in Croatia 60% of civil servants are willing to sacrifice themselves for the good of society

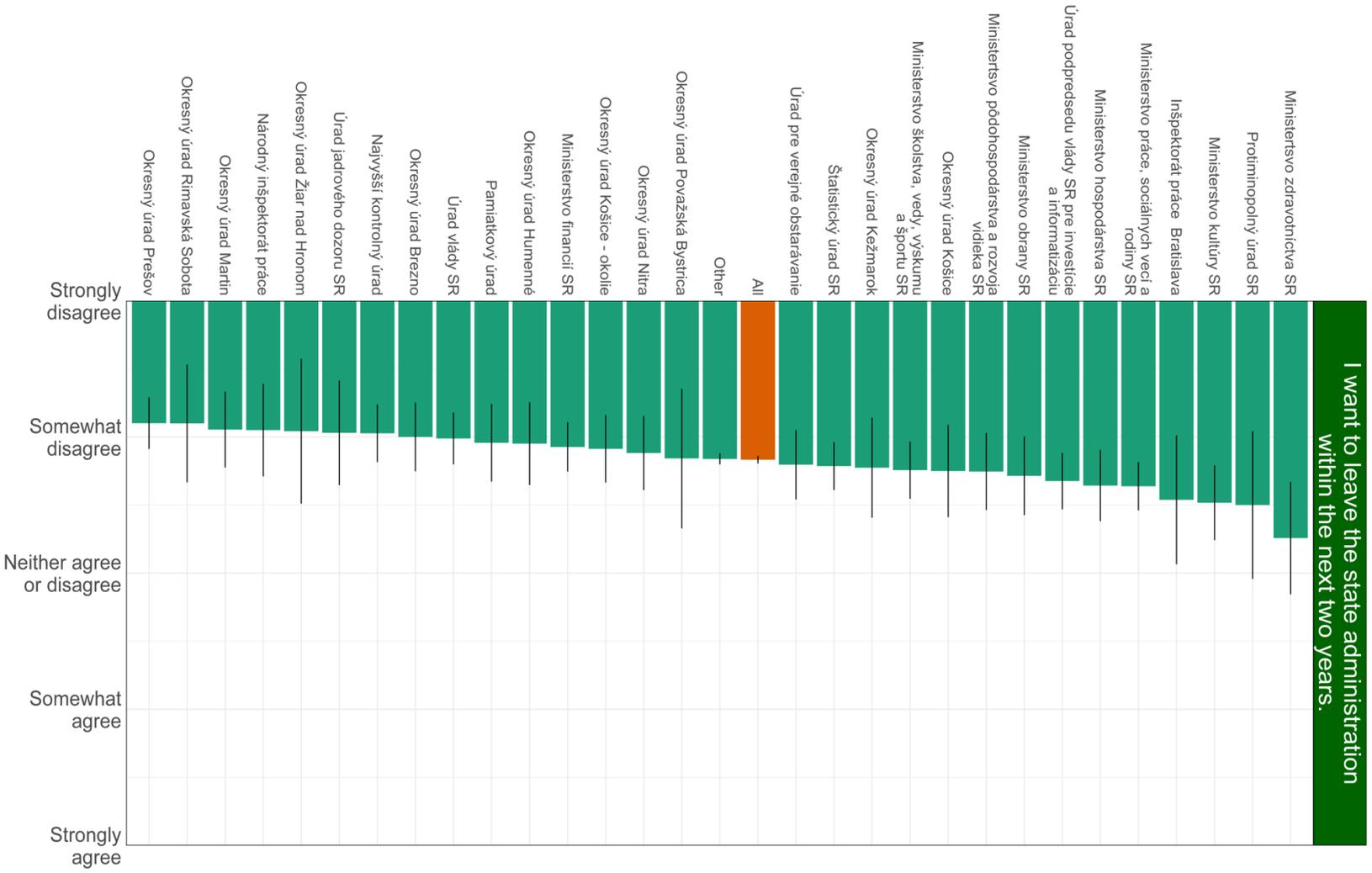
Pro-social motivation is highest in Ministries of Agriculture and Finance.

Male civil servants and older civil servants are more pro-socially motivated than female civil servants and younger civil servants.

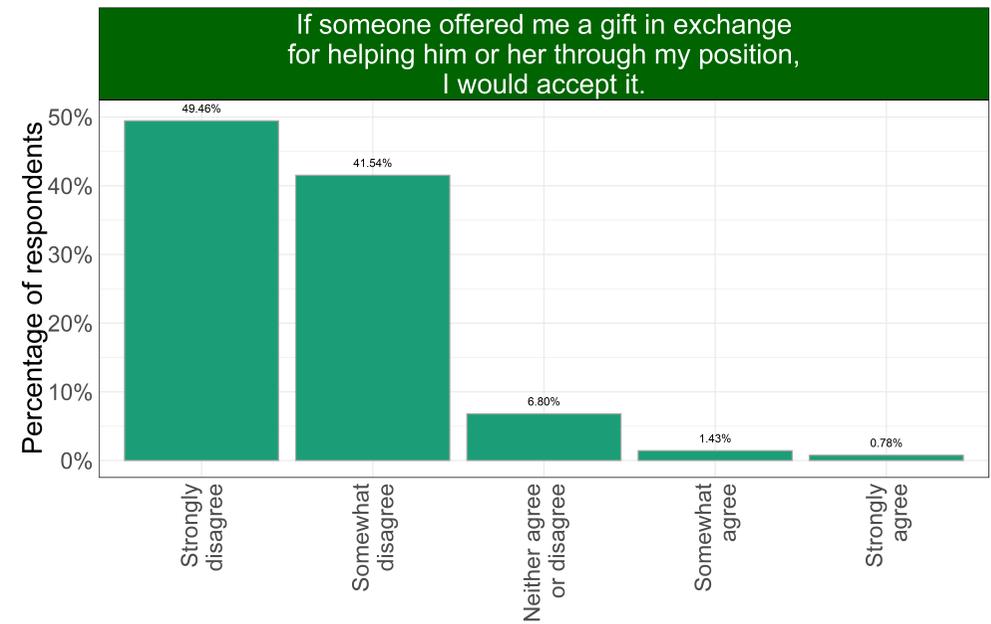
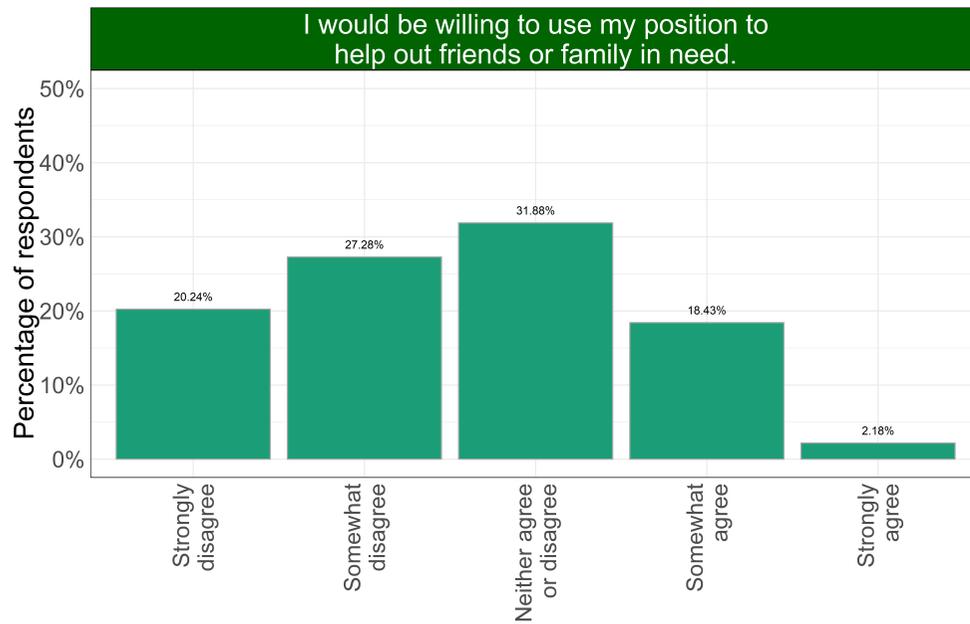
# Commitment to work in public administration: 11% of civil servants want to leave within the next two years



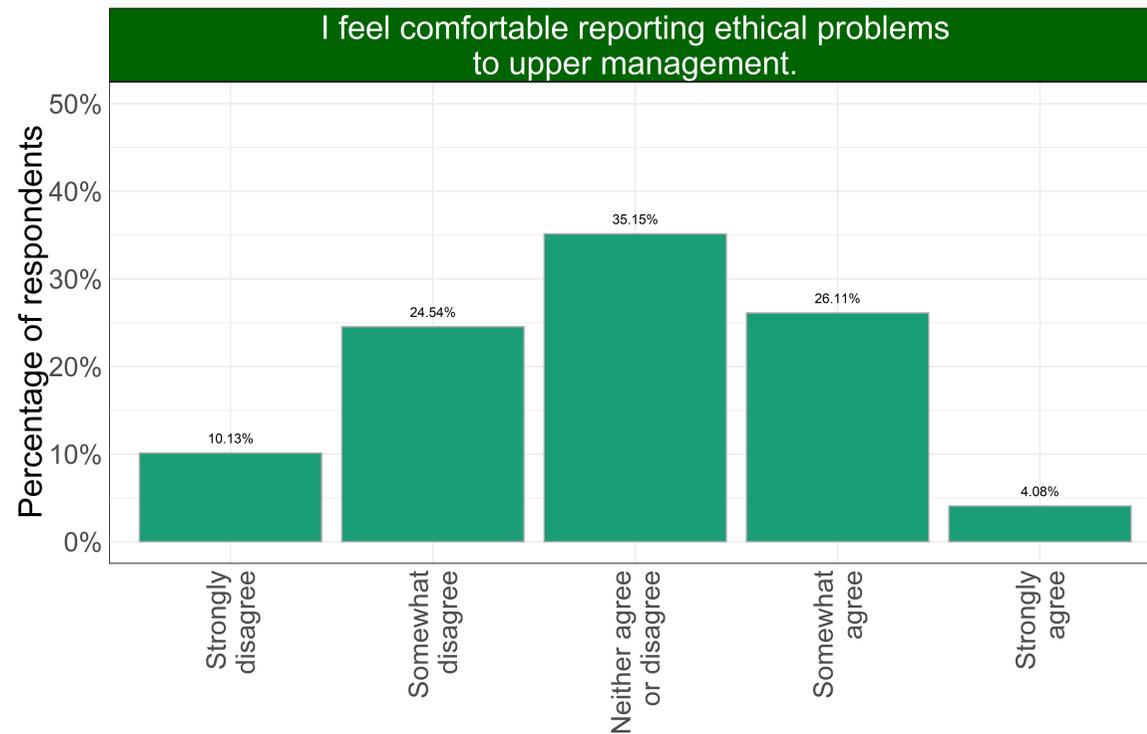
- De facto managers (13%) are more inclined to leave within two years than other groups of staff.
- By comparison, in **Croatia** nearly 30% of civil servants want to leave public administration within the next two years.
- Turnover intention is relatively higher for staff in ministries and located in Bratislava.
- Turnover intention is highest for Ministry of Health



Integrity of civil servants: Civil servants would rather 'not' use their position for personal gain, while nepotistic intentions are more accepted



# The willingness to report ethical problems is low



41% of regular managers would report ethical problems – but less than 30% of their subordinates would dare to do so

Male civil servants are more inclined to behave un-ethically, but they are also more willing to report ethical problems.

# Attitudes of civil servants in Slovakia

- Work motivation and job engagement are high
  - Job satisfaction and pro-social motivation moderately high
- Low proportion of staff with intention to leave public administration
  - Scope for raising ethical awareness and intent
- Variation in attitudes across institutions and groups of staff
  - Need to tailor reform initiatives and support activities to institutions
  - Work with leadership of institutions to improve attitudes of civil servants
- In future, need to work information systems and personnel lists for more effective benchmarking of institutions and groups of staff

# Human resources management practices

- Recruitment and selection
- Career advancement
- Performance evaluation
- Salary management
- Job protection
- Training
- Leadership

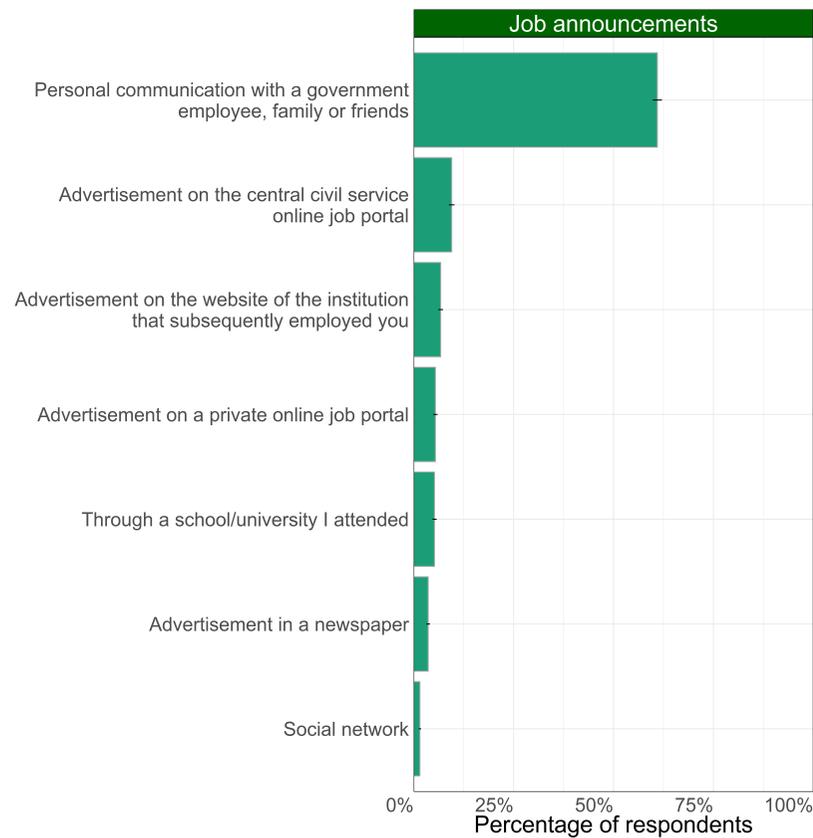
# Recruitment

Recruitment channels

Assessment

Selection criteria

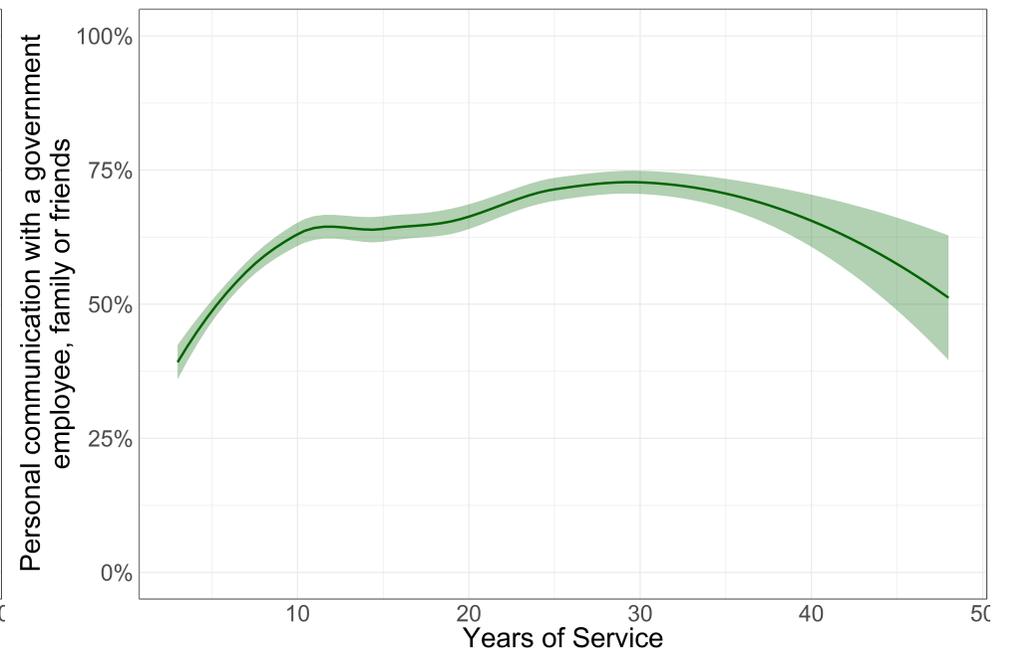
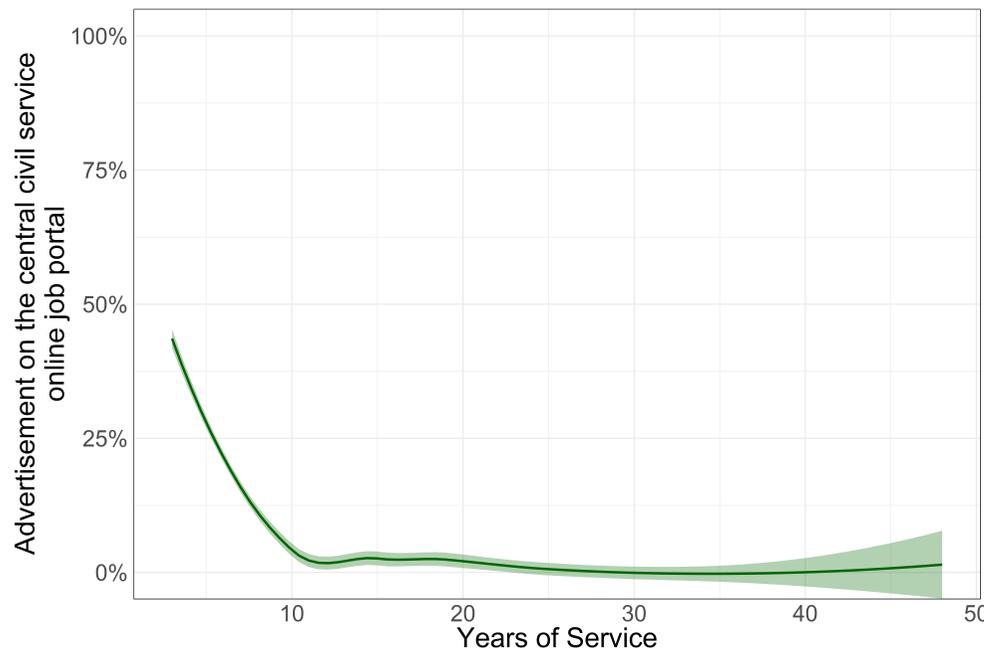
# Most civil servants learned about their first job in the civil service through word of mouth



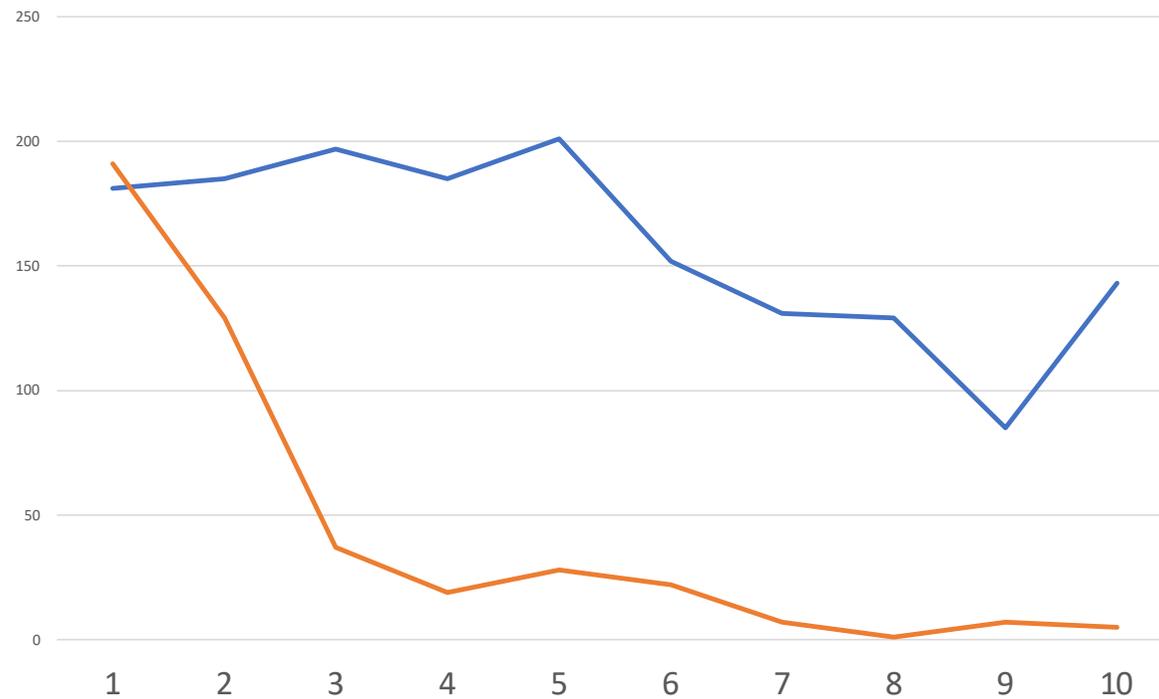
Compared to Slovakia (58%), word of mouth is much less important in Croatia (25%), while formal channels of recruitment are more important in Croatia.

Importance of informal, word of mouth recruitment has declined over time. The role of the central job portal has continuously increased.

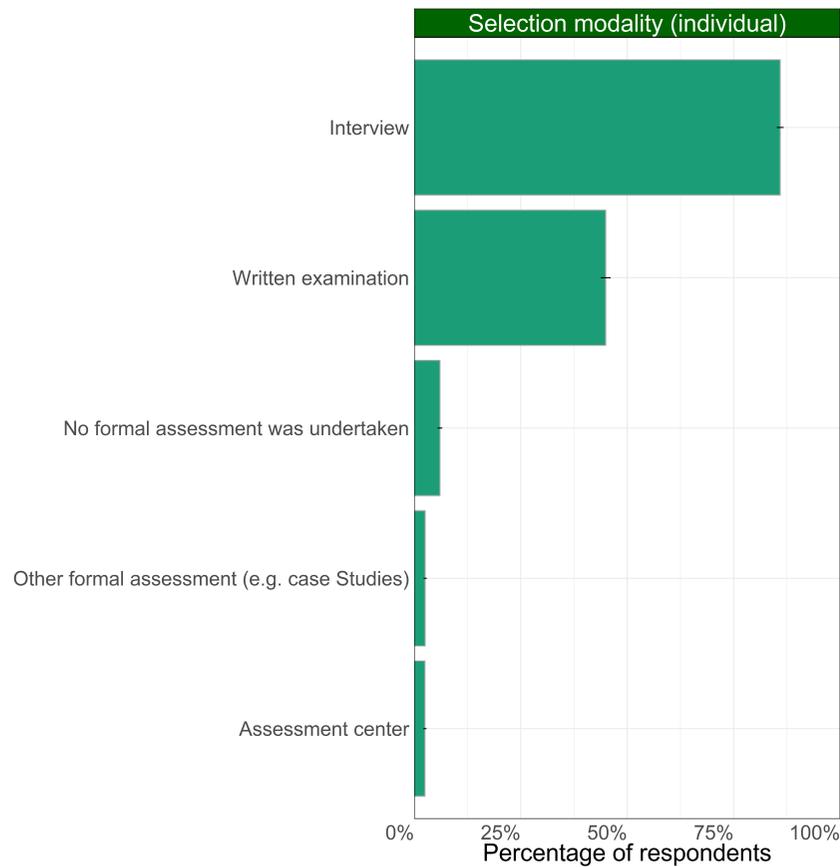
Formalisation of recruitment : Central online job portal has recently grown in importance, while word of mouth has started to decline in relative terms



Central portal versus word of mouth during the last ten years: Central portal increases in importance but word of mouth remains important in absolute terms



# Less than 50% of civil servants passed a written entrance examinations but 85% sat an interview



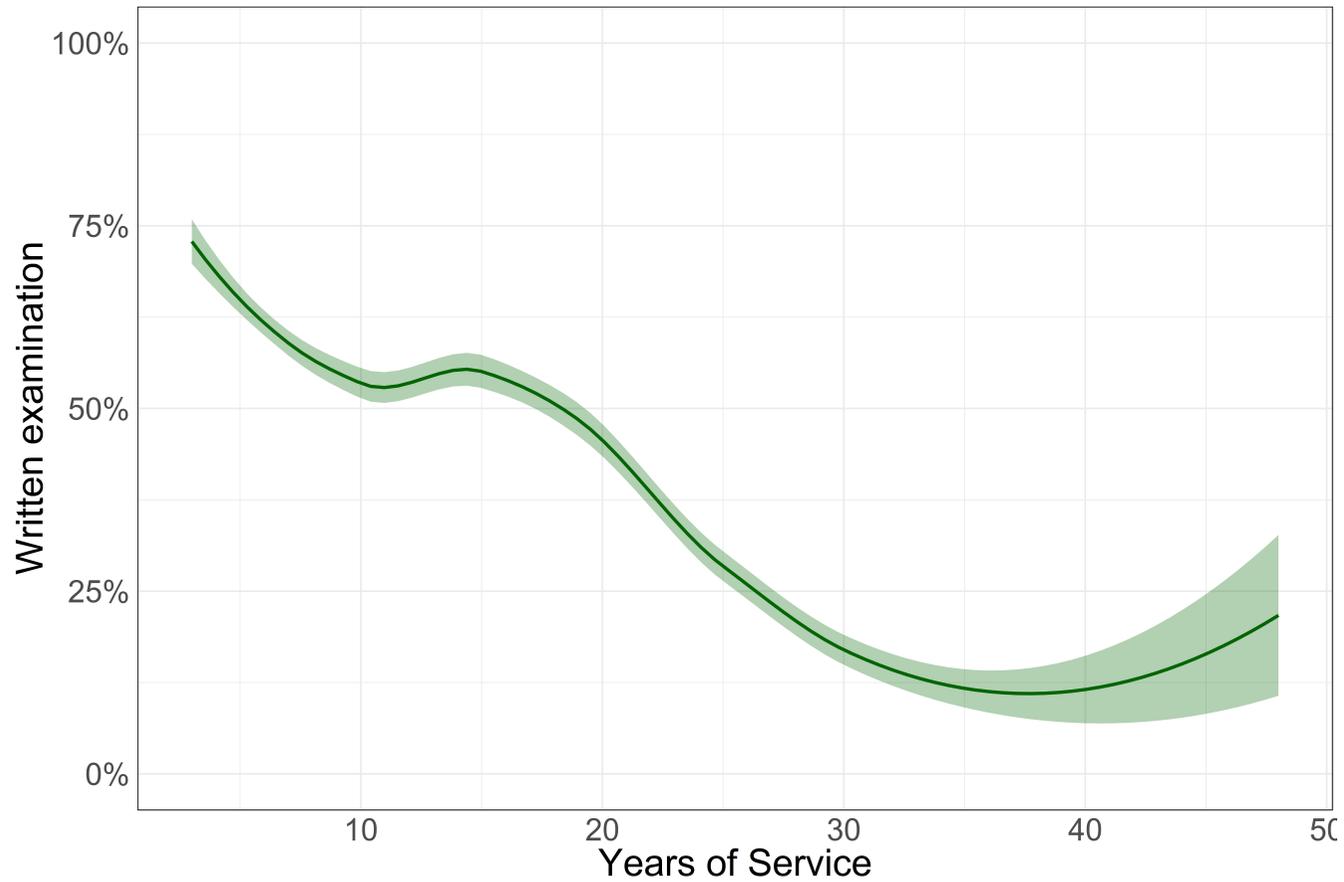
By comparison, in Croatia over 60% of the civil servants passed a written exam and over 80% sat an interview when entering the civil service.

Reliance on written exams has increased over time, especially during the last 10 years.

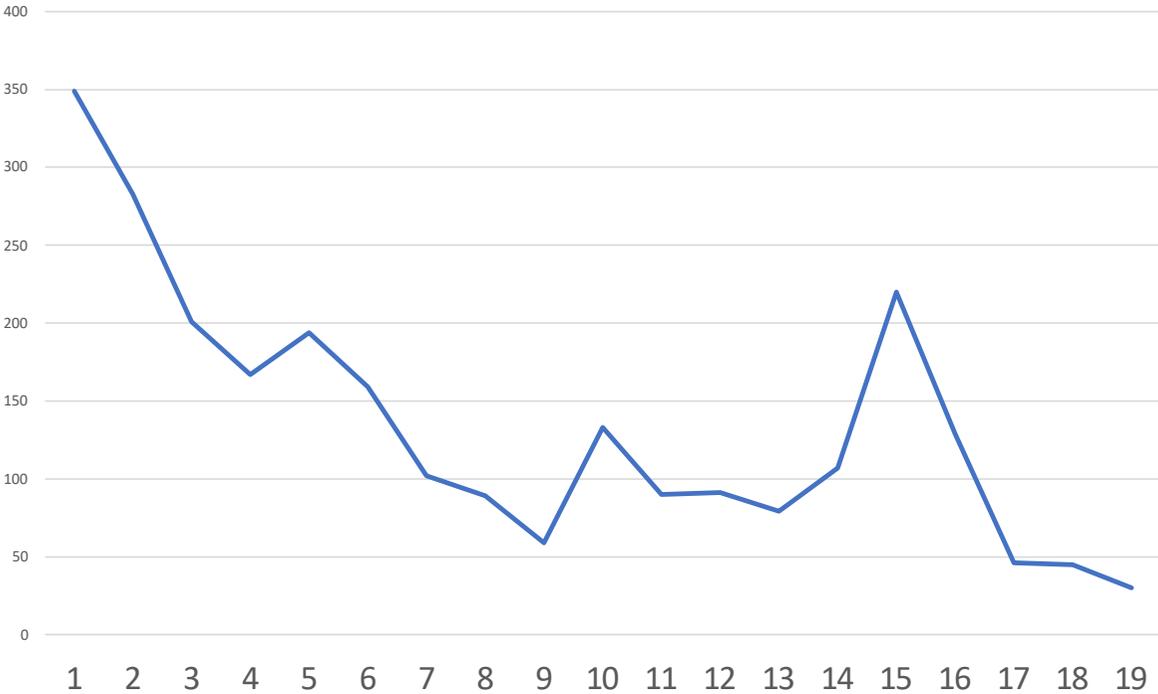
Recruitment without any assessment is rare.

# Growing importance of merit recruitment:

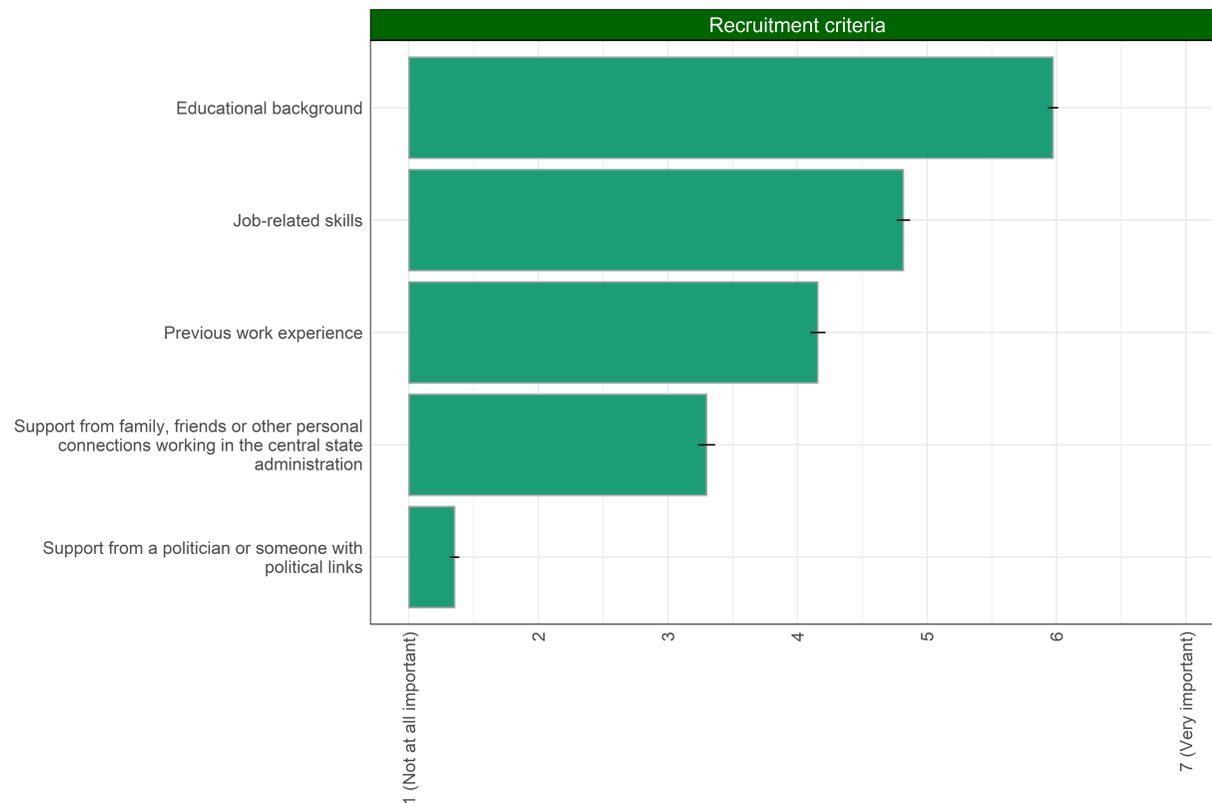
Role of written examinations has continuously increased during 2010s.



# Number of respondents who passed an exam each year between 2000 and 2020



# Educational qualifications and job-specific skills are the most important selection criteria

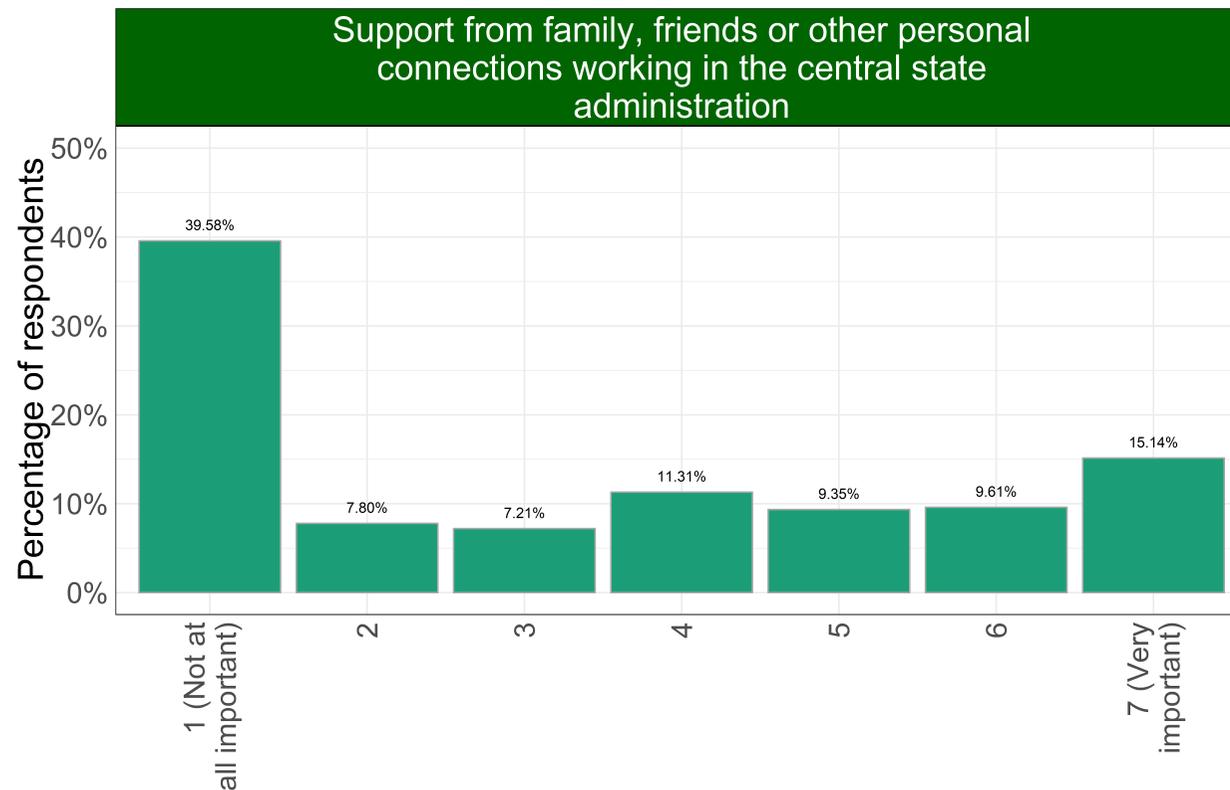


Over time, education and job-specific expertise have constantly remained the most important selection criteria.

Political connections with maximum approximately 8 years ago. Since then their importance has continuously declined.

Personal connections are much more important than political connections.

# *Personal* connections: Help from family, friends or other personal acquaintances inside the civil service help getting a job in the civil service



For 15%, personal connections were very important to get the first job in the civil service.

For 60%, personal connections played at least some role during recruitment.

Importance of personal connections has declined during the last 8-10 years.

Ministry of Justice with lowest mean for importance of personal connections among institutions with many respondents

# Recruitment: What to focus on?

- Announcement
    - Still scope for expanding importance of formal channels of communication and recruitment
    - Word of mouth is *negatively* associated with most of the desirable attitudes of civil servants
  - Selection criteria
    - Scope for reducing political and especially personal connections
    - Especially political connections are *negatively* associated with desirable attitudes of civil servants
  - Assessment
    - Still scope for expanding written exams
    - Written exams and, to a lesser extent, interviews are associated with
      - Greater importance of merit criteria (education, prior work experience, job-specific skills)
      - Less importance for political and personal connections
  - Recruitment practices vary across institutions
- ⇒ Continue to expand public advertisements and merit assessment procedures to ensure their direct and indirect positive effects

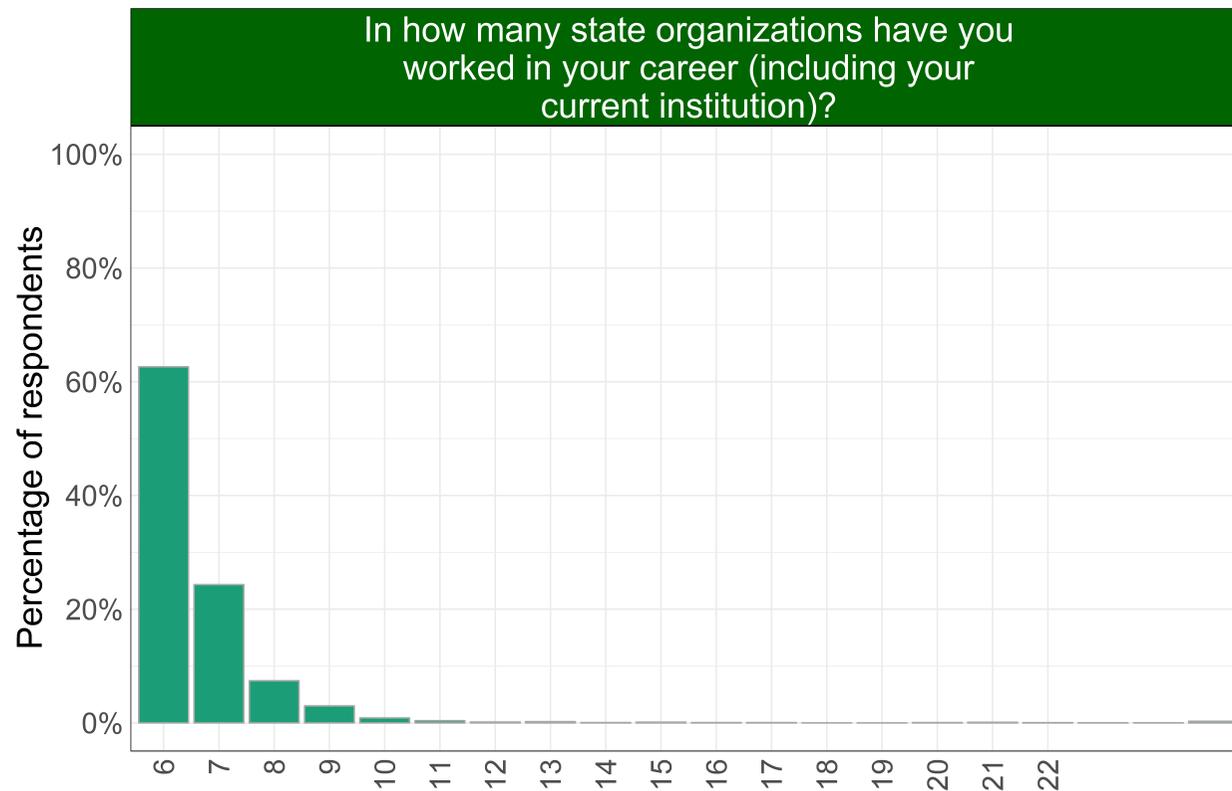
# Career advancement

Mobility

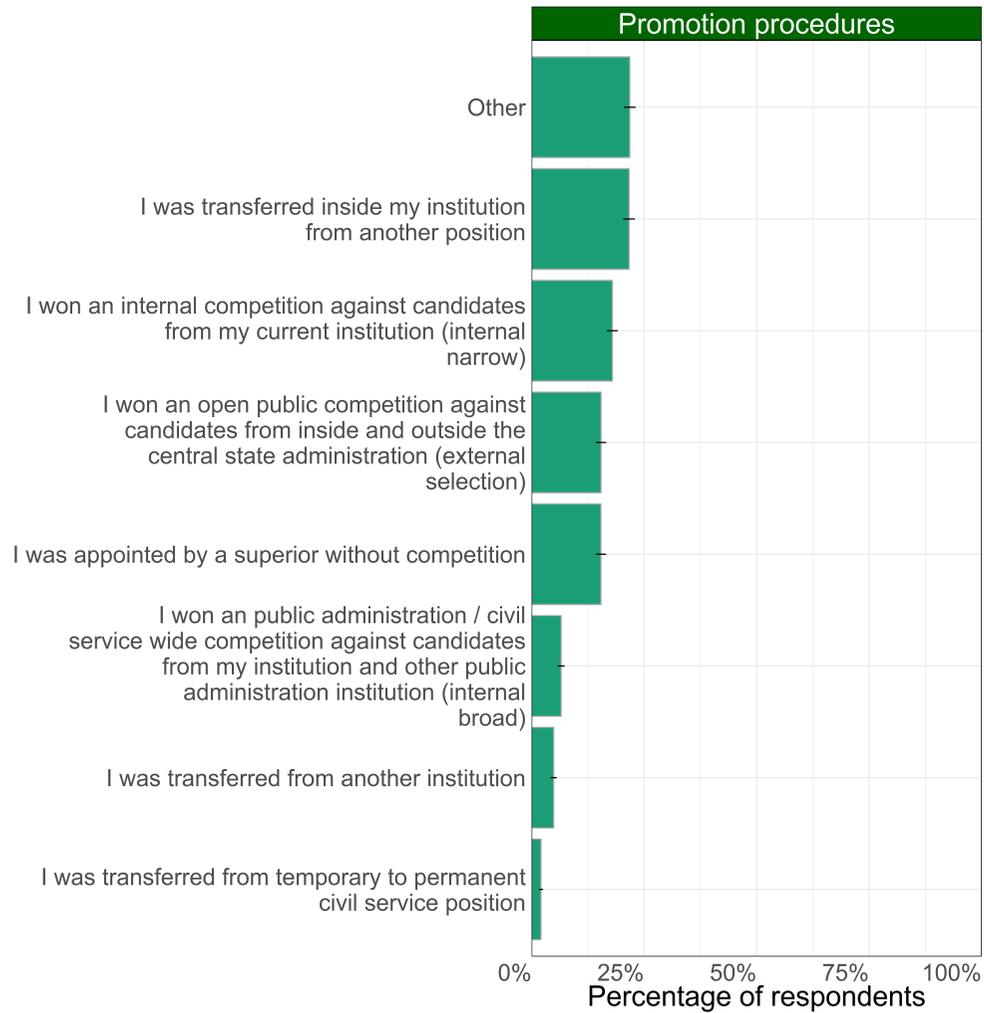
Advancement procedures

Advancement criteria

# Job mobility: Most civil servants spend their career in the same institution



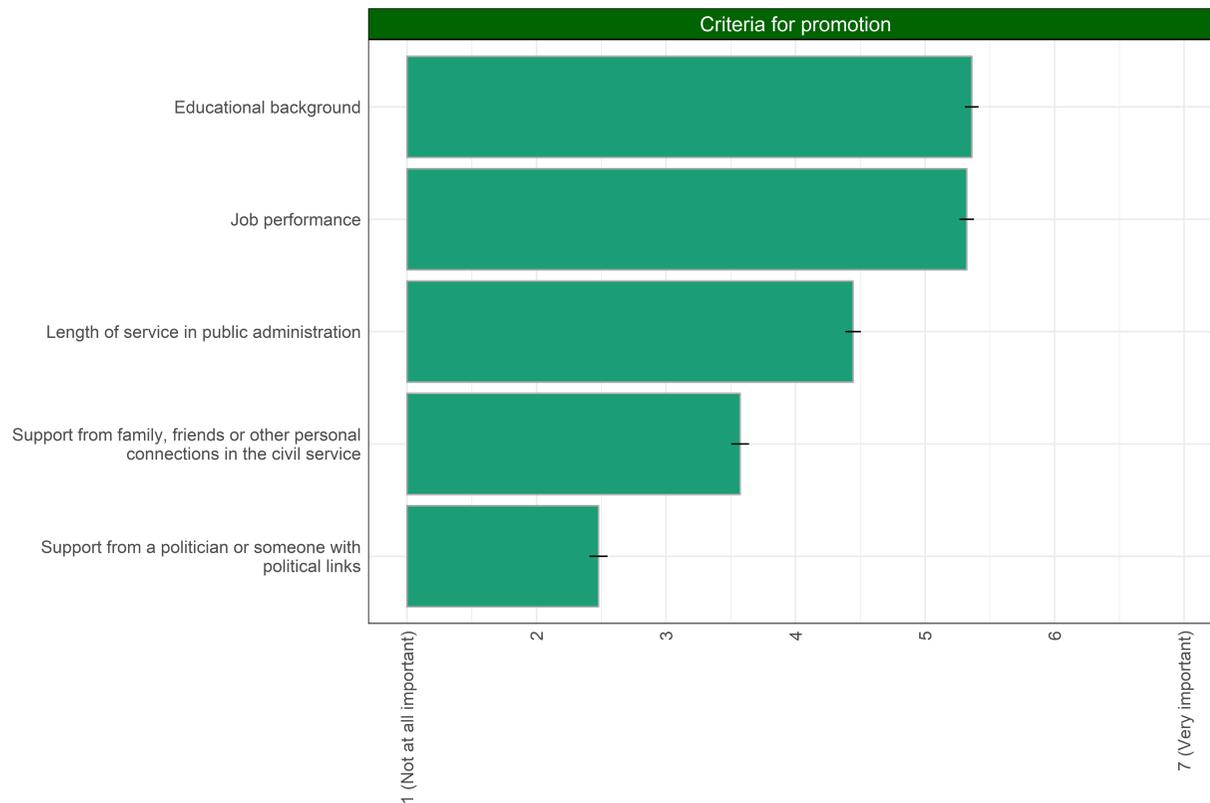
Job mobility in Slovakia (62% never change institution) and Croatia (65% never change institution) is very similar.



When civil servants advance to a better position, they are mainly appointed or transferred within their own institution

Competitive for career advancement happens rarely

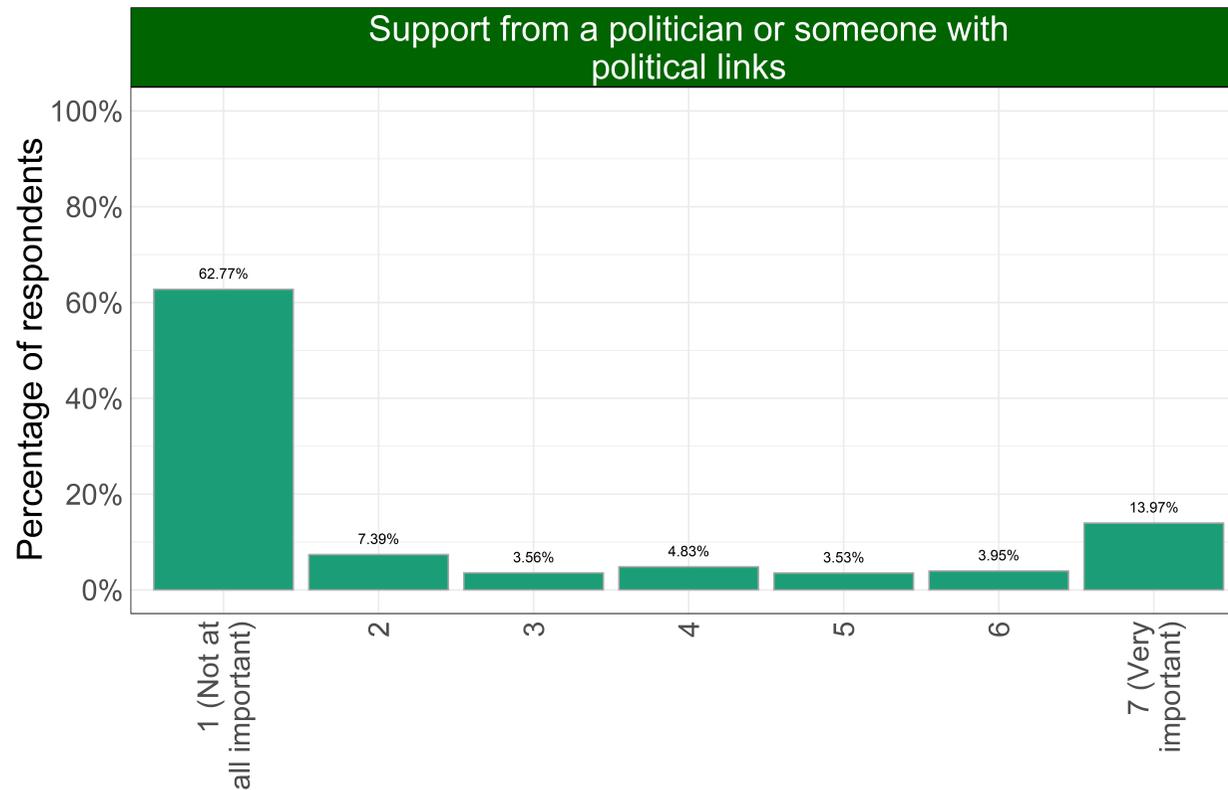
Education and job performance are the main conditions for career advancement, but personal and political connections are also important



Job **performance** matters more for career advancement in the District Offices than in other types of administrative bodies.

**Political** and **personal** connections with considerable importance for advancement.

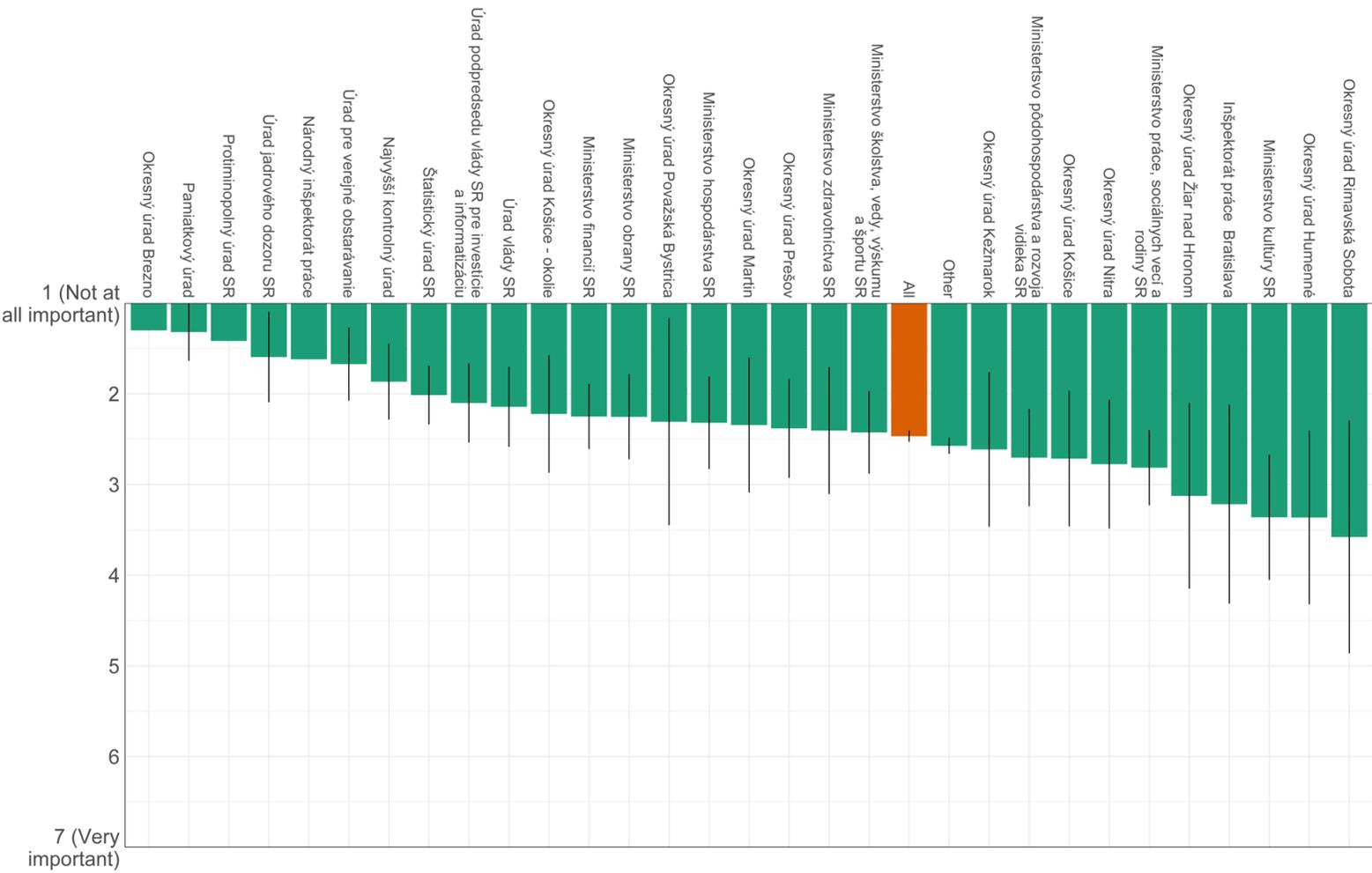
14% of the civil servants believe that political connections are 'very important' for career advancement. 37% give at least some importance.



Political connections are less important in central offices (other than ministries)

De facto managers regard political connections to be more important than other groups.

Support from a politician or someone with political links



# Career advancement: What to do next?

- Job mobility
    - Scope for increasing job mobility between institutions
  - Career advancement criteria
    - Political and especially personal connections perceived as important for promotions
    - Political connections are *negatively* associated with desirable attitudes of civil servants
  - Scope for expanding competitions for career advancement
    - Competitive advancement is *negatively* associated with political and personal connections and positively associated with merit criteria
  - Career advancement experience varies across institutions and ranks
- ⇒ Consider expanding competitive career advancement

# Salary management

Salary satisfaction

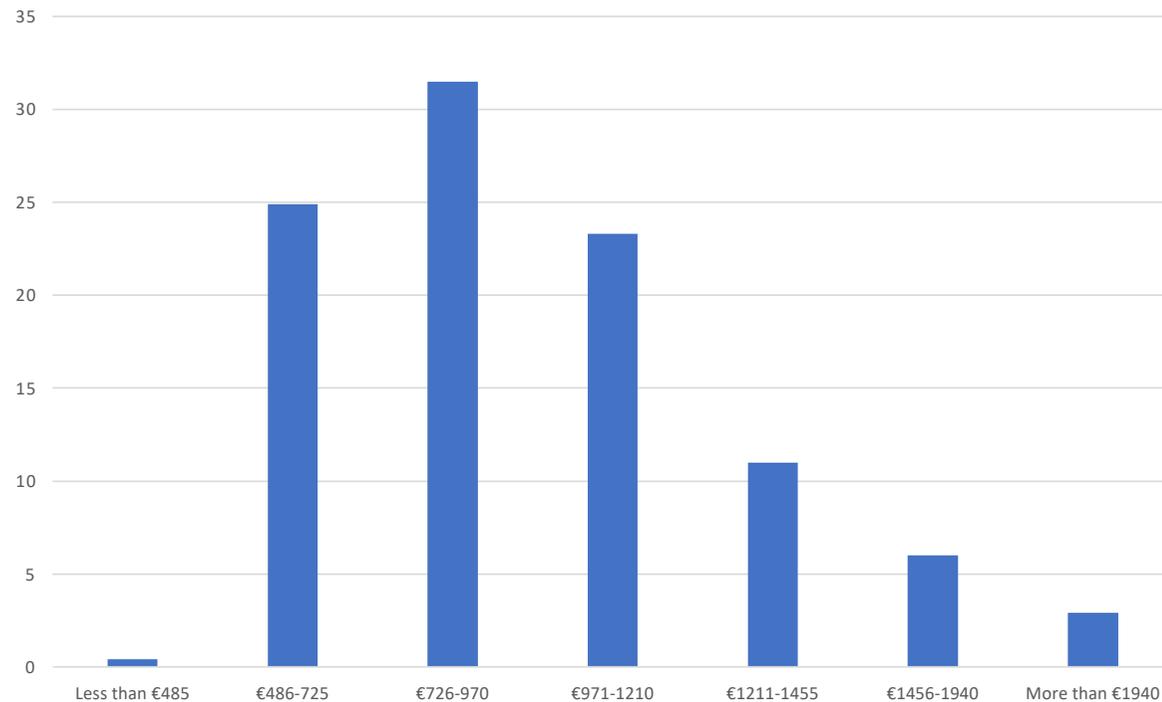
Salary criteria

Salary competitiveness

Salary bonuses

Moonlighting

# 80% of civil servants earn between €500 and €1,200 per month



Survey question: 'What is your monthly net salary (including bonuses averaged over the whole year)?'

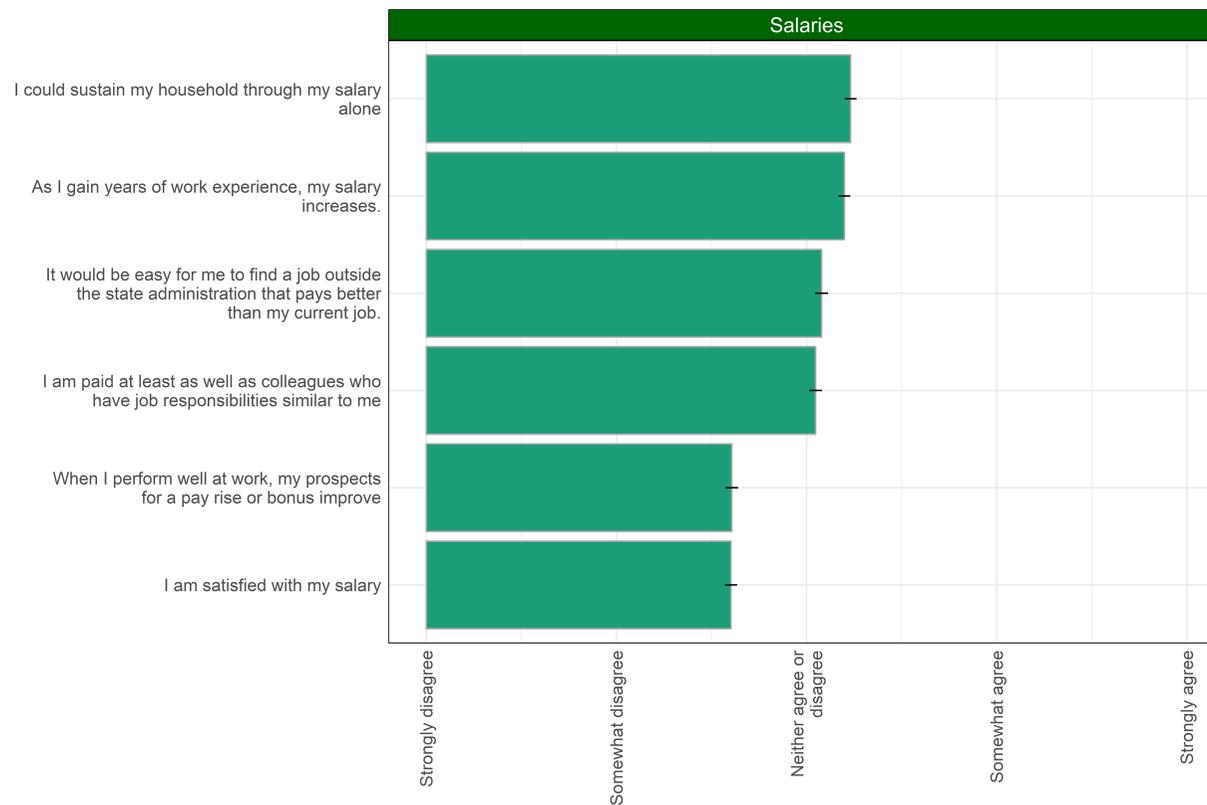
Staff employed in ministries and in Bratislava earn higher salaries.

Salaries increase with rank.

Staff working on EU policy earn higher salaries, on average.

Large differences between ministries and central offices: Finance, Foreign/EU, Gov Office, Nuclear with higher income levels

# Perceived sufficiency is moderate but both salary satisfaction and salary incentives are low



Salaries mainly increase with years of service.

Only 25% agree or strongly agree that good performance will be rewarded with a salary increase.

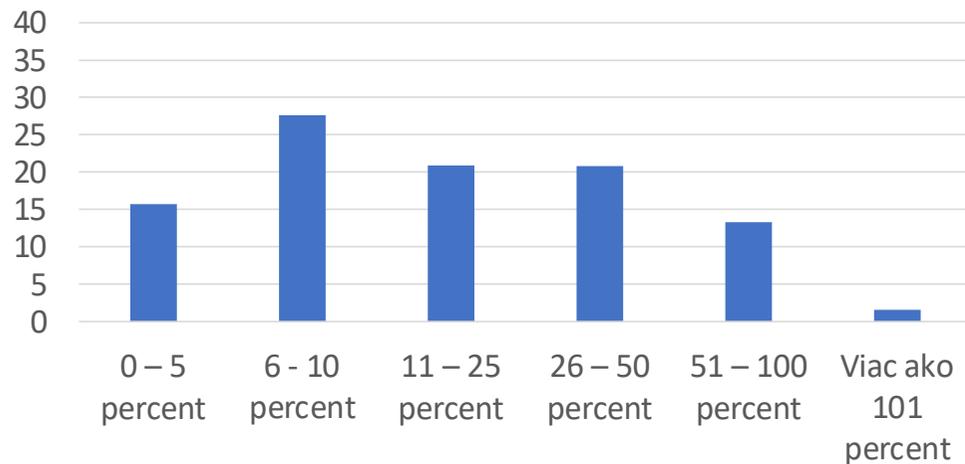
Large differences in salary satisfaction and salary management between types of institutions.

Salary satisfaction is highest in Ministries of Finance, Foreign and EU Affairs, and Environment

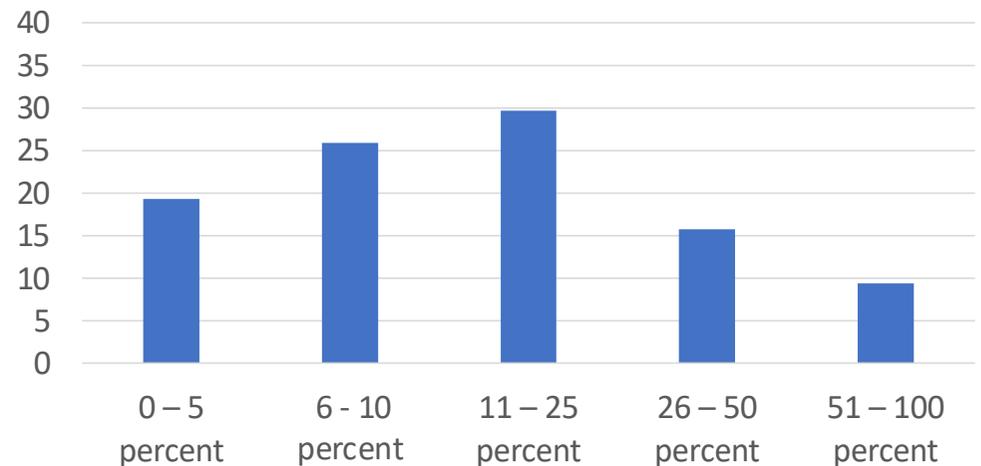
# Varieties of salary bonuses in Slovakia: 61% receive a 'personal salary'. 87% receive a salary bonus.

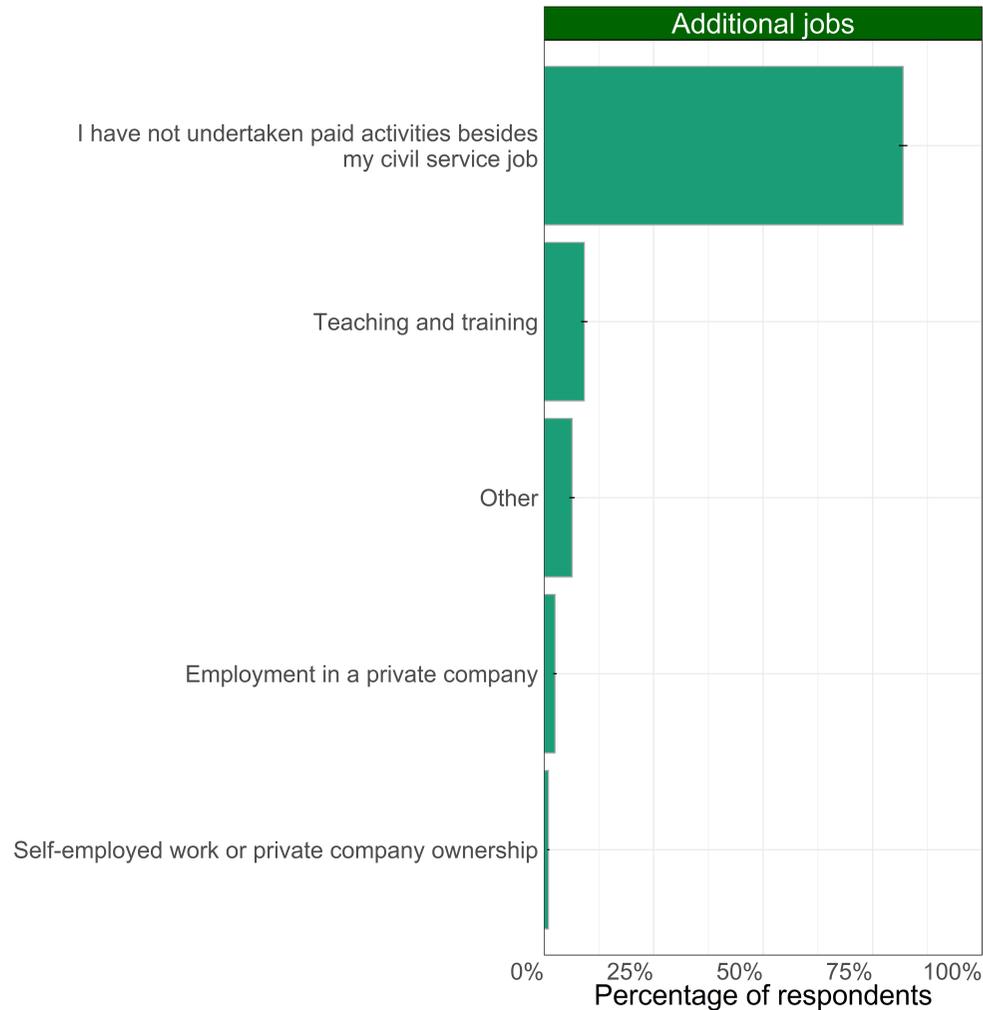
Personal salaries: How to read the answers?

Aká veľká bola odmena vzhľadom na Váš funkčný plat (za posledný rok, v priemere)?



Aký veľký je Váš osobný príplatok vzhľadom na Váš základný plat (mesačne)?





## Ancillary employment is unusual among Slovak civil servants

50% of those with additional jobs do not consider them important for their income.

55% per cent of those with additional jobs spend 10 hours or less per week on the add job.

9% of civil servants are involved in teaching and training activities.

# Salary management: What to do next?

- Salary satisfaction and perceived sufficiency are positively associated with desirable attitudes of civil servants
  - Salary incentives moderate to low
    - Performance with limited effect on salary increases
    - Widespread reliance on varieties of bonuses
    - Performance-related salaries and personal salary bonus are *positively* associated with salary satisfaction, salary sufficiency and directly with desirable attitudes of civil servants
  - Salary experience and management varies across institutions
- ⇒ Consider expansion of performance aspect and review of the salary bonus system in order to leverage positive effect

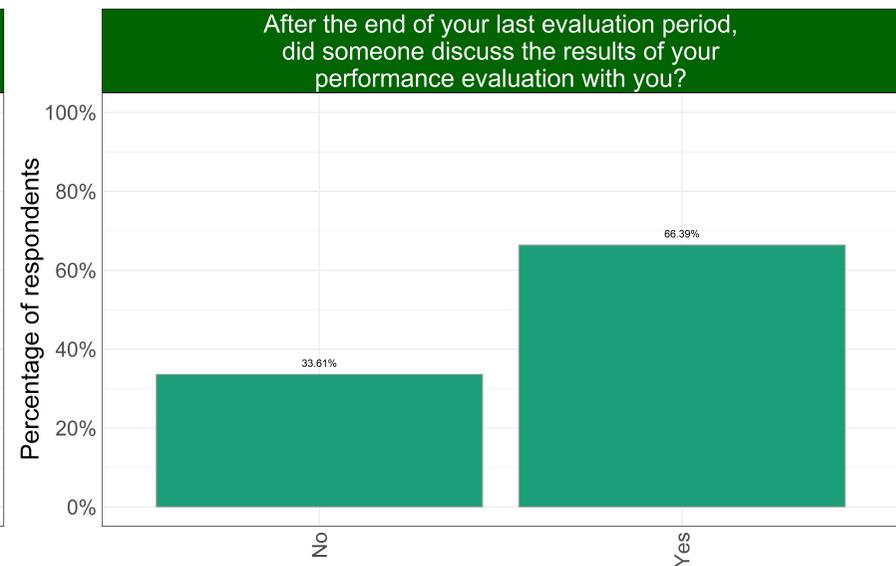
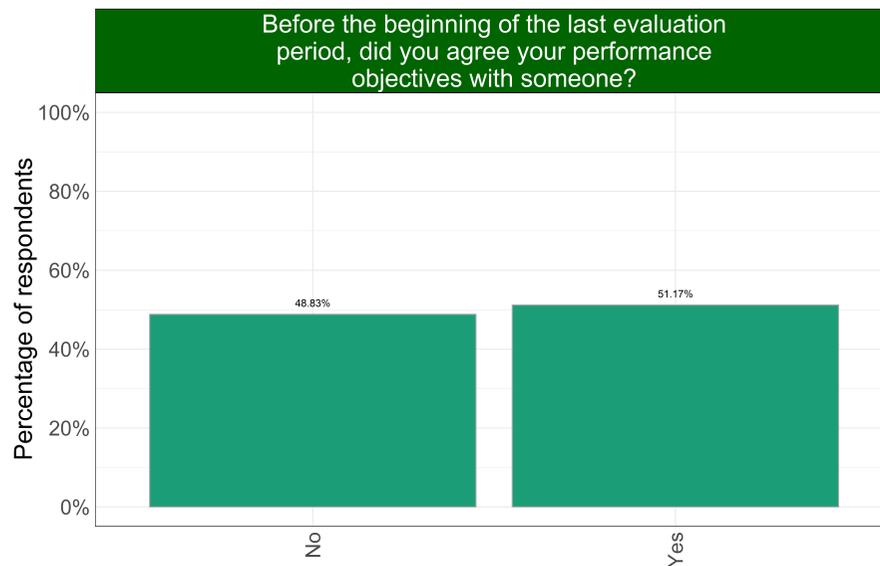
# Performance evaluation

Frequency of evaluations

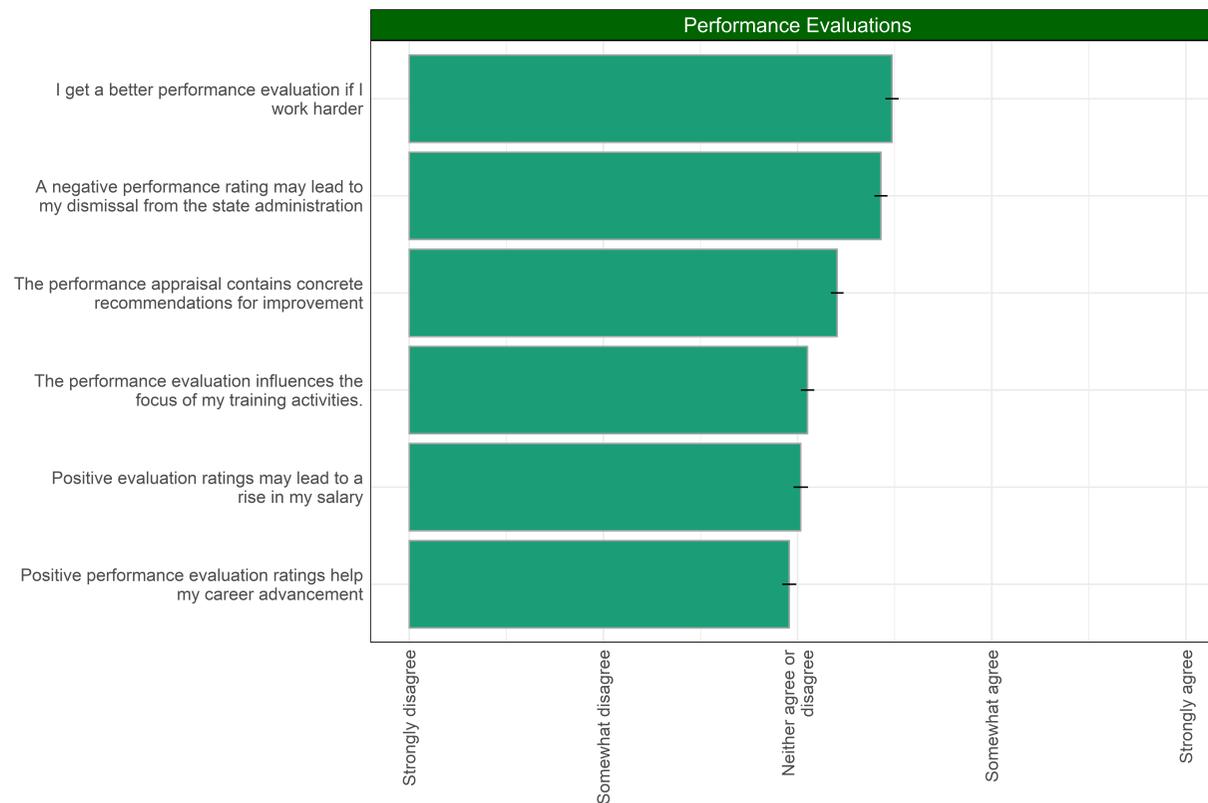
Evaluation process

Consequences of evaluations

92% of staff have had at least one performance evaluations during the last two years. **But** objectives are not always agreed in advance (51%) and feedback is not always provided (66%).



# Performance evaluations with mixed consequences for civil servants' careers salaries and careers



63% agree or strongly agree that a negative performance evaluation may lead to their dismissal.

43% and 38% agree or strongly agree that a positive evaluation will lead to a salary increases or career advancement respectively

Some variation across institutions. More effective evaluations in Ministries of Finance, Agriculture and various central offices

# Performance evaluation: What to do next?

- Frequency of evaluations
    - Ensure that institutions comply with requirements
  - Evaluation process
    - Ensure that managers agree objectives in advance and discuss the results of evaluations
    - Both ex ante agreement of objectives and ex post discussion of results are *positively* associated with desirable attitudes of civil servants
    - Performance evaluation process also strengthens perception of performance-based career advancement and salary
  - Consequences of evaluations
    - Consider more emphasis on positive effect of evaluations, especially, career advancement
    - Effective evaluations (especially when related to career advancement) are *positively* associated with desirable attitudes of civil servants
  - Performance evaluation practices differ across institutions
- ⇒ Consider measures to strengthen performance evaluation process and increase impact on career progression and salary rises to leverage potential positive effect

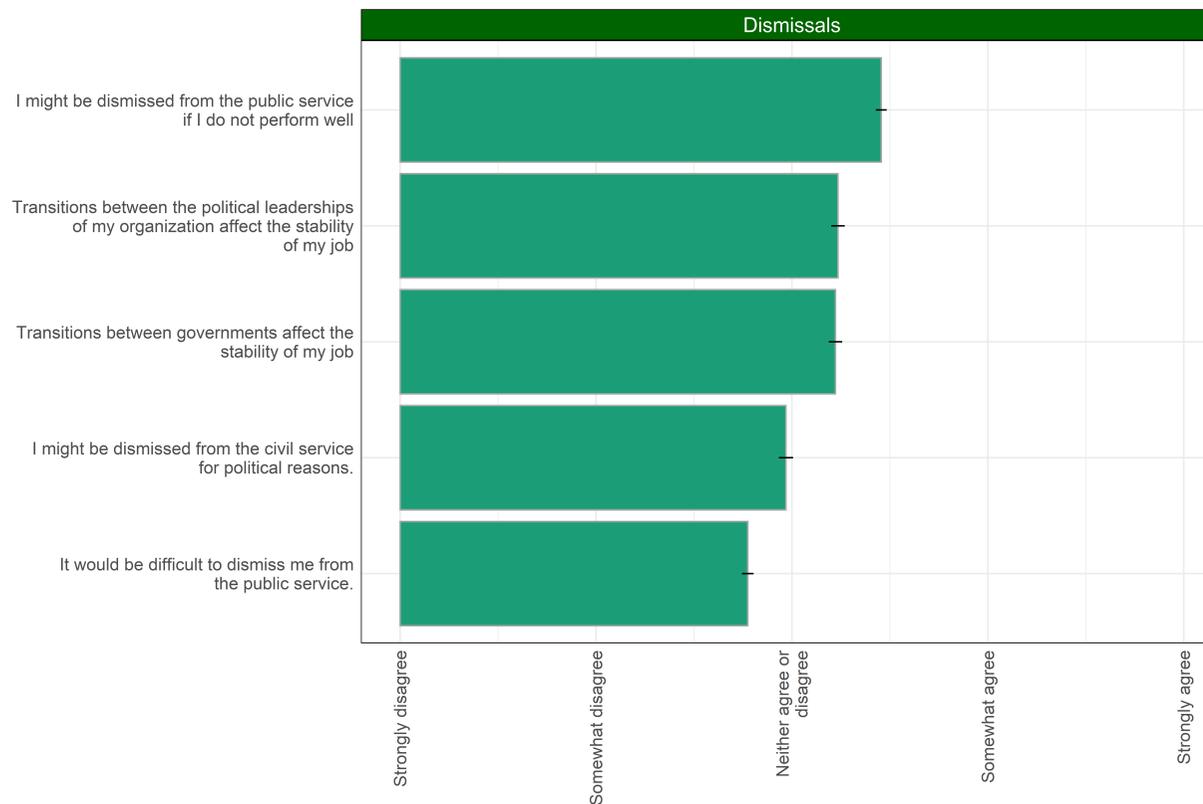
# Job protection

Protection from dismissal

Dismissal for poor performance

Political change and job stability

# Perceived job protection is low among Slovak civil servants



Only 21% agree or strongly agree that it would be difficult to dismiss them from the civil service. By comparison, in Croatia 53% agree or strongly agree.

56% believe that bad performance would lead to their dismissal

42% agree or strongly agree that government changes affect their job stability. 34% believe that they could be dismissed for political reasons.

Political factors affect job protection to a greater extent in ministries.

# Job protection: What to do next?

- Civil servants' sense of job protection is quite low
  - Positive effect of the link between poor performance and dismissal is recognized by civil servants
    - *Positively* associated with desirable attitudes of civil servants
  - Political impact on job instability is widely recognized
    - *Negatively* associated with desirable attitudes of civil servants
  - Some variation across levels of public administration and individual institutions but less compared to other areas of HRM
- ⇒ Consider strengthening the relation between performance and job protection, while diminishing impact of political factors

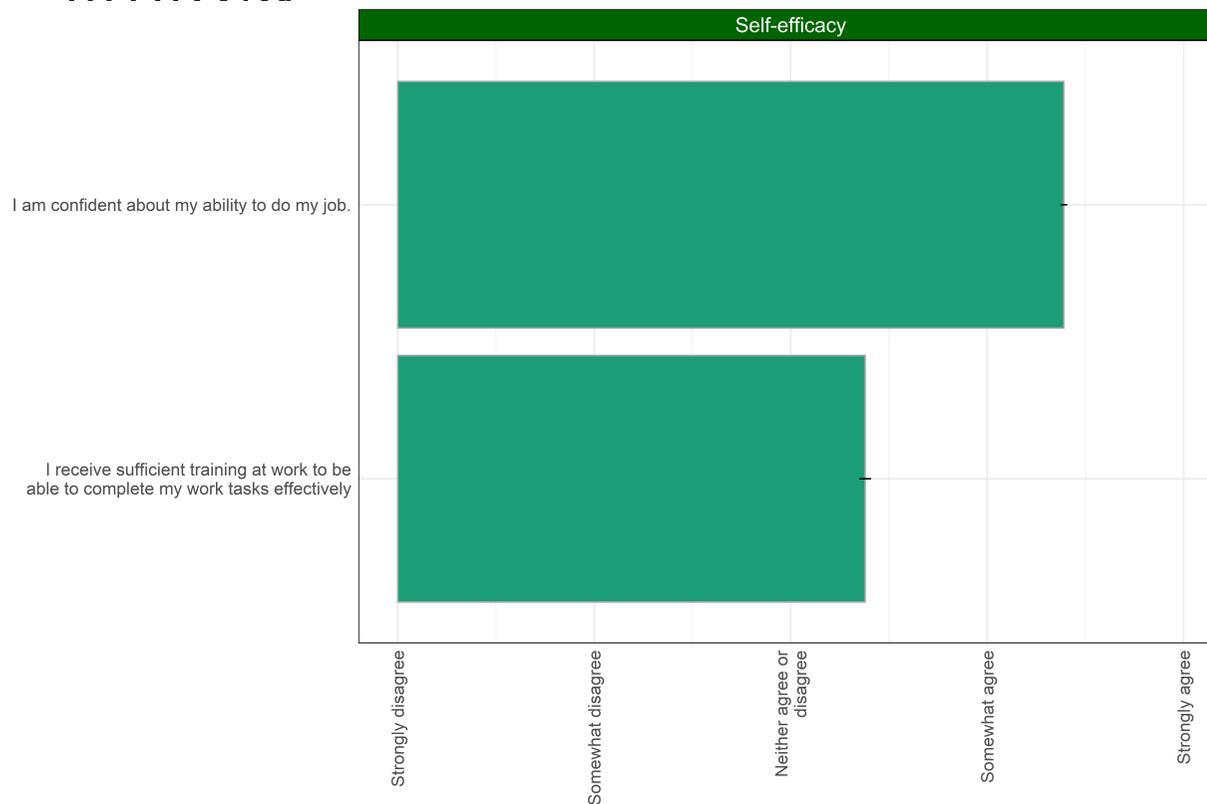
# Training and competencies

Competencies and skill levels

Training participation

Knowledge sharing

# Civil servants feel confident about their competencies but training opportunities are limited



97% of civil servants agree or strongly agree that they have sufficient skills to perform their job.

52% feel that they get enough training.

But variation across institutions:  
More training opportunities in Ministries of Finance, Economy, Labour, Gov Office. Least in Health.

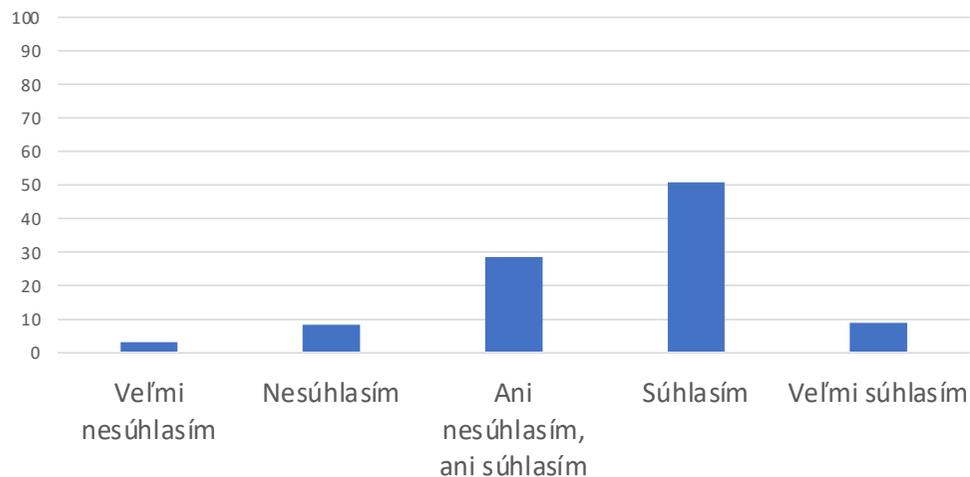
# 79% of civil servants received training during the last year.

- 79% received training during the last 12 months prior to taking the survey
  - District office staff and staff of central offices receive relatively more training
  - Staff in Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Health and Agriculture receive relatively less training
- 47% chose the training themselves. 33% were chosen by their superior. HR Department and senior management with marginal role.
- 83% have since used the skills they learned during the training
- Some knowledge sharing occurring – positive effects of knowledge sharing are evident

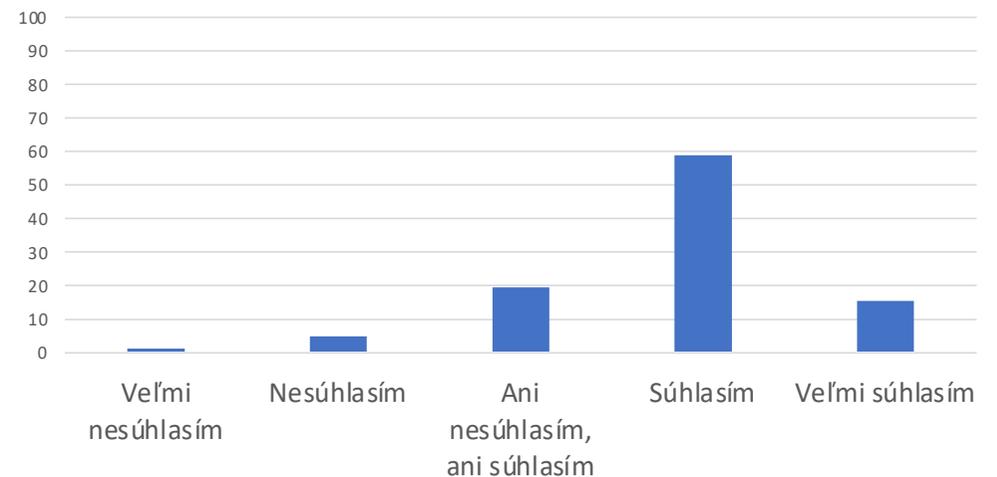
# Knowledge sharing: Positive effects on civil servants' competency levels and attitudes

Some differences across institutions

- 'I often get new information about organizational procedures and skills from colleagues'



- 'I have shared the skills/knowledge gained from the training widely with colleagues at work'



# Training: What to do next?

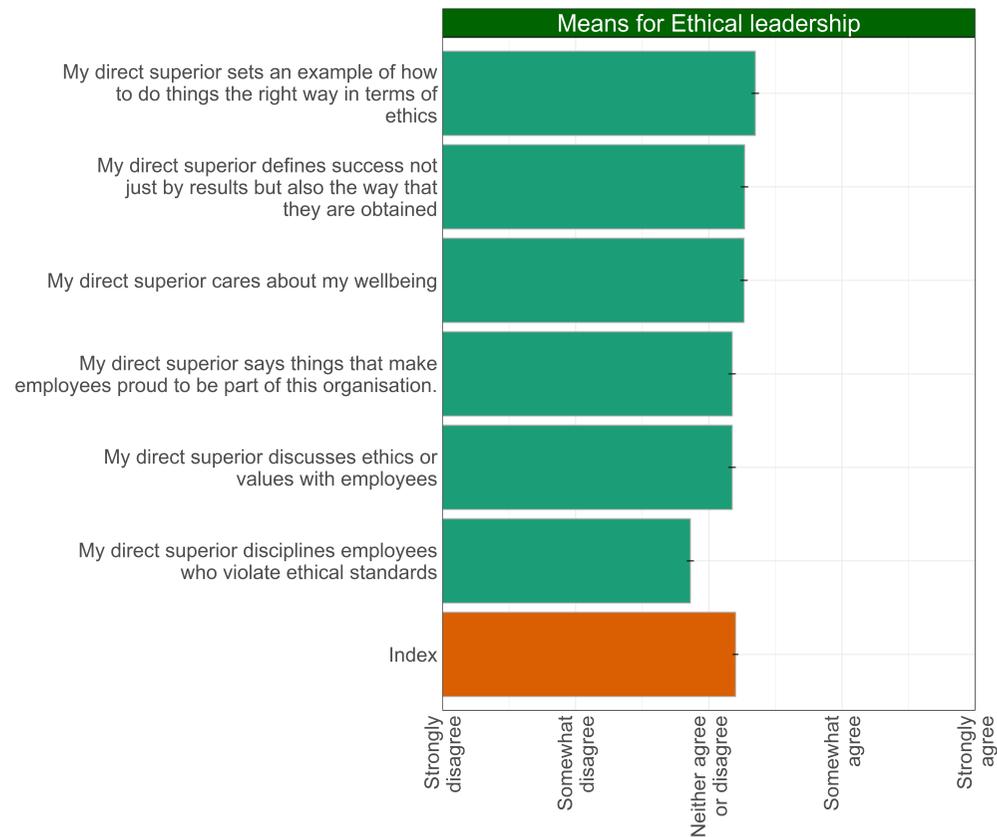
- Perceived competency levels are high
  - Competency levels are *positively* associated with desirable attitudes of civil servants
- Training opportunities are perceived as limited, even though large proportion of civil servants regularly participate in training activities
  - Training insights are used and widely shared among colleagues
  - Knowledge sharing *positively* associated with several desirable attitudes of civil servants

⇒ Invest in training to raise competency levels of civil servants and encourage knowledge sharing among civil servants

# Leadership

Focus here on ethical leadership

# Do managers care for the well-being of their staff and do they practice ethical leadership?



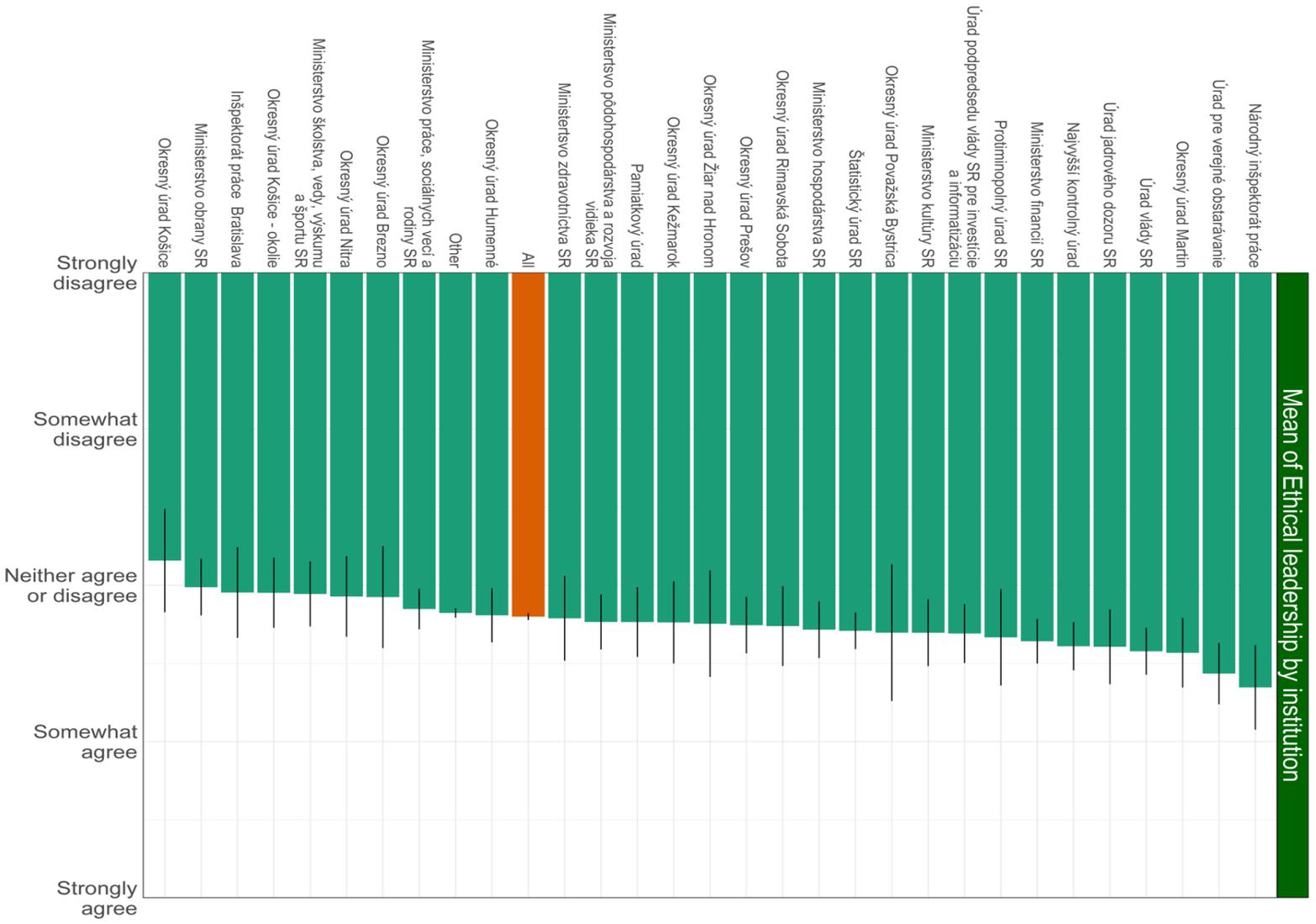
Less than 50% agree or strongly agree that their superior cares for their well-being.

Evaluations of ethical leadership are low:

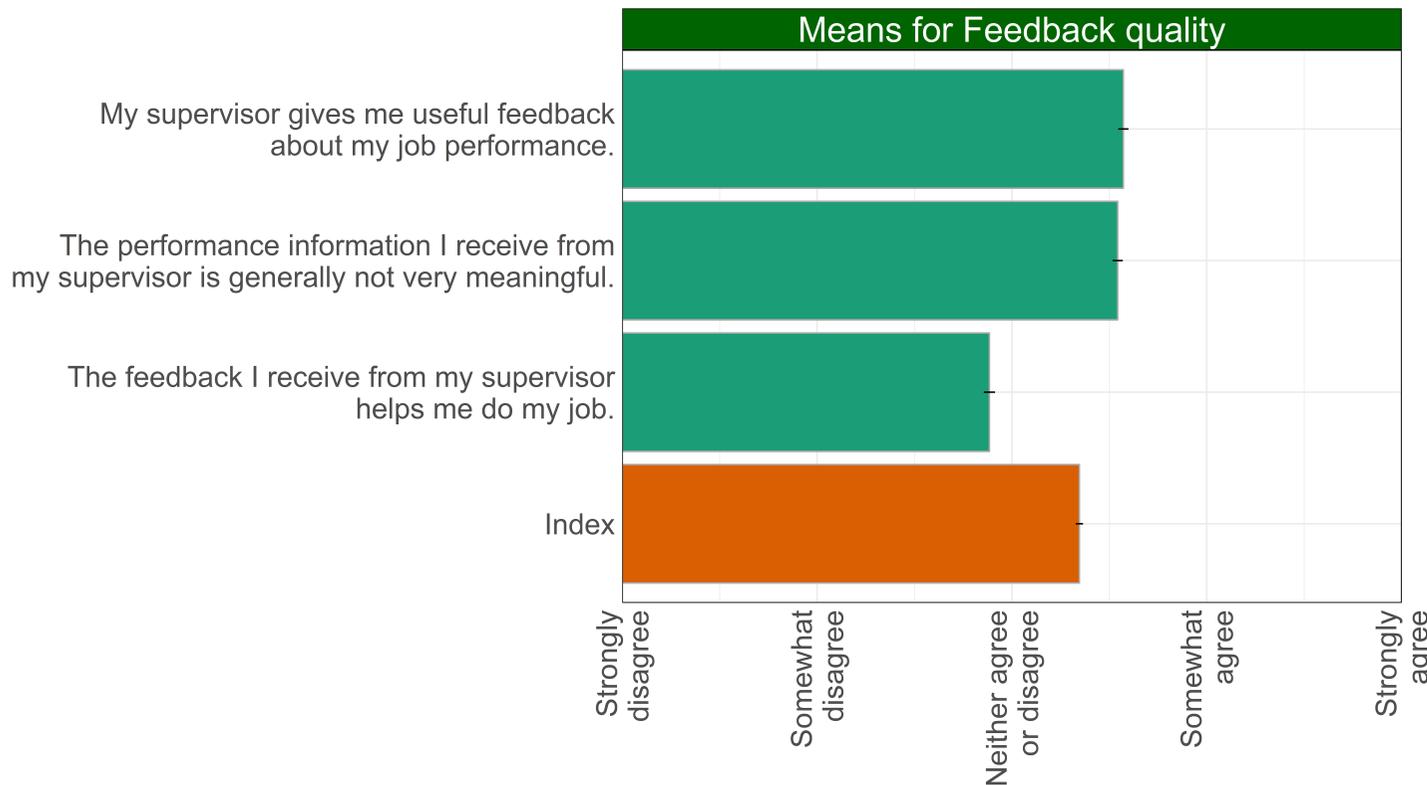
- 30% see ethical standards enforced.
- Less than 50% discuss ethical principles with their superiors

Leadership concern for well-being is perceived as higher in many Central Offices and in Ministries of Finance, Culture and Environment.

Regular managers have a more positive perception of their (own) leadership than subordinate staff



# The quality of feedback from superiors is seen critically



Only 32% agree or strongly agree that their superior provides helpful feedback.

More than 60% consider feedback 'not' to be meaningful.

Compared to ethical leadership, there are few differences in experience with feedback across institutions

# Leadership: What to do next?

- Leadership practices
    - Low evaluation of ethical leadership practices
    - Ethical leadership *positively* associated with desirable attitudes of civil servants
  - Quality of feedback by superiors seen critically
    - Quality of feedback is *positively* associated with desirable attitudes of civil servants
  - Differences in the evaluation of ethical leadership across institutions
- ⇒ Invest in (ethical) leadership practices should be a priority of future reform initiatives!

## Conclusion-1: What next for Slovakia's civil service?

1. Work motivation, job engagement, job satisfaction and pro-social motivation are high **but** scope for improving integrity among civil servants: Consider investment in ethics training and infrastructure?
2. Turn towards formal channels of recruitment but informal channels remain important: Increase reach and appeal of central portal to leverage positive effects
3. Merit recruitment has increased in importance but scope for expanding written exams: Expand use of written exams – or experiment with different types of exams – to leverage positive effects
4. Job mobility and competitive advancement are rare: Expand competitive advancement and reduce (informal) transfers
5. Performance evaluation processes often in-complete and with limited impact on careers and salaries: Work with managers to strengthen evaluation process and consequences to leverage positive effects
6. Job protection is perceived to be low and affected by political cycles

## Conclusion-2: What next for Slovakia's civil service?

7. Competency levels are high and training participation is significant: Expand knowledge sharing activities to leverage positive effects
8. Ethical leadership practices and feedback by superiors receive critical evaluations from staff: Invest in (ethical) leadership practices to leverage positive effects
9. Civil servants' attitudes and experience with HRM varies across institutions and groups of staff: Consider HR networks and work closely with leadership of institutions to raise attitudes and standards across institutions
10. The National Survey of Public Servants in Slovakia provides an effective diagnostic and benchmarking tool: Integrate with HR information system and performance management systems to develop data-driven government analytics

If you have questions on how to take this agenda forward, please do not hesitate to ask. We are happy to assist!

# Thank you!

For questions, please contact us:

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