

Making the Public Sector Attractive to Everyone

Soonae Park
Seoul National University

Making the Public Sector Attractive to Everyone

- A. Strategies for Attracting and Retaining Younger Workers*
- B. Strategies for Attracting and Retaining Senior Public Servants*
- C. Questions of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)*

***A. Strategies for Attracting and Retaining
Younger Workers***

Changing Workforce Demographics and Generational Shifts

Increasing entry of **younger generations**, referred to as "**Generation MZ**"
(Millennials and Generation Z)



**MZ
generation**

- differs significantly **in preferences, expectations, and work styles** from other generation

- Integrates their **unique character** into **public HR strategies** to enhance relevance and effectiveness

- fosters a more **adaptive, resilient, and dynamic** public workforce

- enables the public sector to address **modern governance challenges**

What Drives Young Workers

Balance over Stability

- Young workers value Work-Life Balance(WLB)
 - seeking flexible working arrangements aligned with their Quality-of-Life(QoL)
- Their **career choices** prioritize **well-being** over **job security** (Kimberly et al., 2008)

Reward-Driven Motivation

- **Competitive salaries** and benefits are key motivators for young employees
- They seek **financial rewards** as visible proof of **validation and recognition** of achievement (Ng, et al., 2010)

What Younger Worker Seek Beyond Pay

Growth and Mobility

- MZ employees show a strong desire for **rapid promotions** and **immediate career advancement**
- When lacking growth opportunities or rewards, MZs are more likely to **switch jobs** (Twenge, 2006)
- **[Survey 1- Silent Quitting]** ① Work strictly within paid scope ② Avoid after-hours tasks and gatherings
③ Prioritize personal over organizational needs

Values and Purpose

- Younger generations seek roles aligned with **their values** and **social impact**
- **[Survey 2]** – PSM Generation Gap in value toward public service
- They prefer organizations with a clear **sense of purpose** and **corporate responsibility**, where their roles have significant influence (PwC, 2008)
- youth prefer **project-based work** with visible impact rather than long-term commitment
*“not as a long-term commitment but as **participation in short-term projects**.”* (International Shinto Foundation, 2023)

2022 Public Officials Perception Survey

PPMRC, Seoul Nat'l Univ

- Survey Participants : 926 civil servants from 42 central government agencies
1,051 civil servants from 228 local governments (basic local governments)
- Survey Period : Jan ~ Mar, 2023

A survey on public officials' views regarding public sector performance,
providing key data to develop strategies that respond to the changing public management
environment

2023 Survey on Public Officials' Perceptions of Public Sector Performance

Identify public officials' perceptions regarding
public sector performance and their support or
opposition to the performance management
system

**Assess perceptions of the public sector
performance management system and utilize
the results as foundational data for
developing policy and management
strategies**

Serve as key research data to enhance
public sector performance

**Provide reliable data to support research
aligned with the evolving public management
environment**

[Survey1] - Silent Quitting(1)

PPMRC, Seoul Nat'l Univ

	Age group	N	Mean	SD	MD	t	P-value
I tend to arrive at the office on time rather than early.	20s-30s	987	3.27	1.252	0.55	9.74	0.000
	40s&Older	990	2.72	1.247			
I tend to avoid taking on extra work without monetary compensation.	20s-30s	987	3.29	1.176	0.52	9.91	0.000
	40s&Older	990	2.77	1.139			
I make efforts to use my personal time, such as days off, to improve my job skills.	20s-30s	987	2.94	1.006	-0.31	-7.34	0.000
	40s&Older	990	3.25	0.889			
I tend to refuse additional tasks that are not part of my assigned duties.	20s-30s	987	2.46	0.885	0.10	2.56	0.010
	40s&Older	990	2.36	0.820			
I usually avoid responding to work-related calls or emails after working hours.	20s-30s	987	2.49	1.101	0.24	5.12	0.000
	40s&Older	990	2.25	0.940			
If I finish my tasks early during work hours, I feel it's acceptable to take a break or handle personal matters.	20s-30s	987	2.89	1.003	0.28	6.21	0.000
	40s&Older	990	2.61	0.991			

- Recent behaviors associated with the MZ generation are also evident in the public sector.
- They prefer on-time arrival over early starts, avoid unpaid extra tasks, reject personal-time training, decline non-duty assignments, ignore after-hours messages, and prioritize breaks and personal activities during work.

[Survey 1] - Silent Quitting(2)

PPMRC, Seoul Nat'l Univ

	Age group	N	Mean	SD	MD	t	P-value
<i>I do not attend internal events or meetings unless attendance is mandatory.</i>	20s-30s	987	2.82	0.976	-0.01	-0.22	0.823
	40s&Older	990	2.83	0.942			
It is unreasonable to demand passion or effort beyond what is compensated by salary.	20s-30s	987	3.75	0.989	0.55	12.13	0.000
	40s&Older	990	3.20	1.041			
Dinner gatherings are necessary to promote team cohesion.	20s-30s	987	2.64	1.039	-0.38	-8.43	0.000
	40s&Older	990	3.02	0.975			
Many of my colleagues in the organization perform only the minimum required work.	20s-30s	987	3.39	0.979	0.06	1.38	0.168
	40s&Older	990	3.33	0.947			
When external duties or business trips end early, I tend to leave work immediately.	20s-30s	987	2.78	1.006	0.16	3.58	0.000
	40s&Older	990	2.62	0.991			
Even when facing personal difficulties, work should be completed responsibly.	20s-30s	987	3.68	0.786	-0.25	-7.43	0.000
	40s&Older	990	3.93	0.704			

- Avoid putting in effort beyond what is compensated by salary
- Do not see after-work dinners for team cohesion as necessary
- Prefer to leave immediately after completing their tasks
- Prioritize personal hardships over a strong sense of responsibility for task completion

Public Service Motivation Theory

Perry & Wise's Public Service Motivation (PSM) Theory

Definition

- An individual's disposition to respond to motives that are primarily or uniquely found in public institutions and organizations
- A general altruistic motivation to serve the interests of local communities, the nation, the public, or humanity
- Motivation and behavior in the public domain based on the intention to help others or contribute to social well-being

PSM Variables (①-⑥)

1) Rational motive:

① Attraction to public policy

- For civil servants, it is considered rational to find personal utility in serving the public rather than seeking private gain, and to strive to maximize such utility.

2) Norm-based motive:

② commitment to the public interest, ③ Social justice, ④ Civic duty

- Includes serving the public good, loyalty to the nation, and dedication to social responsibilities.

3) Emotional motive:

⑤ Compassion, ⑥ Self-sacrifice.

- Involves broad affection for others, empathy for the vulnerable, concern for solving societal issues, and a willingness to contribute to the public good without expectation of personal or financial rewards.

Survey 2 - Public Service Motivation

	Age group	N	Mean	SD	MD	t	P-value
Public service that holds value is very important to me.	20s-30s	987	3.17	0.862	-0.34	-9.40	0.000
	40s&Older	990	3.50	0.726			
I am willing to make sacrifices for the public good.	20s-30s	987	3.00	0.879	-0.36	-9.72	0.000
	40s&Older	990	3.36	0.777			
I feel compassion when I see people in difficult situations.	20s-30s	987	3.78	0.707	-0.17	-5.71	0.000
	40s&Older	990	3.95	0.608			
I find it rewarding to participate in policymaking for the public good.	20s-30s	987	3.52	0.755	-0.20	-6.13	0.000
	40s&Older	990	3.72	0.660			
I feel proud to work for my organization.	20s-30s	987	3.22	0.865	-0.28	-7.43	0.000
	40s&Older	990	3.50	0.805			
My organization's values are similar to the values I pursue.	20s-30s	987	2.99	0.859	-0.30	-7.99	0.000
	40s&Older	990	3.28	0.798			
I would like to work for my organization for the rest of my career.	20s-30s	987	2.85	1.014	-0.50	-11.26	0.000
	40s&Older	990	3.34	0.940			

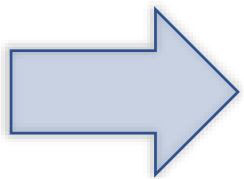
1 = Strongly Disagree

5 = Strongly Agree

- All items related to Public Service Motivation (PSM) showed higher average scores among respondents in their 40s and older compared to those in their 20s–30s.

Challenges in Attracting Young Talent

- The **job-hopping culture** of young workers enables greater **flexibility** and **career growth**
 - This culture does **not work well** in the **public sector**, which has a **rigid employment structure** with **longer-term positions**
- Young employees value **international exposure**, **career mobility**, and **dynamic workplace environments**
 - These preferences reflect a desire for **continuous learning** and **professional growth** through **diverse and challenging experiences**



Attracting talented young workers is a **challenge** when **capacity-building** and **development efforts** are lacking

Leveraging the Characteristics of MZ

Openness, Collaboration and Technological Aptitude

- Despite stereotypes **low motivation or loyalty**, younger generations show **collaborative, technological savvy**, and **openness to innovation**
- MZ workers actively **seek to contribute**, value **Open communication with supervisors** (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2022)
- MZs are well-suited **with gamified processes** and **global communication tools** positions them as **agents of change** in evolving workplace cultures (Dobrowolski, et al., 2022)

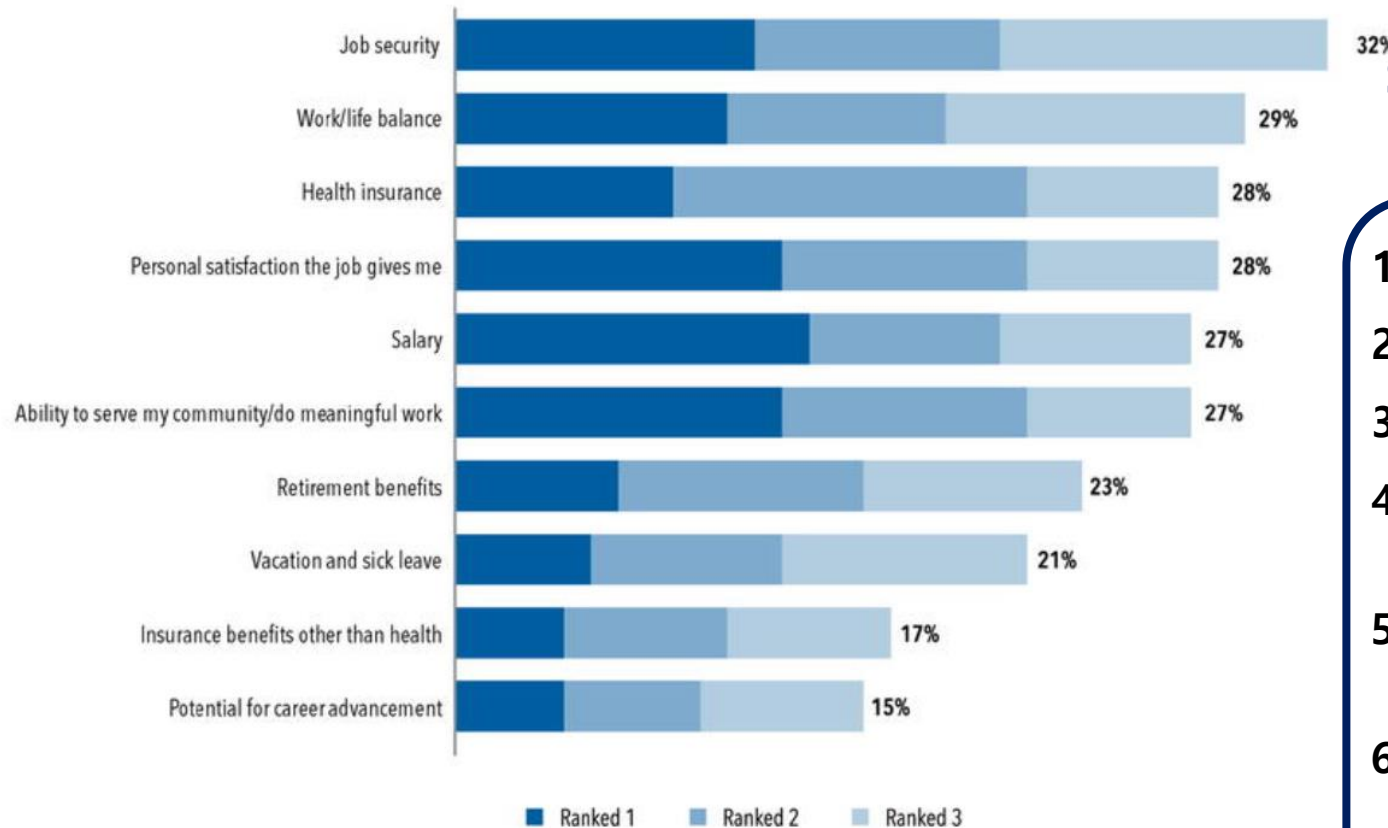
Creating Inclusive, Innovative and Adaptive Work Environments

- By recognizing these qualities, public sector entities can build **inclusive, adaptive, and innovative** workplaces
- These efforts will help attract **top talent** and promote **public service excellence** amid rapid change

Dobrowolski, Z., Drozdowski, G. & Panait, M. (2022). "Understanding the impact of Generation Z on risk management". *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(7).

Myers, K. K., & Sadaghiani, K. (2010). Millennials in the workplace: A communication perspective on millennials' organizational relationships and performance. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 25(2), 225–238.

Strategies for Attracting and Retaining MZ in Public Sector



<Top 3 Factors Initially Attracting you to Work in the Public Sector>

Image Source: <https://icma.org/articles/pm-magazine/attracting-and-retaining-younger-public-sector-workers>

Mission research square institute, 2023. 35 and Under in the Public Sector: Why Younger Workers Enter and Why They Stay (or Don't) p.16, p.27.

Seven Tips for Attracting and Retaining Younger Public Sector Workers

1. Increase Compensation.
2. Show Appreciation and Recognition.
3. Provide Financial Wellness Resources.
4. Prioritize Employee Mental Health and Well-being.
5. Emphasize Employee Impact on Community..
6. Implement Workforce Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Initiatives.
7. Foster Employee Development and Succession Planning.

Making the Public Sector Attractive to Everyone

*Strategies for Attracting and Retaining Senior Public
Servants*

Attracting and Retaining Senior Public Servants

Most strategies mentioned earlier also apply to **senior public servants**

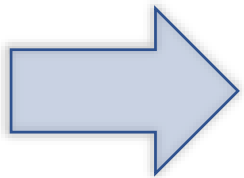
Intrinsic Drivers for Senior Public Servants

- Senior public servants seek a **motivating workplace** with **high-calibre, highly motivated people**
- Motivation is also found in doing **important, meaningful work** for their country and generating **public value**
 - **Scope for managerial roles**, and opportunities to **learn and grow**, can be attractive

Challenges Faced by Senior Public Servants

Organizational and Cultural Frustrations

- Senior public servants often face **organizational and cultural frustrations**
- Constant **inability to promote change** results in **physical, mental, and emotional strain**
- **Lack of progress** and **below-market pay** can lead to resignation
(Baxendale, 2014)
- Addressing these issues is essential to **retain experienced talent** in the public sector



Senior public servants may experience **frustration** due to **organizational and cultural barriers**

Leveraging Senior Experience for Capacity-building

Most strategies mentioned earlier also apply to **senior public servants**



**Senior
Public
Servants**

- can contribute to the **training of younger generations** through their **experience**
- play a key role in **capacity-building**, especially in **developing countries**
- contribute through **peer exchanges** and **technical assistance**
- can promote knowledge-sharing and leadership growth as structured mentoring programs
- *"Pairing newcomers with seasoned public servants through structured mentorship programs will foster knowledge-sharing and leadership growth" (PSI, 2025)*

Public Service Motivation and Public Service Behaviors: Testing the Moderating Effect of Tenure

Jensen, U. T., & Vestergaard, C. F. (2017). *Administration Research and Theory*, 27(1), 52-67.

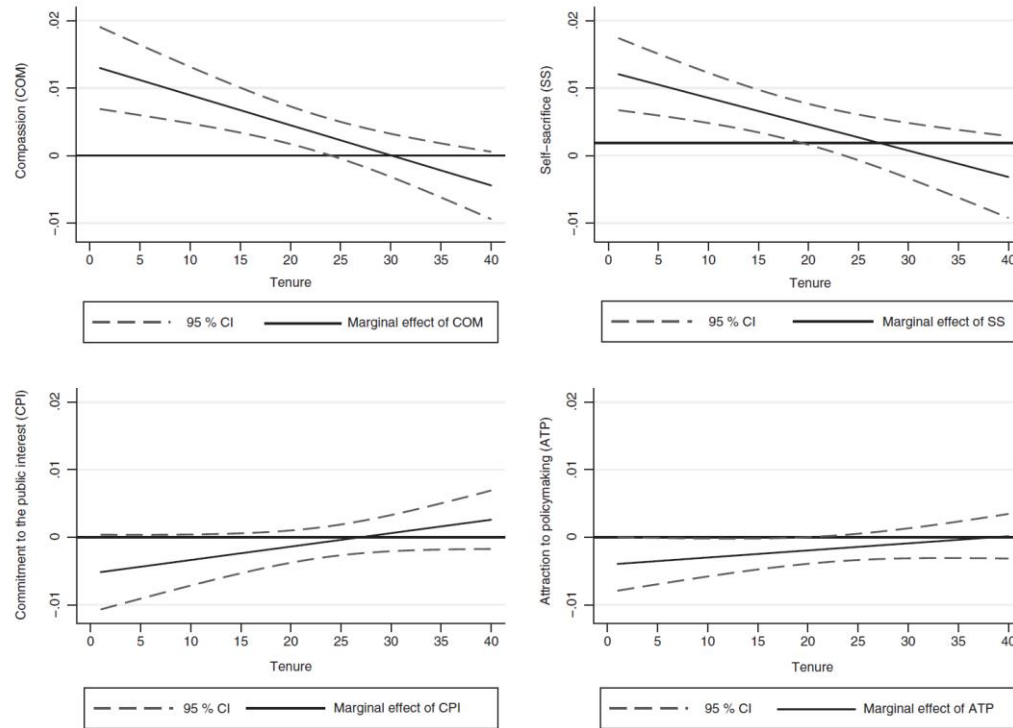


Figure 1. Marginal effects of PSM change on change in the number of home visits for different values of tenure. Note: The marginal effects were not estimated for one observation with extreme value on tenure (49 years).

p.63.

Research Design

- Sample: 213 self-employed Danish GPs
- Behavioral Measure: Number of home visits per GP
- PSM Dimensions: Self-Sacrifice, Compassion, Commitment to the Public Interest, Attraction to Policymaking
- Analytical Approach: Fixed-effects Poisson panel regression

Hypotheses

- H1a–d: Each PSM dimension affects changes in home visit behavior differently.
- H2: The effect of changes in PSM on behavior weakens with longer tenure.

Conclusion

- Emotional and altruistic motives (self-sacrifice and compassion) are especially effective in prompting service-oriented actions.
- In contrast, abstract or policy-level motives (commitment to public interest and policymaking) show weaker links to front-line behavior.
- As tenure increases, GPs tend to rely more on routines and past experience, making their behavior less responsive to motivational change — a form of path dependency.
- For public organizations, this implies that targeting motivational strategies at early-career employees may yield greater behavioral change.

- investigates whether Public Service Motivation (PSM) influences actual public service behaviors and how this relationship is moderated by tenure.

Making the Public Sector Attractive to Everyone

Questions of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)

Promoting Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Importance of DEI in Workforce Retention

- Diversity, equity and inclusion are essential to **retain a qualified public workforce**, especially in settings with persistent inequalities
- Public sector workforce planning must account for the **underrepresentation of marginalized groups**

Wage Inequity and Structural Barriers

- **Wage equity**—equal pay for similar work and performance—is often **not implemented** in practice
- In fragile or conflict-affected countries, **externally funded staff** may receive **higher salaries** than public servants (e.g. Afghanistan case)
- Inequalities raise concerns over **equity**, distort **incentives**, and undermine **HR planning** and **wage sustainability**

Advancing Inclusion and Equality in the Public Sector

Institutionalizing Inclusion and Non-Discrimination

- Retaining motivated employees requires **inclusive workplaces, bias reduction, and equal opportunity** (OECD, 2020)
- DEI aligns with two core principles of effective governance:
 - Non-discrimination
 - Leaving no one behind

Progress and Remaining Inequalities

- **Gender equality** in the public sector has advanced globally, driven by **international support and data integration**
- Persistent issues remain
 - Elitism
 - Discriminations; race, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, migration status, etc
- Brazil case (aims **to promote ethnic and racial equality, adopting SDG18** under 2030 Agenda)

Public Sector Gender Equity

Public sector employs more women than the private sector



Public sector gender equity is correlated with country income

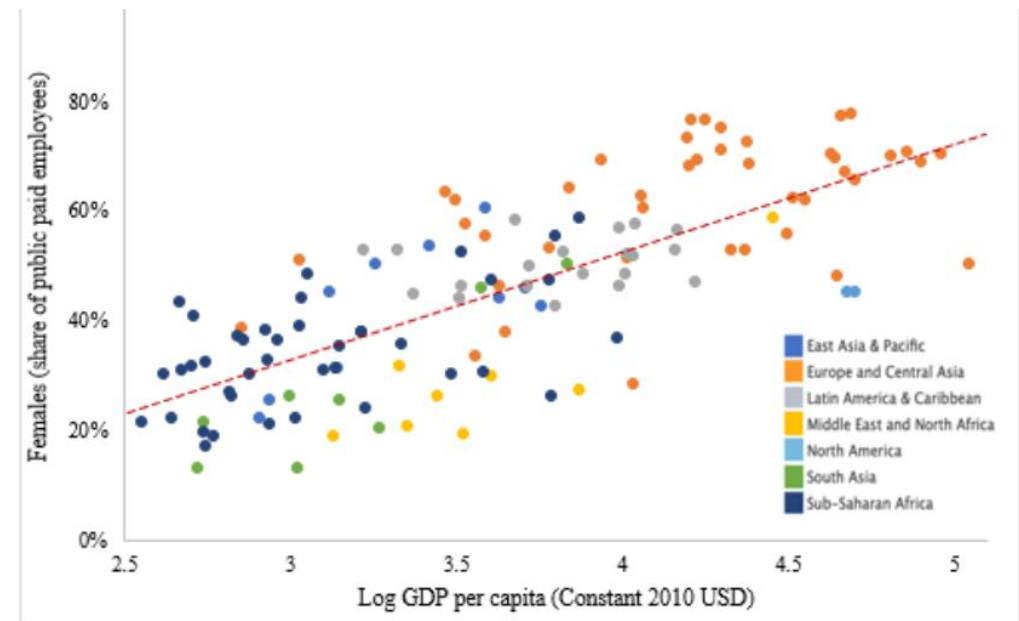
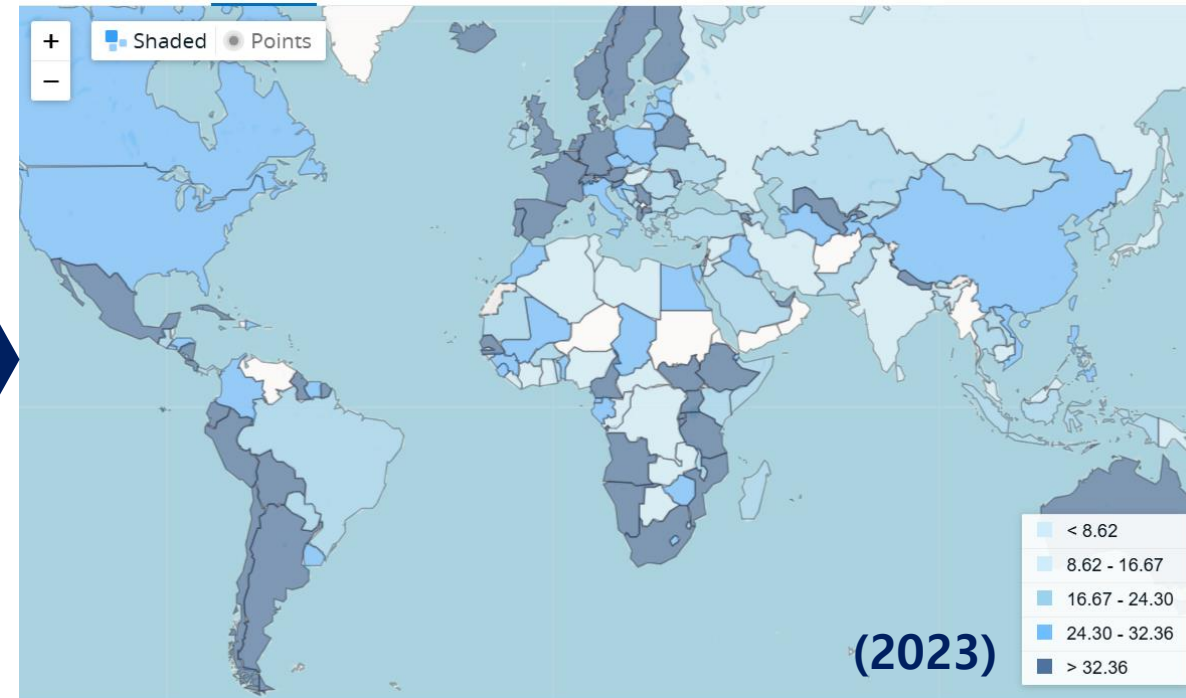
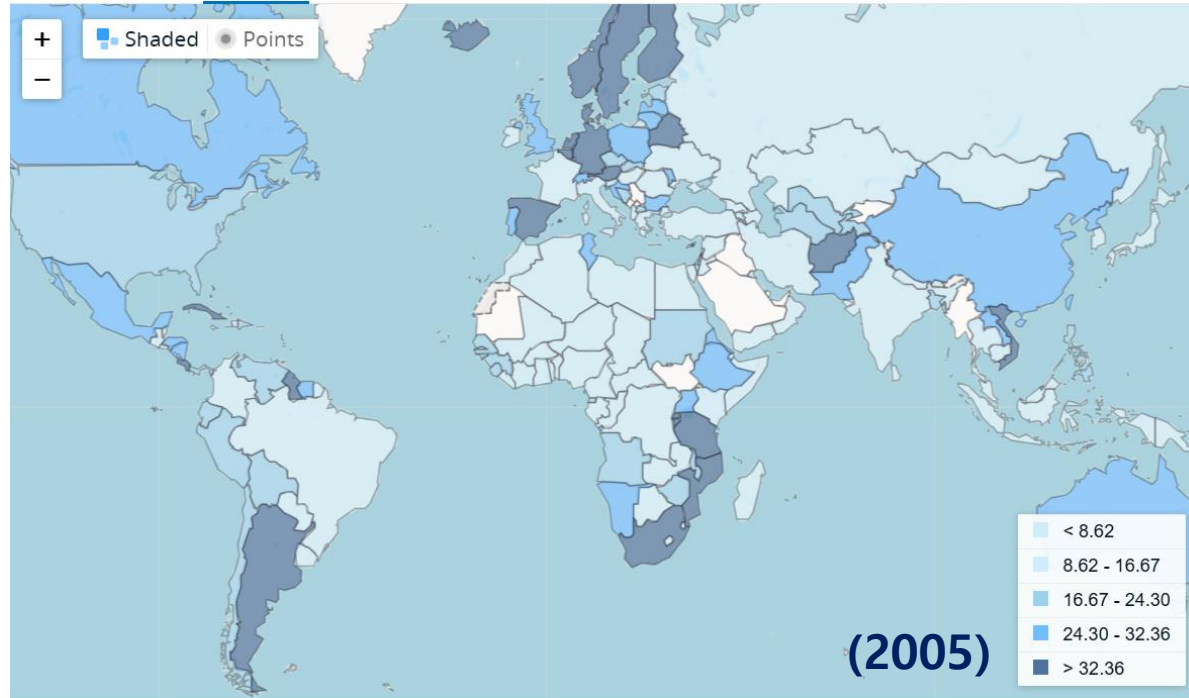


Image Source : <https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/governance/five-facts-gender-equity-public-sector>

- women represent 46 percent of the public sector workforce compared with 33 percent in the private sector
- Women are rapidly gaining in the public sector, where they outnumber men in 55 nations
- Female employment in the private sector is generally believed to have a U-shaped relationship
- In the public sector, there is a consistently positive relationship between female participation and country income.

Proportion of Seats Held by Women in National Parliaments (%)



<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SG.GEN.PARL.ZS?view=map>

- Women are vastly underrepresented in decision-making positions, although there is some evidence of recent improvement
- Disparities are most prevalent in developing countries.
- Gender parity in parliamentary representation is still far from being realized.

Racial and Ethnic Pay Equity I



Fig. 1 Ratio of top 10 % income share to population share, 2000 and 2014. AIAN = American Indian or Alaska Native. NHPI = Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. *Source:* U.S. Census Race and ethnicity file, Form 1040 data, 2000 and 2014.

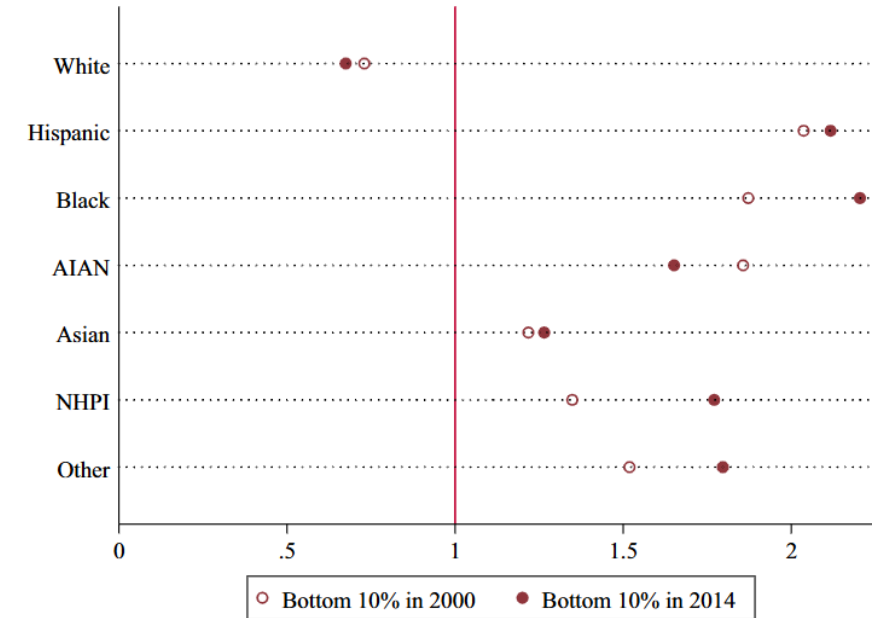


Fig. 2 Ratio of bottom 10 % income share to population share, 2000 and 2014. AIAN = American Indian or Alaska Native. NHPI = Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. *Source:* U.S. Census Race and ethnicity file, Form 1040 data, 2000 and 2014.

Image Source: Akee, R., Jones, M. R., & Porter, S. R. (2019). Race matters: Income shares, income inequality, and income mobility for all US races. *Demography*, 56, 999-1021. pp.1008-1011

- Whites hold a disproportionately large share of top incomes, while Asians receive slightly more than their population share.
- Hispanics, Blacks, American Indians, Pacific Islanders, and Others are underrepresented at the top but overrepresented at the bottom.
- Asians are overrepresented at both extremes of the income distribution, indicating high internal inequality.

Racial and Ethnic Pay Equity II

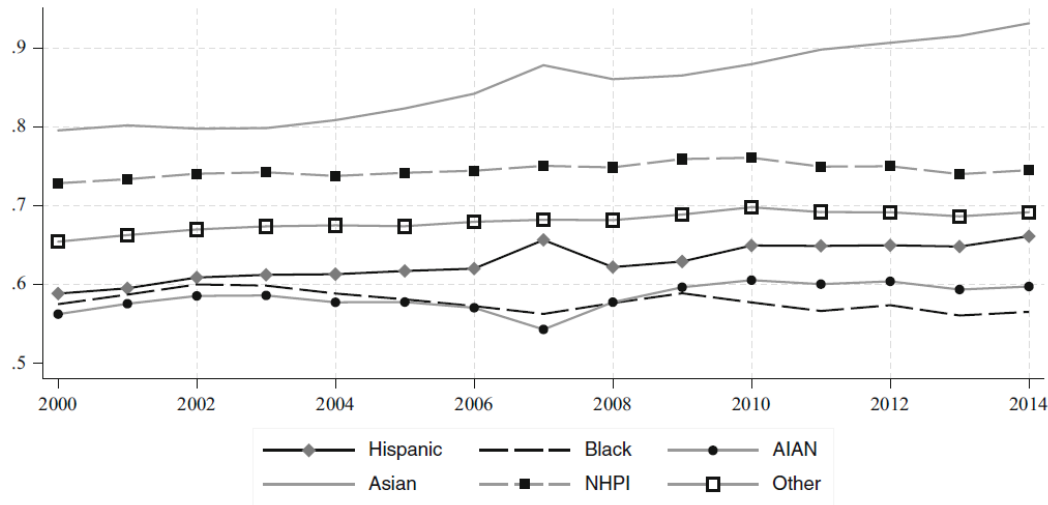


Fig. 3 Income ratio at the 20th percentile, by race/ethnicity relative to white. AIAN = American Indian or Alaska Native. NHPI = Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. Source: U.S. Census Race and ethnicity file, Form 1040 data, 2000–2014.

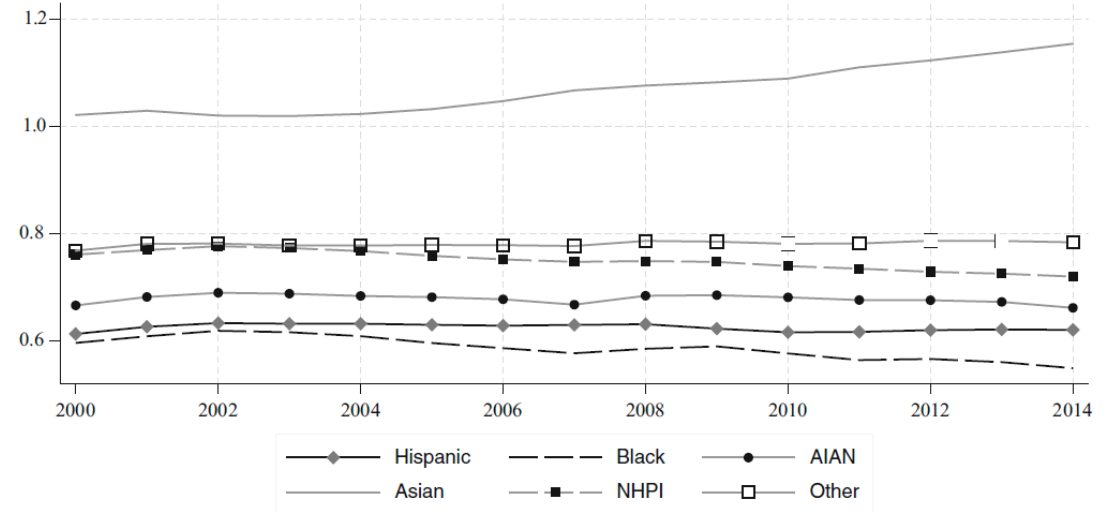


Fig. 4 Income ratio at the 80th percentile, by race/ethnicity relative to white. AIAN = American Indian or Alaska Native. NHPI = Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. Source: Race and ethnicity file, Form 1040 data, 2000–2014.

Image Source: Akee, R., Jones, M. R., & Porter, S. R. (2019). Race matters: Income shares, income inequality, and income mobility for all US races. *Demography*, 56, 999–1021. pp.1011–1014

- At every point in the income distribution, Blacks, Hispanics, and American Indians earned significantly less than Whites—ranging from one-half to two-thirds of White incomes.
- Only Asians consistently showed income growth, eventually surpassing Whites at the 80th percentile and above.
- All other groups remained clustered below parity with Whites across low, middle, and high income levels.
- These persistent disparities suggest structural racial differences beyond class or occupation alone.

Thank You!