

## International Experiences with Senior Executive Service Cadres

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A growing number of countries now manage their senior public servants within a distinct human resource management (HRM) regime with tailored recruitment, management, and remuneration practices which differ from those applied elsewhere in the public service. While there is a shared logic behind the establishment of such a differentiated group, including the need to select and train a body of staff with distinctive skills in strategic leadership who can manage the interplay between politics, policy, and implementation, and to promote policy coordination between departments and over time between administrations, there are also some country-specific reasons for these developments.

This note aims to provide a brief overview of what makes the "Senior Executive Service" (SES) or "Senior Civil Service" (SCS) cadre (hereafter described as the SES) distinct from other civil servants and to uncover the underlying challenges that the creation of a SES attempts to address. It points out that no hard and fast rule exists for defining a SES, as countries retain distinct HR classifications and civil service systems. However, these cadres could be generally defined as the *top management category* of the civil service (excluding political appointees) when this is managed under a *separate HRM policy* that differs from that applied elsewhere in the public service. In addition, the note presents different SES models, options for managing SES performance, issues related to pay and incentives, and a number of recent trends from selected country examples. It does not address the issue of pure political appointees, such as in the US or the cabinet *ministériel* systems of France, Belgium, and Italy, because the appointment and management of political appointees differs substantially from those of regular civil servants (James 2007). The limited evidence available shows a trend towards the creation of such cadres and changes within those that have been created, though the jury remains out on the impact and effectiveness of such cadres in relation to the objectives/rationale for introducing them

### I. Defining the boundaries of the SES

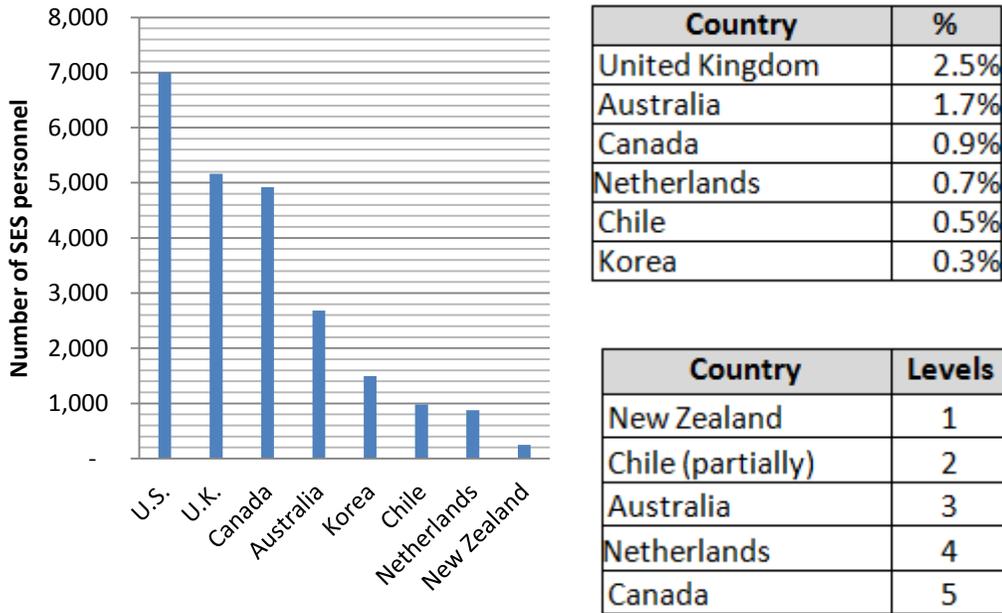
SES cadres have distinctive characteristics in terms of the staff included and the degree to which the HRM policy affecting those staff differs from the rest of the public service.

#### A. Staff groups covered

SES cadres normally cover between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> tiers of the civil service (excluding political appointees). Figure 1, below, provides examples.

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**Figure 1. Number of SES personnel, SES as percentage of total public service and hierarchical levels covered (selected countries, 2010)**



Source: Author’s review of secondary material (sources included in the reference section)

SES may cover the first tier/grade within the civil service (as in New Zealand’s Chief Executives program), the first two tiers (in the case of over half of the agencies in Chile), or additional tiers (Australia, Canada, UK, and the US). This is an important distinction as the challenges and management of SES positions serving as bridges between politics and policy (first tier) are very different from those between policy and implementation (second tier and below).

While some systems focus SES cadres exclusively on managerial functions (Chile, New Zealand), other systems also include senior advisory roles (Canada, Australia, UK). The skills and competencies required for these groups also differ.

**B. Dimensions of difference in HR policy**

SESs show differences in several or most of the following areas of HR policy:

- **Recruitment:** Countries have different recruitment processes, sometimes using a central unit, independent panels, selection committees, or supervising bodies to shortlist candidates.<sup>1</sup> Other countries open up senior positions to competition from the wider civil service and private sector. The main purpose is to enforce a merit filter with each country allowing different degrees of political involvement. At one end of the spectrum are

<sup>1</sup> Within Europe, only two states have created a central, specialized body for the management of Senior Civil Servants: the Ministry of the Interior in the Netherlands and the Civil Service Capability Group in the United Kingdom within the Cabinet Office. In the case of Australia and US the central agency regulates, but agencies directly hire SES staff. New Zealand has a centralized body for the management of the SES, as does Chile for recruitment and selection.

Westminster systems with the largest independence from politicians, where commissioners are entrusted with ensuring merit-based selection and approval of appointments of recruitment for senior positions. At the other end of the spectrum are countries where the recruiting responsibility lies with the minister of each department and often no external checks and balances exist on the process for recruitment into senior positions. Systems between these two extremes often follow a hybrid process where entry into the senior management cadre is open and merit-based but the government has discretionary influence over the allocation of posts.

- *Performance Management:* Countries with a SES cadre typically have also established specific arrangements for managing their performance, separate from the rest of the public service and generally very closely aligned with the agency's corporate objectives. Annual individual performance agreements are common practice. Most of them assess competencies but also include objectives related to the business of the ministry or agency in which they work, as well as generic management objectives appraised across the cadre such as personnel or financial management. Some countries like France also include a section prepared by the supervisor on the context in which the executives had to perform.

Though low performance or the limited achievement of previously agreed performance targets can, in some cases, result in termination of employment of the manager (e.g. France) or a remedial training program (e.g. Korea), dismissal of first tier managers is often more related to other factors such as politics.

SES members are typically classified based on their performance along the following scale: “outstanding,” “surpassed the objectives,” “achieved all objectives,” “met most,” and “low performance.” While some countries such as the UK, Canada, and Korea include quotas for different performance groups, others such as the US and Chile do not, with most senior executives appraised within the top level. In the case of the US, the percentage of executives evaluated at the top rating increased 6 percent from 2006 to 2009 (United States Office of Personnel Management 2010).

- *Employment contracts and mobility:* Terms of appointment vary across countries. In some countries staff retain permanent appointment as civil servants but can gain a fixed-term appointment for a specific SES position (OECD 2010). In Belgium, managers receive a temporary mandate of six years. In Finland, though top management posts in central government are permanent, they receive fixed-term appointments of five years. In the Netherlands, members of the Top Management Group are appointed for a term of five years, and they can prolong this period twice for the duration of one year each time, after which they must be transferred; the general government service appoints other senior public service members to positions for a period from 3 to 7 years without mandatory transfer (OECD 2008). SESs are often targeted for special mobility programs to develop a stable elite cadre with a whole of government perspective.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The development of performance contracts and targets for senior staff is a more general phenomenon across the OECD whether or not there is a distinctive SES in place. The effect is to replace the previously tacit performance expectations defined broadly by the overall job objectives and various codes of conduct with more concrete, formalized and targeted specifications linked, in various ways, to job security.

- *Emphasis on management skill development and competencies:* Many countries have defined competencies for the SES, which broadly include: leadership, communication, strategic planning, personnel and financial management, among others. Training is then tailored for the cadre based on these management skills and competencies.
- *Remuneration:* A higher percentage of the salary for SES is often performance-based, and includes in-kind allowances. To enhance attraction and retention, SES positions can have individualized contracts reflecting personal characteristics and attractiveness in the labor market, as well as job responsibilities. Performance-related pay is very common for SES, and is usually structured into different levels based on performance. In most countries, the maximum bonus tends to be below 10 percent of remuneration, although it can reach higher levels. Table 1 presents performance-related pay practices in selected countries with SES cadres.

**Table 1. Performance-related Pay in selected SES Systems**

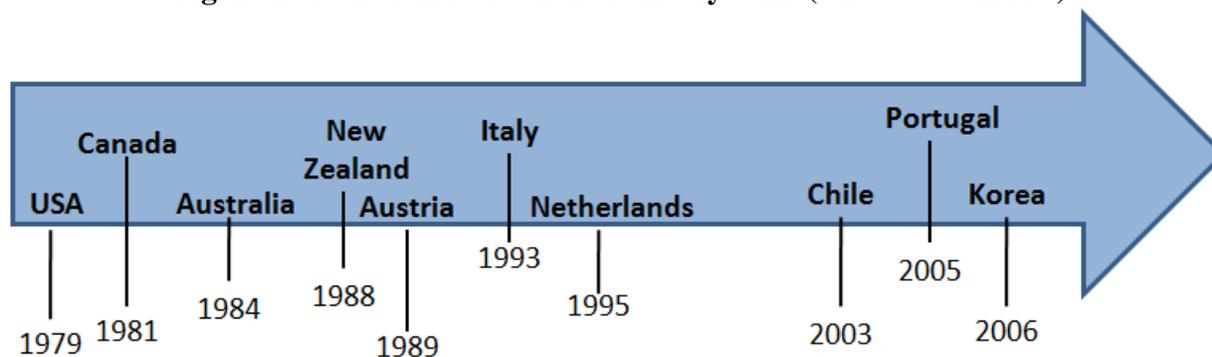
Country	Performance-related Pay Practice
Canada	10% for more junior level (EX1); higher for more senior ones (EX4 and EX5). Top three performance groups out of four receive bonus.
Chile	Can reach the equivalent of 100% of remuneration. All SES members obtain the bonus consistently.
France	Can reach 20% of remuneration.
Korea	Can reach 15% of remuneration.
Italy	Can reach 10% of remuneration.
Netherlands	No performance-related pay for over 90 percent of SES staff. Only highest level staff eligible. Annual bonus equivalent to one month salary (8.3% of remuneration)
UK	Performance bonus, on average, 8.5% of pay in 2010. Amount defined by each institution. Only top two performance groups out of four can obtain some kind of bonus (in 2009, 73% of SES staff did, in 2010 only 58%).
US	99% of SES received some kind of bonus in 2009. Top 3 groups out of 5 get bonus (on average, 9.1% of remuneration for “Outstanding”, 6% for “Exceeds Expectations” and 2.8% for “Fully Successful”).

Source: Author’s review of literature (see references section below)

## II. An apparent increase in the number of SES Systems

Defining a SES is imprecise but based on the above criteria it seems that the introduction of a SES cadre is a relatively young reform in the public sector and seems to have occurred primarily in OECD countries. Figure 2, below, presents a timeline with the year of introduction for some of these systems.

Figure 2. Year of introduction of SES Systems (selected countries)



Source: Author's review of literature (see references section below)

### III. Why are SES systems being created?

At the national level there is much rhetoric surrounding the creation, reform or existence of a SES making it hard to discern the problems to which they are responding. If all the rhetoric were correct, then we would be seeing continual and cumulative improvement in already impressive public services. Reviewing the more analytical literature suggests that there are two principal functional problems to which the SES seem to respond. There are also highly variable and country-specific reasons discussed below.

#### A. *Distinctive skills and competencies*

Senior government posts are a tough semi-political territory that require distinct skills and competencies often not developed within traditional departmental careers. This, in turn, the argument goes, requires distinctive recruitment efforts to attract and retain the right staff together with distinctive competency management to build the right skills.

SES cadres establish clear merit or competency bars to ensure that only the right people can enter these strategic positions. Half of EU member states have central competency profiles for senior civil servants, which are used for recruitment and training (OECD 2010). In Australia, the Senior Executive Leadership Capability Framework includes the five elements of: (i) shapes strategic thinking; (ii) achieves results; (iii) exemplifies personal drive and integrity; (iv) cultivates productive working relationships; and (v) communicates with influence. In 2004, the Australian Public Service Commission released an Integrated Leadership System (ILS) expanding on the capability framework to give a broader framework for executive and senior executive development. The ILS provides capability descriptions at each level and desired behaviors as tools for agencies and individuals to use in their leadership development. It has also been used at both the service-wide level and in a number of agencies to inform the planning and implementation of leadership growth strategies.

The independence of the recruitment process through the use of panels, selection committees, and supervising bodies is designed to establish a clear and transparent standard of competency. In Belgium, SES candidates are first screened by an independent head hunting firm using tests and interviews. In Chile, SES candidates are selected through a process that combines the use of a head hunting firm for local executives and a private sector HR firm that screens online

applications. These firms prepare a long list that an independent SES Council uses to prepare the shortlist for the selection of the candidate by political authorities.

To further develop the distinct skills and competencies required for effective leadership, SES are provided with intensive training and capacity building in management and leadership. A number of countries have established tailored training programs for their SES (e.g. Canada, France, Italy, Korea, Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain, UK, and the US) and some have made executive training programs a prerequisite for entry (e.g. India, Singapore).

### ***B. Continuity and a "whole of government" perspective***

Many countries face the issues of a lack of continuity in senior government positions and the pursuit of narrow, stove-piped departmental agendas, creating a staccato form of government - with much energy lost in reinventing initiatives and getting new staff up to speed. To address these issues, SESs are established to create a lasting cadre with a whole of government perspective through experience across a range of government functions and working with diverse politicians.

In Canada, a more general shift from specialization, silos, and hierarchies to coordinated approaches and shared visions created the need for leaders capable of developing relationship across agencies. Considerable resources have been invested in management training for senior civil servants to enable such flexibility and provide a "big picture" perspective of the Civil Service. In the UK, there is a recognition for the need to develop more flexible employment patterns in the senior civil service and for greater mobility within and interchange outside the civil service (National Institute for Governance 2003). One of the explicit objectives for the creation of the Senior Public Service in the Netherlands was to promote better coordination and cooperation between senior officials at different ministries, as senior executives are increasingly expected to work across departmental and public sector boundaries. In Italy, the development of an inter-ministerial database with resumes of all senior executives and a list of updated available positions was created to promote mobility at the senior levels. In France, there is mobility between ministries and various positions within the administrative systems through temporary assignments.<sup>3</sup>

SESs are also established to create a lasting cadre with a whole of government perspective in order to ensure leadership continuity between elections and other major changes in government. During elections in Australia the senior management, along with the rest of the public service, holds "caretaker" responsibilities – to assist the caretaker government to administer the country while no new policies are made. The SES also hold important stewardship functions to ensure that the rest of the public service has the capacity to serve successive governments irrespective of the style of a Minister or government. The creators of the SES in the United States specifically envisioned it as a cadre of high-level managers in the government who could provide leadership for agencies across administrations and readily move into different assignments as needed (Carey 2011).

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<sup>3</sup> They are also permitted to take a leave of absence to hold political office or work in the private sector while maintaining their benefits (pay and grade) (Ministry of the Presidency, 2010).

Many would argue that the developments in the SES have led to increased accountability for senior managers to deliver, as they have seen their roles change from “advisors, administrative, comptrollers” to “transformational leaders, agenda transmitters, relays towards center, knowledge harnessers, policy entrepreneurs, public goods deliverers, and governance engineers” (Bourgault and Van Dorpe 2011, 3).

### ***C. Country specific reasons for creating SES***

In addition to the generalized problems identified above, the creation of SES is also inevitably responding to local political and administrative circumstances. Two examples illustrate this. In Chile, the development of the SES has provided an opportunity to introduce an additional merit threshold at senior levels that have traditionally been held by short-term political appointees. In the US and the UK, it seems that one implicit purpose of the creation of the SES was to attract and retain a more risk-tolerant group of staff – not least through the distinctive emphasis on performance-related pay and performance contracts for the SES in those settings.<sup>4</sup> Whether in fact the pay and the nature of the contracts is, de facto, sufficient to change the profile of staff applying for more senior positions is not clear.

## **IV. Types of SES Models**

Within the broad category of SES, there are various models which exist: (A) Formalized versus Recognized; (B) Centrally Managed versus Decentralized; (C) Career-based versus Position-based (Kuperus and Rode 2008).

### ***A. Formalized versus recognized***

Formalized SES cadres can be defined by law or policy as a separate group of civil servants (for example, in the Netherlands, Chile, New Zealand), or recognized, but not defined by a law or policy instrument, as in France, Spain and Sweden, among other countries (see Figure 3).

### ***B. Centrally managed versus decentralized***

SES cadres can be managed by central office in charge of selection, training, retention and remuneration policies. Alternatively, the role of the central agency may be limited to regulatory functions, with each agency or ministry identifying their own SES positions, selecting them and, in some cases, negotiating individual contracts. Partially centralized SES cadres include Poland and Portugal, and partially decentralized systems include Australia, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Spain and Sweden. Examples of institutions that manage SES cadres include in the Netherlands the Ministry of Home Affairs, in the UK the Civil Service Capability Group within the Cabinet Office, or in the case of Chile, the National Directorate for Civil Service.

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<sup>4</sup> There is a well-established research literature on the potential “sorting” effect of performance-related pay in developed country contexts, attracting workers who prefer to work under the pressure of tighter performance monitoring (Booth and Frank 1999; Bandiera and others 2006; Cadsby and others 2007).

**Figure 3. SES cadres: Formalized versus Non-Formalized Status (selected countries)**

<b>FORMALIZED SCS STATUS</b>	<b>NON-FORMALIZED STATUS</b>
Belgium	Germany
Italy	Austria
Malta	Denmark
The Netherlands	Slovakia
Poland	Spain
Portugal	Estonia
United Kingdom	Finland
Romania	France
Australia	Greece
Chile	Ireland
Unites States	Latvia
Canada	Luxemburg
New Zealand	Sweden

Source: (Ministry of the Presidency 2010)

### ***C. Career-based versus position-based***

In career-based systems, SESs are drawn from a pool of candidates originally recruited at the entry level through competitive exams, promoted over time and eventually selected into a SES. In a position-based system, SES appointments are drawn from a wider pool comprising all public servants who are qualified, as well as the applicants from the private sector. However, this distinction is becoming less salient as career based systems are opening their recruitment process to entries from non civil servants, and position-based systems are beginning to provide more long-term career management through early identification and cultivation of potential future leaders (Kuperus and Rode 2008).

### **V. SES and political involvement**

While the arrangements for SES emphasize merit and distinctive competencies, it is important to note that this does not imply that there is no political involvement in appointments. The political concern to ensure that the civil service is responsive to changes in policy priorities leads inevitably to pressures for some role in senior staff appointments (Matheson and others 2007).<sup>5</sup> However, merit and political acceptability can and do co-exist. The SES in the US provides an example of how these concerns are blended. It has two types of positions:

1. Career Reserved positions are those that, as defined in law, are "to ensure impartiality, or public's confidence of impartiality of government." These positions can only be filled by career appointees.
2. General positions that may be filled by any type of SES appointee -- career, non-career, limited term or limited emergency.

Within those, four types of appointment can be made:

<sup>5</sup> There is some evidence suggesting that in OECD and Central and Eastern European countries, the pressures for political involvement in senior staffing positions is increasing (Meyer-Sahling and Veen 2012).

1. Career appointments may be to a General or Career Reserved position: incumbents are selected by agency merit staffing process and must have their executive qualifications approved by a Qualifications Review Board convened by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM).
2. Non-career appointments are approved by OPM on a case-by-case basis and the appointment authority reverts to OPM when the non-career appointee leaves the position.
3. A Limited Term appointment may be made for up to 3 years, is non-renewable and must be to a SES General position which will expire because of the nature of the work (e.g. a special project).
4. A Limited Emergency appointment is also a nonrenewable appointment, may be for up to 18 months, and must be to a SES General position established to meet a bona-fide, unanticipated, urgent need.

There are caps on the numbers of non-career appointments. They may be made only to General positions and cannot exceed 25% of the agency's SES position allocation. Government-wide, only 10% of SES positions may be filled by non-career appointees.

## VI. Recent Trends

A number of recent trends are highlighted here based on available material and comparisons between surveys of SES.

### ***A. An increasing move to define a separate group of SES<sup>6</sup>***

Over 75 percent of countries included in the 2010 OECD survey declared having a separate SES cadre, up from about 65 percent in 2005.

### ***B. More emphasis on the management of performance<sup>7</sup>***

In a comparison of OECD Government at a Glance statistics between 2005 and 2010, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Japan and Spain moved from answering "No" to "Yes" on the question of whether they are placing a stronger emphasis on the performance management of their SES cadre. Clearly, the improvement of performance appraisal for managers has been one of the main trends in SES management. The US, for example, is currently working on improving SES appraisal for two reasons: (i) SES staff performance appraisal varies per agency receiving the highest performance rating increased from 43% of the total in 2006 to 49% of the total in 2009; and (ii) performance appraisal methodology for SES is not standardized. The US is now working on a new system, which aims to correct a recent trend at some agencies to overemphasize results when evaluating executives' performance, and guarantee at least some consideration for other characteristics (e.g. leading people, leading change, business acumen, building coalitions and being results driven). They are also creating a uniform performance appraisal template for all agencies, though the weight given to each of the factors may vary, and improving the transferability of SES members (Losey 2011).

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<sup>6</sup> Comparison of 2005 and 2010 data (OECD, 2011), (OECD, 2009)

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

The direction of change in performance appraisal is towards: (i) establishing clear expectations between the executive and her/his immediate supervisor and reflecting these in the performance agreements; (ii) ensuring regular dialogue and feedback, with a minimum of an annual formal appraisal and in many cases a mid-year review too; (iii) aiming for balanced objectives, business-related but also general management objectives (efficiency, personnel management); and (iv) forced rankings, in many cases with quotas for distributing SES performance ratings.

### **Box 2. Recent Reforms and Developments in SES Performance Management – Selected Countries**

**US:** Performance appraisal reform with the objectives of reducing SESs achieving the top score (reversing the increase from 43% in 2006 to 49% in 2009) and standardizing the appraisal process across the administration.

**UK:** Ensure alignment with government strategy; balanced objectives between business delivery, finance/efficiency and people/capability; enforcement of quotas for three performance groups (25% Top; 65% Achieving; 10% Low) and performance appraisal reviews at least mid-year and annually.

**Canada:** Performance management based on key leadership competences, values and ethics; and basis for performance pay. Performance objectives classified in *Ongoing Commitments* (unchanged from year to year – i.e. HRM, finance) and *Key Commitments* (business-related and for the fiscal year). Four performance groups, ranked using a normal distribution and performance appraisal reviews at least mid-year and annually.

**Portugal:** Annual performance appraisal, but full assessment after 3-year period. Top managers’ assessment based on achievement of business targets, competences, leadership and management. Three common objectives: (i) improving efficiency; (ii) complying with deadlines for paying suppliers; (iii) ensuring high quality of performance appraisal for their staff.

**France:** Annual appraisal based on objectives linked to indicators; operational quality of service and capacity; assessment by the line manager of the context for performance.

**Chile:** Relatively low commitment from political authorities - prepared by technical staff or the manager himself. Established for three-year period (duration of contract), with annual targets and progress reports from the executive to its supervisor (one-way street). No performance quotas.

**Korea:** Annual appraisal, agreed with immediate superior. Four performance levels, training for those with low performance is one year.

Source: Author’s review of secondary material (sources listed in reference section)

***C. Increasing reliance on performance-related pay***

In general, countries with a SES are increasingly using performance-related pay to remunerate and incentivize their senior executives. For example, the proportion of performance-related pay is higher for SES when compared to other civil servants in Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Korea, Norway, the United Kingdom, and the US (OECD 2008). In addition the Czech Republic, France and Slovak Republic recently increased performance-related pay for SES (Table 1). Practices vary widely in terms of the scope (the levels within the SES for which performance related pay is used), the form (either as a percentage of base remuneration or an additional bonus), and the amount (from 5%-100%). In Chile, performance pay can reach a bonus equivalent to 100% of base pay, while in the Netherlands there is no performance-related pay for over 90% of SES staff – and the remaining 10% are only eligible for an annual bonus equivalent to one month’s salary (8.3% of remuneration).

***D. Greater focus on attracting and retaining talent***

In Australia, the devolution of responsibility for setting SES pay and employment conditions to agency heads in 1998 coincided with the progressive move from collective to individual bargaining for SES employees, something deemed important to encourage attraction and retention of SES staff. Under the devolved bargaining framework there are no APS-wide (Australian Public Service) SES pay rates or employment conditions, but each level of SES has ranges, and agencies negotiate pay at the individual level. In the US, where pay for SES is managed centrally, there was a decrease in pay satisfaction between 2006 and 2008. Countries with more mature SES cadres such as Australia, Canada, and the US have been carrying out periodic surveys for their SES staff to identify early trends and potential issues, in particular those that may affect retention. The existence of staff associations of senior executives has also been considered helpful as a way of having a permanent dialogue on employment conditions, among other objectives.

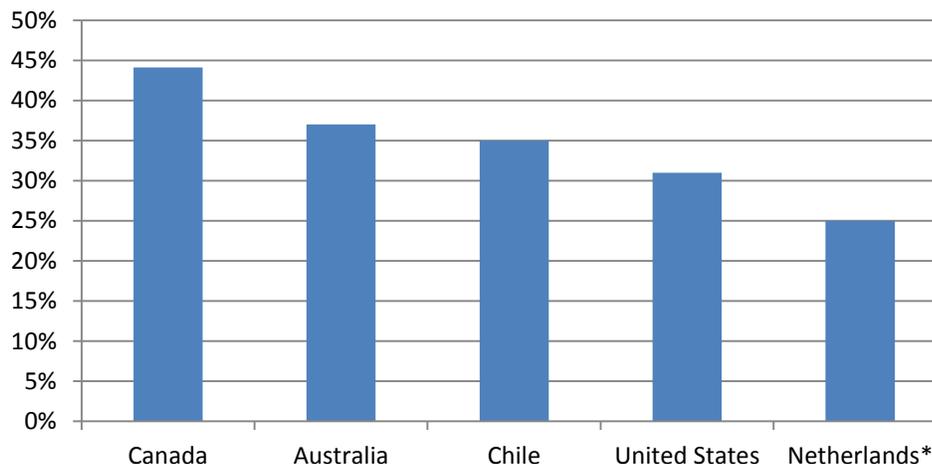
***E. Moves towards gender parity***

In Canada, the proportion of women executives has risen significantly since 1983, with the number almost tripling since 1998. In the majority of OECD countries, the share of women in senior management positions is increasing.<sup>8</sup> The Netherlands, for example, set a target of 25 percent of women in their SES system by the end of 2011.

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<sup>8</sup> OECD 2008, "The Senior Management in the Public Service of Central Governments", in OECD, *The State of the Public Service*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

Figure 4. Women as percentage of total SES staff (selected countries)



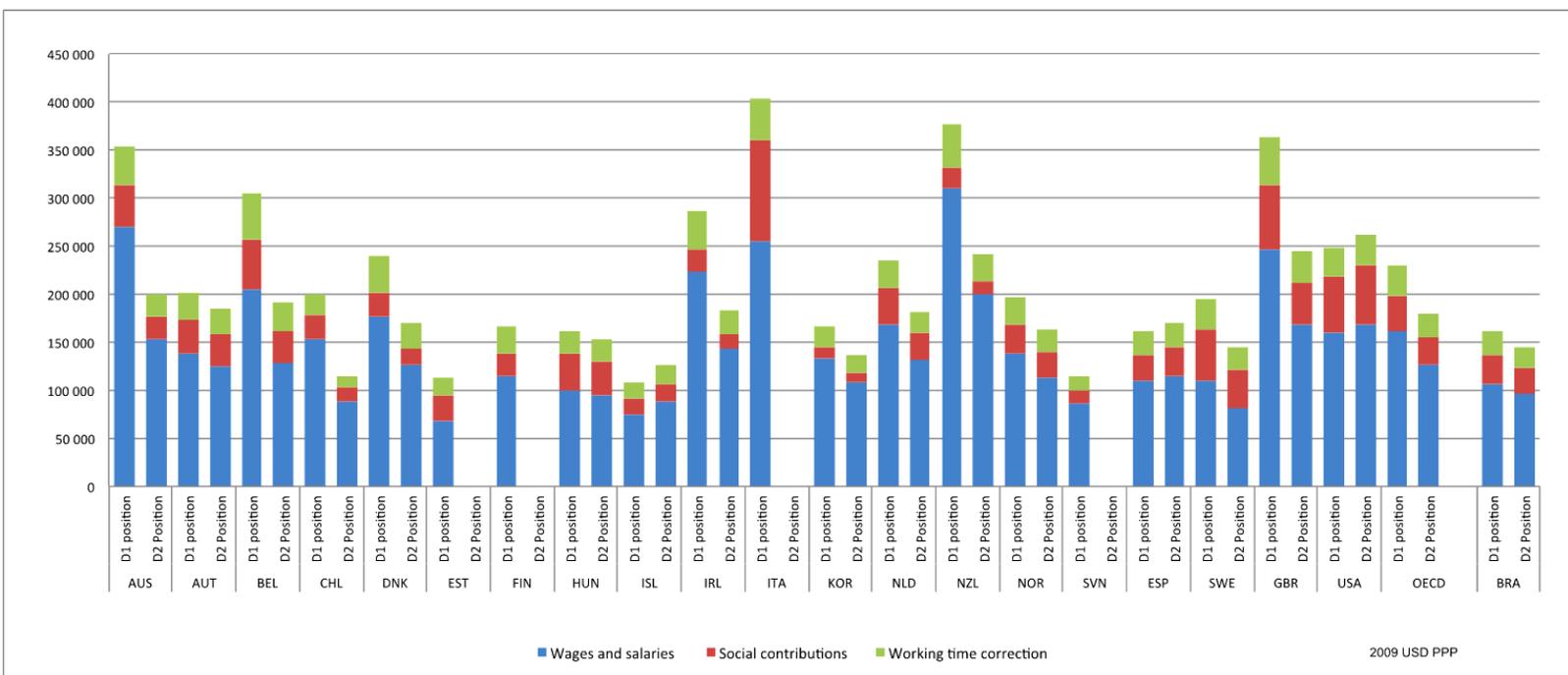
Source: Author's review of secondary sources (sources available in reference section)

\* Policy objective for 2011.

***F. Compensation for senior managers varies significantly across countries***

Compensation of top level positions in 2009, represented below in Figure 5 as D1, varied significantly across countries in Purchasing-Power Parity (PPP) terms, ranging from roughly 100,000 (Israel) to 400,000 (Italy). Pay differentials between the first and second level (D2) also varied across countries, with Chile, Ireland, New Zealand and the UK showing the highest differences. More specific data on SES compensation for cross-country comparison represents a pending item in the SES research agenda.

**Figure 5. Average annual compensation of central government senior managers– First and Second Level (2009)**



Source: (OECD 2011)

Note: D1 Managers are top public servants *below* the Minister or Secretary of State. They could also be SES members or appointed by the head of government. In countries with a system of autonomous agencies, D1 managers correspond to Directors General. D2 Managers may be part of SES, they determine the objectives, strategies and programs for particular units under their supervision.

## VII. Conclusions

### A. What might be driving the growth in the numbers of SES staff?

Since the mid-1990s, growth in Australia’s SES, the United Kingdom Senior Civil Service and Canada’s Executive Group has been similar, although growth has been faster in Australia since 2003. All jurisdictions have also experienced growth in senior executives as a proportion of total public service employment. In Canada, agencies are subject to quotas in respect of the two most senior levels of the executive group levels. Canadian departments must seek Treasury Board approval to increase their approved total baseline of these positions (Australian Public Service Commission 2011).

In Australia, pressure on the time of Secretaries has increased significantly – and this is thought to have increased demand for senior SES support. Relative growth in the SES equivalent grades in the United Kingdom and Canadian civil services has been similar, suggesting that some of the factors relating to the growth in programs, complexity and the accelerating policy cycle may be common (Australian Public Service Commission 2011).

Table 2. Expansion of SES staff (selected countries)

Country		1996	2009	% Increase
Australia	SES	1,779	2,683	51%
	<i>SES/Total</i>	<i>1.24%</i>	<i>1.66%</i>	<i>34%</i>
Canada	SES	3,680	4,923	44%
	<i>SES/Total</i>	<i>0.59%</i>	<i>0.87%</i>	<i>47%</i>
UK	SES	3,373	5,162	53%
	<i>SES/Total</i>	<i>1.66%</i>	<i>2.49%</i>	<i>50%</i>
Country		2004	2011	% Increase
Chile	SES	417	979	135%
	<i>SES/Total</i>	<i>0.25%</i>	<i>0.48%</i>	<i>92%</i>

Sources: (Australian Public Service Commission 2011; Chilean Council for Senior Management System 2011)

### ***B. Are they working?***

The difficulty in defining SES cadres reflects the uniqueness of individual models designed to fit the specific context of each country. SES systems are relatively young, and tend to be a more common practice in OECD countries. This may be due to reasons related to political maturity. The countries with SES cadres have also been willing to depoliticize at least some key aspects of the management of senior positions to ensure professionalization and achieve better results.

Outside of the OECD, there is much interest and some developments in establishing SESs. India's Administrative Service has existed for many years with the objective of ensuring that senior and middle management would be staffed by a cadre of people with a basic level of general (academic) competence selected through a competitive process who would not have stakes in any one department silo or ethnic group/state, but would take a whole of government view. Brazil's Direção e Assessoramento Superiores system has tried to create some kind of elite cadre of senior civil servants, but still with a great number of them assigned in a discretionary way. In Nepal, recommendations to improve civil service leadership and management have included the creation of a Senior Civil Service Group (Shakya 2010). In the Caribbean region, the inadequate preparation for senior management positions has led to a call for the need to formally identify and delineate the senior management core of the civil service – of which one prerequisite would be to complete a planned development program (Draper 2001). The *Administradores Gubernamentales* program in Argentina and the *Alta Conducción* program in Uruguay represent other attempts to install SES systems in Latin America, although with limited success (Ramos and others 2012).

In countries with established SESs, the limited studies available suggest that they may not be fully achieving their objectives. Though one of the main objectives to establish the Australian SES in 1984 was to create a whole of government view, a recent review of the SES and the country's public administration found that less than 40 percent of the 3,000 SES members "definitely see themselves as part of an APS-wide leadership cadre" rather than as leaders only of their agency (Australian Public Service Commission 2011). In the US, the government's original vision to create a mobile SES has also not been realized. A recent review by McKinsey of the US SES in 2012 reveals that only 8% have worked at more than one agency during their entire SES tenure (Partnership for Public Service 2012).

SES cadres also don't appear to necessarily improve the retention of senior civil servants. In Chile (a relatively young SES system with a high number of positions in the first tier more subject to political interference) turnover between 2004 and 2010 was close to 50 percent, compared to 11 percent in the UK during 2005 to 2010 (Chilean Council for Senior Management System 2011). In the US, a 2008 SES survey found that 40 percent of executives wanted to leave within three years. More recently, in 2011 the turnover ratio was 10.3% or 794 SES employees who separated from the Federal workforce, up from the prior year figures of 8.5% or 641 SES employees.

### *C. Overall*

As in many areas of civil service management, much more is known about what has been done than about what has been achieved. The strong belief in a SES is clear, and there are some emerging directions of change – but whether these represent more than fashion is not obvious.

As early as 1983 a GAO review found that in relation to four identified goals of the US SES (accountability for results, managerial flexibility, protection from political interference, and managerial competencies) the SES showed some promise (US General Accounting Office 1983). However, recent evaluations have been rather thin on the ground and views on the SES tend to take the form of analyses of the way in which their design in practice reflects the intentions set out when they were established. For example, in the US recent reviews of the SES focus on refining the model, rather than taking an in-depth approach to analyzing the effectiveness of current practices (Booz Allen Hamilton 2009; Kohli and others 2011). In cases where more formal evaluation or audit institutions have been involved, more evidence is available on the extent to which SES models achieve their objectives (The Audit Office of New South Wales 1998).

Ultimately, whether to establish a Senior Executive Service and what specific conditions to apply to the cadre reflect country-specific choices. While there is clear perceived value in its establishment for a number of the reasons discussed above, evaluations on the effectiveness of such arrangements along a number of dimensions (retention, building an esprit de corp, and organizational performance) remain elusive.

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