

# Recruitment and Retention of Professional & Technical staff in the Civil Service

Submission for Public Service Pay Commission from the Department of Public  
Expenditure and Reform

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Professional & Technical grades

This submission discusses the recruitment and retention of professional and technical (P&T) staff across the Civil Service. The majority of staff in the Civil Service work in general administrative grades which may exist in all Departments (Clerical Officer, Executive Officer, Higher Executive Officer, Administrative Officer, Assistant Principal, Principal Officer, Assistant Secretary, and Secretary General). P&T grades differ as they involve specialist work, often with more specific qualification or compliance requirements, and often with different pay scales and conditions of employment. Some P&T grades exist in only one Department; others are common to two or more Departments. The distinction between general staff and P&T staff can sometimes be unclear, for example ICT specialists are often given general administrative job titles.

The recruitment and retention of P&T staff may present specific challenges when compared to general Civil Service grades, due to the more limited pool of available labour, the often highly specific skillsets and qualifications required, and the existence of comparable public and private sector positions with more attractive offerings, both at home and abroad.

## 1.2. Findings set out in this document

This Department does not have information to show a generalised recruitment and retention problem among all P&T grades. The number of applications to P&T posts overall has remained healthy in recent times, and quantitative data is outlined in section 3 (page 8 onward) to examine trends.

However, there is information which suggests the existence of some issues for P&T grades in specific areas of the Civil Service. More localised information is provided in the illustrative examples in section 4 (page 14 onward). Some concluding commentary is offered in section 4.5 (page 18 onward).

## 2. Central policies which may affect recruitment and retention of P&T grades

### 2.1. Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (FEMPI) Acts, and their unwinding

The following table summarises the reductions in pay since 2010 which may have affected those serving in or considering applying to a P&T position:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Nature of Adjustment</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Legislation / Circular / Agreement</b>
<b>1/1/2010</b>	Reduction in salary	Salaries up to €125,000 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 5% on €30,000</li> <li>- 7.5% on next €40,000</li> <li>- 10% on next €55,000</li> </ul> Salaries in excess of €125,000 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- €125,000 - €165,000: 8%</li> <li>- €165,000 - €200,000: 12%</li> <li>- Over €200,000: 15%</li> </ul>	FEMPI (No. 2) Act 2009 Circular 28/2009
	Reduction in fixed allowances	5% for salaries under €125,000 8% for salaries over €125,000	FEMPI (No. 2) Act 2009 Circular 28/2009
<b>June 2011</b>	Public sector pay cap	€200,000 new Public Service appts €250,000 new Commercial CEO appts	Government Decision & Press
<b>Q1 2012</b>	Public Service Allowance Review	Certain allowances abolished or modified for new entrants. Other allowances abolished or modified for all staff.	Government Decision
<b>1/7/2013</b>	Reduction in remuneration for higher paid public servants (>€65k)	Annual remuneration (= salary and allowances in the nature of pay) in excess of €65,000 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 5.5% on €80,000</li> <li>- 8% on next €70,000</li> <li>- 9% on next €35,000</li> <li>- 10% on anything above</li> </ul>	FEMPI Act 2013 Circular 08/2013
	Increment deferral	Annual remuneration (salary and allowances in the nature of pay): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- &lt; €35,000: 1 x 3 month</li> <li>- &lt; €65,000: 2 x 3 month</li> <li>- &gt; €65,000: 2 x 6 month</li> <li>- &gt; €100,000: 3 years</li> </ul>	FEMPI Act 2013 Para 2.18-2.25 Haddington Road Agreement
<b>1/11/2013</b>	Creation of “merged” scales for New Entrant grades	Applied to New Entrant scales. Generally made up of: Full non-New Entrant scale PLUS two additional points at minimum	Circular 02/2014 Para 2.31 HRA

Table 1: Reductions in pay since 2010, which may have affected professional and technical positions

Conversely, the following table shows recent increases in pay which may affect those serving in or considering applying to a P&T position:

Date	Nature of Adjustment	Details	Legislation / Circular / Agreement
1/1/2016	LRA increase for lower paid public servants	- < €24,000: 2.5% increase - €24,000 - €31,000: 1% increase	Lansdowne Road FEMPI Act 2015 Circular 17/2015
1/4/2017	LRA increase for lower paid	Up to €65,000: €1,000 increase	FEMPI Act 2015 Circular 08/2017
	Restoration of 2013 HRA cut	- €65,000 - €110,000: restoration of half of July 2013 cut - > €110,000: restoration of one third of July 2013 cut	FEMPI Act 2015 Circular 08/2017
1/7/2017		Expiration of HRA increment deferral	Circular 20/2015
1/1/2018	PSSA increase	1% increase to all salaries	Public Service Pay and Pensions Act 2017 Circular 22/2017
	Restoration of 2013 HRA cut	€65,000 - €110,000 ( <i>post-HRA cut salary</i> ): Restoration of second half of July 2013 cut	FEMPI Act 2015 Circular 22/2017
1/4/2018	Restoration of 2013 HRA cut	> €110,000 ( <i>post-HRA cut salary</i> ): restoration of second third of July 2013 cut	FEMPI Act 2015 Circular 04/2018
1/10/2018	PSSA increase	1% increase to all salaries	PSPP Act 2017 Circular 16/2018
1/1/2019	PSSA increase to lower paid	< €30,000: 1% increase	PSPP Act 2017 Circular 20/2018
1/3/2019	PSSA new entrant measures	Increment “skip” at Points 4 & 8 of scale for New Entrant grades	PSSA 2018-2020
1/4/2019	Restoration of 2013 HRA cut	> €110,000 ( <i>post-HRA cut salary</i> ): restoration of final third of July 2013 cut	FEMPI Act 2015
1/9/2019	PSSA increase	1.75% increase to all salaries	PSPP Act 2017
1/1/2020	PSSA increase to lower paid	< €32,000: 0.5% increase	PSPP Act 2017
1/10/2020	PSSA increase	2% increase to all salaries	PSPP Act 2017
	Restoration of fixed allowances	Restoration of 5% or 8%	PSPP Act 2017

Completion of pay restoration (FEMPI “tail”)

For public servants who have not achieved full restoration of the FEMPI cuts by October 2020 (i.e. the date of the last PSSA increase), restoration of this “FEMPI tail” must be completed by way of Ministerial order.

This Order must be made on the following dates:

1/7/2021	FEMPI tail	Post-PSSA salary of < €150,000	PSPP Act 2017
1/7/2022	FEMPI tail	Post-PSSA salary of > €150,000	PSPP Act 2017

Table 2: Increases in pay since 2016, which may affect professional and technical positions

## 2.2. Starting pay on recruitment

In 2010, in the context of a significant exchequer deficit, this Department instructed Personnel Officers in Public Service bodies<sup>1</sup> to introduce the measures restricting the starting pay of staff recruited from open competitions, on foot of a Government decision. This provided that starting pay for posts in the Public Service “should be at the minimum of the relevant salary scale”, may be adjusted in line with Government pay policy, and that this was not negotiable. It further specified that future competition notices, advertisements and information booklets must specify this, and that no undertaking should be given by any Public Service body that starting salary may be negotiable. This policy is still in force, and provides a high degree of fairness and consistency for public pay policy, ensuring proper application of the payscales which are centrally negotiated and agreed, rather than individually negotiated pay as is more common in the private sector.

Where a Secretary General or Head of Department/Office feels that exceptional circumstances warrant an offer of starting pay above the minimum point of a payscale, they are to seek specific sanction from this Department in advance of such an offer being made. Some Departments have sought and received such sanction in a very small number of cases, where recruitment issues were severe and other solutions were not available.

## 2.3. Changes to pension arrangements

Those recruited to positions after 1 January 2013 belong to the Single Public Service Pension Scheme. This newer scheme offers different benefits, which are closer in value to the defined-benefit pension schemes available in the private sector. While the pre-2013 pension was calculated based on final salary, the new scheme is based on career-average salary, with benefits adjusted upwards or downwards in line with inflation.

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<sup>1</sup> (Duffy, 2010)

### 3. Quantitative data

#### 3.1. Overall P&T staff numbers

The graph below illustrates the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) staff employed in professional & technical positions in the Civil Service according to the central Human Resources Management System (HRMS), at year end for each year 2008-2018 inclusive, and at the end of Quarter 1 for 2019. Please note that data for the Irish Prison Service, the Irish Parks and Wildlife Service, and certain solicitor grades is excluded from the below graph, as these were not available for the full time period in question. That partial data is included for reference in Appendix 6.1.

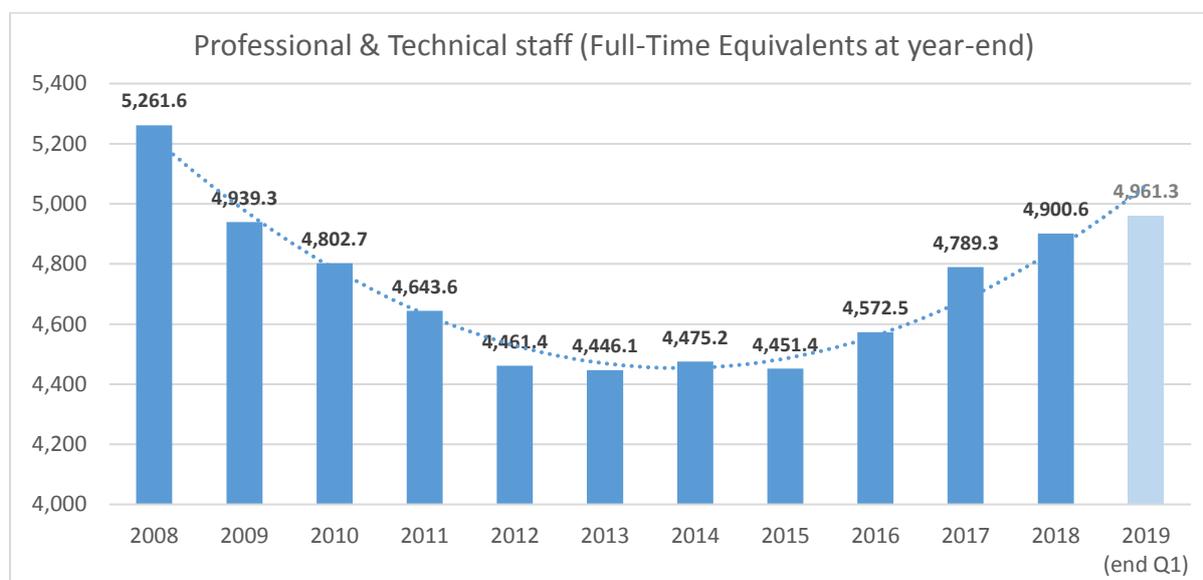


Figure 1: Numbers of Professional & Technical staff in the Civil Service. Source: HRMS

The figures above form a U-shaped curve, with the large overall decrease in numbers explained by the recruitment moratorium introduced in 2009, and the subsequent and ongoing increase after the moratorium's lifting. The percentage variation in the above figures is shown below:

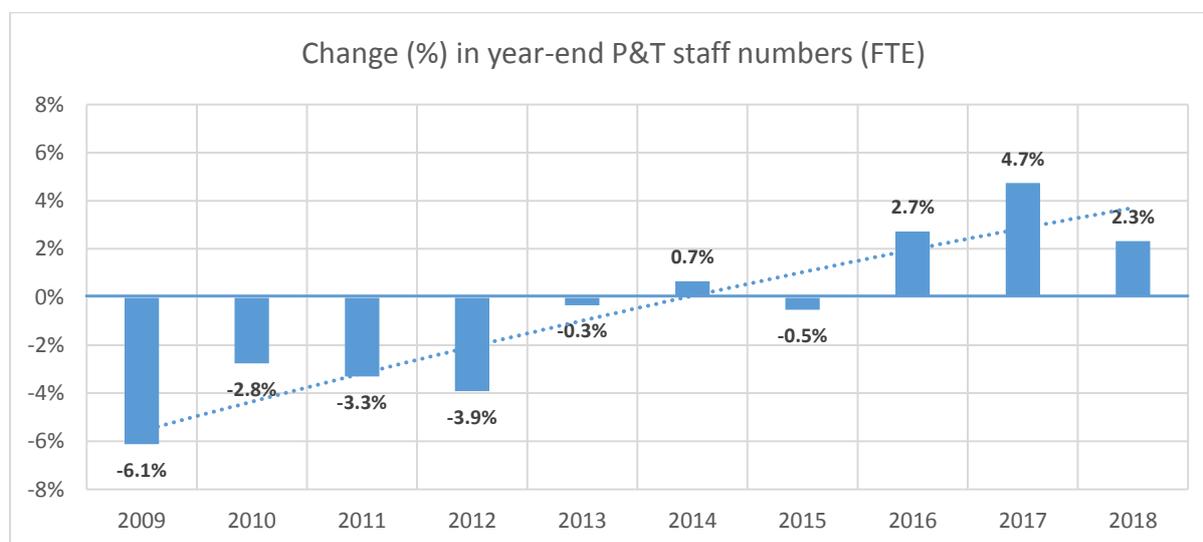


Figure 2: Change in numbers of Professional & Technical staff in the Civil Service. Source: HRMS

The trend in annual changes is clearly positive over the last decade, and there is no evidence to suggest that this trend would reverse in 2019, considering that growth of 1.2% has already been experienced in the first quarter.

### 3.2. Recruitment data

The Public Appointments Service (PAS) runs a number of competitions for professional & technical grades, though some Civil Service bodies do have recruitment licences of their own, and may use these to recruit their own P&T staff. Although PAS cannot therefore provide an absolutely complete dataset, they have provided this Department with an amount of useful data relating to P&T competitions which they advertised in 2008 (as a pre-moratorium reference) and in the 2014-2018 period, shown in the table below:

Year	Competitions advertised	Applications received	<u>Applications</u> <u>Competitions</u>	Assigned	% of applicants assigned	Average assignees per comp.
<b>2008</b>	81	6329	78.1	487	7.7%	6.0
<b>2014</b>	5	290	58.0	0	0.0%	0.0
<b>2015</b>	79	4692	59.4	106	2.3%	1.3
<b>2016</b>	76	6879	90.5	386	5.6%	5.1
<b>2017</b>	112	5337	47.7	780	14.6%	7.0
<b>2018</b>	110	4299	39.1	526	12.2%	4.8

Table 3: Overall P&T recruitment competition data, 2008 and 2014-2018. Source: PAS

The number of applications is healthy – in 2018, the average competition was to assign 4.8 candidates, and received 39.1 applications (8 times the assignees). The trend in this “applications per competition” metric is shown in graph form below:

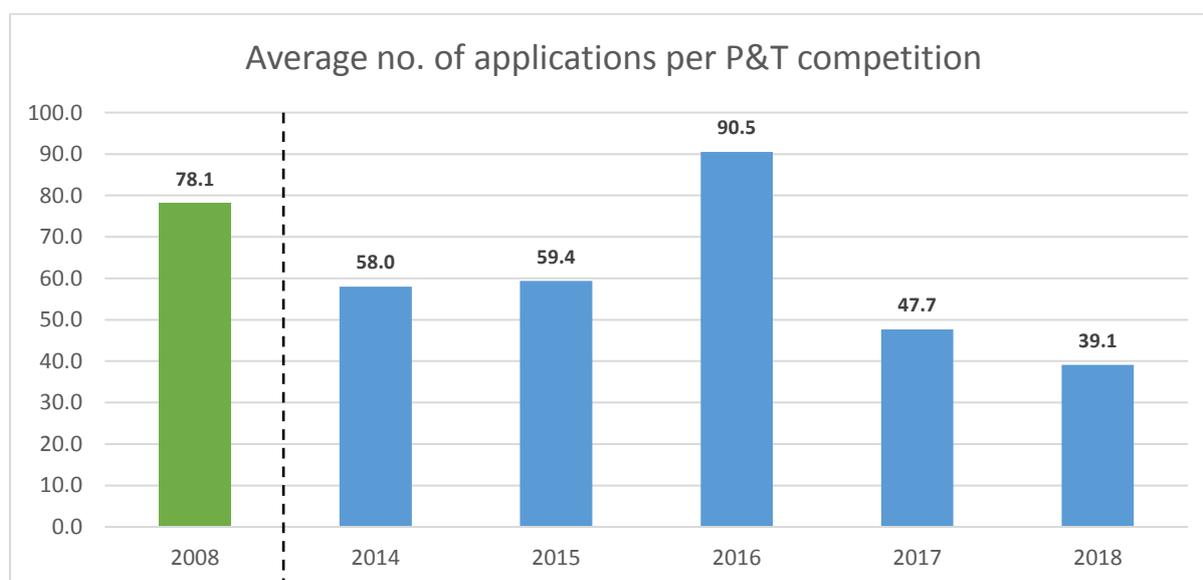


Figure 3: Applications per P&T competition, 2008 and 2014-2018. Source: PAS

The average of these averages is just under 60 applications per competition, for the 2014-2018 period overall, with 2016 as an outlier – this seems to be due to large competitions advertised around that time to form multi-year panels, e.g. Technical Agricultural Officer, Conservation Ranger. This highlights how competitions are used to form panels which may remain in place for a number of years before a new competition is required, which means analysing variations from year to year may not provide the most accurate portrayal of the situation. In the round, the number of applications is not a cause for concern, and a generalised recruitment problem could not be construed from the above figures.

### 3.3. Panel data

In May 2019, PAS provided this Department with more detailed data for professional and technical panels from which candidates were drawn in 2018 (which may have been formed prior to 2018 or during 2018). This data can only provide a snapshot in time, rather than any ongoing trends in recruitment or assignment patterns, but it is useful to illustrate the most recent information on the diversity of P&T roles, the small numbers involved, and the insignificant extent of difficulties in recent times. The pie chart below shows the status of candidates on these panels:

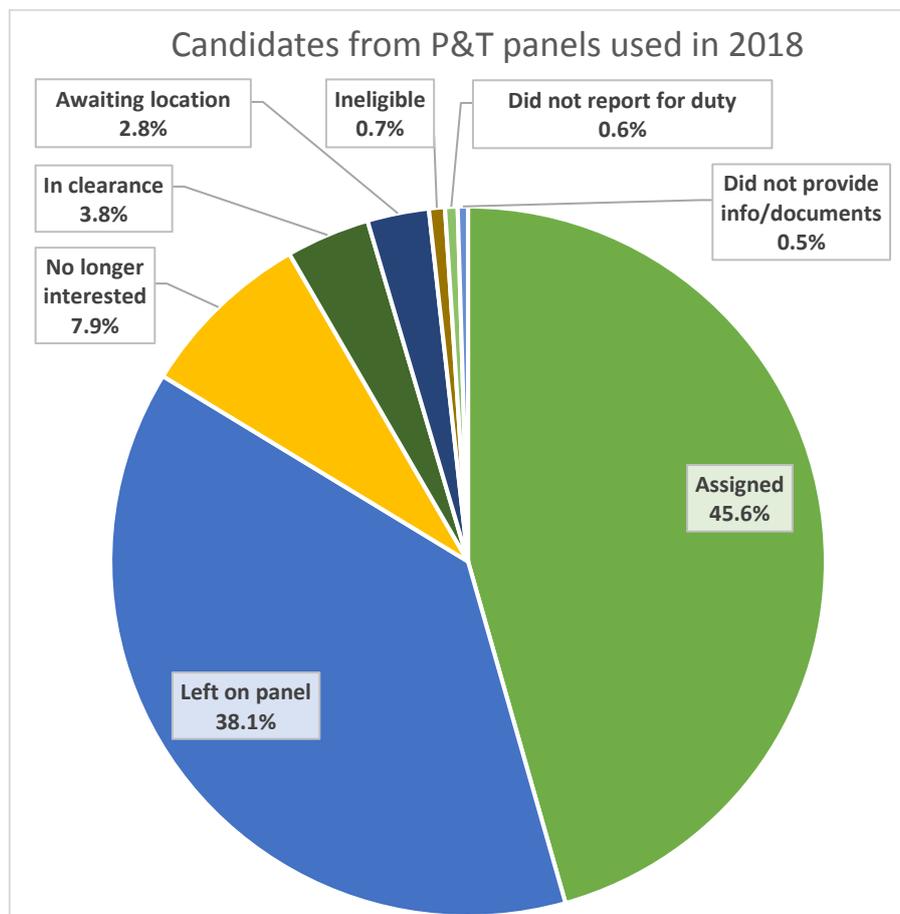


Figure 4: Status of candidates in P&T panels used by PAS in 2018. Source: PAS

From the above it is clear that there was no generalised issue in assigning candidates to P&T vacancies in the past year or so, with less than 10% of panellists withdrawing. To give further detail on the limited amount of difficulty in assigning candidates, the following table shows recruitment panels in which 20% or more of the panel either failed to report for duty, no longer showed interest in the role at the time of offer, or failed to submit required documentation as part of PAS's clearance process:

Campaign	Panel total	Assigned (at Apr '19)	No-show	No-interest	No-docs	Loss as % of panel total
Communications Manager	2			2		100.0%
Parliamentary Reporter (Irish Language)	3	1		2		66.7%
Assistant Librarian - Oireachtas	9	3		4		44.4%
Chemist Grade III	16	7	2	5		43.8%
Technical Advisor OGP	7		2	1		42.9%
Laboratory Analyst Chemistry	19	11	1	6	1	42.1%
Senior Legal Officer	5			2		40.0%
Engineer Grade III Civil	43	14		16	1	39.5%
Forensic Accountant (Grade II)	6	1		2		33.3%
Head of Quantity Surveying	3	1		1		33.3%
Laboratory Analyst Chemical	12	6		4		33.3%
Digital Mapping Officer	37	20	2	10		32.4%
Investigation Officer GSOC	16	6		5		31.3%
Regulatory Investigator	33	10		10		30.3%
Investigations Officer GSOC	17	7		5		29.4%
Forensic Scientist Grade III	35	15		10		28.6%
Architect in OPW	33	1		9		27.3%
Assistant Parliamentary counsel Grade II	4			1		25.0%
Head of Project Man. OGCI0	4	1		1		25.0%
Senior Executive Building Surveyor	4	2		1		25.0%
Comms & Media Asst.	34	4		6	2	23.5%
Data Protection Team Lead	19	11		4		21.1%
Meteorological Officer	34	4		7		20.6%
Civil Engineering Tech Grade II	5	4		1		20.0%
Diversity and Inclusion Lead	5	1		1		20.0%
Engineer Grade 3 (Mechanical & Electrical)	10	7		2		20.0%
Head of Policy and Research	5	1		1		20.0%

Table 4: P&T panels, drawn from in 2018, in which 20% or more of the panellists failed to be assigned. Source: PAS

Given that this sample of panels represents only approximately 10% of the total number of professional & technical panels used by PAS in 2018, and given that many of these panels had fewer than 10 candidates (which made a higher proportion of losses more likely to begin with), this limited data adds credence to the view that there are only small pockets of P&T recruitment difficulties, and these are particularly small in the context of the nearly 5,000 P&T staff in the Civil Service overall.

It is also noteworthy that almost none of the larger recruitment panels feature in this list, and 66% of all the panels used in 2018 had a loss of 0% (indicating that all candidates provided required information, and all assignees accepted their offers and reported for duty).

Again, in the absence of comparative data for previous years, it is impossible to say whether this represents a positive or negative trend over time. While it is obviously unsatisfactory that a number of people assigned to panels no longer show interest in taking up roles, it cannot be said whether this is different in 2019 than in previous years.

### 3.4. Retention data

Civil Service data on staff retention is less easily available than that on recruitment, but HRMS reporting has been reviewed to provide monthly figures for turnover of professional and technical staff overall from Dec 2008 to Dec 2018. These figures represent staff marked as “terminated” from their current position, which may be due to retirement, resignation, transfer, death in service, etc. These numbers are to be viewed in the context of the overall P&T staff numbers provided earlier in section 3.1 (on page 8).

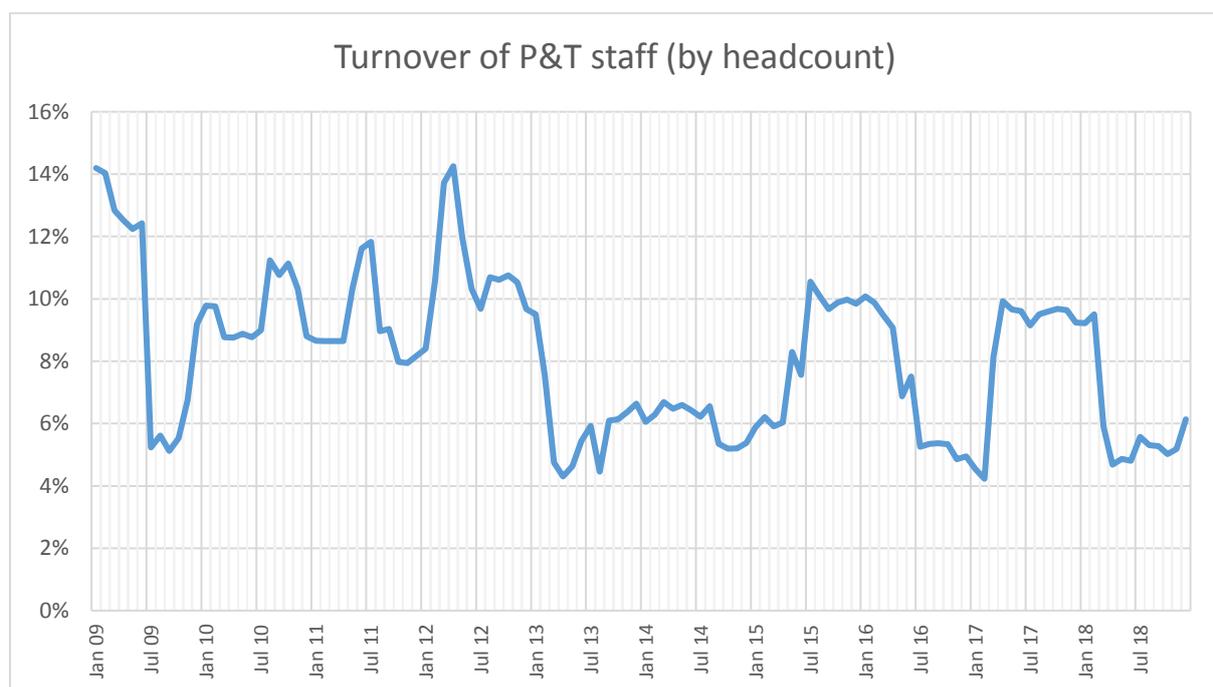


Figure 5: Monthly turnover of P&T staff, by headcount. Source: HRMS

There are significant variations from one month to the next at a number of points on the chart, and it is difficult to discern reasons for these, but the overall trend is downward over the decade. For greater clarity, the graph below uses these monthly figures to produce annual averages:

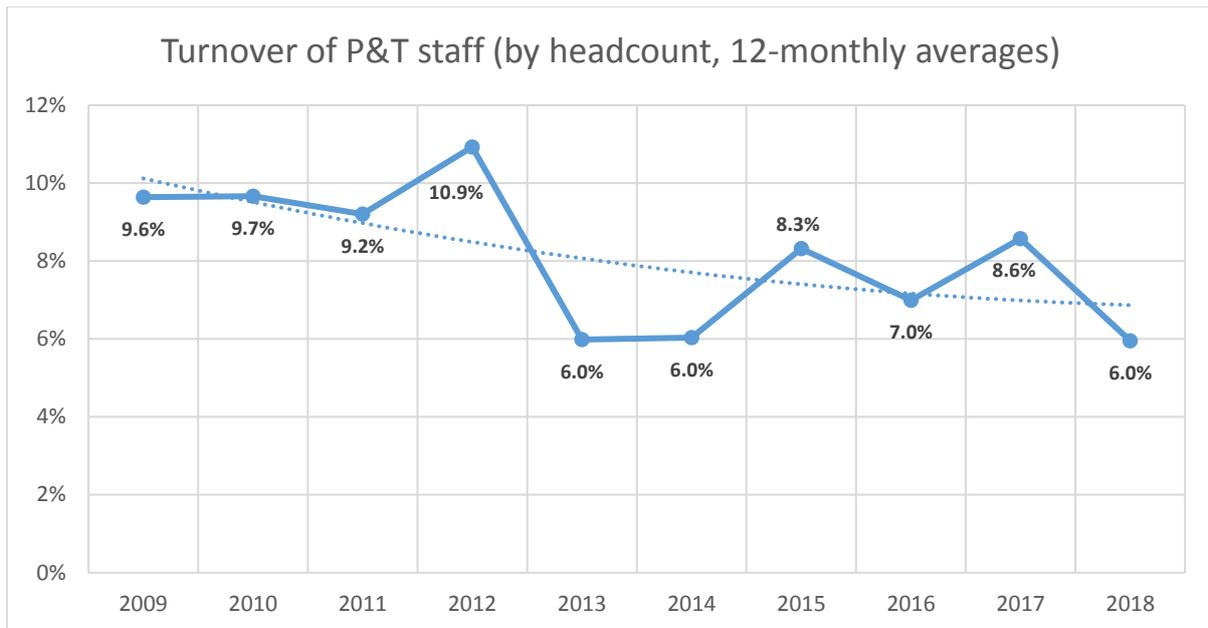


Figure 6: Turnover of P&T staff, with monthly figures averaged to produce yearly figures. Source: HRMS

The downward trend over the decade is more easily visible above, and it is clear that there is no ongoing uptick in turnover– turnover of professional and technical staff overall has remained below 10% in recent years, and has averaged only 6% in 2018. Having said that, the figures appear to be volatile, and longitudinal data may help with analysing trends in future, if indeed any emerge.

## 4. Illustrative examples

Some more niche information on retention is provided for consideration, showing some of the issues arising in particular areas. These are not intended to be representative of all sectors, but rather to give some additional background in view of the limitations of other data available.

It is important to bear in mind the small numbers involved and the highly specific nature of these examples, before drawing any broader conclusions from them.

### 4.1. Central Statistics Office (CSO)

The CSO has provided the following figures for Statisticians who have left their position:

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019 to date	Total
<b>Promotion to CSO Senior Statistician</b>	2	9	2	1	3		<b>17</b>
<b>Resigned</b>			3	3	5	4	<b>15</b>
<b>Retirement</b>		2	2				<b>4</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>36</b>

Table 5: Destinations of Statisticians who have left the CSO. Source: CSO

42% of the Statisticians leaving the CSO since 2014 resigned. Of those who have resigned, the reasons given in each case were as follows:

#### Reasons provided by statisticians resigning from the CSO, 2016-date

<b>2016</b>	Move to another Department for location reasons
	Promotion to another Department
	Private Sector position after career break
<b>2017</b>	Better pay in university sector
	Better pay in another Public Sector Body
	Domestic reasons
<b>2018</b>	Promotion to AP in another Department
	Promotion to AP in another Department
	Promotion to AP in another Department
	Better pay in another Public Sector Body
	Resigned
<b>2019</b>	Better pay in a Semi-State Body
	Better pay in another Public Sector Body
	Promotion to AP in another Department
	Move to charity sector organisation

Table 6: Reasons provided by Statisticians resigning from the CSO. Source: CSO

While being cognisant that 15 staff is a very small number in the context of the wider Civil Service, some noteworthy points may be inferred from the above reasons. Most of those leaving the CSO continued to work for the State or a state-funded entity, with 5 staff (33%) promoted within the Civil

Service, a further 3 (20%) going to the wider Public Service, and a further 2 (13%) going to a Semi-State or university position.

5 (33%) of those resigning cited “better pay” as a motivation, and the majority of these mentioned this better pay being provided by another body in the public sector. This tentatively points to a phenomenon of public sector bodies attracting staff from other public sector bodies. It should also be noted that point 1 of the Statistician (PPC) payscale is currently €32,153, but the final point 18 (LSI 2) is €82,300, which amounts to more than 2½ times the starting salary.

The table below shows HRMS data on full-time equivalent staff in the Statistician grade in the Civil Service for the 2014-date period, of whom 85% are currently in serving the CSO:

<b>Statisticians (FTE)</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>Apr 2019</b>
	76.44	81.74	86.29	104.87	117.80	121.19
<b>Change (%)</b>		+6.9%	+5.6%	+21.5%	+12.3%	+2.9%

Table 7: Numbers of Statisticians, 2014-April 2019. Source: HRMS

The strong growth in the number of Statisticians would seem to suggest that the role remains an attractive one.

## 4.2. Legal Aid Board (LAB)

The LAB in April 2019 provided this Department with data showing that the number of Grade III Solicitors increased each year in the 2014-2016 period, but recruitment did not keep up with staff leaving from 2017 to date (though 2019 competitions have yet to conclude), as shown below:

	<b>Total hire - Solicitor Grade III Legal Aid Board (headcount)</b>	<b>Leave (total)</b>	<b>of which Retirements</b>	<b>of which Other</b>	<b>Net change</b>
<b>2014</b>	9	3	2	1	+6
<b>2015</b>	15	7	2	5	+8
<b>2016</b>	15	6	0	6	+9
<b>2017</b>	8	9	3	6	-1
<b>2018</b>	17	16	3	13	+1
<b>2019 to date</b>	4	2	0	2	+2

Table 8: Recruitment and retention rates for Grade III Solicitors in the Legal Aid Board, 2014-date. Source: LAB

Central HRMS reporting shows the following year-end full-time equivalent figures for Grade III Solicitors for the above period:

<b>Solicitor Grade III - Legal Aid Board (FTE)</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>Apr 2019</b>
	72.36	75.80	88.63	86.76	87.21	87.01
<b>Change (%)</b>		+4.8%	+16.9%	-2.1%	+0.5%	-0.2%

Table 9: Staff numbers for Grade III Solicitors (Legal Aid Board). Source: HRMS

The data supplied points to some challenges at local level for the LAB in relation to recruitment and retention of solicitors although overall numbers have largely remained steady over the 2016-2018 period.

### 4.3. Office of Government Procurement (OGP)

The OGP has a technical grade structure for procurement specialists. Like other technical grades, these staff can apply for roles at general service grades.

In 2019 the OGP provided this Department with some figures on retention difficulties with two technical grades: Category Specialist Higher (CSH) and Category Manager (CM). 64% of CSH staff have 2 years' or less experience in the role, and that turnover for CSH staff in 2018 was 13%, and for CM staff was 10%.

The OGP also listed the following destinations for CSH and CM staff leaving from 2015 to date:

<b>Category Specialist Higher (CSH)</b>	<b>Numbers</b>	<b>Category Manager (CM)</b>	<b>Numbers</b>
Resignation from Civil Service	6	Secondment	5
Transfer out at current grade	4	Resignation from Civil Service	3
Promotion to AP (left OGP)	4	Promotion to AP (left OGP)	2
Secondment	2	Promotion to AP (remain in OGP)	2
Promotion to HEO (left OGP)	2	<b>Totals</b>	<b>12</b>
Promotion to AP (remain in OGP)	1		
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>		

Table 10: Destinations for CSH and CM staff leaving the OGP, 2015-date. Source: OGP

Again these numbers are small in the context of the wider Civil Service and thus not useful for deducing larger trends, but of the above, 13 CSHs (68%) and 9 CMs (75%) remained within the Civil Service after leaving their post, some of whom in fact stayed within the OGP, or moved to a different body at the same grade (which would suggest satisfaction with the pay and conditions of the grade). Again this may illustrate a phenomenon of Civil Service bodies attracting staff from other Civil Service bodies.

### 4.4. Retention of ICT staff

Gathering detailed information in relation to ICT staff poses difficulty, as staff in ICT units are generally given normal Civil Service grade titles (CO, EO, etc.), and thus are not differentiated in central data reporting tools. However, a 2017 survey of the Civil Service ICT Advisory Board, received responses from 11 Departments, as well as Revenue, OPW, and CSO. These bodies raised issues relating to recruitment and retention of ICT staff across the service, including the following points:

- Across the overall ICT staffing cohort of 1,368, there were 136 (10%) ICT vacancies.

- Almost half the attrition was happening at the “feeder” grades of EO & AO.
- Demographics were a concern similar to retirements generally – 16% at HEO & AP levels, and 22% at PO level.
- A further 85 staff (6% of ICT cohort) were seeking moves out of ICT.
- 29 staff with no prior ICT experience or qualifications were assigned to ICT posts.

The survey also listed the destination of staff leaving ICT posts, among the Civil Service bodies who responded:

<b>ICT leavers</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
Transferred out of ICT (on promotion), to general service/admin posts	35	26.32%
Transferred out of ICT (at same grade), to general service/admin posts	32	24.06%
Retirements	31	23.31%
Moved to ICT posts in other Departments / public sector bodies	28	21.05%
Moved to ICT posts in private sector	4	3.01%
Other reasons e.g. career break to travel, set up business, family reasons, etc.	3	2.26%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Table 11: ICT staff destinations after leaving their Civil Service ICT post (in 18 month period 2016-summer 2017) Source: OGCIO*

The survey results show a substantial majority of the leavers counted above remained within the public sector, of which most moved to general service/admin posts, and some remained in the field of ICT but in a different Public Sector Body. While this phenomenon of moving around the system may pose challenges in ensuring ICT skills are available when and where they are needed, it is difficult to conclude from this data that a retention problem exists so much as an ICT specialisation problem, given that only 3% of staff left the public sector.

## 4.5. Concluding observations

### 4.5.1. Promotions

One of the concerns for retention of staff is the provision of promotional opportunities. In many cases, P&T grades are structured as standalone entities, without the natural, hierarchical career progression associated with general Civil Service grades. In other cases, more senior posts within the same specialisation may exist but these may be extremely small in number, making promotion into these more challenging, and statistically less likely, than if moving into a general Civil Service grade. From a broader perspective, this phenomenon is less of an issue than if these staff were to leave for the private sector or emigrate.

Measures empowering “cross-stream” promotion from P&T areas to general administration in the Civil Service were recommended by the Commission for Public Service Appointments (CPSA) in 2011,<sup>2</sup> and were agreed with Civil Service unions in late 2013. General service grades may be an attractive destination for those inclined to leave their P&T position, as noted in some of the illustrative examples earlier, and general service staff are much less likely to step into P&T roles, given the niche qualifications and professional experience which they often require. However, the turnover figures discussed in section 3.4 (on page 12) do not indicate any significant spike following the introduction of cross-stream measures.

### 4.5.2. P&T or general service?

It is arguable that the need for P&T staff is now lower than the need for general staff, compared to 2008. Positions which were previously considered too specialised for general administrative staff to perform in may now be within their reach, given substantial improvements in technology and educational attainment (for example, the proportion of 30-34 year olds holding a third-level degree has increased by 21% since 2008)<sup>3</sup>. On occasion, it may be more appropriate for general service grade staff to provide greater assistance to P&T staff, allowing P&T staff to focus on more dedicated specialist work.

### 4.5.3. ICT approach

It is evident that those responsible for ICT have identified and are implementing possible solutions to issues in their area, in a system-wide, formalised manner. An ICT HR Professionalisation Strategy has been prepared for the Civil Service, with a list of 15 actions designed ‘to address the need for the right

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<sup>2</sup> (Commission for Public Service Appointments, 2011)

<sup>3</sup> (Central Statistics Office, 2018)

people to be in the right roles in order to enable the Civil Service deliver innovative digital services to our customers'.<sup>4</sup> Among these measures are multiple steps aimed at improving recruitment and retention – internship competitions, specific ICT recruitment campaigns, accredited training and Continuous Professional Development, and the development of a staff engagement strategy. A high-profile initiative arising from the HR Professionalisation Strategy was the Civil Service ICT Apprenticeship programme, run in partnership with Fastrack to IT (FIT). This programme places candidates in government Departments for two years as they gain skills and experience in software development, cyber security, or network engineering, leading to a qualification at level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

The type of system-wide strategising to marshal staff with ICT expertise in the Civil Service is of interest for roles which exist across the Civil Service. However, many P&T grades are specific to individual line Departments and have traditionally been their responsibility to handle (though with DPER, legislation, and national agreements governing the specifics of their pay, terms, and conditions), and this is unlikely to change.

#### 4.5.4. Data

From undertaking this research exercise, it is clear that centralised data is lacking on recruitment and retention of professional and technical grades. In existing reporting tools, some staff in P&T disciplines may be categorised as general administrative staff, and vice versa – staff who move to or from the P&T category might not have this change reflected on data systems, and some offices performing technical, specialised work may use general administrative job titles for their staff. The cliché “what gets measured gets managed” may apply in the case of P&T staff – issues arising in this arena may at least partly be due to insufficiency in central gathering and ongoing monitoring and interrogating of quantitative data. Improved labour market research, staff feedback, and ongoing data analytics could assist to identify issues more quickly.

#### 4.5.5. Conclusions

The data in relation to professional and technical grades is incomplete and, as a rule, not separately gathered at central level. This makes analysis of professional and technical grades particularly challenging.

Notwithstanding the difficulties with the data, some centralised data has been made available for analysis as outlined above in section 3.

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<sup>4</sup> (Office of the Government Chief Information Officer, 2018)

The available data does not point to a generalised difficulty in relation to P&T grades, with overall application numbers, assignments, and turnover all shown to be at acceptable levels. It would be challenging to derive more detailed conclusions from the data available, but the limited illustrative examples above highlight how some differences exist between similar jobs in different areas of the Civil Service and Public Service.

As long as such differences exist in vacancies which target similar groups of workers, it is inevitable that internal movements and attrition will be seen to some extent, though this is thought to be quite small overall. Where exceptional interventions are introduced to counteract this, they may create unintended consequences elsewhere, invite knock-on claims, or otherwise distort the internal labour market in the public sector – problems which they may have been trying to address. Additionally, the wider labour market changes dynamically, and problems with recruitment and retention may be entirely temporary, with interventions possibly proving unnecessary if market realities subsequently change.

Given the diversity of roles encompassed by the term “professional and technical”, and the limits of the data, it may well be that there are specific difficulties in niche areas, which are not immediately apparent and which call for some exceptional intervention. One solution worth examining is the greater use of generalist grades in support of P&T staff, thereby ensuring that P&T staff are putting their specialist skills to the best possible use.

Overall, it is the case that the data does not highlight a necessity for measures and interventions at a macro level. However, there may be difficulties at individual organisational level. It is suggested that such difficulties should be examined and approached on a case-by-case basis following consideration of a business case submitted by the relevant organisation. This should allow for the development of bespoke solutions which do not have significant repercussive effects on the internal Civil Service labour market.

## 5. References

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## 6. Appendices

### 6.1. Staff numbers data available for partial time periods (full-time equivalent)

Grade	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Asst Chief Officer - PPC (67220)									129.50	159.00	157.00	154.00
Asst Chief Officer (7220)									143.62	128.62	110.30	103.30
Asst Governor (6365)									22.00	20.00	19.00	19.00
Chaplain IPS - PPC (60193)									6.00	5.00	5.00	13.50
Chief Nurse Officer 2 - PPC (60019)							3.00	3.00	9.00	10.00	8.00	8.00
Chief Officer Class 1 (6375)									9.00	8.00	8.00	8.00
Chief Officer Class 2 - PPC (66560)									16.00	29.00	34.00	36.00
Chief Officer Class 2 (6560)									37.68	32.68	30.68	33.68
Chief Trades Officer 2 (7080)									6.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Governor Grade 2 (1057)									6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00
Governor Grade 3 (1061)									11.00	11.00	8.00	9.00
Head Of Psychology In Prisons PPC (61311)									1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Industrial Supervisor - PPC (67216)									6.00	4.50	4.50	4.50
Industrial Supervisor (7216)									8.00	7.00	6.00	6.00
NPWS BSC CRFT (Craftsman) - PPC										2.00	1.00	2.00
NPWS Craft Chargehand - Non PPC (NPI - 112)									1.50	2.50	2.00	2.00
NPWS Craft Foreman - Non PPC (NPI - 114)									4.00	4.00	5.00	5.00
NPWS Drain Foreman Grd 3 - Non PPC (NPI - 120)									5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
NPWS Drainage Foreman Grade 1 - Non PPC - (NPI - 116)									1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
NPWS Guide - PPC (NPI - 100)									1.00	8.00	9.00	19.00
NPWS Store Keeper Cler Charge - Non PPC (NPI - 104)									5.60	5.00	4.00	4.00
NPWS Store Keeper Clerical Grade 1 - Non PPC (NPI - 106)									4.00	5.00	4.00	4.00
NPWS Stores/Office Sup - Non PPC (NPI 102)									1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Nurse Officer - PPC (66249)									74.50	69.00	69.00	69.00
Nurse Officer (6249)									16.50	15.50	10.00	10.00
Prison Admin and Support Officer Grade I - PPC (60168)								1.00	5.00	5.00	4.00	6.00
Prison Admin and Support Officer Grade I (186)										1.00	1.00	1.00
Prison Admin and Support Officer Grade II (187)									2.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
Prison Admin and Support Officer Grade III - PPC (60126)								2.00	97.20	43.00	36.40	89.40

Grade	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Prison Admin and Support Officer Grade III (171)									2.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
Prison Chaplains (9810)									8.00	5.00	4.50	4.00
Prison Nurse - PPC (60183)									16.00	15.50	16.50	48.50
Prison Nurse (279)										1.00		
Prison Officer - PPC (67518)									1,533.66	1,488.56	1,450.00	1,437.00
Prison Officer (7518)									497.00	429.00	361.00	346.00
Project Administrator (NPG - 68)												
Project Manager (NPG - 67)			50.00									
Psychologist In The Prison Service PPC (63456)									2.00	1.00		9.00
Recruit Prison Officer - PPC (67522)									3.00	1.00	2.00	2.00
Recruitment Prison Officer - PPC (60188)									1.50	3.00	2.00	326.00
Senior Education Welfare Officer (79)												
Solicitor Grade 1 (NPG - 60)			10.00	10.00	9.00	8.00						
Solicitor Grade 1 PPC (NPG - 63)			1.70	1.70	1.70	1.70						
Solicitor Grade 2 (NPG - 61)			20.70	19.90	17.00	16.40						
Solicitor Grade 2 PPC (NPG - 64)			11.70	12.70	11.70	11.27						
Solicitor Grade 3 (NPG - 62)			9.90	9.00	8.00	6.00						
Solicitor Grade 3 New Entrant (NPG - 86)					5.00	10.00						
Solicitor Grade 3 PPC (NPG - 65)			56.10	54.70	59.23	51.48						
Special Education Needs Advisor (NPG - 12)								1.00				
Temp Geological Assistant (NPG - 46)			5.40	4.00								
Trades Officer - PPC (67361)									37.00	35.00	48.00	51.00
Trades Officer (7361)									10.00	7.00	5.00	5.00
Trainee Solicitor (NPG - 76)			2.00	1.00								
Work Training Officer - PPC (60159)									213.00	203.00	205.00	208.00
Work Training Officer (182)									93.50	84.50	77.00	75.00