

The civil service workforce

The number of civil servants has been cut by more than 70,000 since the Spending Review in 2010, meaning the Civil Service is at its smallest since before the Second World War. Particular departments – DWP, HMRC, MoJ and MoD – account for most of the reduction in absolute terms, given their size.

The biggest headcount reduction in percentage terms has come at the most junior (administrative officers and assistants) levels. Different departments have very different grade mixes, from top-heavy DfID (where the dominance of grades 6 and 7 has become more pronounced since 2010) to administration-heavy MoJ.

A more diverse Civil Service should be more effective; it would be more representative of the population and would suggest that talented candidates from all backgrounds were working within it. Although much progress has been made on diversity, the representation of women, ethnic minorities and disabled staff in the most senior grades is lower than across the Civil Service as a whole.

Different parts of the country host varying numbers of civil servants, with London (unsurprisingly, given central government's base there) employing the most. Every member of staff in DCMS is based in London, while other departments have a wider geographical spread, including in the devolved nations (DfT in Wales, DfID in Scotland).

About the data

Our data on **staff numbers** by department is taken from the quarterly Public Sector Employment (PSE) series, published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). We have adjusted for Machinery of Government changes (so movements of staff between departments are not counted as cuts) and distinguished between staff directly within a line management structure up to departmental leaders ('managed departments'), and those staff working for government organisations for which a minister has some responsibility ('departmental group'). We also used the ONS PSE data for the figures on the wider public sector. The Cabinet Office has kindly provided us with headcount data back to 1902. These figures are all Full-time Equivalent (FTE).¹

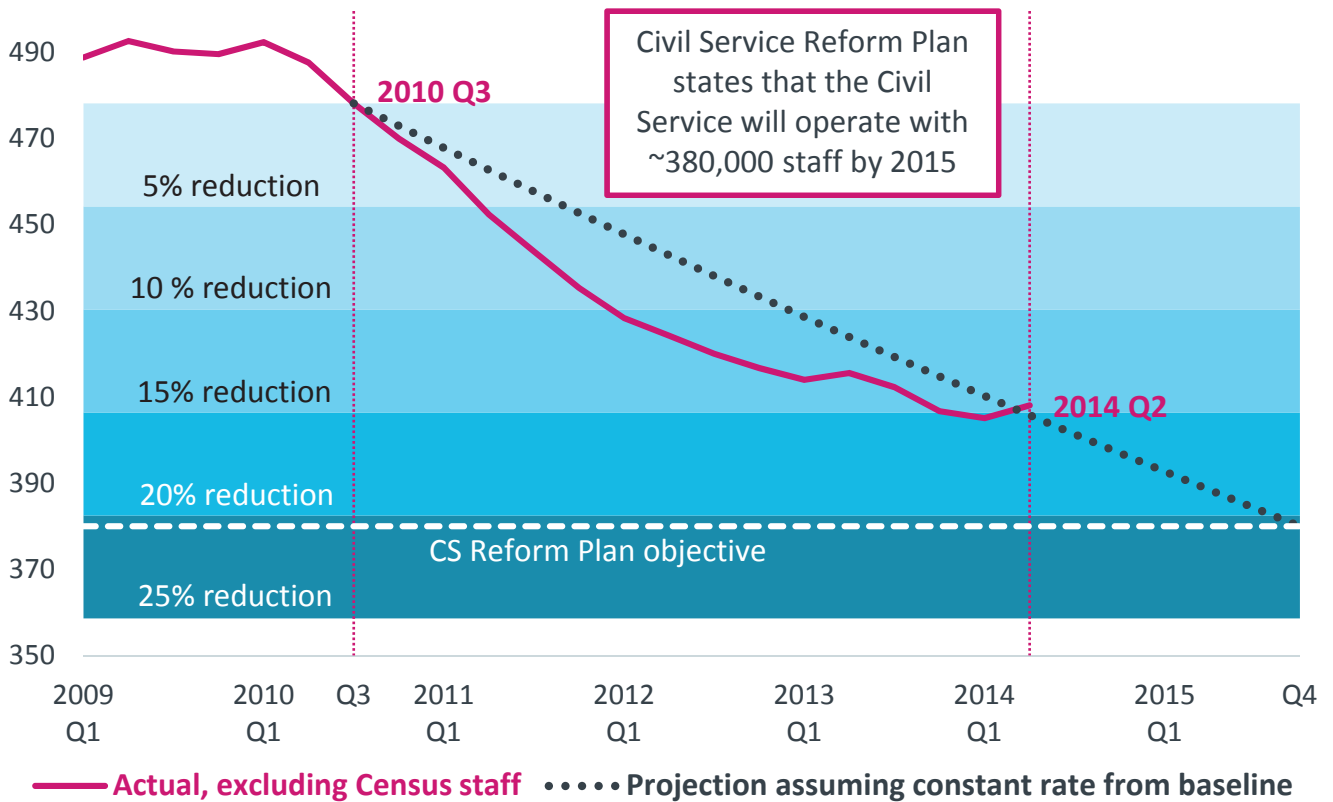
Our **diversity** analysis is based on the Annual Civil Service Employment Survey, also published (usually in October) by the ONS. We have also used the annual *Fast Stream Recruitment Report* which provides information on applicants to one of the Civil Service's recruitment streams. The historical data comes from both the Annual Civil Service Employment Survey and the Cabinet Office's Senior Civil Service (SCS) database, and was previously published in the Institute for Government report *Bringing In and Bringing On Talent*. These figures are for headcount and thus include part-time staff.²

Our **location** analysis is largely based on the ONS Annual Civil Service Employment Survey. For staff numbers in the Northern Ireland Civil Service we use Nisra, *Employment in the Northern Ireland Civil Service – 1st July 2014*, table 1(a), as it is not available in the ONS release. These figures are for headcount.³

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Staff numbers: 408,010 civil servants, down 70,120 since Spending Review 2014

Figure 4.1: Civil service staff numbers, March 2009 – June 2014 ('000, Full-time Equivalents)

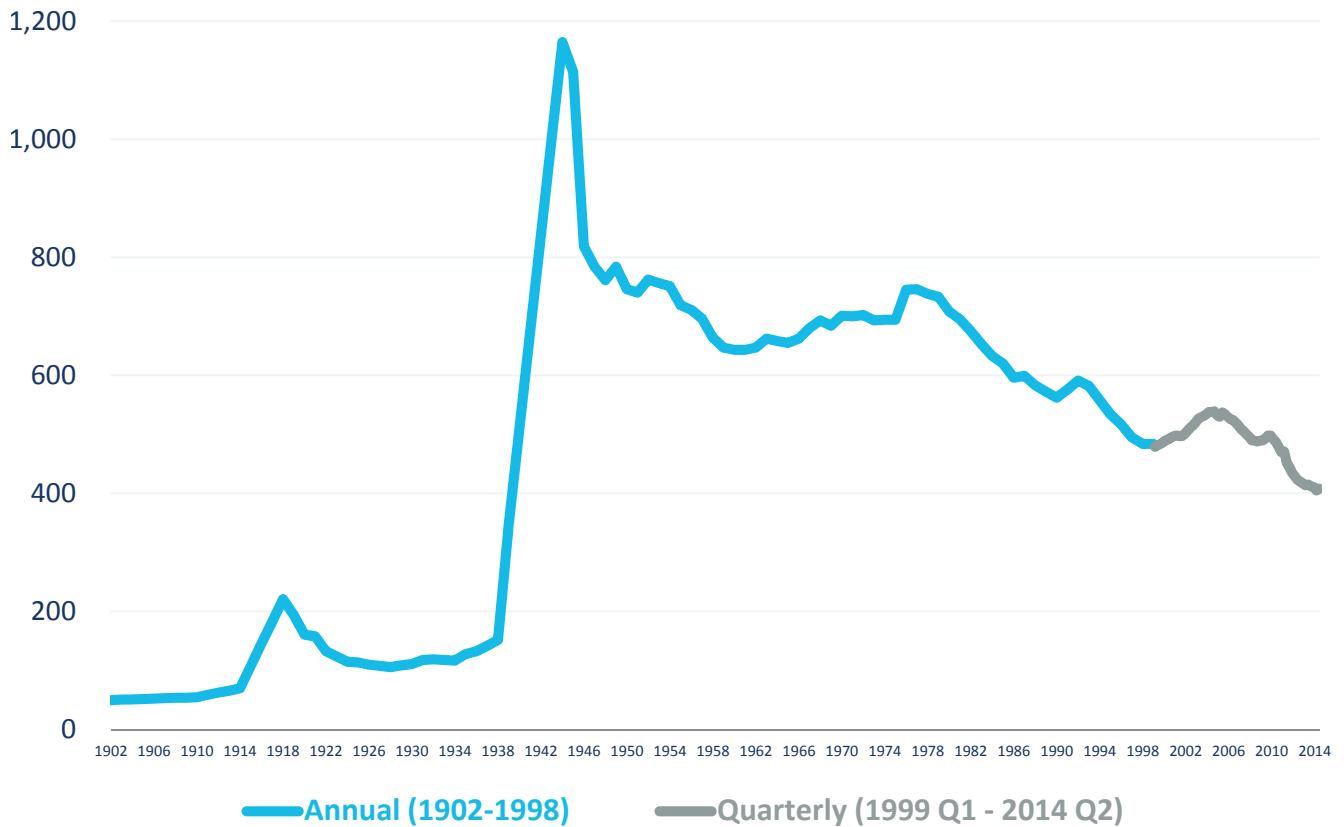


Source: Institute for Government analysis of Office for National Statistics (ONS) Public Sector Employment data (table 9), Q1 2009 to Q2 2014.

In the June 2012 *Civil Service Reform Plan*, the Coalition committed to reducing the size of the Civil Service by some 23% over the course of this parliament. Staff numbers have fallen from 478,130 (FTE) at Spending Review 2010 to 408,010 in June 2014, a fall of 70,120. An increase in staff (of 2,940) from March 2014 to June 2014 means that, for the first time, the Government is not on course to meet its objective.

The three months to end June 2014 (2014 Q2) represent only the second quarter since the Spending Review where overall headcount rose. This was because 9,100 probation staff were counted as civil servants for the first time, having joined the National Offender Management Service (part of MoJ) from the National Probation Service on 1 June. The only other quarter to record an increase was 2013 Q2 (June). This was also due to a reclassification of staff: two new executive agencies were created (at DH and MoJ), meaning that more than 6,000 employees were counted as civil servants for the first time. In both quarters, these reclassifications aside, the underlying direction of change was still a cut.

Figure 4.2: Civil service staff numbers, 1902 to 2014 (FTE)

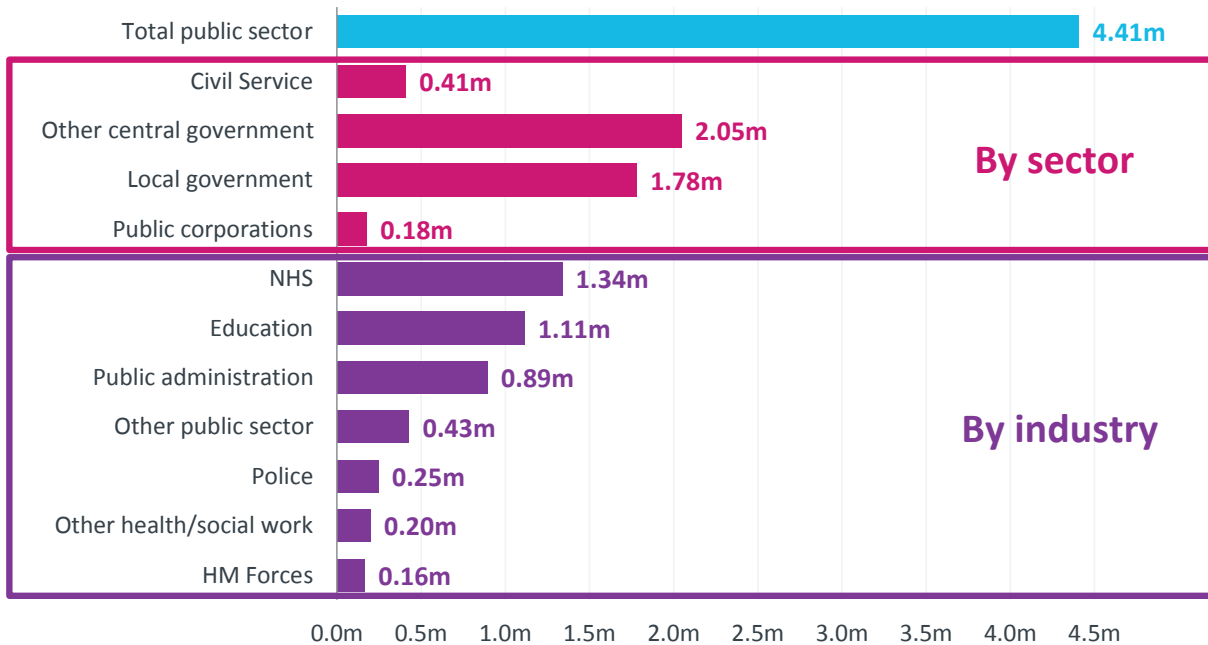


Source: Institute for Government analysis of Cabinet Office compilation of mandate and departmental returns (civil service statistics, 1902-90) and ONS PSE statistics (annual, 1991-98; quarterly, 1999 to date).

Looking at this in historical context, we can see that the Civil Service is at its smallest in staff terms since before the Second World War. There was a spike in numbers during the war periods 1914-18 and 1939-45, followed by a slight fall, but, in each case, more civil servants were employed after the conflict than before.

Civil service staff numbers fell from the mid-1970s and under the Thatcher and Major administrations (1979-97), before a small increase under New Labour from 1997. Further reductions came in the late 2000s, and then again (as we have seen) from 2010.

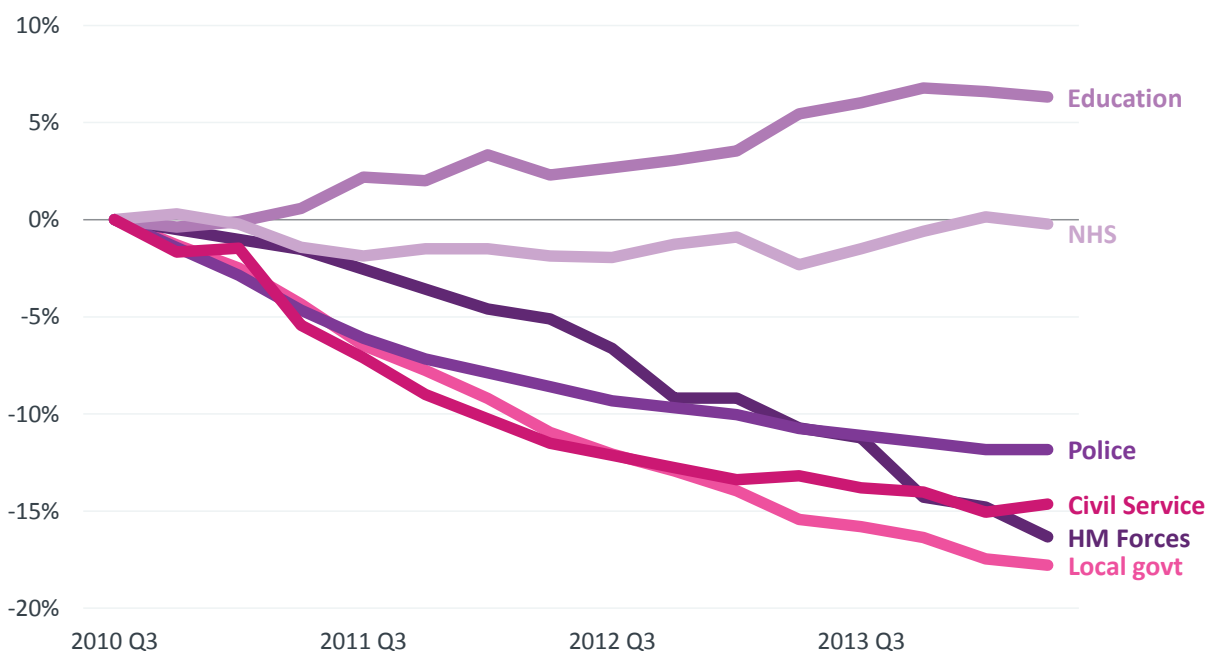
Figure 4.3: Public sector staff, Q2 2014 (FTE)



Source: Institute for Government analysis of ONS PSE data, Q2 2014. Note: for illustration only. The 'sector' and 'industry' sections are different classifications, so cannot be added or compared.

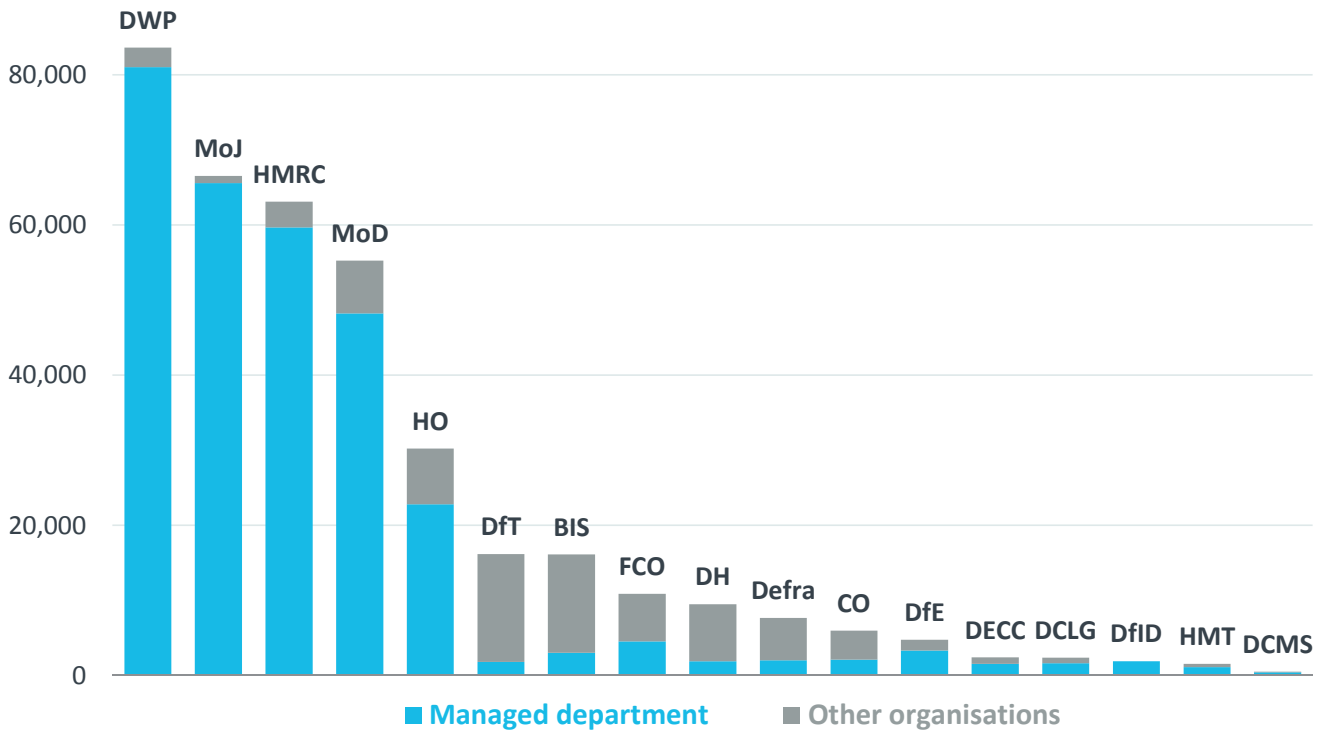
The current 408,010 FTE of the Civil Service is relatively small compared to other parts of government – the rest of central government has more than two million staff (FTE), and local government just under two million (until 2011, local government employed more staff than central government excluding the Civil Service). Since the Spending Review, civil service staff numbers have declined further and faster than other parts of the public sector, including the police and the NHS, though not as much as local government and the armed forces. Staff numbers in education have risen since the Spending Review.

Figure 4.4: Public sector staff, Q3 2010 to Q2 2014 (selected groups, FTE)



Source: Institute for Government analysis of ONS PSE data, 2010-14. Education excludes employees of English further education corporations, who were classified as public sector between 1993 and 2012 Q2.

Figure 4.5: Civil service staff by department, June 2014 (FTE)



Source: Institute for Government analysis of ONS PSE (table 9) to Q2 2014.

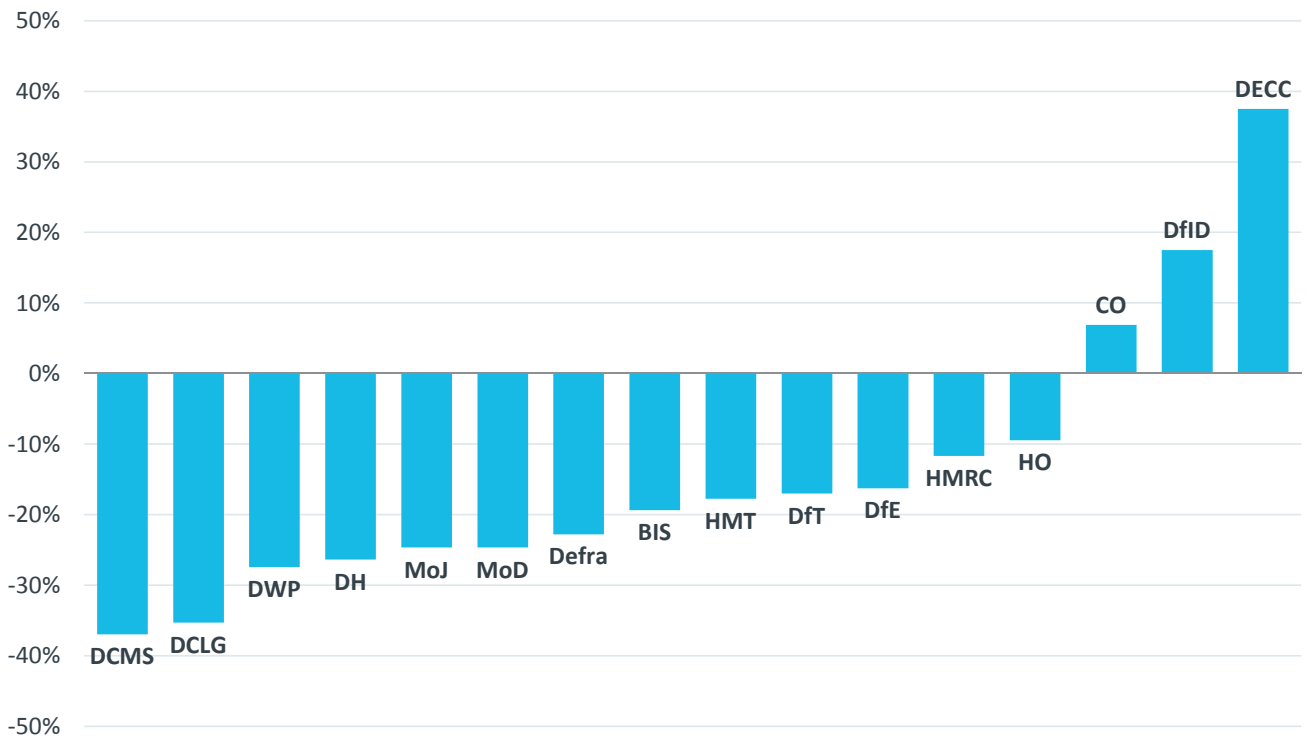
Four delivery departments – DWP, HMRC, MoJ and MoD – are considerably bigger than the other government departments. MoD is nearly twice the size of the Home Office, the fifth-biggest department, with MoJ and HMRC more than twice the size and DWP nearly three times the size.

The departments are broken down into three components:

- **managed department** – the core department and bodies within the department that are line managed within a structure that flows from the departmental leadership (for example, the National Offender Management Service within MoJ, the Education Funding Agency within DfE)
- **other organisations** – other civil service bodies for which ministers in the department have responsibility (for example, Ofsted in DfE or the DVLA in DfT) but which are not part of the department’s line management structure
- **departmental group** – the sum of the managed department and other organisations.

Staff numbers: reductions in all but three managed departments; DWP, HMRC, MoD, MoJ main drivers

Figure 4.6: Change in staff in managed departments since Spending Review 2010 (FTE)



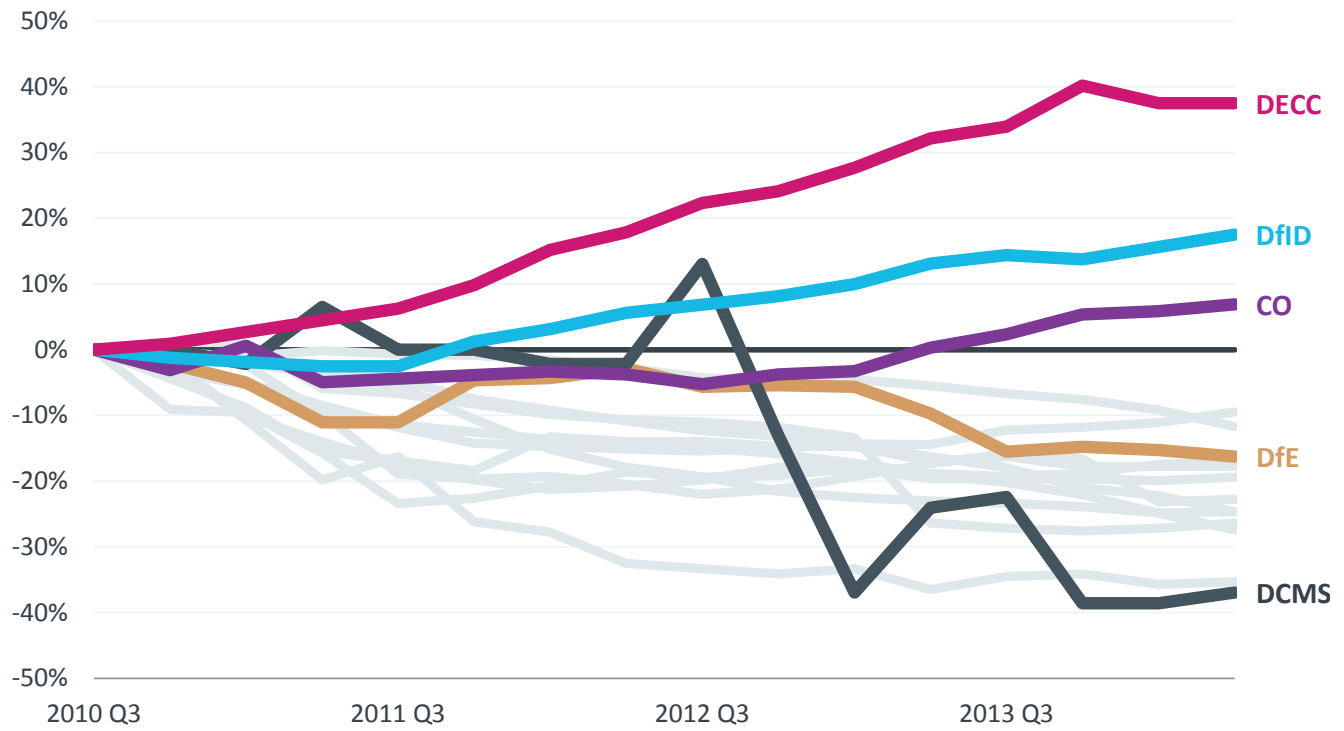
Source: Institute for Government analysis of ONS PSE data (table 9) to Q2 2014. Adjusted for Machinery of Government changes.

Since the 2010 Spending Review, only DECC, DfID and the Cabinet Office have seen an increase in staff numbers. Unlike other departments, DECC (which has had the largest increase) did not indicate that it would reduce staff numbers at the time of Spending Review 2010. It is also the newest department, having been established only in 2008.

Even though DCLG and DCMS have seen the largest staff reductions in percentage terms (more than 35%), they are two of the smallest departments. In absolute terms, reductions have mainly been driven by the big delivery departments with large numbers of staff delivering services across the UK:

- DWP has reduced by 30,640 staff (27%)
- HMRC is down by 7,890 (12%)
- MoJ has cut 18,260 staff (25%)
- MoD is down 15,750 (25%).

Figure 4.7: Percentage change in managed department staff since Spending Review 2010 (FTE)



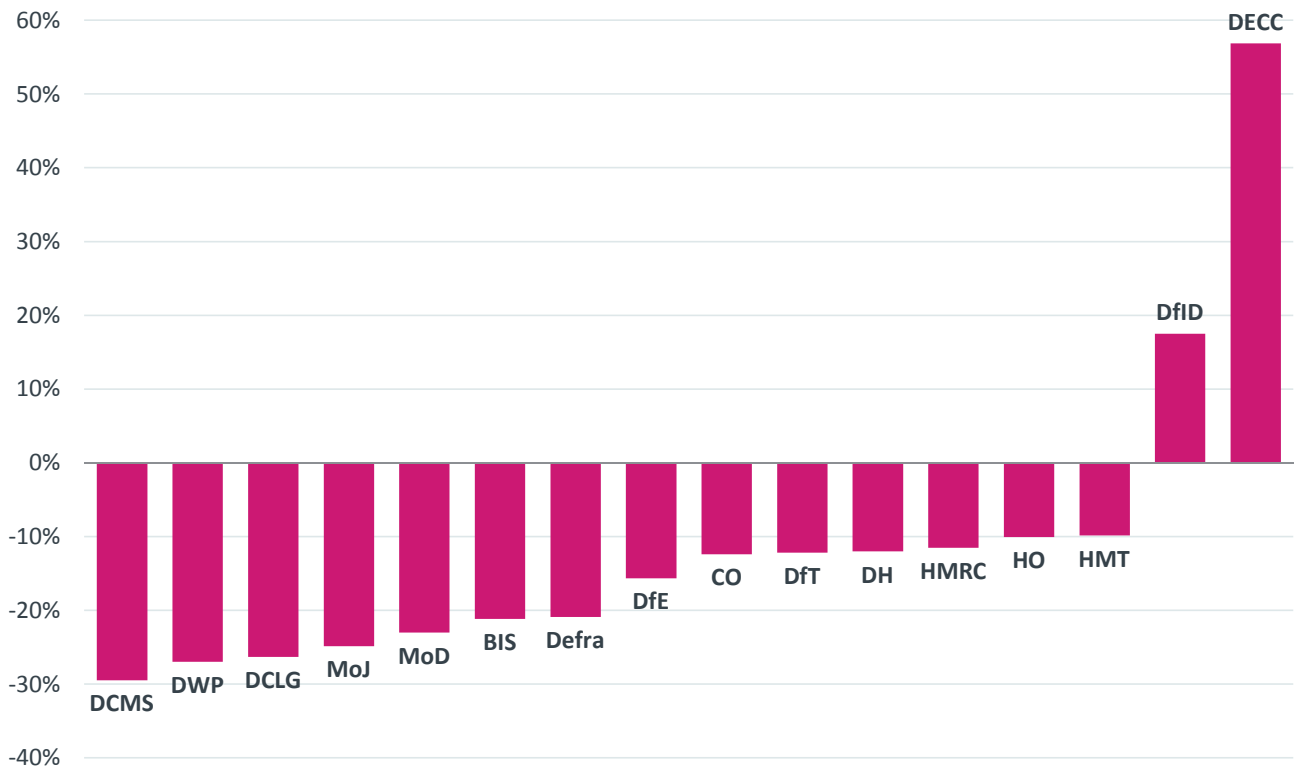
Source: Institute for Government analysis of ONS PSE data (table 9) to Q2 2014. Adjusted for Machinery of Government changes.

Most managed departments made significant cuts immediately following the 2010 Spending Review and have been relatively stable over the past few quarters, though there are exceptions. DfE, for example, embarked on two rounds of cuts – in mid-2011 and again in mid-2013.

Of the departments with an increase in headcount, DECC has had a continuous increase in staff numbers since the Spending Review (until 2014 Q1, its first fall by quarter), and DfID a consistent rise since mid-2011. The Cabinet Office has increased its staff numbers after an initial cut.

DCMS, which has gained (broadband) and completed (Olympics) various policy areas, has seen erratic changes in the size of its staff.

Figure 4.8: Change in staff in departmental groups since Spending Review 2010 (FTE)



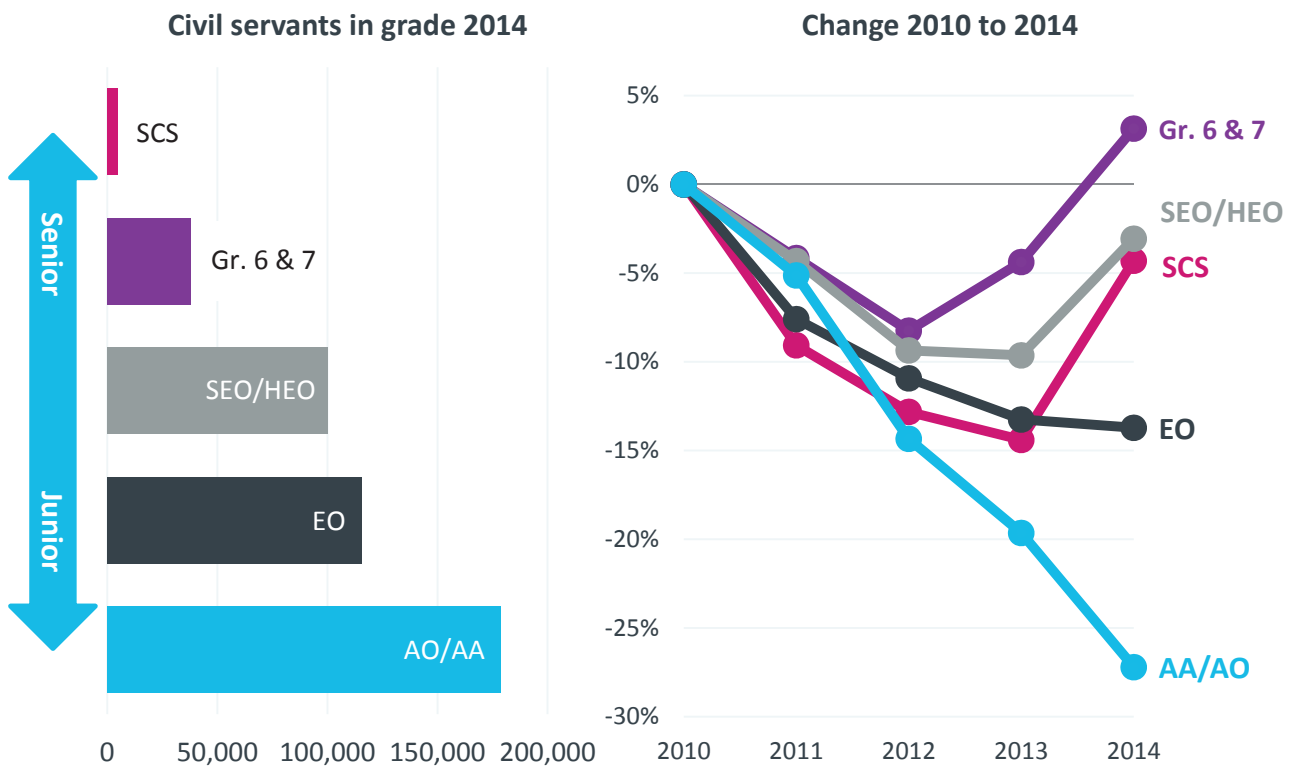
Source: Institute for Government analysis of ONS PSE data (table 9) to Q2 2014. Adjusted for Machinery of Government changes. FCO excluded (missing baseline).

We get a slightly different picture looking at whole departmental groups. DECC’s staff numbers have increased by even more, while the Cabinet Office – which had a staff increase within the managed department – sees a drop once other organisations it is responsible for are included.

The percentage drop in staff numbers is also slightly less severe for a number of departments, including DfT, DH, Defra, DCLG, HMT and DCMS.

Grade: lowest grades reduced by largest percentage since 2010

Figure 4.9: Civil service grade – composition 2014 and change 2010-14 (headcount)



Source: Institute for Government analysis of ONS Annual Civil Service Employment Survey, 2010-14.

Looking at the whole Civil Service, the highest grade, SCS, has the fewest employees, while the lowest grade (administrative officers and administrative assistants, AO/AA) has the most, giving a pyramidal structure from most junior to most senior.

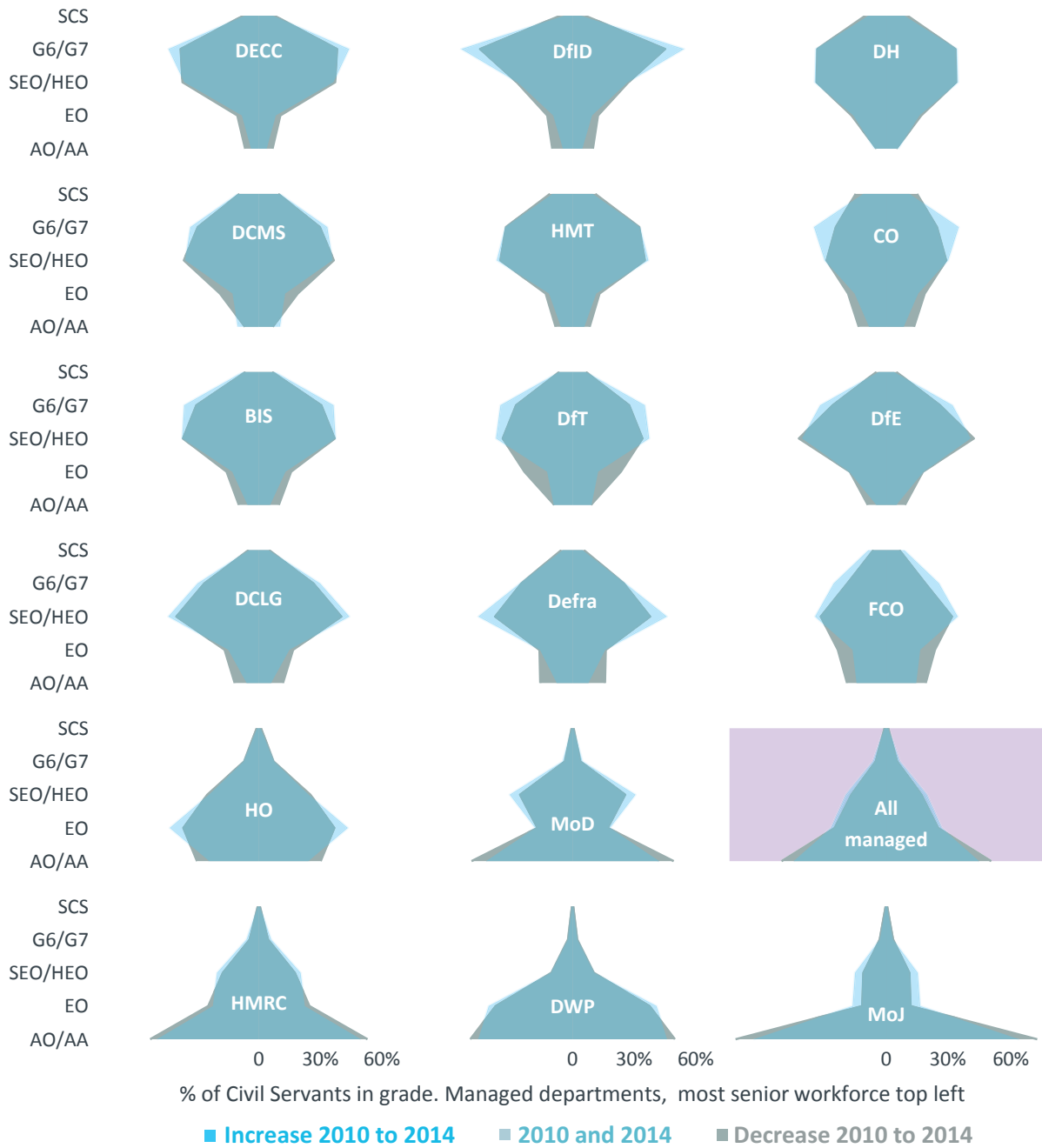
The AA/AO grade has been reduced by the largest percentage since 2010, being cut by over 25%. Grades 6 and 7, who do much of the 'heavy-lifting' on policy in government departments, appear to have been largely protected from cuts – indeed, they have grown by 3%, from 36,600 in 2010 to 37,800 in 2014.

The grade composition varies considerably between departments. DECC and DfID are top-heavy, with grades 6 and 7 being the largest grades in those departments – in DfID, they make up more than 54% of staff. DH, CO and the Treasury stand out as having a high proportion of senior civil servants – Cabinet Office has one senior civil servant for every nine in other grades, compared to DWP, which has one senior official for every 400 others.

Some of the big delivery departments – DWP, HMRC and MoJ – are dominated by AO/AA, given that they directly provide public services.

In terms of changes since 2010, DfID, DECC, CO, BIS, DfT, and DfE are among those departments with a percentage increase in the more senior grades.

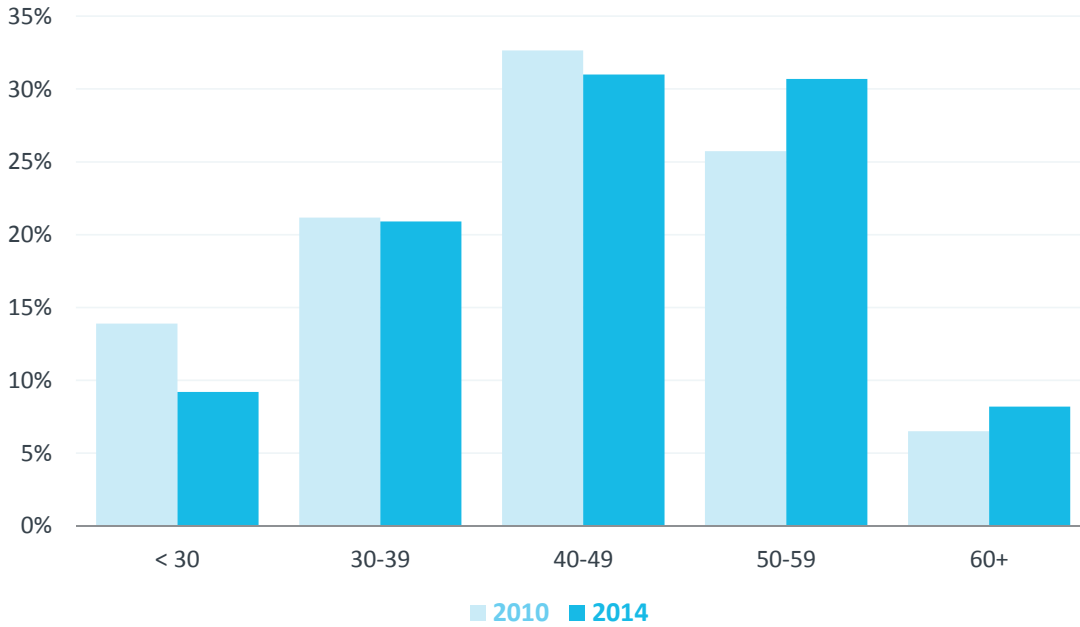
Figure 4.10: Grade composition by government department, 2010 and 2014 (headcount)



Source: Institute for Government analysis of ONS Annual Civil Service Employment Survey, 2010-14.

Diversity: Civil Service older, slightly more female and ethnically diverse than 2010

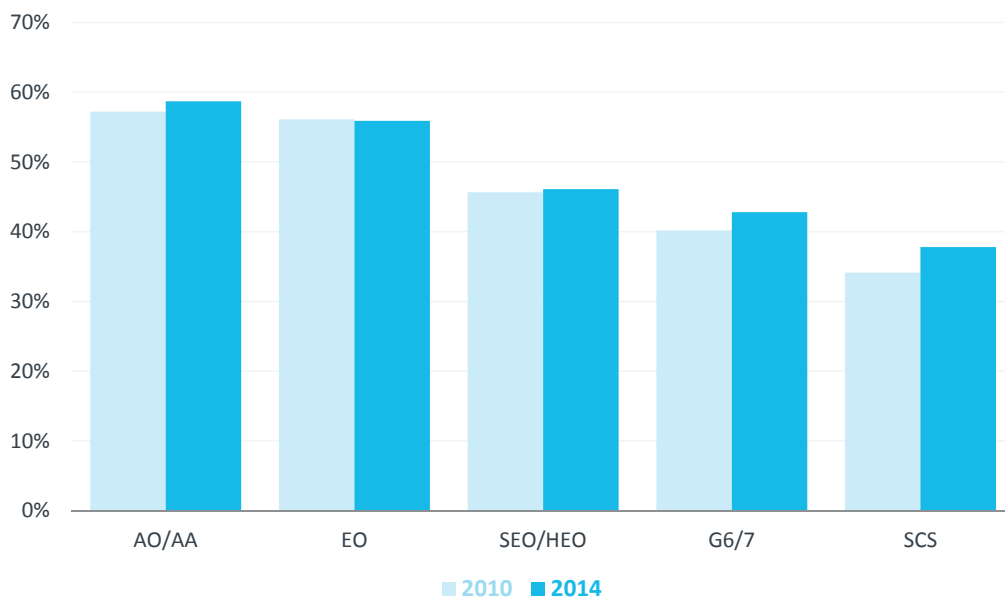
Figure 4.11: Civil service age composition, 2010 and 2014 (headcount)



Source: Institute for Government analysis of ONS Annual Civil Service Employment Survey, 2010-14.

The concentration of civil servants in the age groups 50-59 and 60+ has increased, while the percentage of those under the age of 30 has contracted compared with 2010. This may be partly due to recruitment freezes, with fewer newer (and younger) civil servants being hired.

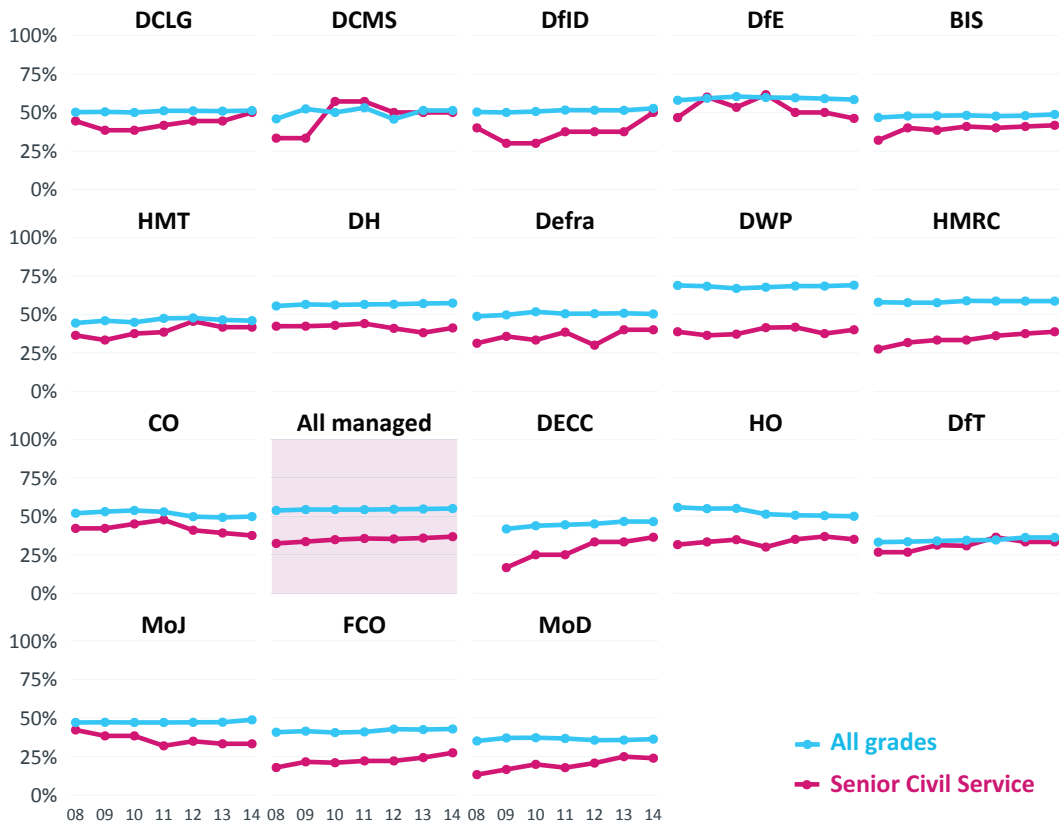
Figure 4.12: Female civil servants as a percentage of staff in grade, 2010 and 2014 (headcount)



Source: Institute for Government analysis of ONS Annual Civil Service Employment Survey, 2010-14.

Overall, 53% of civil servants are women, unchanged from 2010. There are slight increases in most grades compared with 2010, but with small variations; the percentage of women in the SCS has increased by 4% since 2010 but remains low, at 38%.

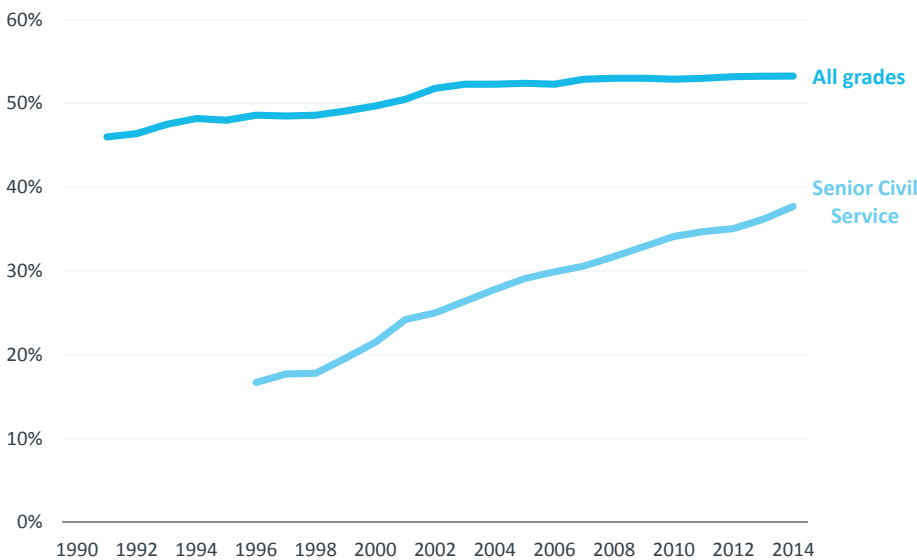
Figure 4.13: Female civil servants by department, 2008-14 (headcount)



Source: Institute for Government analysis of ONS Annual Civil Service Employment Survey, 2008-14.

At departmental level, DWP – with its large percentage of AO/AA, the most junior grade, which is more than 50% female across the Civil Service – has the highest percentage of female civil servants, and DCMS the highest percentage in the Senior Civil Service. MoD has the smallest percentage of women overall and at SCS level.

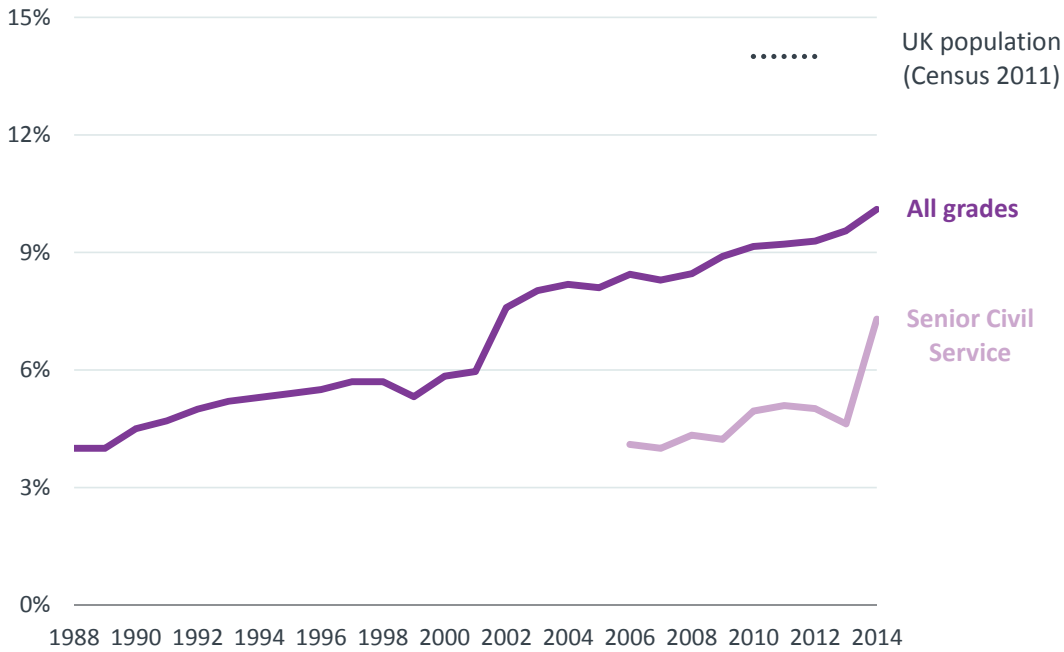
Figure 4.14: Female staff as a percentage, 1991-2014 (headcount)



Source: Institute for Government analysis of ONS Annual Civil Service Employment Survey and Cabinet Office SCS database.

Looking back over a longer time period, the percentage of women in the Civil Service and SCS has increased (from 46% in 1991 to 53% in 2014, and 17% in 1996 to 38% in 2014 respectively).

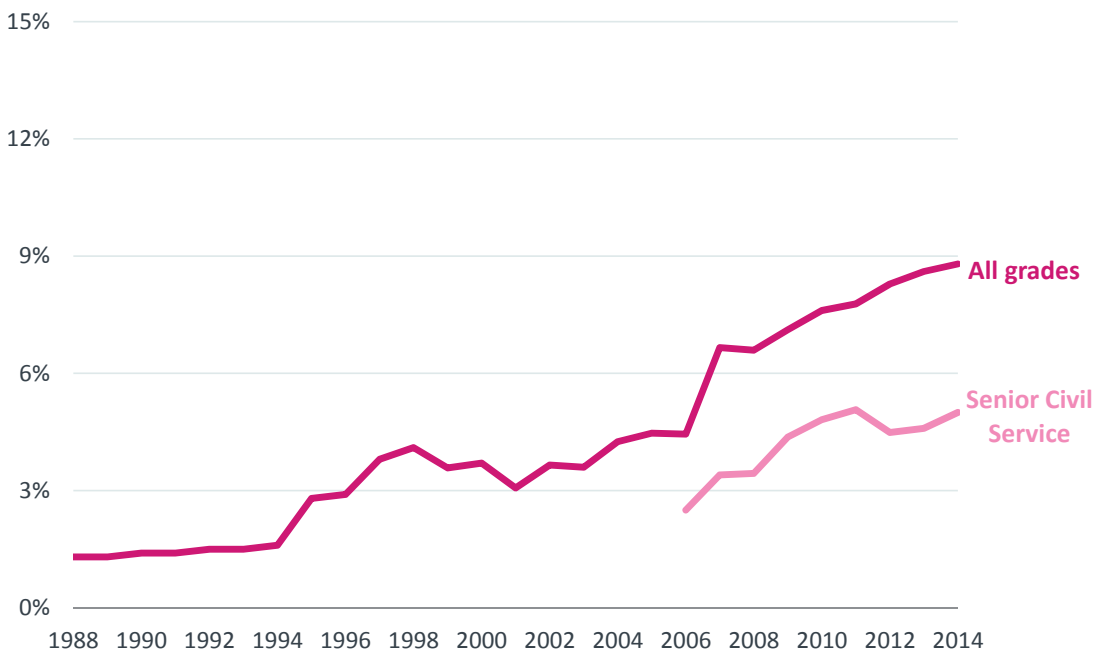
Figure 4.15: Ethnic minority staff in the Civil Service, 1988-2014 (headcount)



Source: Institute for Government analysis of ONS Annual Civil Service Employment Survey, 1988-2014.

Since 2010, the percentage of civil servants from an ethnic minority has increased slightly, from 9.2% in 2010 to 10.1% in 2014; since 1991, it has increased a great deal, from 4.7%. The percentage of ethnic minorities in the SCS decreased slightly between 2010 and 2013, with an increase only in 2014, and the percentage of people from an ethnic minority in the Civil Service is lower than in the population as a whole.

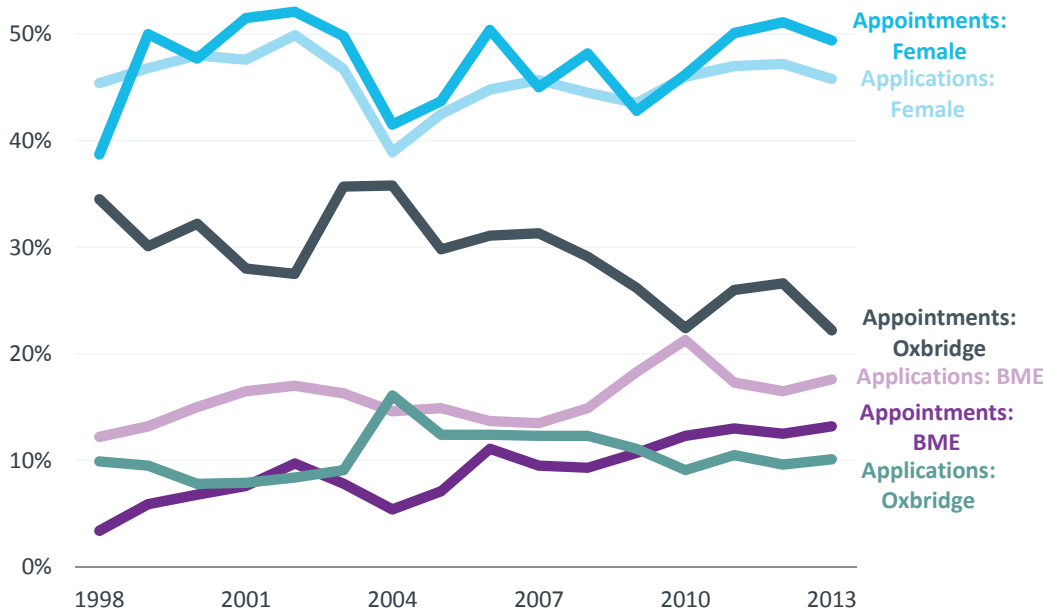
Figure 4.16: Civil service staff with a disability, 1988-2014



Source: Institute for Government analysis of ONS Annual Civil Service Employment Survey, 1988-2014.

At present, 8.8% of civil servants identify themselves as disabled, compared with 1.4% in 1991. The share of senior civil servants in this category saw a slight setback after 2010 but has recovered in the last two years – at 5%, it is now slightly above its 2010 level.

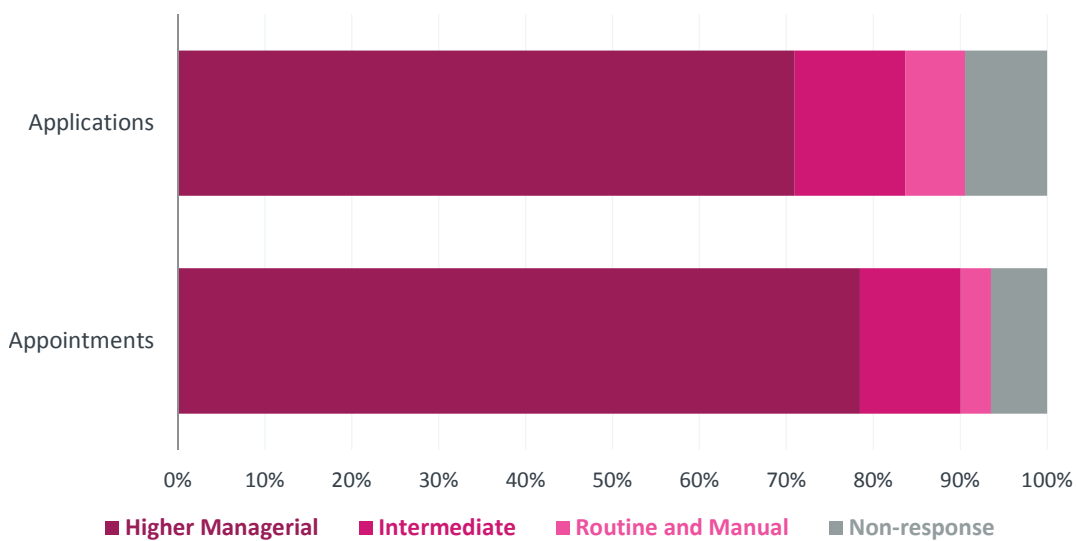
Figure 4.17: Fast Stream vacancies and applications, 1998-2013



Source: Institute for Government analysis of *Fast Stream Recruitment Report*, 2014. In 2004, a new self-assessment system lowered the number of applications.

The Fast Stream is a graduate recruitment process for future leaders (with 16,156 applicants for 864 appointments in the 2013 competition), so its diversity matters to the future diversity of the SCS. The percentage of women appointed is similar to the percentage applying (around 50%), but the appointment rate for ethnic minority candidates is lower than the application rate. Candidates from Oxbridge represent 10% of applicants but 22% of appointments, although the percentage of appointments has fallen since the mid-2000s, and four non-Oxbridge Fast Streamers are appointed for every Oxbridge one.

Figure 4.18: Fast Stream appointments by parents' socio-economic status, 2013

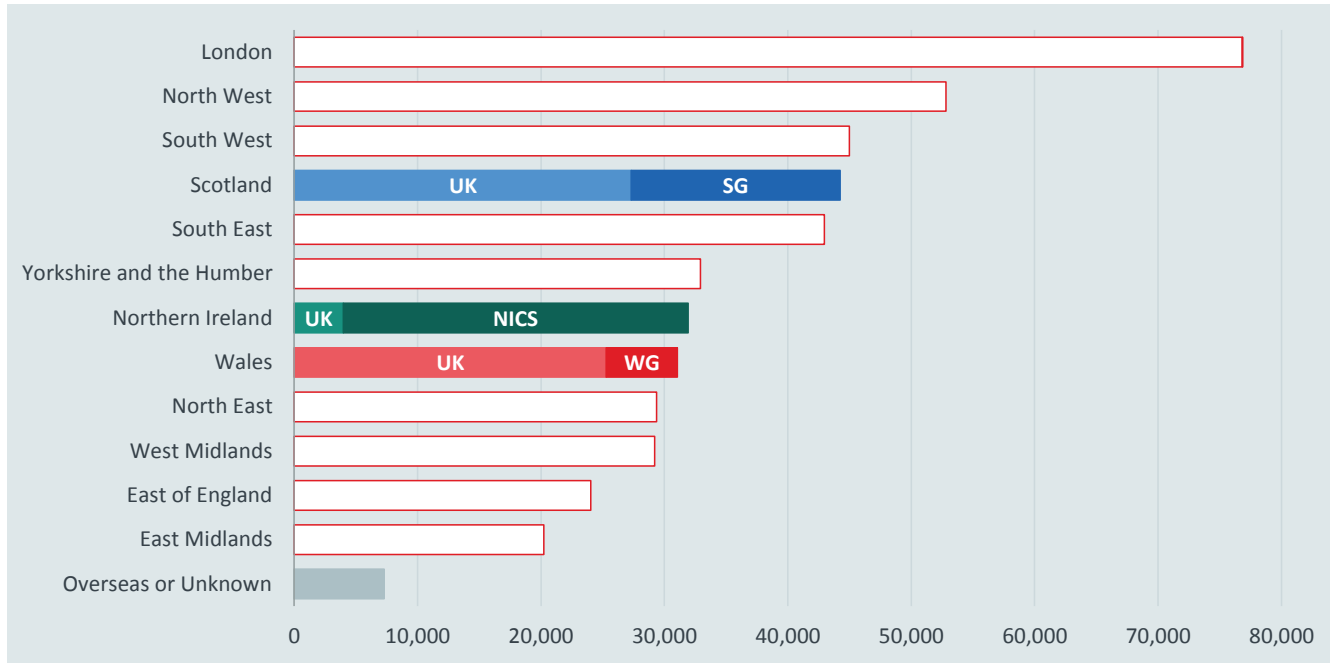


Source: Institute for Government analysis of *Fast Stream Recruitment Report*, 2014. Data available only from 2011.

In 2013, more than 70% of applicants came from a higher managerial background. These applicants are offered the majority of appointments, but they make up a higher percentage of appointments (79%) than applications; their success rate (5.3%) is higher than those from intermediate (4.4%) and routine and manual (2.4%) backgrounds.

Location: London has most civil servants, but departments vary – only DCMS has all staff based in London

Figure 4.19: Location of civil servants in the United Kingdom



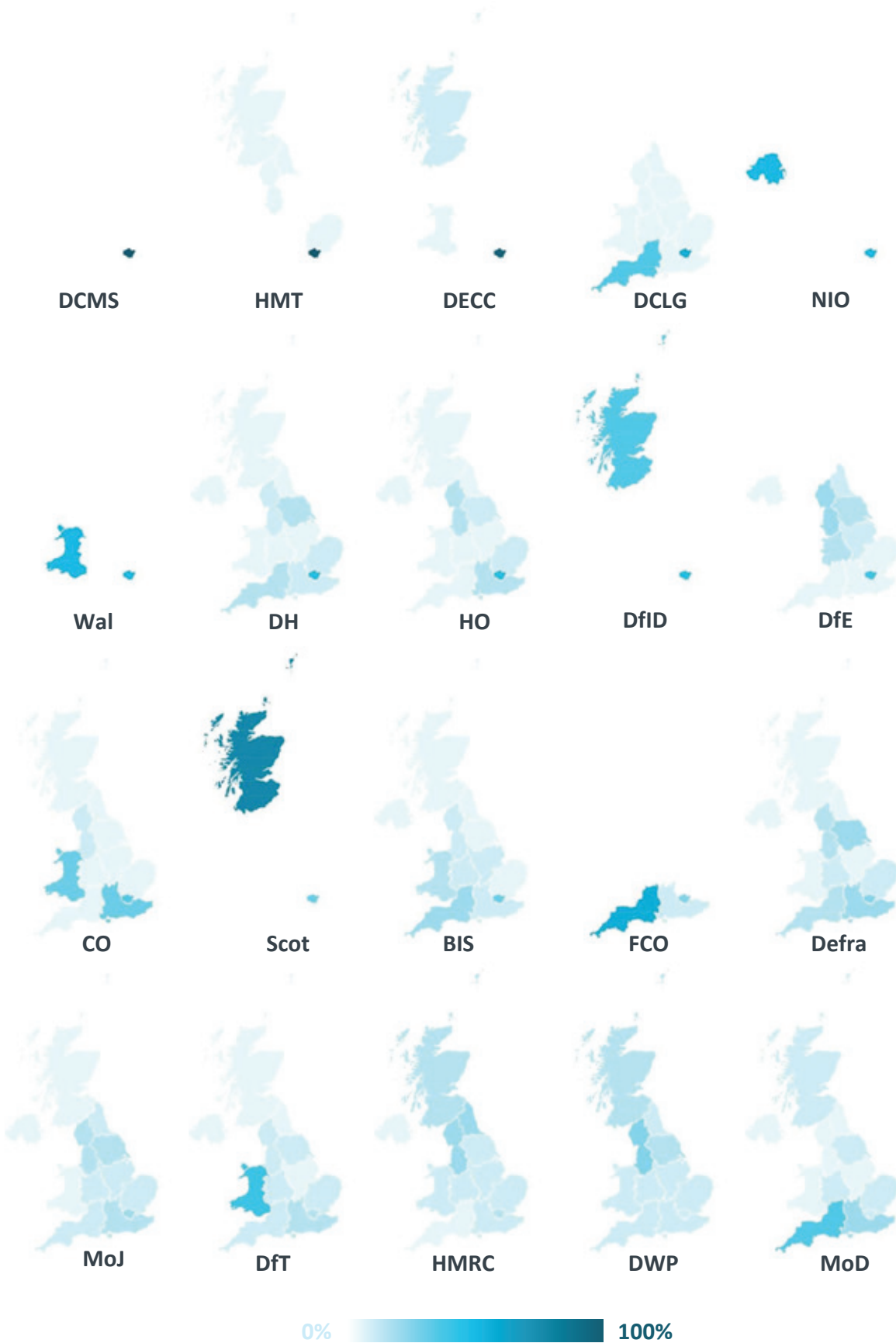
Source: Institute for Government analysis of Annual Civil Service Employment Survey. Northern Ireland Civil Service data is from Nisra, *Employment in the Northern Ireland Civil Service – 1st July 2014*, table 1(a).

Unsurprisingly given its status as the seat of government, more civil servants are based in London than in any other UK region – some 76,840 staff, or nearly one in six. The East Midlands hosts the fewest (just over 20,000, or fewer than one in 20), even though – in general population terms – it is larger than the North East of England, Northern Ireland and Wales.

In both Scotland and Wales, there are more civil servants working for UK government departments than there are for the devolved administrations. In Northern Ireland, the reverse is true: there are few UK government civil servants, but the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) employs nearly 28,000 people. This is due to certain policy areas, like welfare, being devolved to Northern Ireland.

The territorial spread of civil servants working for UK government departments and their arm’s-length bodies varies considerably. DCMS is the only department with 100% of its staff based in London. Others have a large presence in different parts of the UK – more than 35% of DfT’s workforce is outside England (much of it at the DVLA in Swansea), while more than 30% of DfID’s workforce is based in Scotland.

Figure 4.20: Location of home civil servants by department, 2014



Source: Institute for Government analysis of ONS Annual Civil Service Employment Survey, 2014 (data at 31 March 2014). Data excludes 'not reported'. Maps are ordered by percentage of civil servants based in London (high to low).