

Study finds public sector workers more pro-socially motivated than their private sector counterparts

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New research has found public sector workers are typically more pro-socially motivated than their private sector counterparts. The University of Bristol study, published today, examined motivational indicators in workers from both sectors across 51 countries.

But there are some nations where the reverse is true and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)-funded study, led by [academics](#) in the University's Centre for Market and Public Organisation, explored whether corruption can explain variation in motivation across countries.

Using World Values Survey (WVS) data from 59,604 people across 51 countries (representing a total population of 4.8 billion¹) with a range of income levels, different political regimes and cultures, the researchers compared motivational characteristics between public and private, for-profit sector workers.

In addition to age, education, proportion female, the researchers examined motivational indicators, such as the person's work motivation, their self-perception - based on what things are important to them in life, and their self-reported activity in pro-social organisations including charity and environmental work.

As well as differences in motivation, there is a near-universal tendency for [public sector](#) workers to be older, more likely to be female and to be better educated than private for-profit sector workers. People with a higher level of well-being are also more likely to work in the public sector.

One of the authors, Professor Sarah Smith, said: "Our findings suggest that public sector workers tend to be more intrinsically motivated across a wide range of different countries but this is not a

universal characteristic. Our research shows that there are certain features of the public sector, such as the level of [corruption](#), that can make it more attractive to pro-socially motivated workers."

Provided by University of Bristol

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