



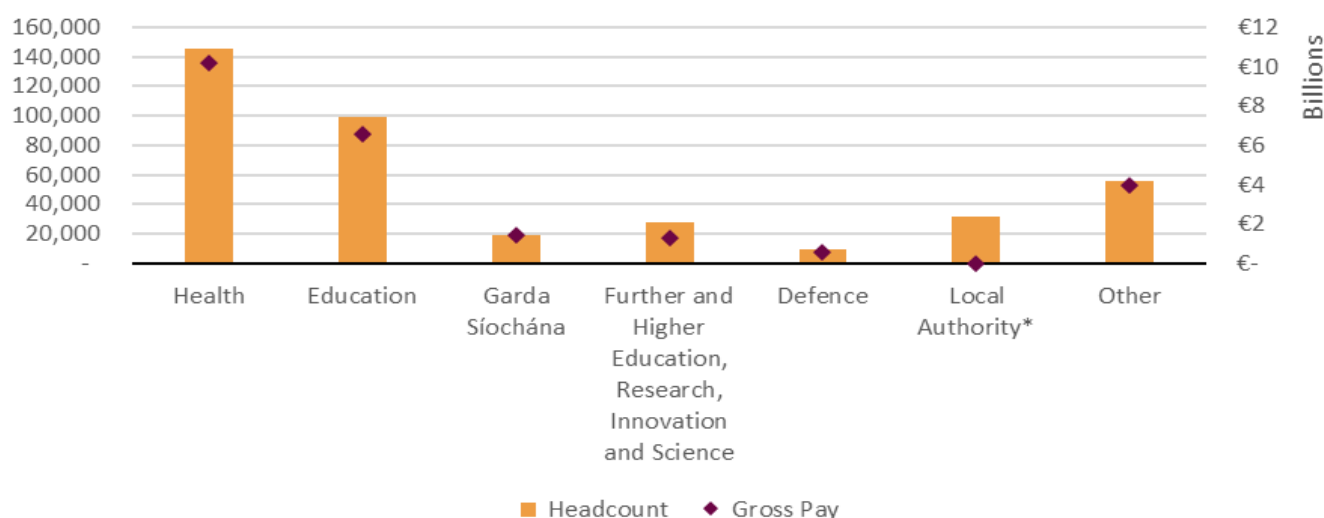
Public Service Staffing and Pay 2023

Funding public service pay is a substantial component of Voted spending in any given year. **The gross cost of the 2023 pay bill for the Public Service in the Revised Estimates for Public Services 2023 is over €23,999 million.** The public service headcount for 2023 is projected to reach 388,784, up from 380,492 (including Local Authority staff) set out for 2022 in the *Revised Estimates for Public Services 2022*, an increase of 2.2%. Excluding Local Authority staffing,¹ the headcount is rising from 349,416 to 356,850 (+7,434 / +2.1%).

There are two primary measures of staffing, and it is important to ensure that comparisons between datasets reflect these differing methodologies. Firstly, **headcount** is a simple measure of the total number of employees of a body or bodies without any regard to whether they work full time. Alternatively, the measures of **Full Time Equivalents (FTEs)** or **Whole Time Equivalents (WTEs)** reflect a more nuanced measure of employment.² For example, in November the HSE reported a headcount of 155,227; however, these workers represented just 137,220 WTEs.³ Detailed dual reporting of headcount and WTE data for all public sector bodies, as now done by the HSE, would assist the development of a more nuanced understanding of public employment, composition and pay.

Figure 1 illustrates the staffing and associated gross pay costs set out for 2023 in the *Revised Estimates for Public Services 2023*. It illustrates Votes which employ more than 10,000 persons and an 'Other' category for the staffing and gross pay associated with the remaining Votes. As such, **gross pay reported for 2023 for the public service (€23,999 million) understates the real level of expenditure on public service pay as it does not include pay for some 32,000 employees paid by Local Authorities.**

Figure 1: Gross Voted Pay & Associated Headcount (2023)



Source: PBO based on *Revised Estimates for Public Services 2023* (December 2022).

Note: Local Authority pay is not encompassed by the Revised Estimates.

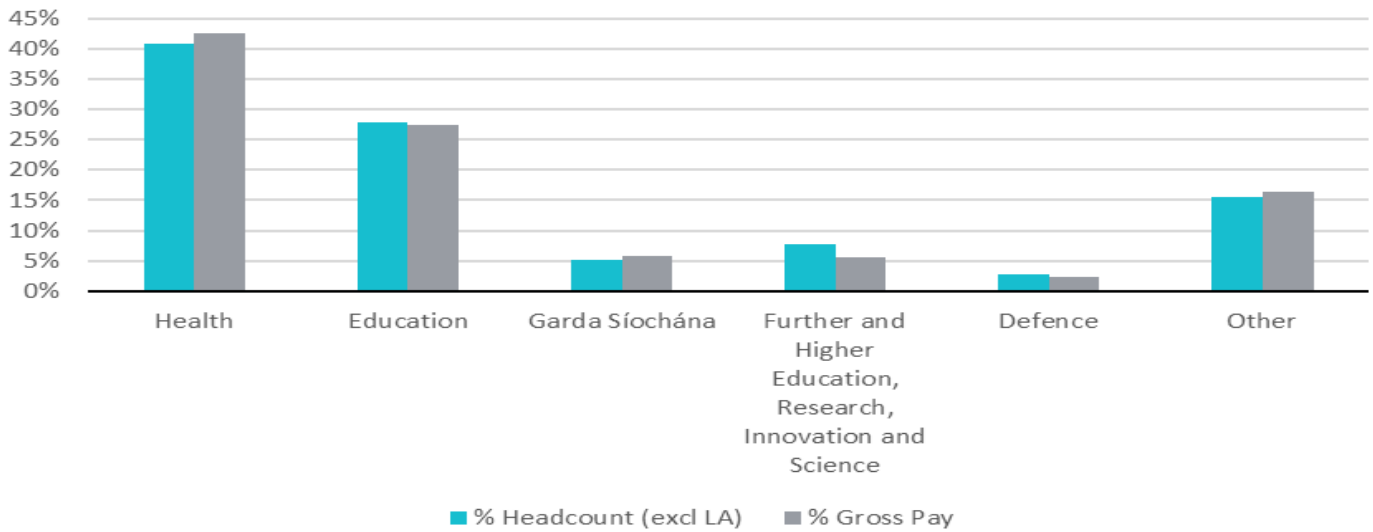
¹ Local Authority Staff are public service staff under Vote 34 Housing, Local Government, and Heritage. However, they are illustrated separately in Figure 1 as, while their headcount is reported in the Revised Estimates Volume, their pay is not derived from the Vote 34. Instead, Local Authority staff are paid by the Local Authorities.

² PBO, The Irish Public Sector: *An Overview of the Composition of the Public Sector, and of the Development of Exchequer Funded Public Sector Pay* (2021) p.14.

³ HSE, *Health Service Personnel Census: November 2022* (accessed 14 February 2021).



Figure 2: Key Votes Gross Pay & Headcount (% of total)



Source: PBO based on [Revised Estimates for Public Services 2023](#) (December 2022).

Note: Local Authority pay is not encompassed by the Revised Estimates.

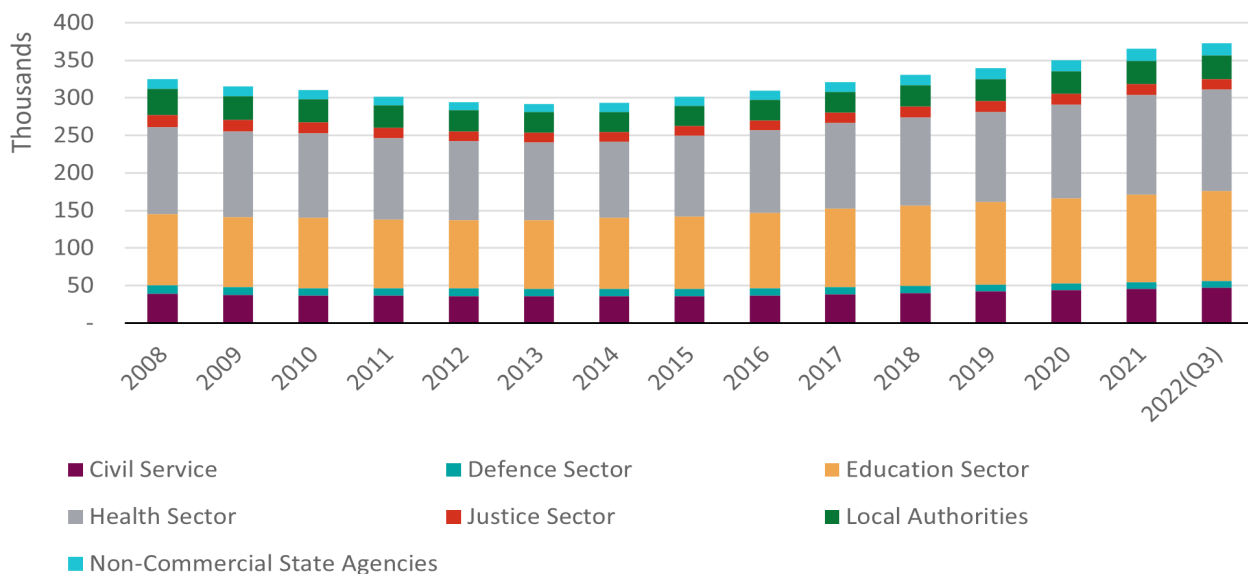
Figure 2 illustrates that voted pay is highly concentrated in a small number of Votes. Voted pay (€23,999 million) is associated with 356,850 public service staff (excluding Local Authority staff). Both (Voted) pay and staffing are highly concentrated. Figure 2 shows that:

- **Vote 38 Health:** This Vote employs 41% of public service employees who receive 43% of the 2023 gross Voted pay allocation;
- **Vote 26 Education:** This Vote employs 28% of public service employees who receive 27% of the 2023 gross Voted pay allocation;
- **Vote 45 Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science:** This Vote employs 8% of public service employees who receive 5% of the 2023 gross Voted pay allocation;
- **Vote 20 Garda Síochána:** This vote employs 5% of public service employees who receive 6% of the 2023 gross Voted pay allocation;
- **Vote 36 Defence:** This vote employs 3% of public service employees who receive 2% of the 2023 gross Voted pay allocation; and
- **Other:** The remaining Votes employ 16% of public service employees who receive 16% of the 2023 gross Voted pay allocation.



Figure 3 illustrates the sectoral composition of the public sector during the period 2008 to 2022. Following the financial crisis, public sector employment declined annually for the period 2008-2013. In this period, employment (WTEs) declined by 33,278.8 – most notably in the Health sector (-12,175.2) and Local Authorities (-7,464). However, since Q4 2013 (to Q3 2022) public sector employment has grown by 80,612 WTEs; this growth is primarily associated with the Health (+31,664.7) and Education (+25,459.1) sectors.

Figure 3: Public Sector Employment (WTE) by Sector at end Q4 (2008 - 2022)



Source: PBO based on DPBR databank.

Figure 4 illustrates how employment in the public service has changed relative to Q4 2013. This illustrates the decline in staffing levels to the 2013 trough and the subsequent broad rebound in staffing levels. This approach illustrates that the **Non-Commercial State Agency (NCSA) sector suffered the greatest proportionate decrease in employment in the period 2008 to 2013 but has also experienced the greatest proportionate increase subsequently**. NCSAs are bodies that are under the aegis of Departments or Local Authorities, some well known examples include Bord Bia, Raidió Teilifís Éireann, and the Workplace Relations Commission.

The defence sector is the only sector in which employment remains below 2013 levels (-13%).⁴ While the establishment of the permanent defence forces (the recommended or desired staffing of the PDF) has been reduced, and now stands at 9,500, the strength (actual staff in situ) is significantly below strength (-1,032 personnel as of December 2021).⁵ PDF strength at levels below establishment are recognised as a capability deficiency.⁶ This situation is likely to have grown considerably worse based on the 2022 data in Figure 3.

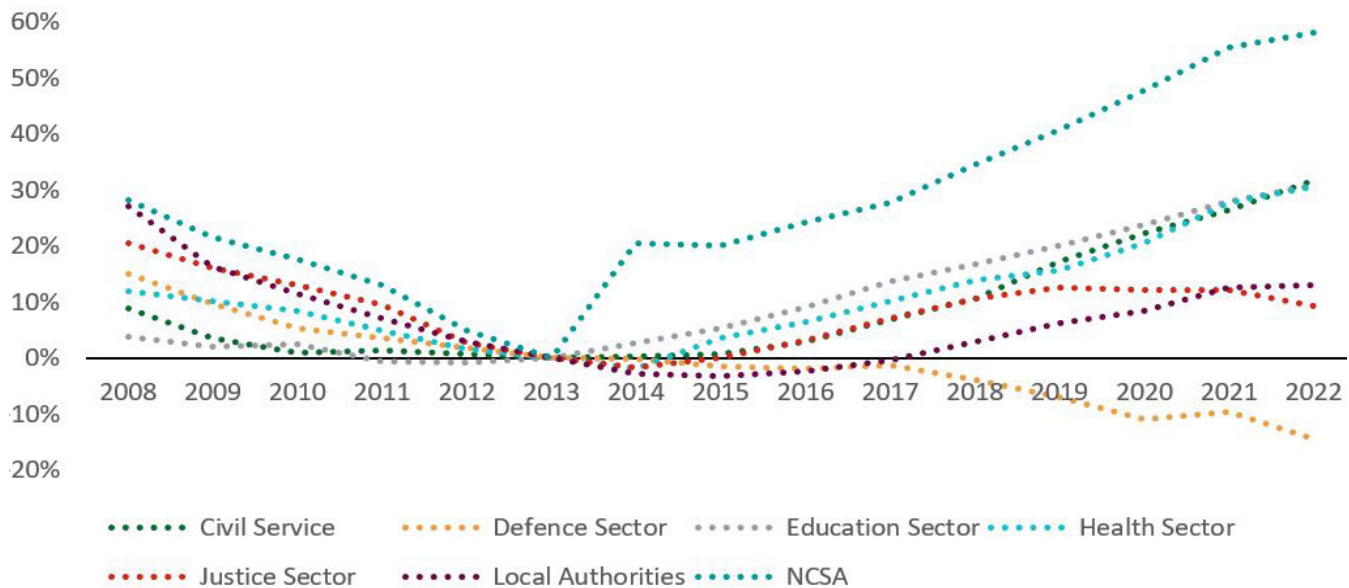
4 This reflects ongoing changes to the recommended strength of the permanent defence forces (PDF) described in greater detail in PBO, *Defence Forces: Remuneration, Recruitment and Retention* (2020) p.8.

5 Commission on the *Defence Forces, Report of the Commission on the Defence Forces* (2022) p.155.

6 Department of Defence, *White Paper on Defence Update 2019* (December 2019) p.3.



Figure 4: Change in WTE (%) relative to 2013 baseline



Source: PBO based on DPER databank.

Note: All data is Q4 except 2022 which relates to Q3 figures (the most recent available at time of writing).

Table 1 (below) sets out public sector employment (in whole time equivalents) by sector in Q4 of 2008, 2013 and Q3 of 2022. **2013 represents the lowest level of employment for the period covered (just below 292,000 WTEs).** Also shown are employment levels in Q4 2013 compared to Q4 2008 (down by more than 33,000 WTEs), and how employment in Q3 2022 compares to Q4 2013 (the lowest recorded level), having increased by over 80,000 WTEs. **This reflects a net increase over the period Q4 2008 to Q3 2022 of more than 47,000 WTEs.**

Table 1: Whole Time Equivalents by Sector (Q42008, Q42013 and Q32022)

	End Q4-2008	End Q4-2013	End Q3-2022	Change Q4-2008 to Q4-2013	Change Q4-2013 to Q3-2022
Civil Service	39,313.09	36,117.79	47,551.18	(3,195.30)	11,433.39
Defence Sector	11,265	9,796.60	8,386.03	(1,468.40)	(1,410.57)
Education Sector	95,024.34	91,589.84	119,861.67	(3,434.50)	28,271.83
Health Sector	115,755.35	103,580.20	135,244.88	(12,175.15)	31,664.68
Justice Sector	15,691.5	13,020.50	14,215.00	(2,671.00)	1,194.50
Local Authorities	35,007.53	27,543.51	31,085.38	(7,464.02)	3,541.87
NCSA	13,060.39	10,189.95	16,106.70	(2,870.44)	5,916.75
Total	325,117.20	291,838.39	372,450.84	(33,278.81)	80,612.45

Source: PBO based on DPER databank.



For more detailed analysis of the composition of the Irish public sector and the associated pay costs please see the Parliamentary Budget Office's paper [*The Irish Public Sector: An Overview of the Composition of the Public Sector, and of the Development of Exchequer Funded Public Sector Pay 2021*](#)).

Key Messages

- Gross pay reported for 2023 for the public service is €23,999 million for almost 357,000 employees, not including an additional 32,000 employees paid by Local Authorities.
- All subsectors of the public sector except defence now employ more people than in Q4 2013 (when public service employment was at its lowest level in recent times); and
- Public sector employment in Q3 2022 (WTEs) was 6,557.7 greater than in Q4 2021, an increase of 1.79%.