

At your service!

Three out of four work in the service sector

Overall, employment in the tertiary or service industries has grown from 750 000 at the beginning of the 1960s to 1 860 000 today, representing almost 76 per cent of all employees. The dominance of the tertiary industries has encouraged many general characterisations of modern society, such as ‘the post-industrial society’, ‘the information society’, and ‘the service society’.

This sector comprises many diverse industries, e.g. commodity trade, hotels and restaurants, transport, financial services and tourism. However, the largest service sector is the public administration – i.e. local and central government administration – including social services, health, education and administration.

Strong growth in the public administration

In recent decades, public administration has experienced strong growth and now employs almost 800 000 people, compared with only 200 000 in 1962. Its share of employment has increased from 13 to approximately 30 per cent, which corresponds to 25 per cent of the hours worked (part-time work is somewhat more common in the public sector).

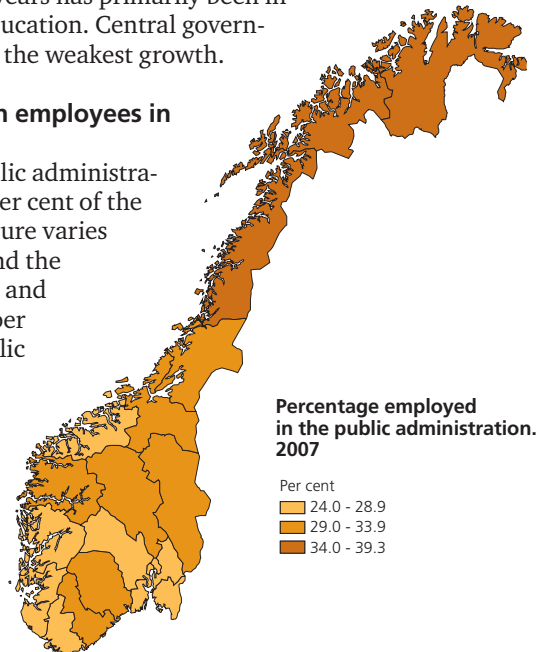
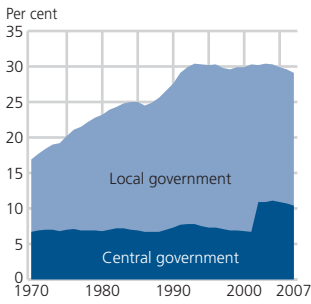
Two thirds of those employed in public administration work in local government administration. When the central government took over the county municipal hospitals, the number of employees in the central government sector increased significantly in 2002.

The strong growth in recent years has primarily been in health and social care and education. Central government administration has had the weakest growth.

Many public administration employees in Northern Norway

As mentioned above, the public administration accounts for almost 30 per cent of the total employment, but the figure varies from county to county. We find the highest proportions in Troms and Finnmark, where almost 40 per cent are employed in the public administration. (This high percentage is due to the presence of the Norwegian armed forces and the fact that municipalities with a scattered population require a relatively high number of employees to maintain the range of municipal services.)

Employees in the public administration as a percentage of total employment



Rogaland, Oslo and Akershus have the lowest share of central and local government employees at just 24-26 per cent. In Oslo, there are many employees in the central government administration but fewer in local government.

ICT: a new sector

The ICT sector consists of a number of industries in information and communication technology, such as the manufacturing of computers and computer equipment, electronic trade, telecommunication and consultancy services. In other words, this sector cuts across the traditional division of industries and includes the production of both goods and services.

The ICT sector employment increased until 2001. In 2006, 73 600 people were employed in this sector. If we include the so-called content sector, which comprises publishing activities, information services, radio and television and film and video, more than 106 000 people are currently employed in the information sector.

Important in daily life

Despite the increased economic significance of the ICT sector, its importance for the user, both at work and at home, is far more visible. During the 1990s, modern means of communication such as PCs, mobile phones and the Internet became important ingredients both at work and home.

Nine out of ten enterprises (with over ten employees) now have access to the Internet, compared with four out of ten in 1998. Around 70 per cent have their own website. In this respect, it seems that Norwegian companies are lagging behind their Nordic neighbours.

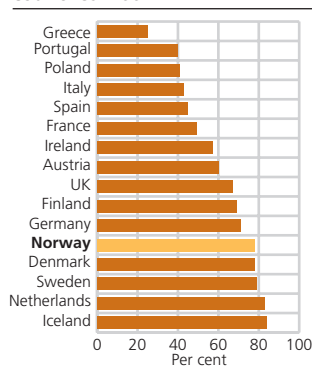
However, the significance of modern communication technology is perhaps most striking when we look at households. In 2007, 87 per cent had access to PCs at home, while 83 per cent had access to the Internet at home.

Norway, together with the other Nordic countries, is at the forefront as regards access to and use of ICT equipment, e.g. Internet access. This is also the case when it comes to the use of PCs at home and mobile phones.

Number of employees in the ICT sector

1995	59 500
1996	63 230
1997	68 100
1998	73 700
1999	80 300
2000	85 500
2001	88 700
2002	86 900
2003	71 500
2004	69 100
2005	69 600
2006	73 600

Percentage of households with access to the Internet in selected countries. 2007



Source: Eurostat.