



Chief Executives Board for Coordination

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Addendum

Navigating to the Next United Nations: A Journey Full of Potential





This paper was developed by *Young UN: Agents for Change* (Young UN), a global network of more than 1,500 members, working in 100+ countries across all UN system entities represented in the High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM). The network is open to all employee categories and contract types, including consultants and interns, and has no age limit. Young UN members recognise that there are many common challenges across the UN system and are proactive in addressing them in order to transform the UN system to live by the principles it stands for.

Following Young UN's participation at the April 2019 session of the HLCM, this study was prepared by Young UN at the request of the HLCM as an input to deliberations on "The Future of the UN System Workforce".

This paper is the result of a process using new ways of working (see Annex 1). The main data source for this study was a survey that asked UN employees about their experiences and expectations at the workplace and how the UN needs to adapt for the future of work. The survey received a total of 859 respondents from 34 UN entities, 91 countries and across different contract types and length of service in the UN (for more information, see Annex 2).

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Key messages

The UN has the potential to be the most attractive employer in the world...

- The UN system has no problem attracting employees and they are motivated to stay primarily due to the UN's compelling purpose and the opportunity to do meaningful work.

...and it has a highly-skilled, mobile talent pool that is looking for diverse opportunities and flexible career paths to apply their skills...

- In the next five years, **the majority of the 859 employees surveyed for this study are primarily interested in transitioning** within the UN system, between entities or duty stations, re- and upskilling.
- More than **80% are interested in collaboration opportunities** outside their core team.
- Opportunities for flexible working are highly appealing. Around a third of respondents already use **telecommuting** within the duty station, a quarter do **coworking** or use **flextime**.
- **More than 70%** are looking to their supervisors for career guidance, mentoring and professional coaching.

...but current systems and practices need to change to enable people to reach their potential, giving them space, choices and security to grow.

- **Under 20%** of respondents believe that their organization enables them to **reach their full potential**.
- **Less than a third** feel their organization helps them to **acquire the skills and knowledge** needed to get better at what they do, and **only 25%** feel their organization supports their career development.
- **68% want to stay in the UN system**, but many feel they do not have a choice. **More than 90%** of those on consultant, service contracts and temporary appointments **feel concerned** that they will have to leave the UN within two years because their contract expires. For **about 75%**, their current contract situation allows them to **plan ahead for one year or less**, which two thirds consider to be insufficient.
- **Two thirds of respondents are actively seeking job opportunities**, mainly within the UN system.
- A lack of career development opportunities, poor management practices, underutilization of skills, and lack of employment predictability are the main reasons prompting people to leave the UN.

The UN is not sufficiently prepared for the future of work.

- **Almost 40%** of respondents feel their organization is **not at all prepared for the future of work**.

- **Opportunities for collaboration, flexible working and career development** support **do not seem to be available** to the majority, or are blocked by their supervisor.
- **A culture of innovation and collaboration is sorely lacking.** Only 14% of respondents think that their organization has a culture of innovation and risk-taking. The majority do not feel encouraged to experiment due to a lack of support from senior management or direct supervisors (60% and 40% respectively) and lack of dedicated time within working hours (38%).
- **Less than half** of respondents feel encouraged or empowered **to share information and collaborate within their organization; less than a quarter** feel encouraged to do so within the **UN system** or with others outside the UN system.

Four shifts in mindsets, structures and practices can make the UN fit for the future of work:

1. From hierarchies to self-managing teams: redesigning the UN as an agile organization
2. From competition to collaboration and transparency: creating a network of empowered, cross-functional teams
3. From risk aversion to innovation: enabling learning at all levels
4. From putting employees into boxes to putting people at the centre: embracing a mobile, flexible workforce

Introduction

Where the journey could take us: outlooks on the future of work

The future of work has already started. Rapid and radical changes in the world are reshaping working environments, ways of working and people's expectations of employers. While the implications of the future of work vary by organization, sector, and type of work, organizations everywhere are grappling with the same questions. The UN system shares many struggles with other large organizations that need to change to remain relevant and retain talent in today's world.

This paper sets out core themes as they pertain to the UN context and the changes needed to make these shifts. More data than ever is available on what organizational values, structures, and ways of working lead to which results and why. As outlined below, five major trends emerge across related studies and articles.

1. Organizations redesign themselves to become more flexible and agile

Traditional organizational structures are ill-suited for new ways of working. Hierarchical command and control structures are limited in a variety of ways, most notably when it comes to effective communication and rapid processing of tasks.¹ New or 'reinvented' organizational models are on the rise, which are agile in the sense that they embrace change and can react quickly to keep pace with the challenges of a complex, unpredictable world.²

2. Cross-functional teams foster collaboration

As organizations strive to become more agile, they reduce hierarchies, silos, and bureaucracy, while nurturing highly collaborative, empowered, and cross-functional teams. High performing organizations are nowadays operating as a network of self-managing teams, with people moving from one team to another.³ For managers, this shift requires that they focus on building positive relationships and an enabling environment, instead of taking away responsibility and ownership from employees.⁴ This increased collaboration usually goes hand in hand with a high degree of transparency and distributed authority, supported by digital tools.

3. Learning enables innovation, adaptation and growth

The future of work requires the ability to constantly learn and adapt.⁵ Adaptation and learning also takes place at the organization-wide level through innovation. Instead of prescribed learning approaches, employees expect dynamic, self-

¹ Erica Volini & Garth Andrus (2018) [The Future of Work is Here. Here's How Your Organization Needs to Change](#).

² Deloitte University Press (2016) [Global Human Capital Trends 2016](#). [The new organization: Different by design](#), p.4.

³ Ibid, p.17; Chris McGugan (2019) [Future of Work: Three Steps for Navigating a new Era of Collaboration](#).

⁴ Gallup (2017) [State of the Global Workplace](#), p.7; Ben Rossi (2019) [How businesses can avoid "fake agile"](#).

⁵ Heather McGowan (2018) [The Future of Work is Learning](#).

directed, continuous learning opportunities from employers.⁶ Strategies that enable them to identify, develop, and use their natural talents to become strengths have the potential to dramatically improve workforce productivity.⁷ Work itself turns into continuous learning.

4. Work is flexible and mobile

The future of work is flexible and distributed. The large majority of employees feel that flexible working environments and arrangements improve their productivity and they also create many benefits for employers.⁸ Young people anticipate working as part of different teams, in different geographies and for different employers seeking an enriching experience at every stage.⁹ Organizations need to embrace the change and adopt more flexible work environments to enable this and retain talent.

5. The future of work is meaningful

People want to work for organizations that have a clear purpose, which resonates with their personal values.¹⁰ Aspects such as *visions*, *values* or *contribution to society* are driving engagement more than ever. Organizations with a clear and meaningful mission will pull in the best talent by offering employees a deeper purpose.¹¹

Where we are now: time to get moving

The UN system has the potential to be the most attractive employer in the world. It has a compelling purpose, mandate and vision. People want to bring their skills to solve the world's toughest challenges. As identified in this study, the opportunity to do meaningful work, passion for their specific area of work as well as the mission/mandate of the organization were the top reasons respondents cited that would motivate them to keep working in the UN system in the long term, directly echoing the reasons respondents applied to the UN in the first place.¹² Job advertisements in the UN receive countless applications.

Yet despite broad interest to join the UN and a commitment to work for the organization, many UN employees – especially young ones – face a series of challenges and frustrations. And here the UN is falling short for the wrong reasons: it does not make the most of its people and their potential.

⁶ Deloitte University Press (2016) [Global Human Capital Trends 2016. The new organization: Different by design](#), p.57.

⁷ Gallup (2017) [State of the Global Workplace](#), p.6.

⁸ Ernst & Young (2017) [The future of work is changing. Will your workforce be ready?](#)

UN Women (2019) [Supplementary <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2019/gender-parity-enabling-environment-guidelines-supplementary-guidance-en.pdf?la=en&vs=1535>](https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2019/gender-parity-enabling-environment-guidelines-supplementary-guidance-en.pdf?la=en&vs=1535) Guidance on the Enabling Environment – Guidelines for the United Nations System.

⁹ Deloitte University Press (2016) [Global Human Capital Trends 2016. The new organization: Different by design](#), p.2.

¹⁰ Danielle Guzman (2018) [Five Workplace Trends Shaping the Future of Work: Which Are Most Important to You?](#)

¹¹ Deloitte University Press (2016) [Global Human Capital Trends 2016. The new organization: Different by design](#), p.50.

¹² Young UN (2018) [Global Ideas Survey 2017](#).

In line with previous Young UN surveys, the study found that less than 20% of the UN employees surveyed believe that their organization enables them to reach their full potential and apply their full talents to support its mission. Employees are often not enabled to learn and grow, to share information and collaborate with others, to take calculated risks and innovate, or to fail and try again.

This is an opportunity for the UN system

With plenty of critical challenges ahead, the UN cannot afford to let the potential of its workforce go untapped, lose talent to other organizations, or continue to compete internally instead of collaborating towards a common purpose. The UN can serve as an example of an empowered organization that establishes, upholds and defends essential values and lives by them. Doing this will require some fundamental shifts. It will require identifying and challenging the underlying assumptions that inform current structures and practices, such as fear and control. Shifting to a mindset of mutual trust and openness can create a UN where information is openly available to all by default, where employees feel encouraged to challenge, speak-up, take risks and potentially fail, where systems are in place that enable and facilitate collaboration, where all employees are able to shape and contribute to decisions, and where teams are organized based on principles of self-management, not hierarchies or control. This shift will not happen from one day to the next and it will be an adventurous journey – but one that is worth it.

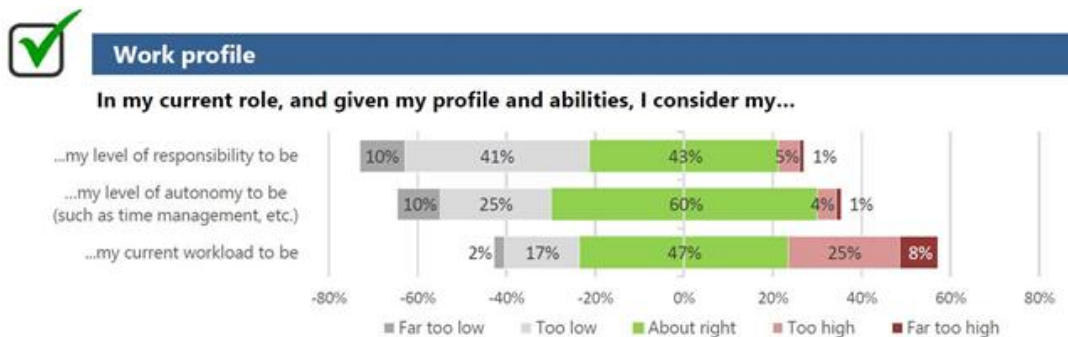
From Today's UN to Next UN: four shifts are needed

1. From hierarchies to self-managing teams: redesigning the UN as an agile organization

"As companies strive to become more agile and customer-focused, organizations are shifting their structures from traditional, functional models toward interconnected, flexible teams... A new organizational model is on the rise: a 'network of teams' in which companies build and empower teams to work on specific business projects and challenges." Deloitte (2016, p. 4).

When asked to describe the UN in one word, the adjectives used most frequently by early-career UN employees are: bureaucratic, slow, inefficient and hierarchical.¹³ Bureaucratic organizations are characterized by a hierarchical structure and governed by a set of laws, rules and procedures as the basis of authority and direction. They assign a personnel number, a pay grade and an office number to a worker and expect pre-defined outputs to be delivered within a rigid framework. Such a system neither caters for the needs of people nor unlocks their full potential.

It is time to rethink the current cog-in-a-machine mentality and create a modern and transparent system that puts people at the centre. On paper, the UN system has the ingredients to become an agile organization, driven by its values and the commitment of its employees. To put this into practice, self-management as well as a safe and supportive environment are two important concepts to consider. The UN can work towards these by moving from hierarchies to networks, by piloting self-management models at first on small scale and – if proven successful – scaling to the whole organization.



Only 43% of respondents consider their level of responsibility as about right, and about a third wish for more autonomy and a lower workload. Inefficient management practices and attitudes seem to be at the heart of the problem.

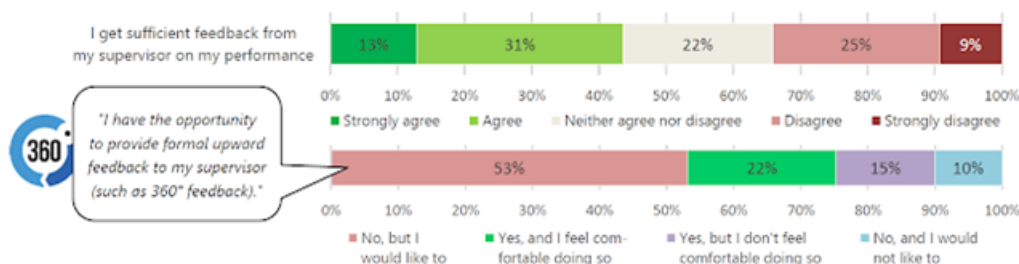
"People become managers because of their technical skills but have no idea of how to manage programmes or people."

"Make sure managers know how to manage, and leaders how to lead."

(Quotes from survey respondents)

¹³ Young UN (2018) [Global Ideas Survey](#) 2017.

Being aware of the value of proper management skills, the majority of respondents also name them as the top skill they would like to acquire over the coming years. Poor management practices are also quoted as one of the major reasons for early career employees to leave the UN system (47%) with lack of recognition from supervisors (24%) being another. While respondents would like to be mobile (84% would like to gain experience at another UN organization and 79% would like to move geographically), management practices seem to be a barrier, rather than an enabler. The culture of bureaucracy and formal hierarchy is criticized in open comments from respondents across all UN organizations.



Less than half of the respondents (44%) state that they get sufficient feedback on their performance. However, giving feedback is not a one way street: The majority of respondents (53%) would like to be given an opportunity to provide upward feedback to their supervisors. Although provided the opportunity, about 15% of respondents do not feel comfortable giving honest upward feedback. These findings draw a rather dark picture of the current management practices.

Trust is also an important dimension for the management of performance and behavior: Employees have to be able to trust in a system which recognizes and rewards good performance and behavior, while it addresses and – if applicable – sanctions poor performance and misconduct.

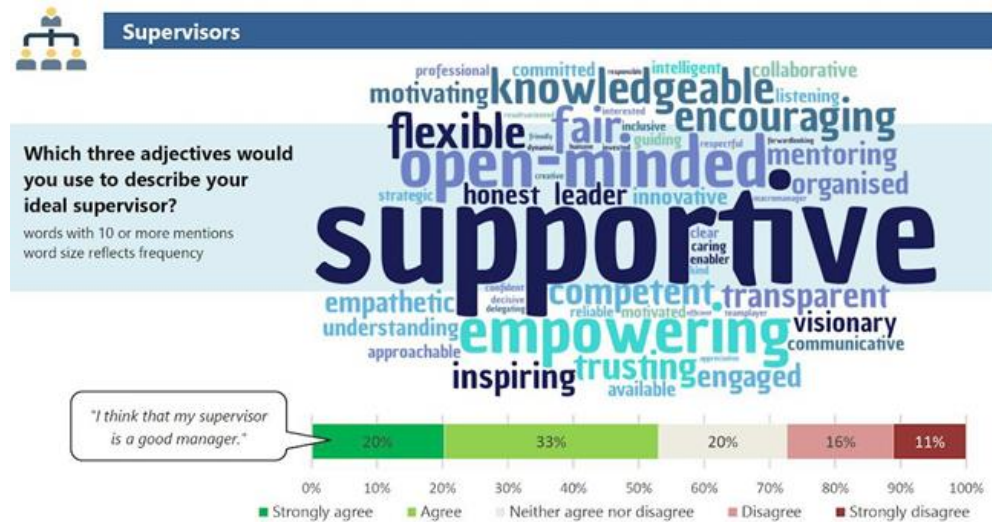
"The UN is a generous system but it is abused by some staff members."

"Have the courage to put words to action, no matter who/what level is concerned (e.g. misconduct, mismanagement, bad performance)."

"Change recruitment and add real accountability to ensure that poorly performing staff-members have to leave the organization while well performing staff members have opportunities for career development (mobility both vertical and horizontal)."

(Quotes from survey respondents)

Self-management enables individuals to perform management tasks freely and autonomously within a given, flexible framework but without a mechanistic hierarchy. If equipped with the right amount of autonomy, it provides the opportunity for small teams to develop a strong sense of accountability and responsibility. A safe and supportive environment is required to foster the exchange of experience, share knowledge and information, and reflect on failures and achievements. To get there, the UN culture needs to be reset and rebuilt based on mutual appreciation and trust, where learning, risk-taking and honest feedback – both positive and negative – become the default and a daily routine for employees and managers. When asked to describe their ideal supervisor, the top words were supportive and empowering.



Support and empowerment facilitate a shift towards self-management where the role of current managers is reimagined to focus on enabling functions, including coaching, mentoring and guiding team members, encouraging their learning and growth. Continuous feedback is a crucial element in this context since it will motivate employees to acquire new skills.¹⁴ This time could be freed-up by reducing lengthy bureaucratic procedures, strengthening autonomy of employees and sharing responsibilities more widely.

Recommendations

- **Redefine management to focus on enabling functions and move towards self-managing teams:** The role of the manager as coach should be included in job descriptions as a core part of their duties and with an allocated amount of time (e.g. 50% of working time). Supervisees should confirm their yearly satisfaction with the coaching and development support received from their supervisors.
- **Provide expert career tracks without managerial responsibility:** Provide a career track for highly skilled technical experts without managerial aspirations by decoupling the compensation from the management status.
- **Revise performance management systems and enforce compliance:** Good performance and behaviour need to be recognized and rewarded, while poor performance and misconduct need to be addressed rigorously at every level.
- **Senior management champions on calculated risk-taking:** Respected senior leaders should be encouraged to share their learning experiences and how mistakes and risk taking have led them through their career.
- **Mandatory 360° feedback surveys:** 360° feedback surveys should be compulsory for all employees in supervisory roles, and also be available for employees without supervisory responsibility. Such surveys should be accompanied by adequate training, ongoing coaching and support to managers.

¹⁴ Gallup (2019): [The Real Future of Work: The Disruption Issue.](#)

- **Regular career counselling and coaching:** Professional career counselling services should become an integral part of talent management. Every UN employee (incl. interns) should be assigned one HR partner who supports them in their career path.
- **(Cross-UN) mentoring programs:** Establishing mentoring programs within all UN organizations with mentors coming from within the same UN entity or another one, contributing to further cross-fertilization.
- **Compulsory management skills training:** Employees assuming management responsibility should be required to acquire managerial skills *prior* to switching into their new role
- **Probation period with involvement of supervisee:** A 12-month probationary period for any new supervisor, with feedback from team members taken into account before confirming the supervisor in their management role.

Good practice examples

UN internal good practices

- ILO offers three kinds of management courses: One for emerging leaders who will assume management responsibility in the close future, and two for more experienced managers.
- Collaboration between UN Secretariat, WHO and WIPO: Coaching and career counselling for all employees, and coaching skills for managers.
- The Young UN network is an example within the UN system operating on principles of self-management, without need for either hierarchy or consensus. Young UN works on the basis of constant questioning, creating, experimenting, testing and improving. Members take a solution- and action-oriented approach, forming fluid teams that gather and disperse according to the initiative underway. Projects and geographical hubs can be initiated by any member of the network and rely on the commitment of members to drive them forward. The fundamental assumptions underpinning Young UN's work include trust, transparency, collective intelligence, shared responsibility and distributed leadership. This report is an example of this style of working.

External good practices

- When assuming his role, the [Chairman of the Belgian Federal Office of Social Affairs](#) cut three of five layers of hierarchy, encouraged all employees to challenge the status quo, identify areas for improvement and eliminated as many meetings as possible.¹⁵
- From large multinational companies, to public institutions including schools and a nursing cooperative, *Reinventing Organizations Wiki*¹⁶ provides a list of 28 organizations who have made the journey to self-management, including transitioning from traditional hierarchical structures.

¹⁵ Corporate Rebels (2016) Frank van Massenhove: the man with the funny stories and the silly shoes

¹⁶ Reinventing Organizations wiki, Case Examples of successful journeys organizations have made to self-management

2. From competition to collaboration and transparency: creating a network of empowered, cross-functional teams

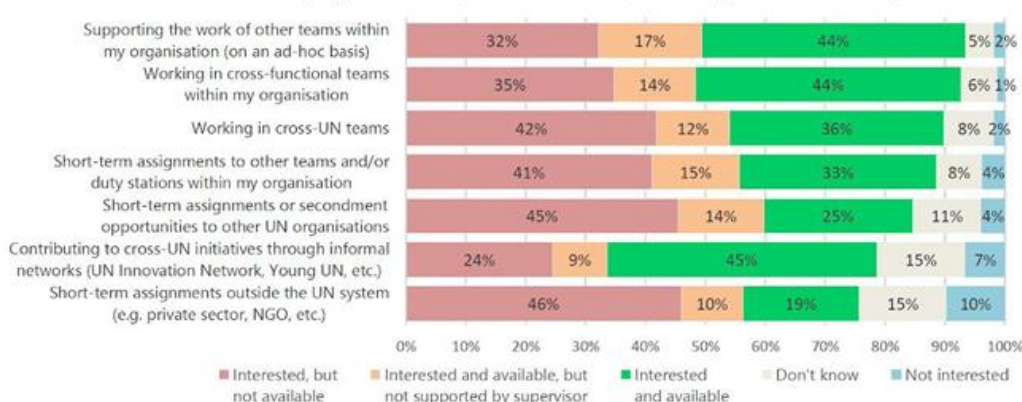
*“In the past, **information was the currency of power**: hard to come by and hard to spread... In this world of abundant information and connectedness, the potential **benefits of trusting people who share the organization’s purpose** to act on information as they see fit usually **outweigh the potential risks** of open information being used in counter-productive ways” (Dwarfs & Giants)*

Only 23% of survey respondents agree that their organization is ‘transparent and openly shares information with employees’. 43% feel empowered to share information and collaborate with others across their organization. This figure drops to 22% and 20% in relation to sharing information and collaborating across the UN system and outside the UN system respectively. These build on previous Young UN findings where 77% of 643 respondents¹⁷ said they had experienced competition between different UN agencies or departments that has had a negative impact on the UN’s effectiveness, and only 22% were satisfied with the transparency of the recruitment process in the UN.

Together these figures describe a status quo where information and decision-making power continues to function in what Heimans and Timms (2014) describe as an “old power”¹⁸ way – like a currency, held by a few and inaccessible to the majority. As one respondent explained, *“as a young staff member and junior staff, it is very challenging...as a lot of important decisions, access and information are held by senior managers”*.

Simultaneously, given the prominence of purpose for UN employee motivation as described above, the UN has the potential to have incredibly high employee engagement which is critical for organizations to succeed. Yet, this strong commitment suffers from a lack of engagement and opportunities to participate and shape the organization. In addition to the low level of autonomy and responsibility already highlighted, only 21% of people feel they have a voice and opportunities to shape decisions in their organization. Highly hierarchical structures were repeatedly mentioned as a key barrier.

To what extent are the following opportunities for collaboration interesting and available to you?



¹⁷ Young UN (2018) [Global Ideas Survey 2017](#).

¹⁸ Jeremy Heimans & Henry Timms (2014) [Understanding “New Power”](#).

The UN has to its advantage that employees have a strong willingness and interest in collaborating across boundaries. More than 80% of respondents were interested in each of the following: supporting the work of other teams in their organization on an ad-hoc basis, working in cross-functional teams in their organization, working in cross-UN teams and through short-term assignments to other teams and/or duty stations in their organization and short-term assignments or secondment opportunities to other UN organizations.

The ingredients are there to create the fluid approaches demanded by the Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs), where the UN system can tap into the collective talent pool and people can contribute where their skills are needed.

Yet to do so, the UN must remove the barriers that prevent more than half of those interested from taking up such opportunities as they are either not available or not supported by supervisors. The need for systems to enable collaboration and to distribute authority and decision-making call for a different approach. This requires a shift from static job descriptions, grades and boxes, which define people's roles and place in the organization, to a project-based approach where teams gather and disperse according to needs, where the UN system has one talent pool, aligned to its overarching purpose, rather than competition between entities, where people can bring their potential without being boxed as a 'G' or 'P' staff, international, national, etc.

On-the-job learning (i.e. job shadowing), temporary job swaps, (temporary) assignments and inter-agency movements should be a common practice instead of a once-in-a-lifetime experience for those who are strong enough to overcome all doubts and regulatory restrictions.

As highlighted by many respondents, key barriers to collaboration in the UN system are also around appropriate tools for the job and proper training for existing tools. The need for collaborative platforms was repeatedly stressed. One respondent explained, *"we have worked closely with other duty stations for a specific project... the use of technologies was crucial (to meet remotely, work on collaborative documents, etc.) We tried to use the tools provided by the organization but we faced many problems and IT issues. We ended up using external tools, not "allowed" by the UN. It is sad that so much time and energy of staff is taken away because of inefficient IT tools provided by the UN"*.

Information about what is being used where and how it is working is also missing: *"It is with great sadness that I find out on my own about innovative apps or tools that have proved effective for other UN entities whilst these have not reached my "family of entities", even though these would be very useful"*.

Recommendations

Invest in UN-wide tools and platforms to enable collaboration, information access and to enable people to make original mistakes and tap into the full potential of UN system. This could include, for example:

- Create a common skills sharing, innovation and collaboration platform for the entire UN system to enable people to link skills, projects and career opportunities within the UN system to enhance collaboration and cross-fertilization and unleash the full potential of the organization and its people.
- Create a searchable repository for all past and current projects, policy documents across the UN system to enable continuous learning and to make original mistakes rather than reinventing the wheel.
- Create a Wiki UN (cross-UN internal wikipedia) built and maintained through crowd wisdom, where employees can find different examples of how to go about core practices. This could also include a crowd-based chat forum to crowdsource for tacit and institutional knowledge.
- Crowdsourcing ideas and solutions: Instead of appointing task forces, make them (partly) open for all colleagues to attend and to provide inputs.
- Make existing Microsoft 365 packages inter-operable (this functionality is currently limited) to enable UN system collaboration using existing tools.

Demonstrate commitment to transparency through actions:

- Make all non-sensitive information accessible to all UN system employees by default.
- Ensure transparency around how decisions are made.
- Openly share information and prioritize dialogue with employees: Explicitly and proactively invite feedback, views and opinions from colleagues.
- Publish the agenda of important (closed) meetings (e.g. senior management meetings) before they take place and create a space or channel where ideas, suggestions or concerns from employees can be discussed on higher level. Encourage senior leaders to provide debriefings of the outcome of the meeting.

Flatten hierarchies in the organization:

- Transfer more autonomy, responsibility and decision making authority away from senior management teams to increase accountability and shorten approval processes.
- Recognize the contribution of informal networks, e.g. Young UN and the [UN Innovation Network](#), to creating a culture of collaboration and innovation. For example by recognizing contributions of employees to these networks in performance appraisals.

Good practice examples***UN internal good practices***

- Young UN has developed a concept for conecta, a UN system-wide skills sharing and collaboration platform. A self-managed team is working on a prototype to pilot this within the Young UN network. conecta would combine four components: (i) a cross-UN global directory of employees; (ii) skills and

expertise profiles; (iii) a project inventory to find projects in need of collaborators and networks of interest; and, eventually, (iv) facilitating a cross-UN talent management approach where employees can find opportunities for new jobs, mentorship and networks of practice. For such a platform to operate at scale, it would need the buy-in and support of all UN entities.

- UN Women has an informal youth council network, which has regular interaction with senior management.
- UN Secretariat/OHR, 'Coffee with Directors': every week, a random group of collaborators are picked to have a one-hour informal discussion around a coffee with a director. The aim is to restore trust through frank and direct situations.
- The Director-General of UNIDO periodically offers "DG Informal Talks" for a group of up to 10 persons, organized by HR.
- The Director-General of UNOG hosted 'staff engagement dialogues' where all staff were invited and both the DG and young staff shared personal experiences of risk-taking and innovation.

External good practices

- Inspired by how social movements operate, the New Horizons team in the British National Health Service (NHS) apply a network and new power approach to large scale change in a public service organization with 1.2 million employees.¹⁹ They prioritize change platforms not programmes²⁰ as a way to engage thousands of employees in developing solutions to challenges. The School for Change Agents is an open access online course to build change agency among employees.
- The Government of Canada's [Talent Cloud](#) is an 'experimental new staffing platform for project-based employment'.²¹ It aims to become a 'validated, searchable repository of cross-sector talent',²² prioritising workers access to rights, benefits and union representation, while retaining the flexibility to choose work inside and outside government.
- The company [Patagonia](#) prioritizes information transparency for not only employees but also customers and suppliers. Customers can see where everything is made, how it is made or what the impact of transportation and water usage is on the overall carbon footprint.

¹⁹ NHS England (2018) [Leading Large Scale Change: A practical guide](#).

²⁰ Gary Hamel & Michele Zanini (2014) [Build a change platform, not a change program](#).

²¹ The GC Talent Cloud, <https://www.csps-efpc.gc.ca/events/gctc/index-eng.aspx>.

²² OECD Case Study (2018) [Free Agents and GC Talent Cloud – Canada](#).

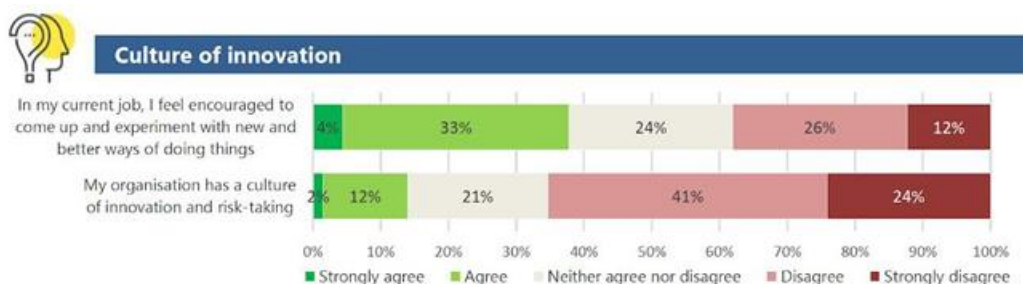
3. From risk aversion to innovation: enabling learning at all levels

To remain relevant in the future, learning needs to be at the heart of organizations. Innovation is a vital learning mechanism for an organization.

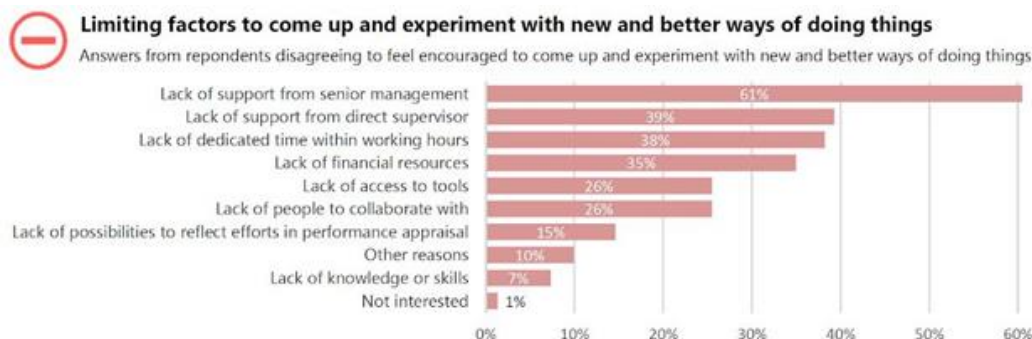
The learning organization

The need for innovation is recognized and prioritized at the highest levels of the UN system. As the UN Secretary-General has underscored “the UN system has a moral obligation to its stakeholders to innovate in order to better serve its beneficiaries, deliver its mandates more efficiently and effectively, and scale its collective impact to help meet the SDGs”.²³ Further, in the CEB meeting in May 2018 on innovation, it was acknowledged that “innovation [needs] to be a part of every staff member’s job, regardless of the role being fulfilled” and that “young staff in particular were seen as a fertile source of ideas and suggestions for improvement”.²⁴

Yet, and despite this strong commitment from the top, when asked whether their organization has a culture of innovation and risk taking, only 14% of respondents agree or strongly agree. This is a testimony that changing culture and integrating innovative approaches into the DNA of an organization takes time, and that our journey towards an innovative UN has a long way to go.

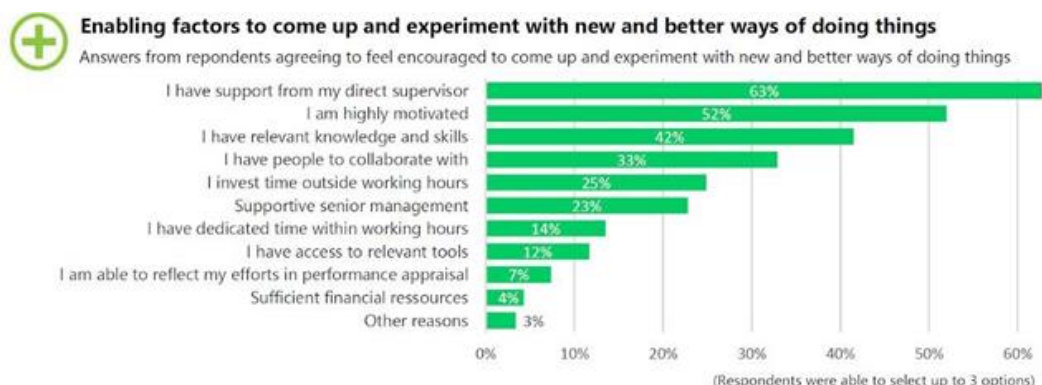


This study found that the main limiting factors for UN employees to try new approaches and better ways of doing things were lack of support from senior management or direct supervisor and lack of dedicated time within working hours. In a similar vein, support from supervisor was seen as the most important enabling factor, followed by intrinsic motivation and relevant knowledge and skills. The findings show the key importance of a shift to a culture of learning and innovation in order to be sustainable, rather than as a separate activity. One respondent explained: “To promote innovation, we need to have more time and space to brainstorm and collaborate”.



²³ Chief Executives Board for Coordination (2018) [First regular session of 2018](#), p.6.

²⁴ Ibid. p.8.



While the term innovation often risks becoming a buzz word, or a synonym for the latest technology hype, innovation in agile organizations is seen as a means to an end rather than an end in itself. Facing uncertain, complex and fast changing external environments, organizations have to be able to adapt and learn continuously rather than relying on top-down, long term planning that risks to become quickly outdated.

Mainstreaming innovation across the UN requires shifts on many levels, including time and space to experiment and develop ideas, creating incentives for innovation, openness and creativity, and establishing a supporting structure that enables innovation to happen across functions, departments and duty stations. Other methods include engaging employees through approaches such as crowdsourcing, foresight thinking and rapid prototyping to identify opportunities for improvement and iterate solutions.

Recommendations

Empower employees to experiment and develop ideas: Provide time, space and (if necessary) funding to reflect, think critically and test new approaches. This may include:

- Adopt a broad definition of innovation: Communicate that innovation is everyone's job and not the sole responsibility of a dedicated department.
- Introduce initiatives that create innovation time, space and modalities and provide an enabling function such as innovation teams to support employees to drive innovation. Moreover, a UN system-wide 'innovation fund' should be established where people can apply for funds to test and scale successful innovations.

Incentivize a culture of openness, collaboration, creativity and learning from failure: A culture shift is the most sustainable approach to mainstream innovation. This may be attained by:

- Include and incentivize innovation in performance appraisal so that supervisors are encouraged to provide employees space for innovation and be open to new approaches.
- Communicate openly that failure is part of learning, allow for original mistakes and focus on learning from failure and iteration in a constructive way. As part of this, a space to exchange experience on failed projects could be created (e.g. [UN internal fail faires](#) or [FUN: F**k Up Nights](#)).

- Include innovation explicitly in organizations' core values/competency frameworks.

Identify and support innovations from informal networks: Scan the horizon and tap into informal networks such as Young UN and UNIN as sensing networks for emerging challenges.

Good practice examples

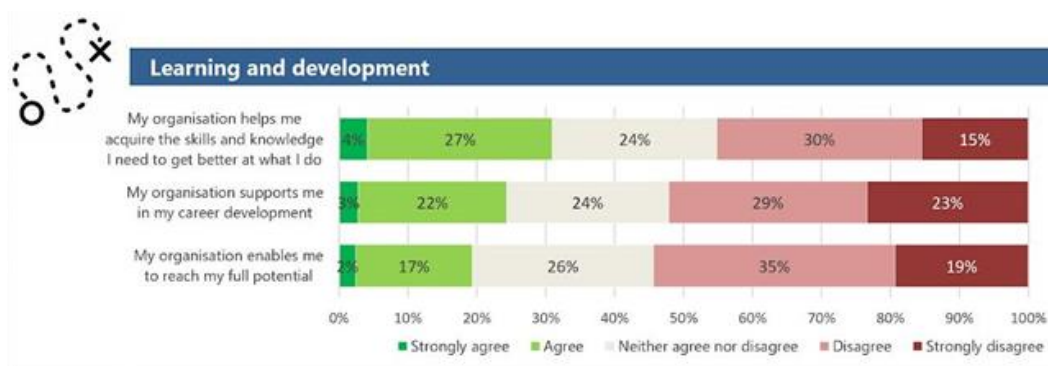
UN internal good practices

- **IMF's i-Time policy:** IMF has established i-Time, an innovation time policy. Under this policy, all IMF employees may – on the basis of a detailed project proposal – request to assign up to 20% of their time to innovative projects related to improving the work of the Fund.
- **Young UN innovation time pilot:** In a first step towards a UN system that provides time and space for employees to develop and test unconventional solutions, Young UN has piloted innovation time. 30 employees from 10 organizations in Geneva are participating in the pilot, each dedicating up to 20% of their working hours to develop an innovative project or idea.
- **Tanzania Innovation Safari:** In collaboration with the Resident Coordinator's Office and WFP's Innovation Hub, UNIN is piloting the Tanzania Innovation Safari, a "slow-motion" innovation bootcamp specifically tailored to the needs of innovators in country offices. The Innovation Safari will include joint problem identification, ideation, design and development around key challenges that UN entities in Tanzania are experiencing.
- **The World Bank Group:** The World Bank has piloted new agile ways of working within several teams of the organization. For example, as part of the pilot programme, the senior vice president for operations at the World Bank issued a "waiver" to teams involved in the agile programme to free them from the Bank's existing internal processes and encourage them to experiment, fail, and learn.
- **Innovation labs:** Innovation labs such as the WFP Innovation Accelerator, the ITC Innovation Lab or UNDP's Network of Accelerator Labs provide numerous examples of new approaches, supporting actors across the UN system to innovate with end-users in mind and accelerate new solutions and ideas. Following the recommendation of its Global Commission on the Future of Work,²⁵ the ILO is currently developing an innovation laboratory on digital technologies that can support decent work. Several other UN entities are also in the process of setting up dedicated innovation teams.

The learning employee

Despite the CEB Leadership framework emphasis on learning and its inclusion in Human Resources strategies across the UN system, reality is a different story. Less than a third of respondents feel their organization helps them to acquire the skills and knowledge needed to get better at what they do and 25% feel supported in their career development.

²⁵ ILO (2019) [Work for a brighter future](#).



With significant cuts to staff training budgets in some organizations²⁶ and an inconsistent allocation of training and staff development funds among staff categories, it does not come as a surprise that many survey respondents cited lack of resources as a limiting factor for learning and development. Among the skills mentioned as mostly needed to acquire and further develop to be prepared for future trends and changes in ways of working, only about 5% of respondents quote technical skills. The overwhelming majority see a clear need to acquire management (30%), digital (29%), communication (20%), and general soft skills (15%) such as team work, collaboration and problem solving.

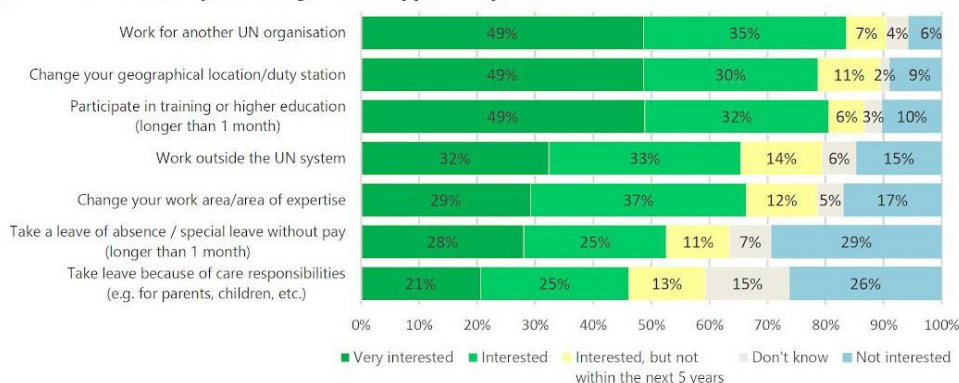
It is time to walk the talk on employee development and learning. Regardless of their grade or contract type, all employees should be regarded as an asset rather than a liability. Consequently, any expenditure in their learning, development and training should be seen as an investment that reaps significant returns, rather than a cost. Identifying transparent career path curricula and learning opportunities should come before any external recruitment exercise in order to allow existing employees to develop their skills and take up new opportunities. In a work environment where technical skills can become quickly outdated, investments should be made in people, in meta-skills and digital capabilities.

In the next five years, the majority of respondents are eager to move within the UN system, entities or duty stations, to gain experience outside the UN system, and to re or up-skill.



Outlook and career aspirations

In the next 5 years and given the opportunity, I would be interested to...



²⁶ According to the Office of Human Resources Management, \$640 was spent per staff in 1994 compared to \$484 in 2010.

UN system organizations will need to adapt to facilitate versatile and flexible career paths of this nature. Ensuring the portability of skills and entitlements will be critical. Individual training accounts as well as unified skills certification and recognition systems could be a potential avenue to facilitate the transition of employees across the UN system.

While training budgets should be increased, participation in career development opportunities and provision of individual career support mechanisms are needed for employees. This will require a new link between selection and employee development policies for most UN organizations.

Recommendations

- **Shift from hiring new staff to investing in staff development and growth:** Shift the culture from selecting new employees for specific posts to identifying, developing and promoting internal employees for new functions (on a part- or full-time basis).
- **Select for potential rather than past experience:** Establish UN-wide internal vacancy announcements which allow to identify and select candidates based on skills and development potential rather than for past formal work experience.
- **Transparent career development curricula:** Establish a clear grid of career paths for employees in different job families which allow for changes of function, new tasks and projects with a minimum of formal requirements. Identify learning opportunities and assignments required for employees to have a clear idea of their potential career paths in different areas.
- **Recognize lifelong learning as an entitlement:** Lifelong learning should be formally recognized as a universal entitlement to all employees, including interns.
- **Support lateral learning opportunities:** Proactively support internal career development opportunities such as job shadowing, temporary assignments and swaps/lateral moves, especially between UN entities. Establish a common skills certification and recognition framework to enable mobility.
- **Establish portable individual training accounts:** Allow all employees to accumulate time and budget for learning, training and development activities, and ensure portability across the UN system and beyond.
- **Increase the staff development and learning budgets and allow for outside-the-box learning:** Invest in the individual as a whole person, lower the need to identify an imminent return on investment and focus on shaping the future generation of UN employees in terms of adaptability, creativity and resilience

Good practice examples

UN internal good practices

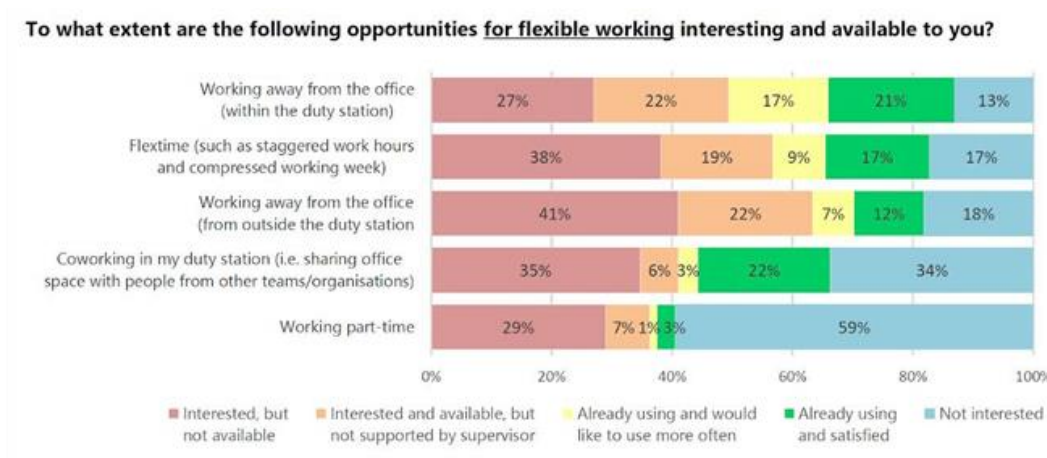
- The #NewWork initiative in the UN Secretariat includes innovation and risk taking, capacity building, collaborative environment and working flexibly among its top priorities. The initiative plans to use a network approach to engaging employees and driving change.
- ILO: Free and unlimited access to Lynda eLearning courses and favorable rates on courses offered by the International Training Centre (ITC).

4. From putting employees into boxes to putting people at the centre: embracing a mobile, flexible workforce

Putting people at the centre means providing both flexible working arrangements, job security and predictability. More flexible working arrangements (FWA) is one of the most frequently mentioned desires of today's labour force.²⁷ Such arrangements bear benefits for both employees and the organization, such as a reduced rate of unscheduled absenteeism and a better work-life balance. Moreover, they can have a positive impact on the environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions from commuting to and from work.²⁸

"Telecommuting has definitely increased both my productivity and job satisfaction."

(Quote from survey respondent)



Despite calls from Member States²⁹ and a keen interest among survey respondents, FWA are still not available to all employees in the UN system. Even where those arrangements are available, there is a disconnect between policies and their application. The vast majority of survey respondents are interested in working from outside the office (87% within and 83% outside their duty station), flextime (82%) or coworking (66%). Slightly fewer respondents (40%) are interested in working part-time.

For the majority of those interested, FWA are not available or not supported by supervisors. Stigmatization of such arrangements and a mistrust towards employees seem to be key barriers:

"Working remotely is seen often as essentially cheating the system to take time off."

"My supervisor is stuck in the Stone Age and believes that one can only work if in the office."

(Quotes from survey respondents)

²⁷ See, for instance: Ernst & Young (2017) [The future of work is changing. Will your workforce be ready?](#) and Jon Messenger (2018) [Working time and the future of work](#).

²⁸ For an overview of FWA and their mutual benefits, see UN Women (2019) [Supplementary Guidance on the Enabling Environment Guidelines for the United Nations System](#).

²⁹ Adopted in 2011 and reiterated in 2013, Member States have requested the Secretary-General to report on efforts to "enhance the understanding and implementation of the principles of work-life balance and a flexible workforce across the Secretariat." (GA resolutions 65/247 and 67/255). Consequently, many organizations have developed or updated their FWA policies and the number of staff utilising FWA increased significantly since 2011.

Moreover, lengthy and bureaucratic approval processes as well as a lack of adequate IT equipment are mentioned frequently as disabling factors.

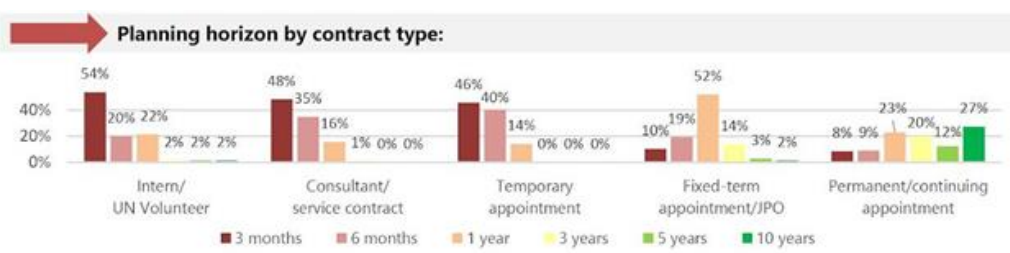
The wish for more flexible working arrangements is often confused with a wish for more flexibility regarding employment contracts. While there is a strong desire for more flexibility regarding working arrangements, there is also a strong desire for more stable and predictable employment. Job security and predictability are important dimensions of ILO's Decent Work agenda since they enhance social security for workers and their dependents, increase productivity, and provide better prospects for personal development and social integration.

"Sometimes I think [the] UN abuses the enthusiasm and beliefs of a better world that young people have, then keep them working with lower salaries, with any employment security under consultant contracts."

"I myself had 6 temp contracts in the last 1.5 years. This is unacceptable for someone who has a family."

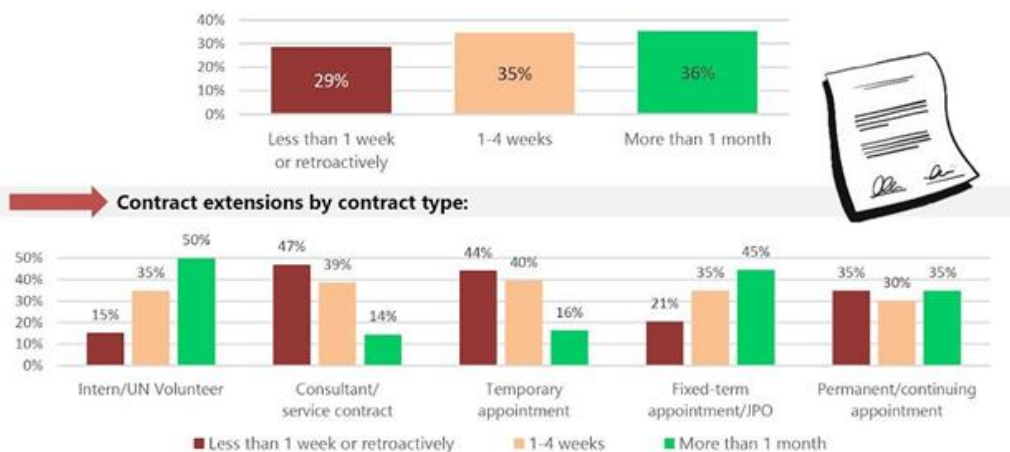
(Quotes from survey respondents)

Given the opportunity, about 68% of respondents would like to stay in the UN system for more than two years. However, more than half of all respondents are at least somewhat concerned that they might have to leave the UN system within the next two years because their contract expires. About 75% of respondents indicate that their current contract situation allows them to plan ahead for a maximum of one year; oftentimes considerably shorter. Two thirds consider their planning horizon to be (highly) insufficient.



The lack of employment predictability and a proper planning horizon is amongst the top four factors for people considering leaving their organization or even the UN system. Therefore, it is not surprising that about two thirds of respondents are actively seeking new jobs inside and outside the UN system.

If you receive a contract extension, how long before the start date is this usually issued?



Even if a contract is extended, this happens most often on very short notice: Only 36% of respondents receive their contract more than a month before their actual entry on duty date. The lack of predictability can result in both an unnecessary financial burden as well as emotional stress for employees, while extensions on short notice also occasion costs for the organization by initiating and then often postponing, or even cancelling the repatriation process of employees.

The UN needs to act on its principles when it comes to basic employment security and social support. More transparent and predictable career paths need to be provided which allow for a longer planning horizon of employees, free from fear about their personal and professional future.

Recommendations (job security and predictability)

- **Provide bridge financing:** Considering the unpredictability of the receipt of payments on the side of organizations (e.g. due to delayed payments by Member States), a 'stopgap fund' could bridge the gap between a donors' funding commitment and the actual payment receipt, and would enable the organization to issue a contract in due course; ideally, more than two month before the expiration of a contract.
- **Guarantee universal social protection for all employees including consultants and interns:** At a minimum, the UN has to guarantee access to essential health care and basic income security to all employees, including interns, over the life cycle.³⁰ However, minimal is not optimal and the UN should lead by example, i.e. progressively strive for higher levels of social security. This is not a nice to have, it is fundamental if the UN is to regain credibility in the public eye and as an employer.
- **Remove all barriers and inequities in contracting:** People should be employed as people with potential to bring to the organization not put in limiting boxes. One standardized UN contract would be the ultimate solution. As an interim step, enable all current employees to apply to all types of jobs across the UN system, regardless of their contract type and status.
- **Limit number of short-term contract extensions:** To improve the overall job security of employees, the number of extensions of short-term contracts should be limited. Organizations may, for instance, only extend such a short-term contract a maximum of three times and/or may not exceed a total duration of two years; after that, a more permanent contract has to be provided.³¹ This would also counteract the practice in some organizations to increasingly employ consultants for performing staff functions.
- **Remove mandatory breaks between contracts:** Mandatory breaks between contracts can be financially and emotionally destabilizing. These can be especially detrimental to those with dependents, those with disabilities and/or those from lower socioeconomic groups, which limits the ability of the UN to ensure diversity in its employees.

³⁰ See ILO's [Social Security \(Minimum Standards\) Convention](#), 1952 (No. 102) and [Social Protection Floors Recommendation](#), 2012 (No. 202).

³¹ See, for instance, German part-time and fixed-term Employment Act.

- **Improve transparency in recruitment:** In order to ensure transparent and qualification-based recruitment processes, open chat rooms could be created as the only means for interaction between applicants and hiring managers. Moreover, a recruitment mechanism should be considered which enables the direct placement of qualified employees through a reduced competition. This would reduce the number of pseudo job postings with pre-selected candidates.

Recommendations (flexible working arrangements)

- **Destigmatize FWA:** An important element to destigmatize FWA is trust: Supervisors have to trust employee that tasks are completed, and employees have to trust supervisors that FWA requests are only rejected on an exceptional basis. One way of establishing this mutual trust relationship is to approve FWA requests as the rule and to reject them only as an exception.
- **Reconsider core working hours:** In addition, the concept of core working hours should be reconsidered: Instead of defining core working hours as those hours employees need to be present at their desks, it should be defined as the hours when they can be reached (e.g. via phone or email); regardless of where they are. At the same time, the organization should support workers to enforce their right to disconnect.
- **Provide information and training:** Employees as well as supervisors should be well informed about the possibilities of FWA. Tailored information sessions and trainings for both supervisors (e.g. how to manage virtual teams) and employees (e.g. conditions of a remote working place) can address prejudices and improve efficiency. Certainly, not all positions within an organization are equally suitable for FWA. For transparency reasons and also to manage expectations, the suitability of FWA should be clearly stated in job descriptions.
- **Harness technology:** A precondition for FWA is the provision of a reliable IT infrastructure that enables remote access and collaboration, including hardware (e.g. laptop, mobile phone, etc.) and software (e.g. cloud-based storage and collaboration platforms, online telecommunication tools, etc.). Regular training sessions on using technology can help demystify their use for FWA.

Good practice examples

- UNICEF has a '365 days Programme', which allows qualifying employees to work remotely for a year. The organization also has a policy in which FWA are automatically accepted unless a manager submits a compelling reason for rejection.
- The UN Secretariat has revised its policy on FWA, which allows up to three days of telework per week (more in case of temporary disability) as well as telework from a different duty station for up to 6 months (+3 additional). There are also courses on flexible working arrangements for managers (managing flexible teams) and for staff (on working remotely).
- UN Women: FWA are encouraged, including working away from the office (telecommuting)

- ILO: Employees on contracts without limit of time or a fixed-term contracts can apply for ad hoc or regular (up to 50% of working time) teleworking. The tasks and outputs have to be specified in advance and the Office provides the necessary equipment, subject to availability.
- ITC: Introduced an Enhanced Work-Life Balance (WLB) Framework which included promoting FWA (staggered working hours, teleworking within commuting distance and remotely, compressed work schedules and flexible schedule breaks for external learning).
- UNHCR developed a Pocket Guide to Flexible Working, Moving UNHCR Forward Together to help supervisors discuss FWA with colleagues. It includes examples of how UNHCR colleagues working around the globe have used flexible working arrangements in the different duty stations, especially deep field.

List of recommendations

From hierarchies to self-managing teams: redesigning the UN as an agile organization

- Redefine management to focus on enabling functions and move towards self-managing teams
- Redefine management to focus on enabling functions and move towards self-managing teams
- Revise performance management systems and enforce compliance
- Senior management champions on calculated risk-taking
- Mandatory 360° feedback surveys
- Regular career counselling and coaching
- (Cross-UN) mentoring programs
- Compulsory management skills training
- Probation period with involvement of supervisees

From competition to collaboration and transparency: creating a network of empowered, cross-functional teams

- Invest in UN-wide tools and platforms to enable collaboration, information access and to enable people to make original mistakes and tap into the full potential of UN system
- Demonstrate commitment to transparency through actions
- Flatten hierarchies in the organization

From risk aversion to innovation: enabling learning at all levels

- Empower employees to experiment and develop ideas
- Incentivize a culture of openness, collaboration, creativity and learning from failure
- Identify and support innovations from informal networks
- Shift from hiring new staff to investing in staff development and growth
- Select for potential rather than past experience
- Transparent career development curricula
- Recognize lifelong learning as an entitlement
- Support lateral learning opportunities
- Establish portable individual training accounts
- Increase the staff development and learning budgets and allow for outside-the-box learning

From putting employees into boxes to putting people at the centre: embracing a mobile, flexible workforce

- Destigmatize flexible working arrangements
- Reconsider core working hours
- Provide information and training
- Harness technology
- Provide bridge financing
- Guarantee universal social protection for all employees incl. consultants and interns
- Remove all barriers and inequities in contracting
- Limit number of short-term contract extensions
- Remove mandatory breaks between contracts
- Improve transparency in recruitment

Annex 1: Background and methodology of this study

Why this study was done

Young UN: Agents for Change (Young UN) is a global network of more than 1,500 members, working in 100+ countries across the UN system. The network is open to all staff categories and contract types, including consultants and interns, and has no age limit. Young UN members recognize that there are many common challenges across the UN system and are proactive in addressing them in order to transform the UN system to live by the principles it stands for.

Young UN serves to (1) crowdsource ideas and feedback globally from across the UN system and advocate for change, (2) pilot and incubate innovative ideas and (3) drive a bottom-up movement for cultural and mindset change to mainstream innovation across the UN's work.

Young UN has already produced a number of studies and surveys in the past to gain a clear and holistic understanding of (particularly young or entry-level) employees' experiences, expectations and aspirations, and to provide bold recommendations on how the UN system needs to change to enable people to reach their potential and to prepare for the future of work.

Following Young UN's participation at the April 2019 session of the UN Chief Executives Board (CEB) High-level Committee on Management (HLCM), Young UN was invited to provide input at HLCM's October retreat on "The Future of the UN System Workforce". These results will also inform Young UN's advocacy efforts and practical action to shape the UN.

How this study was done

The main data source of this study is a survey that asked UN employees about their experiences and expectations at the workplace and how the UN needs to adapt for the future of work. The survey was developed using new ways of working: members of the Young UN Network were invited to join a dedicated project team that primarily coordinated itself through an online collaboration platform and via video calls. The distribution of roles and tasks within the group was fluid and based on availability, ability, and preference. Some team members participated in a Young UN pilot project and used "innovation time" for their contributions.

The survey was developed using an evidence-based approach, building on previous Young UN studies³² and external studies or articles related to the future of work. Key aspects were collected and grouped according to main themes and linkages, while identifying pain points or best practices. Based on this overview, the questions and survey outline were developed. The entire work process took around three months (July to September 2019). Young UN received pro bono support from Agenda Consulting, an Oxford-based not-for-profit organization with extensive experience on staff engagement surveys, particularly within the UN system.

The survey was online for 12 days³³ and had a total of 859 respondents. Responses were received from 34 UN entities, 91 countries and across different contract types and length of service in the UN.

³² A Young UN 'temperature check' conducted in April 2019 amongst 689 respondents was used as a main input for these considerations. Themes surfaced in the 2017 Global Ideas Survey, 2018 innovation survey and 2019 UN Reform Temperature Checks also informed closed question responses.

³³ From 23 August to 3 September 2019.

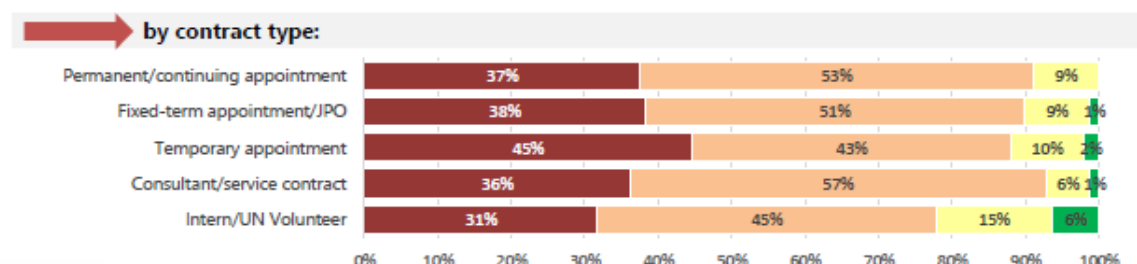
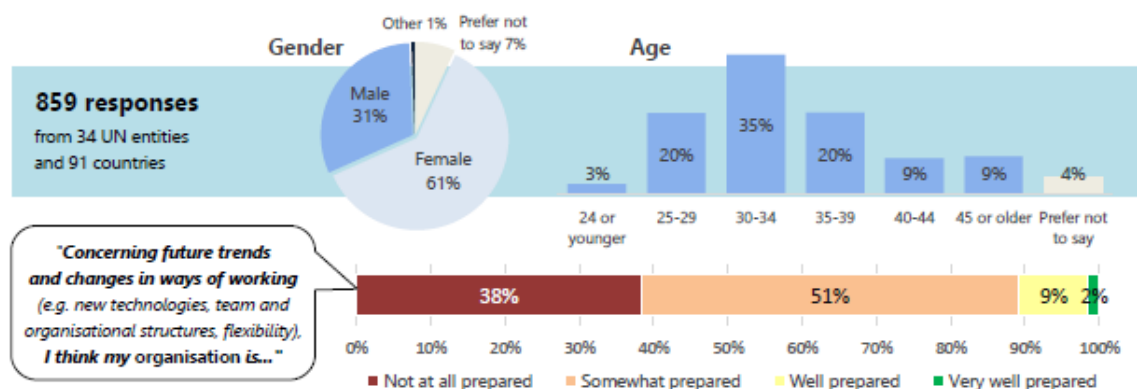
Annex 2: Data sheet – Full survey results

Attached on the following pages.

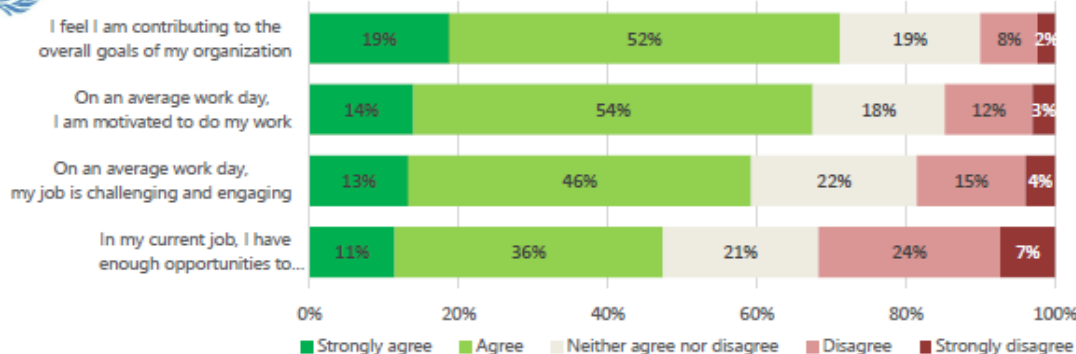


FUTURE OF WORK survey

Respondents' background (at a glance)



The experience at the UN as a workplace



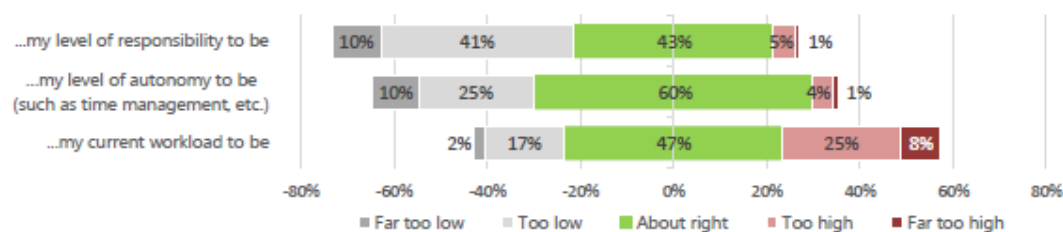
What are the barriers to use your knowledge and skills? [open question, most frequent answers]

- Hierarchy; perceived ageism resulting in responsibility not given to younger staff
- Poor management; lack of good planning, often leading to time pressure
- G to P Exam; general lack of opportunities for G staff
- Admin tasks are too time consuming and fall onto younger staff
- Risk averse culture/organization is not open to new ideas or ways of doing things
- Skills development is not promoted; General mismatch of skills with job description
- Lack of mobility and promotions
- Bureaucracy; outdated policies



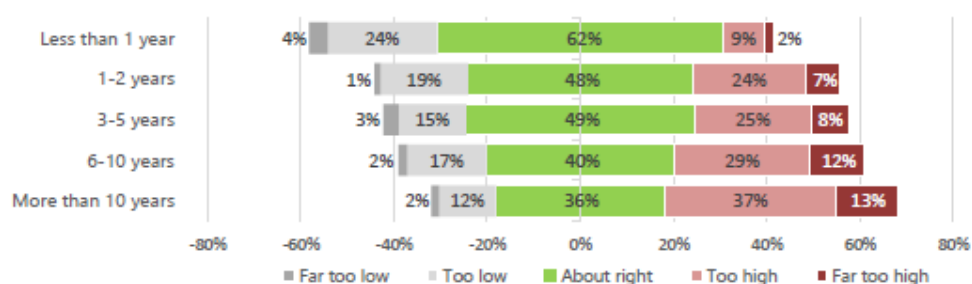
Work profile

In my current role, and given my profile and abilities, I consider my...



Workload in relation to years of service in the UN:

In my current role, and given my profile and abilities, I consider my current workload to be...



Further comments from respondents on their work profile [open question, most frequent answers]

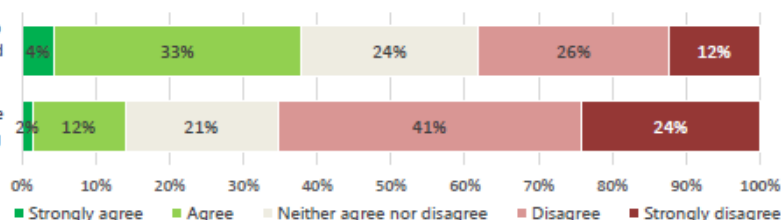
Ageism / recognition	I feel young people are not seen as capable of doing substantial tasks by senior staff. Much work is done by relatively junior professionals, including interns, UNVs, JPOs, short-term consultants, P2s, and in some cases, the efforts provided by them are not recognized.
Autonomy	Level of autonomy for time management is far too low. At the UN everything has to be pre-approved, is subject to X administrative forms, even the flexible working arrangements are not flexible.
Hierarchy	The organization's culture is very hierarchical and every single move needs to be approved by several people.
Career development	The UN has no reward system for doing good work. Your career is based on how you entered the system and how long you manage to "stick around", not on how much you contribute. The internal ego-driven politics is so divisive that people cannot work together for a common vision being too preoccupied with how their individual performance looks like and their own reputation, all of which makes the UN agencies ineffective in achieving its mandate and the SDGs.
Efficiency	Resistance to use of new technologies means more time is spent on manual work on paper, data entry, etc. This leads to workloads being increased unnecessarily.
Flexible working arrangements	Being in a common office 9 to 5 situation is not an ideal approach to me. I work better when having major noon breaks away from the office
General	As a young staff member and junior staff it is very challenging and limited to explore and have new opportunities as a lot of important decisions, access and information are held by senior managers.
Management skills	People become managers because of their technical skills but have no idea of how to manage programmes or people. In selecting managers, no attention is given to their ability to actually 'manage' staff
Performance management	The primary problem is that there are no mechanisms in the system to identify bad managers, instruct them to do a better job, retrain them or get rid of them
Readiness	In relation to the readiness for the future of work, I do not see my organization preparing itself or even piloting initiatives that would address the needs of its future work force (more time autonomy, innovative thinking, flexible work arrangements, collaborative engagement across work units/teams, etc.).
Responsibility	The level of responsibility is very rigid as the UN is hierarchical and I feel often that professional category is more valued than actual capacities and quality of work
Suggestion	The office environment can be quite sterile. There is plenty of opportunity to embrace a new system of working e.g. an active working space, breakout discussion rooms. The rows of office cubicles are not conducive to.
Underutilisation	Coming into a hierarchical structure, where career progression is based upon time served rather than actual performance people end up not utilizing their skill-set. My official workload is too low and doesn't provide me with opportunities to utilize my skills and abilities
Workload	Workload is very uneven mainly due to poor resource management and distribution of labour Workload tends to be too high because the workday gets taken up by administrative tasks that could be more efficiently handled if processes and procedures were more user friendly.



Culture of innovation

In my current job, I feel encouraged to come up and experiment with new and better ways of doing things

My organisation has a culture of innovation and risk-taking

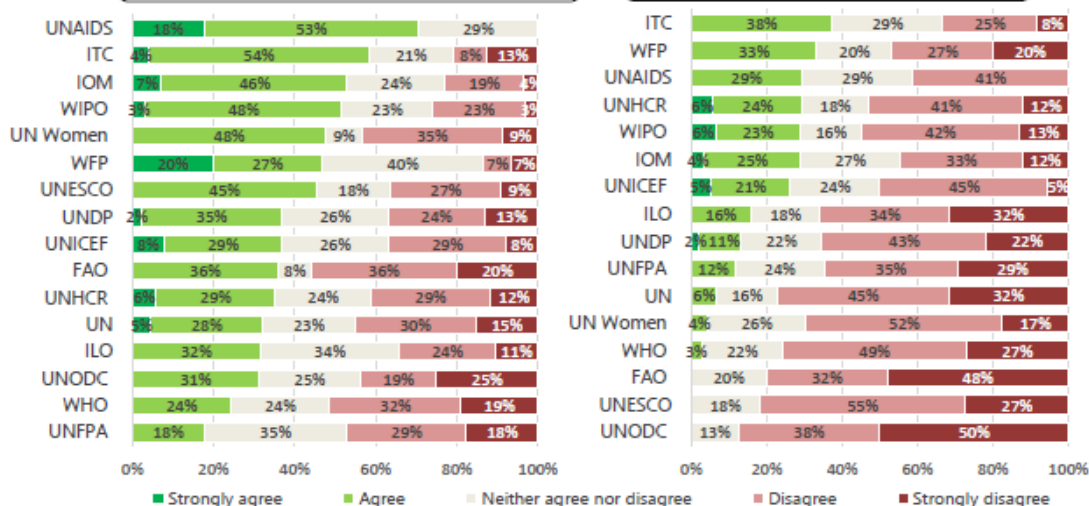


Culture of innovation by organization:

Listed are all organizations with at least 10 respondents

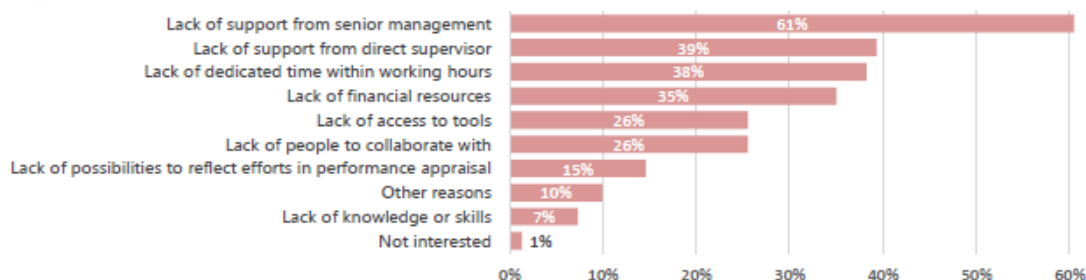
"In my current job, I feel encouraged to come up and experiment with new and better ways of doing things"

"My organisation has a culture of innovation and risk-taking"



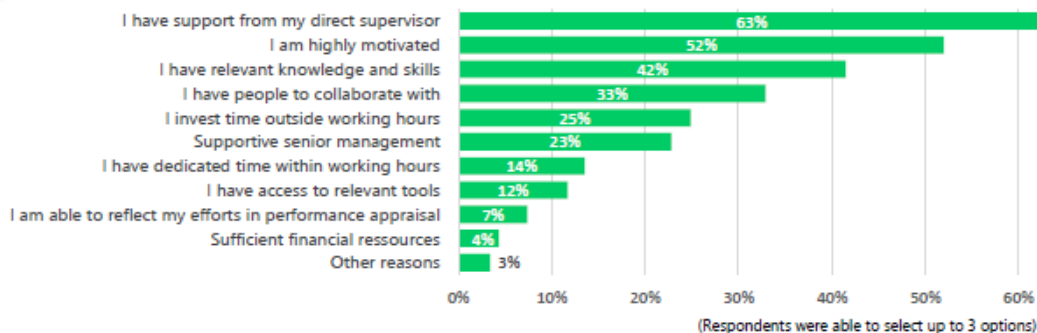
Limiting factors to come up and experiment with new and better ways of doing things

Answers from respondents disagreeing to feel encouraged to come up and experiment with new and better ways of doing things



Enabling factors to come up and experiment with new and better ways of doing things

Answers from respondents agreeing to feel encouraged to come up and experiment with new and better ways of doing things



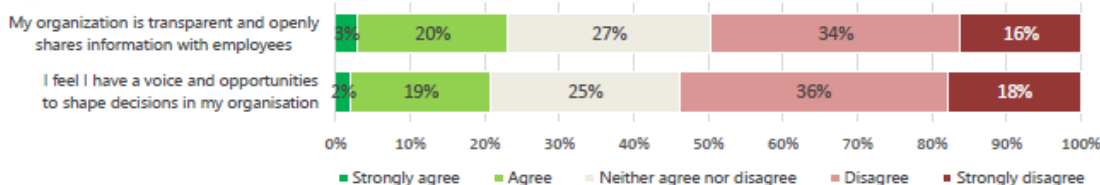


Do you have suggestions on how your organisation/the UN system can make (better) use of new technologies? [open question, most frequent answers]

Empower staff, especially youth	<p>The UN system could definitely benefit from the use of new technologies and working methods to be more agile and proactive: collaborative platforms, chats, CRM, analytics, etc. We try to adapt some of those tools but they always gets stuck at the management level. Young professionals with high skills face the UN management system, which consists of people who joined the UN 20 years ago...</p> <p>In my team, as a G-staff, I feel there is very little space to contribute to improve the way things are done. Things are rigid and old. It lacks young people/millennial mentality. It needs more flexibility, dynamism and thinking out of the box.</p> <p>Adopting up-to-date innovative tools should be encouraged and supported from senior management level. Currently, new ideas from young professionals are not recognized and management is willing to stay with the status quo and does not want extra work.</p>
Improve sourcing and implementation	<p>"New technologies" is currently limited to e-mail and video telephony. But in order to use new technologies, staff need to be made aware of their existence (e.g. collaborative platforms) and need to be trained to use them efficiently. These technologies need to be part of work streams and office culture. Ad hoc attempts by some managers to introduce whatever they think is best or the flavour of the day is not useful, as it lacks sustainability in the broader organisation.</p> <p>provide sufficient funds for offices to try new technology</p>
Coordination, collaboration and access to technological systems	<p>To promote innovation, we need to have more time and space to brainstorm and collaborate. In my current office, there is no social space or a place to even have coffee or lunch with colleagues. Thanks to my supervisor, brainstorming and exchange of ideas are encouraged in team meetings, etc.</p> <p>Improve coordination between departments in the UN. In our experience of setting up a website, we noticed that some of the requirements for websites set by DPI (which had to approve publication) did not yet have corresponding functionalities developed by OICT, which meant that our office had to wait for OICT to develop the functionality required before our website could be approved. DPI and OICT should cooperate better to ensure that requirements and functionalities match.</p> <p>Coordination would be the first and most important measure. It is with great sadness that I find out on my own about innovative apps or tools that have proved effective for other UN entities whilst these have not reached my "family of entities", even though these would be very useful.</p>
Foster a culture of innovation	<p>Establish dedicated innovation hubs at organization to better streamline new technologies, foster ideas, etc.</p> <p>Technologies really isn't the key thing, what matters much more is how to build a culture promoting creativity, different ways of doing things, and thinking outside the box. To do so, we need a culture of freedom under responsibility, and sufficient resources to experiment. We also need a less risk-averse culture. In the Secretariat, traditionally the potential punishment for taking risks is often higher than the potential reward, which leads to careful managers and thus careful staff, thus lowering creativity.</p> <p>At field level more accountability and focus on concrete results as a first step, then guarantee innovation is not presented as a one-off (training, consultancy), but is mainstreamed throughout programmes and operations. The administrative processes have to be simplified.</p>
Find inspiration from outside	<p>Borrow best practices from other entities (e.g. private sector, civil societies and academia) or collaborate with them.</p> <p>Overall a culture of greater openness to what comes from the outside, including the private sector (in terms of relatable best practices), needs to be fostered by senior management.</p>
Provide the right tools for the job	<p>We have closely worked with other duty stations for a specific project for a while. In this context, the use of technologies was crucial (to meet remotely, work on collaborative documents, etc.). We tried to use the tools provided by the organization but we faced many problems and IT issues. We ended up using external tools, not "allowed" by the UN. It is sad that so much time and energy of staff is taken away because of inefficient IT tools provided by the UN.</p> <p>Better awareness of existing technologies among staff, access to training or brief introductions to certain tools</p>
Support current technology and tools	<p>My office has refused to use OneDrive and other such technologies on the grounds that it would be "not safe". The resistance of senior management to let us use the tools available are the main reason for this.</p> <p>Better awareness of existing technologies among staff, access to training or brief introductions to certain tools</p>
Training, mentorship, and technological literacy	<p>Greater training possibilities are required. The daily workload makes it difficult to learn and develop new ways of doing things. In addition, resources for training are quite limited. On the other hand, in my division the director is not very oriented to carry out courses or trainings that increase our human capital.</p> <p>Lack of mentoring and leadership mean that I am left on my own guises to 'develop global technical expertise' the whole time, as management does not have the technical expertise to guide me and correct me if I am wrong.</p> <p>New technologies are important, but basic technological literacy is also lacking. Most people don't have a fundamental understanding of how to use the tools we have at hand, they use a computer like a typewriter that sends e-mail. It is not practical to talk about neural networks when most staff cannot save a word document to the cloud.</p>
Staff up for technology	<p>We should assess IT skills/knowledge of the people we hire. I have colleagues that can barely use word.</p> <p>Hire senior managers actually interested in making the organisation - i.e. incl. staffing & working methods - better, not just be subject matter gurus.</p>

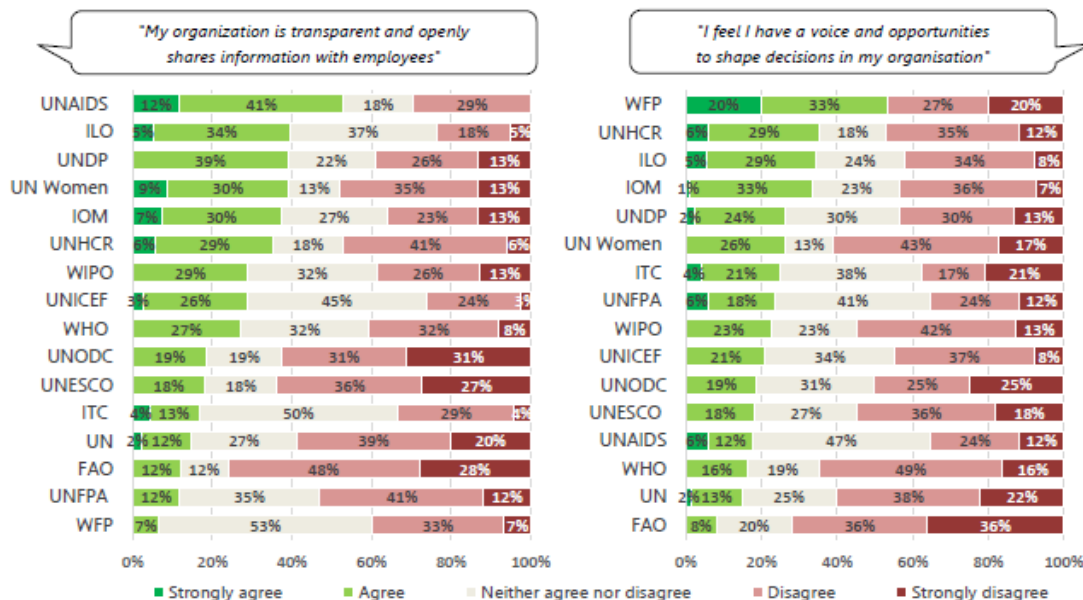


Transparency and collaboration

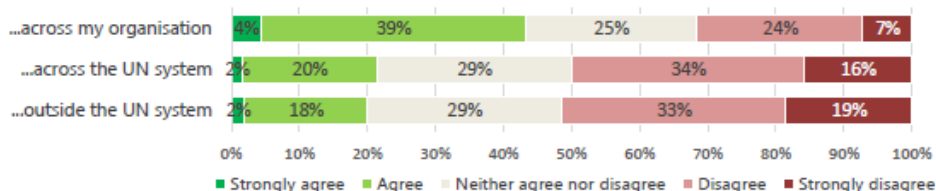


Transparency and collaboration by organization:

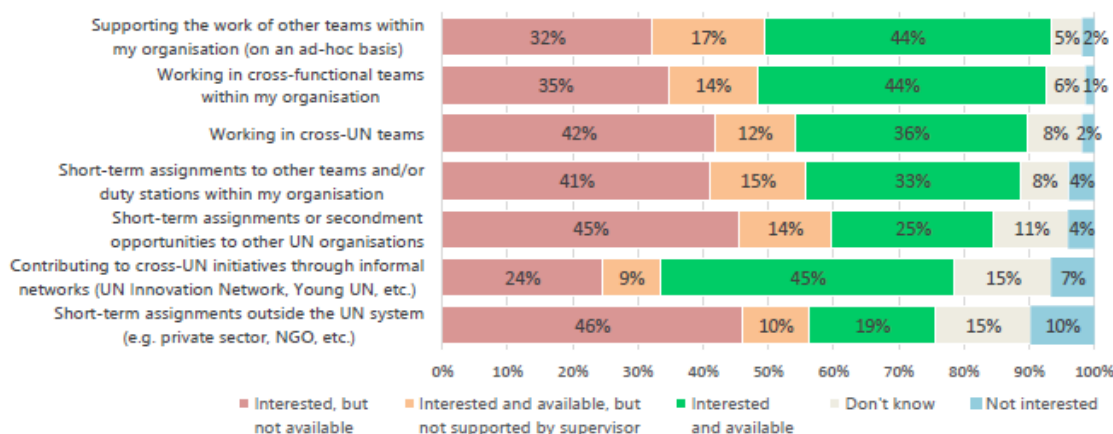
Listed are all organizations with at least 10 respondents



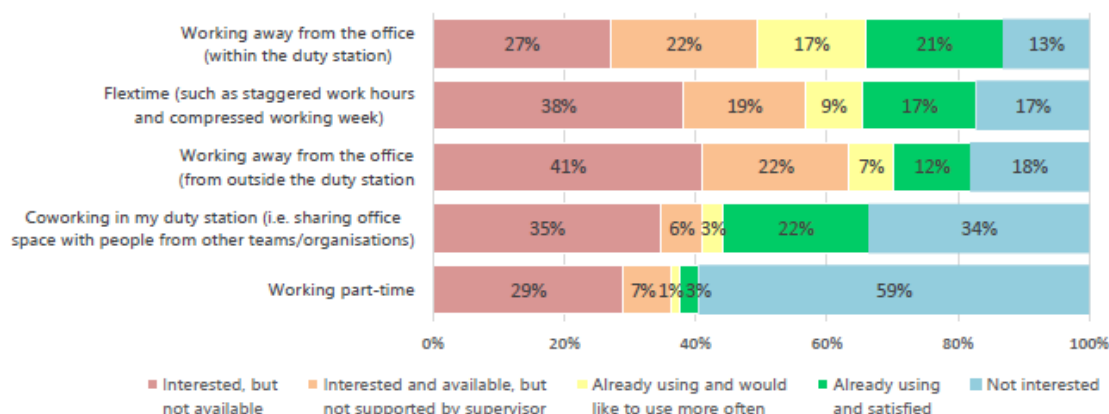
I feel encouraged and empowered to share information and collaborate with others...



To what extent are the following opportunities for collaboration interesting and available to you?



To what extent are the following opportunities for flexible working interesting and available to you?



Please elaborate if you use other flexible working arrangements or if you want to share your experiences (e.g. challenges or best practices). [open question, main frequent answers]

Stigmatisation of flexible work arrangements	Often it appears that it is due to a lack of trust of the employee. An imagination that work can only be carried out in a physically defined space. It's really old fashioned thinking.
	I am not expecting to be able to work from home all the time but 1-2 days per week would greatly help and reduce the stress of commuting.
	Working remotely is seen often as essentially cheating the system to take time off.
	It is a presence oriented culture not a performance oriented one
	My supervisor is stuck in the Stone Age and believes that one can only work if in the office.
Bureaucratic process	It feels like the implementation has been designed to discourage its use, particularly by requiring many approval layers, including supervisor, director and HR.
	The procedure for setting up flexible working arrangements is too bureaucratic. In my office, one must sign an agreement detailing exactly which days one will be taking advantage of these arrangements. Therefore, there is no flexibility to e.g. work from home one day because you have a sick child to take care of or the weather is terrible, even if you don't have meetings.
Theory vs. practice (inconsistent application)	The pressure not only comes from management and supervisors but also from peers. There is a sense of jealousy if you use flexible arrangements and others are not. It creates a very toxic atmosphere.
	I have flexible working arrangements, signed off by my supervisor, however given the amount of work and the scheduling of meetings, as well as not being able to work from home, I can only utilize them on limited occasions. Also my flexible working arrangements mostly end in overtime for me
	The answer I received when requesting compressed working week was that the optics to the other teams wouldn't be great if that was allowed.
Informal agreements	There seems to be no formal or clear rule in my organization which allows supervisors to let their staff work from home from time to time / when the need arises (i.e. not on a regular basis). It's informal practice in some teams. It seems that some people (higher up in the hierarchy or those with more leverage) can work from home over longer periods of time without formal arrangements.
Digital vs. present teams	I find it useful to share an office with the communication specialist in order to keep myself updated on my organization's visibility initiatives and brainstorm together on new approaches
	The faceless organization, where everything is sorted through phone calls and emails / tickets while possible, has its own drawbacks and should be weighed carefully, especially if the policies and instructions for implementation are going to increase in complexity.
	One - two days working from home is good when concentration needed, however, the team spirit suffers.
Positive experience	I felt that I was so productive and got so much more work done (working from home) that even on a more "unproductive" day, my level of productivity was good. I was able to participate in meetings on Skype but they were shorter and to the point. I am very disappointed that this was stopped in our department.
	Telecommuting has definitely increased both my productivity and job satisfaction.
	While my workplace has flex working hours to some extent, I just communicate with my supportive supervisor, who trusts my decisions, whenever I need to flex.
Suggestions and best practice	UNICEF senior management sent a message to all staff saying that flex work requests should be approved by default and only rejected exceptionally. Such a message can send a strong message and encourage people to have the courage to ask.
	I also suggest to consider time spent in trains or public transportation when more than 2 hours are spent in commuting and when conditions exist to use this time to work and reduce core hours at the office (when the calendar of meetings allows it and when efficiency is not jeopardized)
	REMOVE CORE HOURS: This system does not match with the current environment and creates a rigidity that demotivates. ALLOW SHORT APPOINTMENTS DURING THE DAY: The way my organization works, I have to take a half day off in order to attend a school function or parent meeting. This is both unnecessary and incredibly frustrating for all involved. ALLOW WORK FROM HOME: Some work is not conducive to working in the office and can be better accomplished from a quiet location less likely to be disrupted.



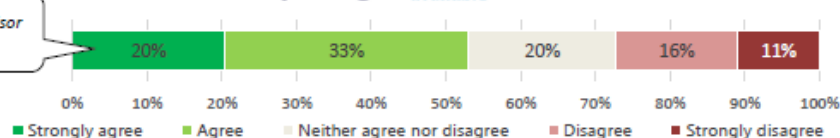
Supervisors

Which three adjectives would you use to describe your ideal supervisor?

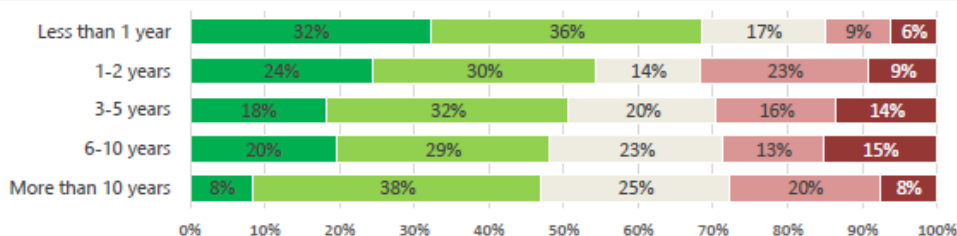
words with 10 or more mentions
word size reflects frequency



"I think that my supervisor is a good manager."



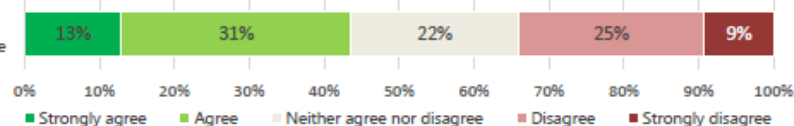
Supervisor appraisal in relation to years of service in the UN:



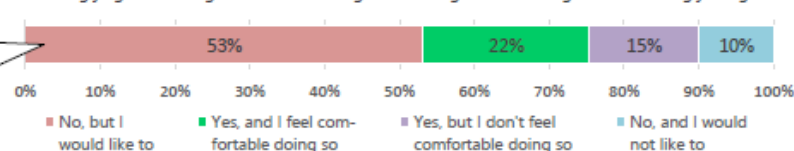
Respondent's comments on reasons for their answer [open question]

positive		negative	
communicative	I have clear objectives for the year and communication between us is easy and flexible. There is no fear to admit mistakes and solutions are discussed together.	disengaged	He is not interested in daily business. Never wants to take a decision and staff has to cope with his unwillingness to be accountable for work we are doing. His interest is not the success of the organization but his own political career in the UN.
inspiring	Can-do attitude that inspires the office. Supports and encourages new ideas and looks for the positive way of approaching difficulties.	lack of managerial skills	Good managers are hard to come by in the UN. Managers are usually older staff that moved up the ranks and are selected because of their seniority rather than because of management skills
flexible	My supervisor/section chief is highly supportive of staff, new ideas and flexible working arrangements. She does not care about the level of staff and values every input and discussion. We have open dialogue and discussions to find the best solutions.	self-serving	Is very self-centred and does not listen or take into account team inputs if not in line with her own thoughts. With senior management she takes credit for big ideas and will only credit your small contributions, especially with interns and UNVs who rarely speak up.
trusting	Trusts his employees and lets them lead and take initiative in the areas you think are important. Supports and defends your decisions, is of service to make your job easier and elevates your work as needed.	disorganized	My manager is very disorganized, and regularly misses emails containing information requested. Much of my time is therefore spent on reminding my manager that they are to review documents that they asked for.

I get sufficient feedback from my supervisor on my performance



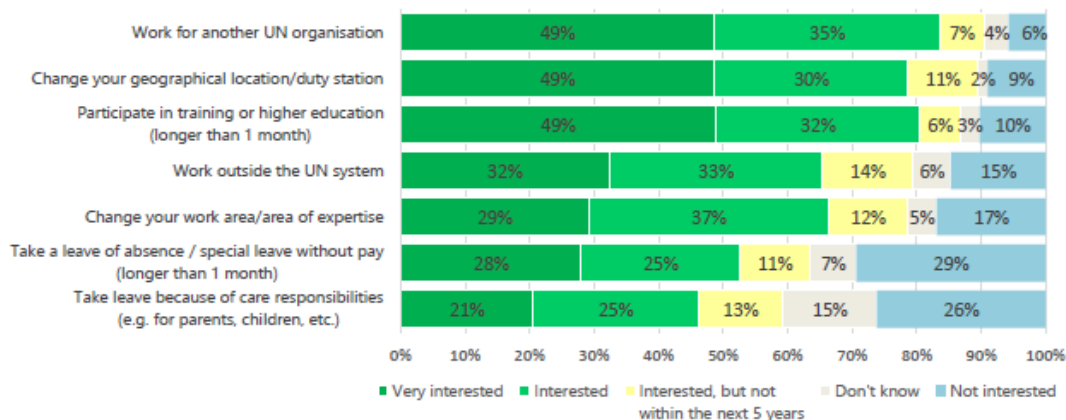
"I have the opportunity to provide formal upward feedback to my supervisor (such as 360° feedback)."





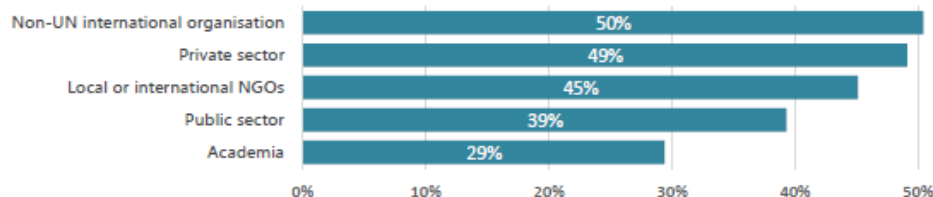
Outlook and career aspirations

In the next 5 years and given the opportunity, I would be interested to...

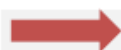
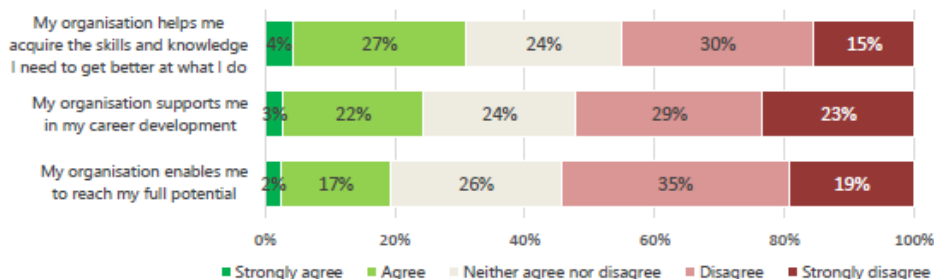


Where would you be most interested to work outside the UN system?

Only asked to those who responded to be interested to work outside the UN system.

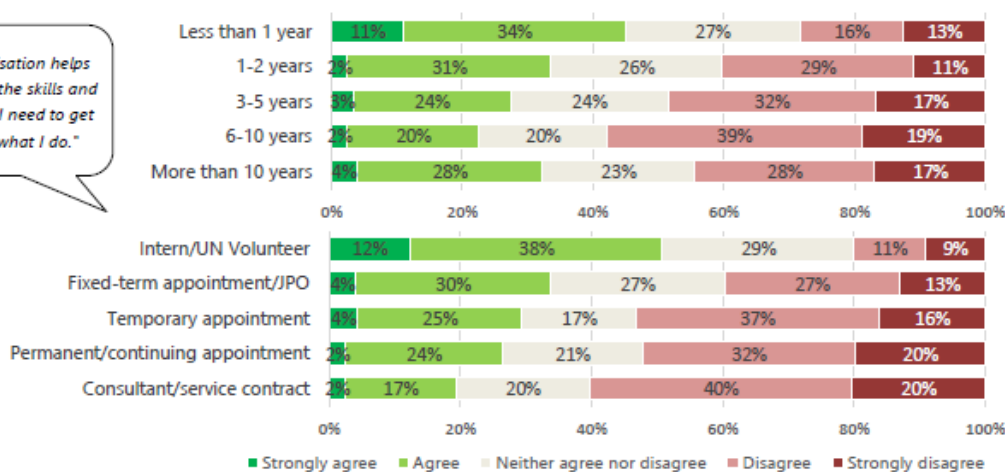


Learning and development

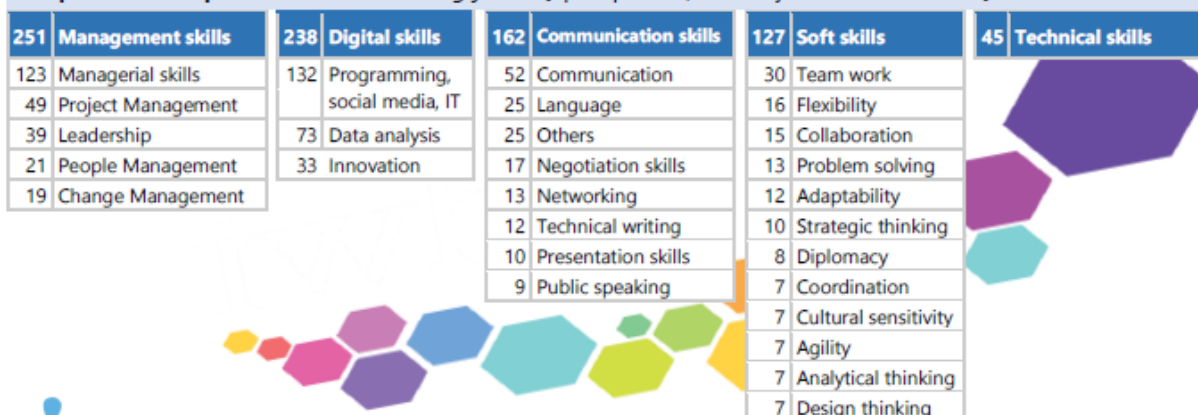


Learning support by contract type, and by years of service in the UN:

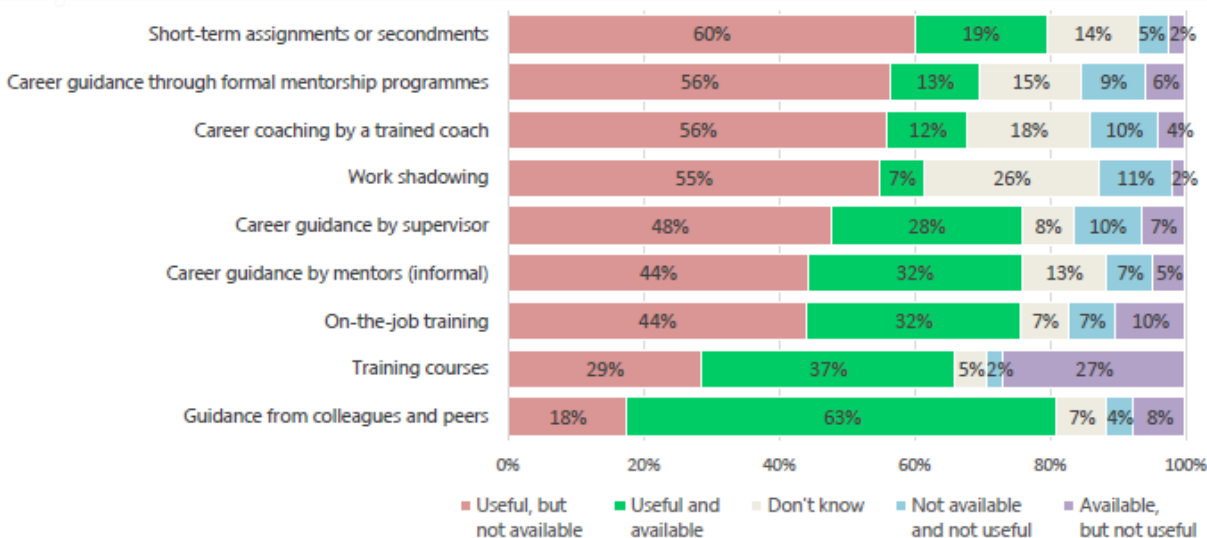
"My organisation helps me acquire the skills and knowledge I need to get better at what I do."



In view of future trends and changes in ways of working, what are the top skills that you think you will need to acquire or develop further over the coming years? [open question, sorted by number of mentions]



Which of the following options are available to you and do you consider most helpful for your career development?



Other options respondents considered useful for their career development

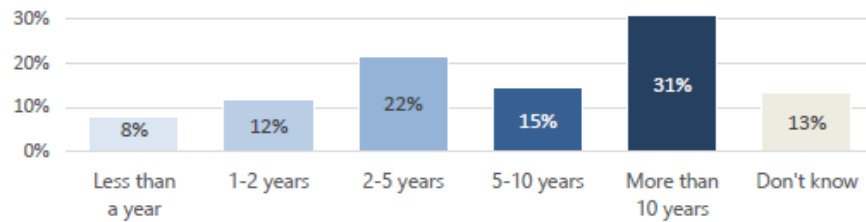
[open question, sorted by number of mentions]

Mobility (35)	Within organizations (being seconded to another department, go to the field assignments) and outside organization (collaboration with private sector, universities etc.)
Career Counselling (17)	availability of an HR officer who provides information on different pathways and training opportunities, works on a career development plan
Mentoring/coaching (11)	is needed, there are good practices
Budget availability (11)	a system to secure funding for training purposes is needed, recurring issue
Limited categories (11)	mandatory and available courses are limited and not of the best relevance, suggested to have a larger catalogue, training outside of organisations
Career advancement (10)	eliminate barriers for vertical transitions within organizations, incl. from G to P, merit based promotion
Job shadowing (7)	is needed, there are good practices
Contract type (6)	to make trainings available to non-staff personnel
Working arrangements (6)	suggested to ensure there are appropriate working arrangements in place when taking longer training courses (sabbatical leave)
Policy implementation (5)	many organizations have good policies , but they are not implemented (flexible working hours, etc.)

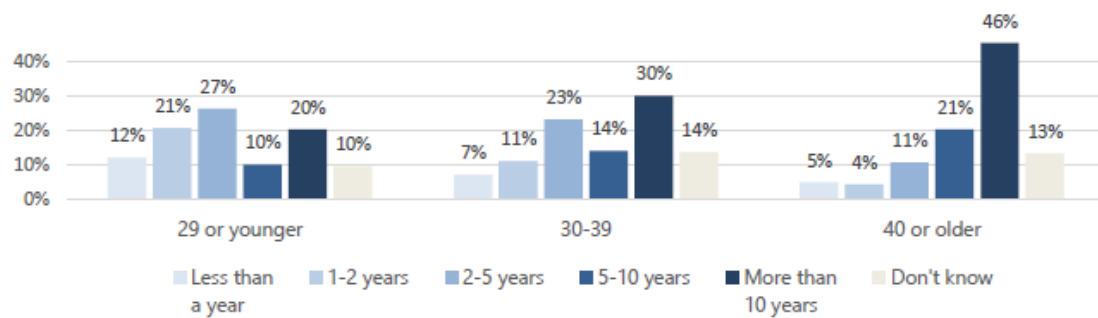


Talent retention

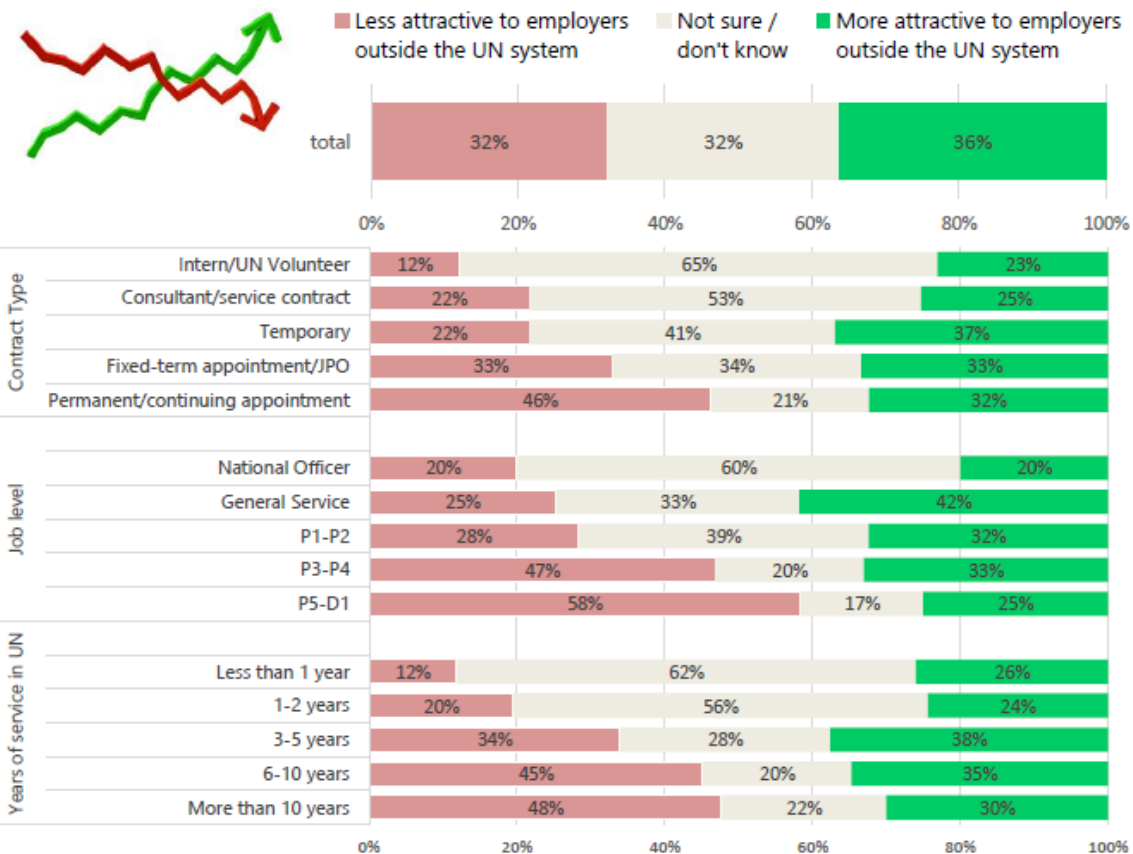
Given the opportunity to do so, how much longer would you like to work within the UN system?



Desire to stay in the UN system by age:

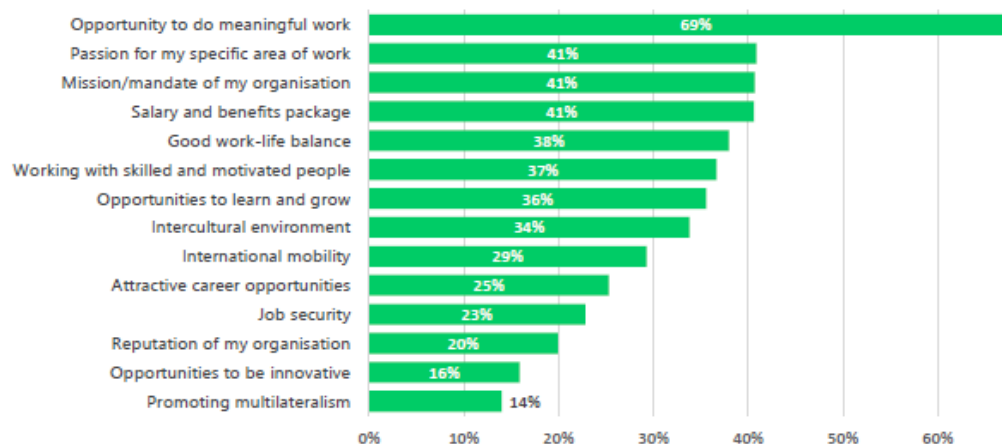


I believe that my work experience in the UN system makes me...

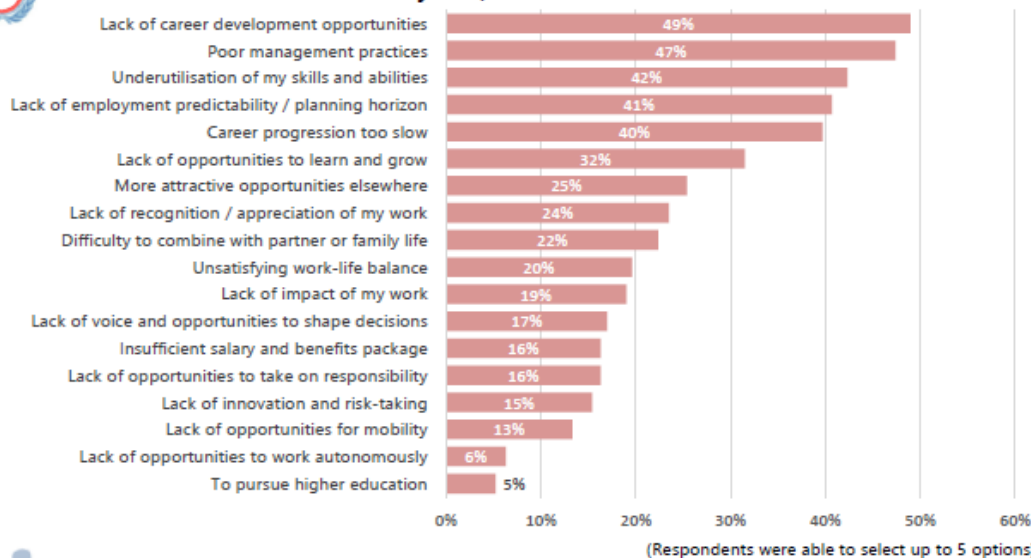




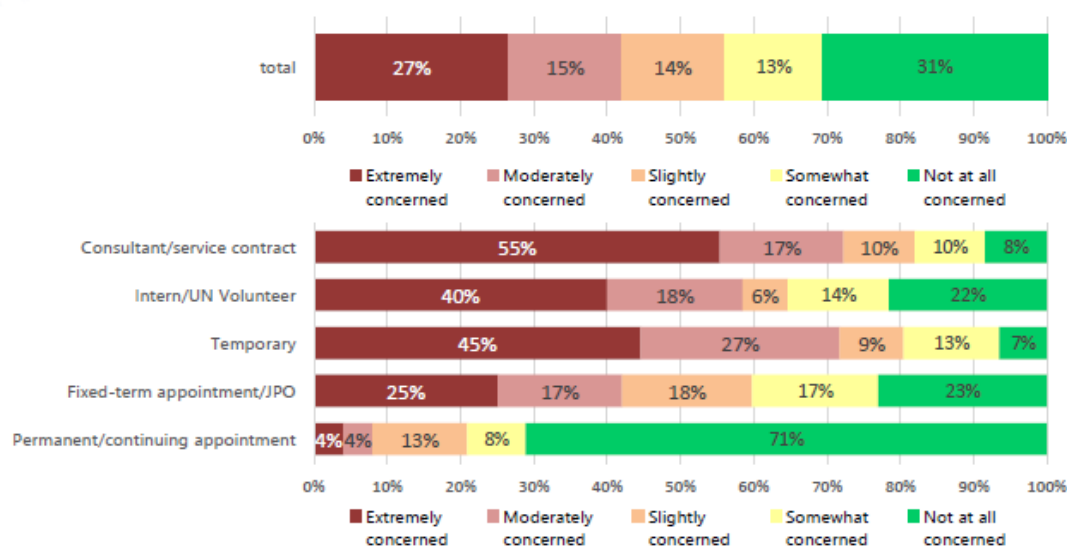
Which factors would motivate you the most to keep working in the UN system long-term?

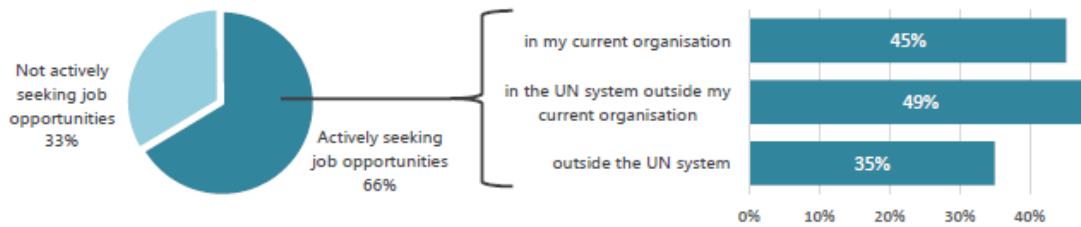
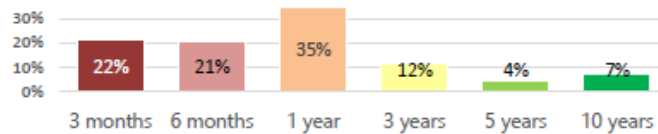
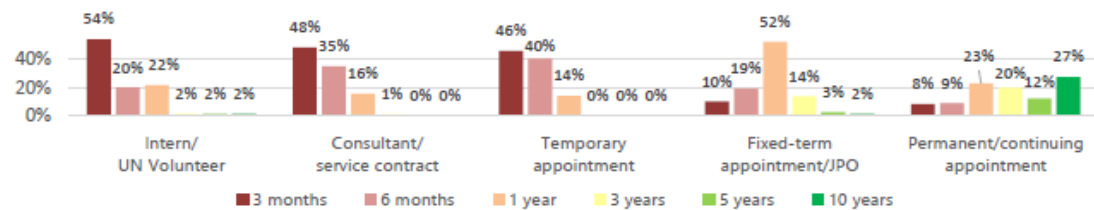
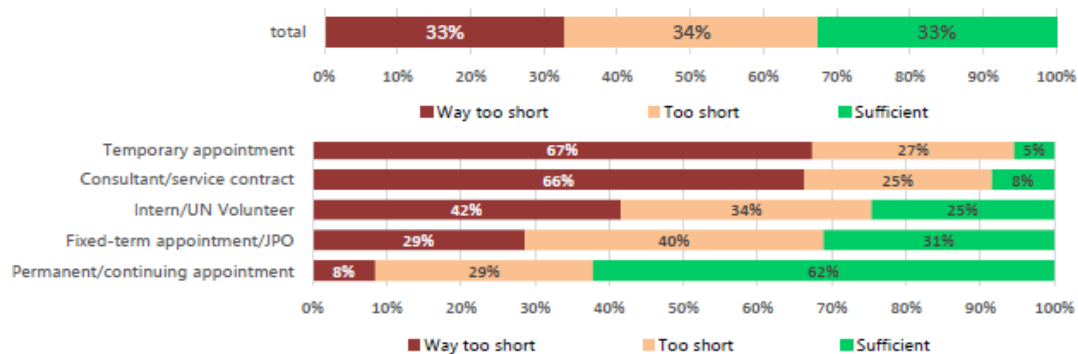
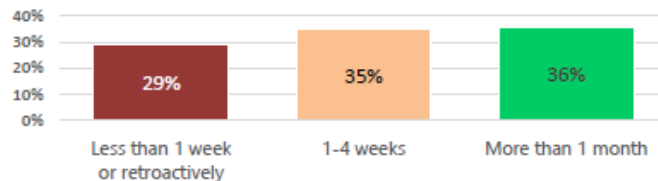
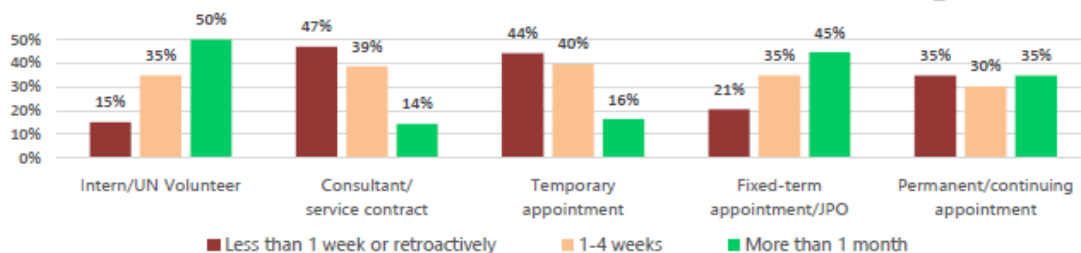



If I were to decide to leave the UN system, the main reasons would be:



How concerned are you that you will have to leave the UN system within the next two years because your contract expires?



Currently I am:**My current employment situation allows me to plan ahead (both in my personal and professional life) for up to:****Planning horizon by contract type:****I consider this planning horizon as:****If you receive a contract extension, how long before the start date is this usually issued?****Contract extensions by contract type:**



Recommendations for the UN to adapt itself and prepare for the future of work [open question, sorted by number of mentions, page 1 of 2]	
Improve performance management (32)	<p>Change recruitment and add real accountability to ensure that poorly performing staff-members have to leave the organization while well performing staff members have opportunities for career development (mobility both vertical and horizontal).</p> <p>Have the courage to put words to action, no matter who/what level is concerned (e.g. misconduct, mismanagement, bad performance).</p> <p>Please give managers the tools and incentives to sanction non-performing personnel.</p>
Better career development (28)	<p>Allow its employees to plan on developing their career, give opportunities to change job families</p> <p>Focus on individuals in career planning - currently, there is no path for career development. At different times in life, people have different priorities. Just having e.g. mobility as "one fits all" does not work to utilise the potential of staff. Clear career paths should be available, given and supported.</p> <p>Have a real talent management system that harmonizes all aspects of recruitment, training, mobility, performance evaluation, workforce planning, etc. (and stop looking at those topics as silos)</p>
Foster job security (24)	<p>I myself had 6 temporary contracts in the last 1.5 years. This is unacceptable for someone who has a family and with great PAS record</p> <p>Stop relying on consultancy contracts to perform long-term tasks as a cheaper alternative to staff positions.</p> <p>There needs to be a stronger system in place to protect rights, especially for consultants. All kinds of unethical behaviour go unseen on our cost because people in higher positions know we are in short term contracts so we have no way to protect ourselves and are dependent to have contracts renewed or ask for too many opportunities within. When I asked my old boss for better opportunities, she said "when I was your age I just kept my head down and did what I was asked to do. Nothing more."</p>
Allow for more flexible working arrangements (21)	<p>The UN should really embrace a more dynamic working environment. Countless studies show how productivity can be boosted by having co-working spaces, areas for active breaks, and chill out zones. What if we had a room with a ping pong table and bean bags for workers to take breaks? It would boost team bonding, support mental health, and improve overall productivity.</p> <p>Introduce a culture of new / flexible working arrangements and new technology communications</p>
Better culture of innovation (20)	<p>Create a greater sense of ownership among staff members: give more freedom to develop new projects and approaches. Hierarchical structures and micromanagement may not be the best ingredients for empowering staff members to innovate.</p> <p>Give young professionals more chance, authorization and support in working more efficiently, such as exploring trendy practices in the private sectors, adopting innovative methods etc.</p> <p>Have a much more active focus on horizon scanning, identifying new trends in the world of work, technology, organisational theory & change etc - I think the UN is far too reactive and nowhere near proactive enough. The UN should really be leading on some of this thinking around how to create and reinvent organisations in a way that can rise to the incredibly complex and urgent challenges the world is facing. Suggest a cross-UN team (full-time) dedicated to horizon scanning and foresight to be able to develop different scenarios and develop policies and approaches that are sufficiently flexible to accommodate different futures.</p>
(Compulsory) management training (19)	<p>Consider management as a true profession and not a capacity granted to senior staff members</p> <p>Make sure managers know how to manage, and leaders how to lead</p> <p>My organization lacks good management from top to bottom. In fact, staff are not appointed to management positions based on assessed management skills or track record; and once appointed their performance is evaluated as a well-functioning node in the hierarchy, not based on their people management. This is ancient civil-service culture and rapidly becoming extinct in the private sector. It makes the organization underperforming and less attractive to young professionals</p>
Prove more learning opportunities (18)	<p>create a culture of lifelong learning for individuals and evolutionary learning for the organization</p> <p>The UN should be open to people stepping outside temporarily to upgrade their skills as it makes them more likely to stay and less likely to leave the organisation completely</p> <p>Staff and organizations have to do more in terms of life-long learning and keeping skills up to date. This is a joint, employer/employee responsibility.</p>
Reduce hierarchies (18)	<p>Abandon structural hierarchical systems which put age and experience above knowledge and innovation or experimentation</p> <p>Segregation of professionals by letters: G or P or D when we are all a team. Some people treat badly their colleagues with other letter ...</p> <p>Go with the time - the system is outdated, too hierarchical</p>
Increase family friendliness / work-life balance (17)	<p>Enhance the work life balance including spouse work facilities and child care support</p> <p>One of the most difficult things about the UN is that it still works as if there is one (male) breadwinner and a trailing spouse. If I leave the UN it will be a combination of lack of influence and the inability of the organization to support a dual career family.</p> <p>I think a major factor is the "outside work life" - if I am not able to adapt my job with the possibility of a family, or my partner is unable to find a (meaningful) job at my future duty station, I will be forced to leave the system. And there is no support for neither of these elements in my organization.</p>

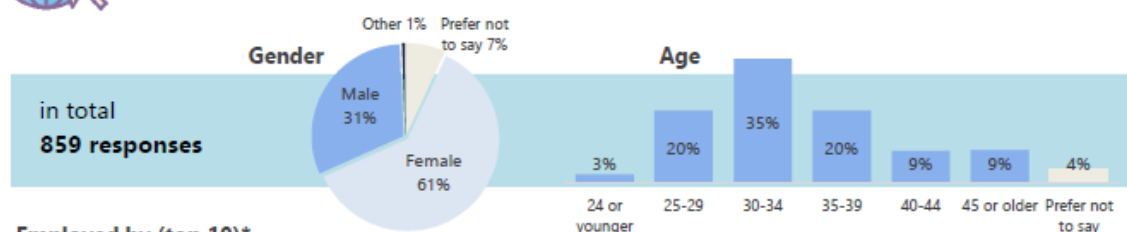


Recommendations for the UN to adapt itself and prepare for the future of work [open question, sorted by number of mentions, page 2 of 2]	
Increase mobility / rotation (16)	<p>Implement mobility cycle of 4-6 years. Encourage internal mobility - it's called a "golden cage" for a reason!</p> <p>I believe that the current system of rotations is ineffective. People should be able to choose to change roles or duty stations and not be forced to move. Ideally, we should get more career opportunities from other UN agencies.</p> <p>Mobility taken as an important part of career development and job satisfaction/motivation, i.e. and work with staff actively on career planning and management. For that we require: (1) individual career planning, with manager involvement and HR support; (2) training budgets that are coupled with career plans; (3) an OHRM that has a say and takes an active role in postings, movement, etc. and not only individual manager (4) possibility to give preference for internal candidates, like in Ministries of Foreign affairs. (5) Managers who aren't too hierarchical, or afraid to be fired (i.e. longer term contracts - none of this one-year nonsense)</p>
More recognition / appreciation of staff (16)	<p>Do not give people the feeling that they are disposable and doing a bad job. It is impossible to thrive in the hostile work environment my organization has. Most young people stay for a few years because they have hope and believe in the system, but currently the system and it's practices smashes this hope and people look elsewhere.</p> <p>incentivize and recognize the work of colleagues in the agency - particularly the technical colleagues that are furthest away from the top management but that is doing the day-to-day work</p>
Reduce bureaucracy (15)	<p>Create a 2 track career path at the UNone for expert and one for managers -- stop promoting people who cannot manage projects/people/departments</p> <p>The paralysis of decision making at all the level of management is the number one reason for delays in personnel contract extensions leading to serious issues like personnel only being informed of contract extension/not 3 days before contract ending, and leading to great stress/strain.</p> <p>The UN should invest in less bureaucratic more interactive and innovative workflows</p>
Embrace technology (13)	<p>I believe the UN should be more open minded to leave its old ways in the past and start to adapt to newer and more innovative technologies that will not only help us here in the NY headquarters but also around the world</p> <p>More interagency collaboration with external partners on required future of work skills. E.g. The session UNICEF had last year with the editor of Wired and their Board members was extremely eye-opening on challenges on the horizon for the future of work.</p> <p>Encouragement of secondments, short-term postings, regular training programmes, forbid the cancellation of opportunities to go on temporary job assignments (especially for junior staff),</p>
More diversity of staff (10)	<p>Place equity at the heart of the UN System - our current classifications of staff (G, P, national) are colonialist and sexist, with little opportunities for development for those outside of the P category. Stop valuing nationality over education and technical experience. Stop tying career growth to labor requirements that favor the heterosexual male.</p> <p>UN should have equal job opportunities to both nationals and international, currently UN look like it was designed for internationals only.</p> <p>Hire people from un-represented and poor countries, minorities, people with disabilities</p>
Better collaboration / knowledge sharing (9)	<p>Create interdisciplinary teams; introduce structural and procedural change to build cross-functional teams</p> <p>More opportunities for stretch assignments as they do in some of the agencies. Encourage more collaboration across teams, e.g. lending staff to special projects.</p> <p>Centralise information so that there is a harmonized database that UN Staff can use to collect info, and conduct research, and be able to validate that info</p>
Improve efficiency (8)	<p>Cut the amount of sign off (esp. the political ones...) We just need actually duty bearers of decisions in the room. There is far too much 'involvement without responsibility', which slows everything down and indeed prevents any different ways of looking at things or doing things. It invites abuses of power and is a colossal waste of money as it keeps us management and administratively heavy which failing to manage any real risks</p> <p>Live more by its own values. It's crazy how much money is spent on international staffs children's education, on last minute flight bookings, how much waste in the offices that is not recycled and so on. The UN should adapt itself to be more performative rather than instrumental and truly implement its values practically on all levels.</p>
Increase (junior) staff participation (8)	<p>Give a bigger platform for youth to express ourselves, and to include more youth in higher level positions</p> <p>There also needs to be constant feedback from colleagues to decision makers so that the UN changes in real time, at office, country and global level.</p> <p>Involve senior management in the discussions with staff. Identify staff members who are willing to engage in dialogue with senior management, such as the Young UN, and create opportunities for discussion and exchange on the future of work and how it will impact our organizations</p>
Allow for upward feedback (7)	<p>360 degree evaluations should be mandatory for every office and termination of contract must be made easier</p> <p>In the last 5 years, I have not had ONE opportunity to evaluate my supervisors. The higher in the system, the more time you are most often obligated to dedicate to supervise others. You are supposed to get the most out of the people working for you and the most reliable indicator of how a person will perform as a supervisor (or in any role) is how they have performed previously. However, there is not data available in the two UN-organisations that I have worked for. Therefore, it is impossible for me to understand on what grounds people are promoted/selected for higher positions? Obviously not based on their ability to lead other people. [...] My proposition is that an (anonymous) evaluation of supervisors from the people they supervise needs to be mandatory across the entire system, within a very short time frame (2021). As this will take effect over the next 10 years, the UN (as whole) will be a better place to work.</p>
Increase transparency (6)	<p>Be transparent, in particular in recruitment practices</p> <p>Give a chance to candidates based on merit, not on who they know, this will ensure best quality outputs for the organization. There is still too much nepotism plaguing the whole system. Some people are not qualified to hold the positions they are appointed for.</p>

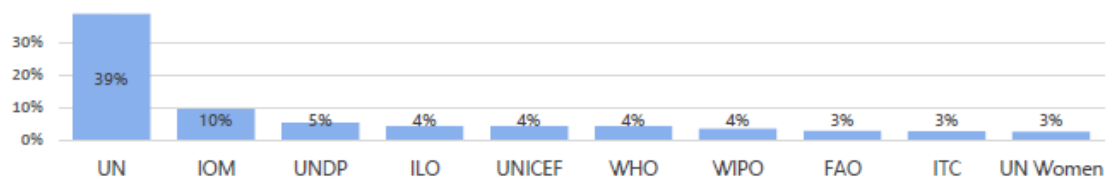


Respondents' background

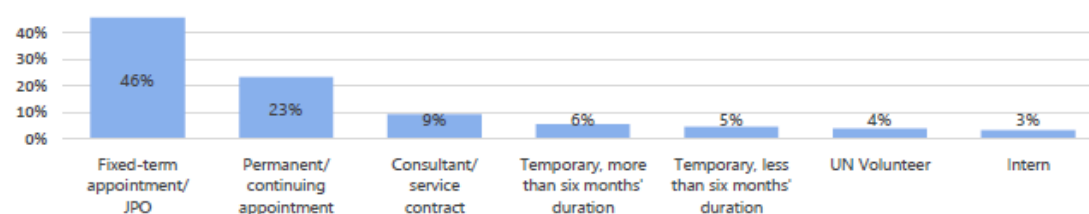
The survey was online for 12 days, from 23 August to 3 September 2019



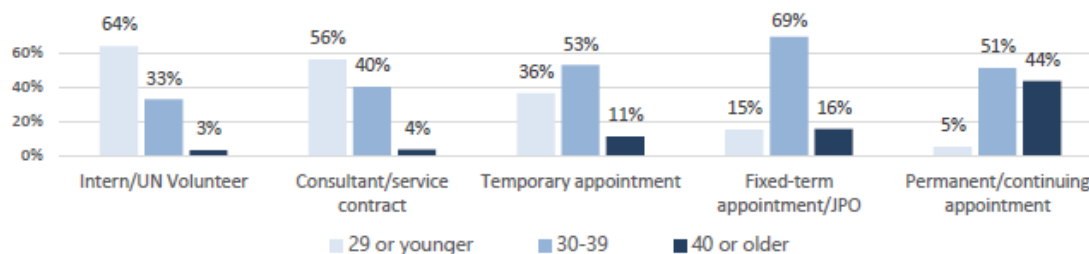
Employed by (top 10)*



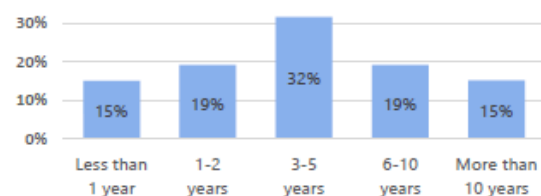
Contract type



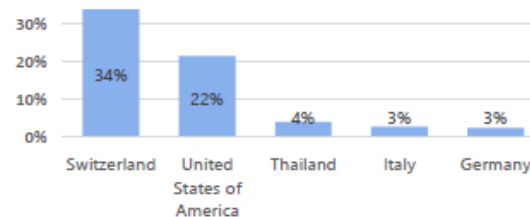
Age by contract type



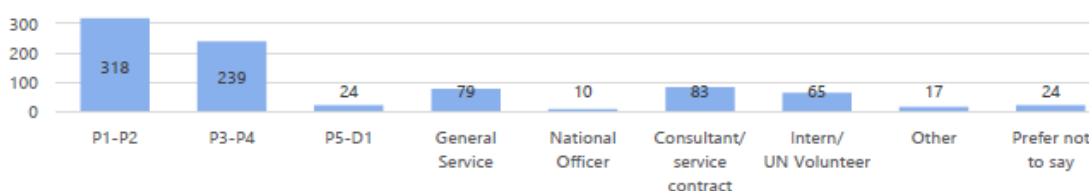
Length of service in the UN



Country of duty station (top 10) out of 91



Job level or type (in absolute numbers)



* Respondents captured under 'UN' comprises mostly the UN Secretariat and the Economic and Social Council. Overall, responses came from 34 different entities, in addition to those already mentioned in the chart, also IAEA, IMO, ITU, UNAIDS, UNCDF, UNCTAD, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNIDO, UNITAR, UNODC, UNOPS, UNRWA, UNSSC, UNV, UNWTO, WFP, WMO, World Bank Group, WTO.