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UN System HR Analytics Framework: Common Definitions and Methodologies for HR Analytics Across the United Nations System

HR Network
HR Analytics Community of Practice

This document formulates a system-wide understanding of HR analytics terms and methods for the United Nations system. It provides a harmonized framework to support evidence-based decision-making and strengthen analytical consistency across organizations. It aims to inspire and align HR analytics practices within the UN system and beyond.

Disclaimer

The recommendation to use the UN M49 standard country or area codes for statistical classification does not imply the expression of any opinion by the CEB Secretariat or participating United Nations system organizations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, area or city, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

Status, intended use, and document governance

The UN System HR Analytics Framework was endorsed by the CEB Human Resources Network at its 49th session, held in Budapest from 24 to 26 June 2026, as a reference for inter-agency analysis and as a living document. The Framework provides common terminology, definitions and measurement methodologies to improve comparability across the United Nations system. It is not a prescriptive tool for organizations' internal or external reporting and does not replace organization-specific policies, systems or reporting requirements.

The Framework is maintained as a living document by the HR Analytics Community of Practice, with support from the CEB Secretariat and oversight of the CEB Human Resources Network. It may be reviewed and updated periodically to reflect developments in HR policy, data standards, organizational practices and system-wide analytical requirements.

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HR Analytics: Terms and Definitions

Workforce Terminology

Staff Members/Staff

All personnel employed under the staff rules and regulations of the organization on short-term (i.e., temporary), fixed-term, or without-term-limit (i.e., continuing, indefinite, or permanent) appointments. Staff roles are generally associated with sustained institutional accountability, delegated authority, decision-making responsibilities, stewardship of resources, representation of the organization, and continuity of operations.

Workforce

All individuals engaged with the United Nations in a working relationship, regardless of their contract type. This includes staff and affiliates.

Affiliates

Any individual directly engaged by a United Nations system organization to perform work or services for a limited or project related period of time, and whose contractual relationship is not governed by a letter of appointment subject to the staff regulations and rules of the respective organization. Affiliate personnel or non-staff are generally used to provide flexibility, surge capacity, specialized expertise, implementation support, or time-bound operational capacity, particularly where functions do not require sustained institutional accountability or delegated authority.

Internationally Recruited¹

Individuals engaged for positions that are classified as internationally recruited. These positions may be subject to geographical mobility, and their compensation and entitlements follow the UN common system's international professional salary scales and benefits framework established by the ICSC.

Locally Recruited²

Individuals engaged for positions for which the incumbents were sourced within the country of the duty station. These positions are assigned to a specific duty station and are not subject to geographical mobility. Their compensation and entitlements follow the locally established UN compensation framework at the assigned duty station.

¹ Contractual modalities of internationally recruited employees include but are not limited to: International Professional staff (or higher categories) with temporary, fixed-term, continuing, indefinite, or permanent appointments; internationally recruited consultants (CSTs), Personnel Services Agreement (PSA), international UN Volunteers, interns and fellowship holders.

² Contractual modalities of locally recruited employees include but are not limited to: General Service staff with temporary, fixed-term, continuing, indefinite, or permanent appointments, National Professional Officers (NPOs), Service Contracts (SC), Personnel Services Agreement (PSA), Special Service Agreements (SSAs), locally recruited consultants (CSTs), interns, and volunteers.

Contract Types Terminology

Without-term-limit Contracts

Continuing, indefinite or permanent contracts with no predefined end date. Applies only to staff members.

Fixed-term Contracts

Contracts with a defined term limit, typically ranging from 1 to 5 years. Applies only to staff members.

Long-term Contracts

Contractual arrangements with a duration of one year or longer. This applies to fixed-term and without-term-limit contracts. Applies only to staff members.

Short-term Contracts

Also called temporary contracts. Contractual arrangements with a duration of less than one year, applicable to both staff members and affiliate modalities as defined by organizational policy.

Recruitment and Separation Terminology (Staff Categories Only)

Vacancy

A position to be filled by an employee in the staff category regardless of the category or location, that is either unencumbered or temporarily encumbered by a staff member.

Separation

The action by which a staff member ceases to be employed by the organization. It occurs when a staff member resigns, abandons their post, reaches the expiration of their appointment, retires, has their appointment terminated, or passes away.

Preventable Loss

Separations initiated by the staff member such as resignations, abandonment of post, rejections of further employment under equal or better conditions, early retirement and interagency transfers. Applies only to staff members on long-term contracts.

Interagency Transfer

The movement of a staff member from one organization to another under conditions which give the staff member no right to return to the releasing organization while carrying over their service accruals to the receiving organization. Loans and secondments are not considered an interagency transfer but are separate mobility modalities with different rules.

Resignation

A resignation is a separation initiated by a staff member that does not fall under the category abandonment of post.

Abandonment of Post

A separation initiated by the staff member other than by way of resignation. Separation as a result of abandonment of post shall not be regarded as a termination within the meaning of the Staff Rules.

Rejection of Further Employment Under Equal or Better Conditions

A staff member's decision to reject an offer from the organization to extend or renew the existing contract. It further entails those staff members that have been offered a contract for a different position with the same or a higher pay grade by the organization 3 to 6 months prior to or after separation.

Early Retirement

Early retirement refers to retiring before the applicable mandatory retirement age: 62 for staff who joined the UNJSPF before 1 January 2014, and 65 for those who joined on or after that date. Staff may opt for an early retirement from age 55 (if they joined before 2014) or from age 58 (if they joined on or after 2014).

UN System HR Analytical Framework

This framework defines a set of people-management dimensions that can be evaluated through measurable indicators. These dimensions provide a structured yet flexible way to assess workforce and HR performance, recognizing that organizations may differ in how their HR functions are structured or prioritized.

Workforce Composition

The distribution and characteristics of an organization's personnel across categories, grades, contract types, functions, and locations. It provides insight into the structure, balance, and sustainability of the workforce, enabling evidence-based decisions on staffing models, recruitment strategies, and resource allocation.

Workforce Stability

The overall stability, health, and performance of the workforce. This dimension assesses how well the organization attracts, retains, engages, and sustains talent. It provides insight into the effectiveness of leadership, workplace culture, and HR practices in enabling employees to contribute to and support organizational goals.

Diversity and Inclusion

The organization's progress toward building a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace. This dimension uses quantifiable indicators to monitor representation, inclusion, and belonging, and supports targeted actions that strengthen D&I practices and promote a more equitable and inclusive organizational culture.

Recruitment

The organization's ability to attract, assess, and select qualified candidates in a timely, fair, and efficient manner. This dimension focuses on the effectiveness of recruitment processes, the competitiveness of the organization in the talent market, and the overall health of the talent pipeline.

Career Development

The effectiveness and efficiency of the organization's career development, learning, and talent management programs. It assesses the availability and quality of career pathways, mobility opportunities, and professional growth in an organization and across the UN system, ensuring support for sustainable and meaningful careers aligned with organizational needs.

Compensation, Benefits, and Entitlements

The organization's approach to structuring, managing, and investing in staff compensation and the broader employee value proposition. This dimension evaluates the equity, consistency, and sustainability of pay, allowances, and benefits across duty stations.

Health, Safety, and Well-being

The organization's practices aimed at enhancing employees' physical, psychological, and occupational well-being. This dimension evaluates risks, absence patterns, and health-related indicators to support a safe, healthy, and productive work environment.

Figure 1: Overview of the UN System HR Analytical Framework



Workforce Composition

Headcount

- Definition:* The entire workforce of the organization at a defined point in time. It includes all staff members and affiliates who have an active working relationship with the organization, regardless of contract modality, funding source, recruitment type (international or local), or grade.
- Purpose:* To support cost-sharing arrangements and to provide a holistic view of the number of individuals engaged with the organization at a given point in time. Headcount provides a baseline for more advanced analytical work, including strategic workforce planning, budgeting, diversity and inclusion, resource management, and external reporting.
- Calculation:* Determined by counting all individuals who have an active working relationship with the organization on the reference date. This includes all internationally and locally recruited employees, both staff members and affiliates, as defined in previous sections.
- Notes:* Headcount includes individuals who are on leave with pay, as they continue to maintain an active employment relationship during the reference period. Individuals who are on leave without pay are excluded, since their active working relationship is suspended. Incoming secondments and loans are included in the headcount because these individuals perform duties under the organization's supervision and contribute to its operational capacity. Outgoing secondments and loans are excluded, as these individuals are temporarily assigned to external entities and are not part of the organization's active workforce on the reference date.³

³ The HR Analytics Community of Practice recognizes that ERP system configurations vary across organizations, especially in relation to the management of secondments and loans. Accordingly, the clarifications in the Notes section should be understood as an idealized reference point rather than a reflection of all currently existing reporting standards or technical capabilities.

Full-time Equivalents (FTEs)

- Definition:* The full-time equivalent time that staff or affiliate personnel were actively engaged throughout the standard year, with one FTE representing one full-time person working a standard year.
- Purpose:* To provide a normalized measure that enables meaningful comparison and benchmarking of the use of Staff Members and Affiliate Personnel over a defined period.
- Calculation:* For each person, divide the number of working days they contributed during the period by the standard number of working days in a full year. The total number of FTEs for the period is the sum of all individual results.
- Notes:* A standardized number of working days per year can be used for these calculations.

Percent of International Professional Officers and Higher Categories (Relative to Total Staff)

- Definition:* The percentage of International Professional (IP) and Higher categories staff relative to the total number of staff members in the organization. International Professionals include all internationally recruited professional categories as defined in this glossary.
- Purpose:* To assess the organization's technical capacity, policy and programme leadership strength, and the balance between international and locally recruited roles. It also supports analysis of workforce models, mobility patterns, and strategic staffing alignment across duty stations.
- Calculation:* The percentage is calculated by dividing the number of International Professional and Higher categories staff by the total number of staff members, then expressing the result as a percentage.
- Notes:* The denominator includes all staff members on long-term and short-term contracts, as defined in this glossary.

Percent of General Service Staff (Relative to Total Staff)

- Definition:** The percentage of General Service staff relative to the total number of staff members in the organization.
- Purpose:** This indicator shows the proportion of administrative and support roles within the staff structure. It helps assess the level of operational support capacity across duty stations and provides insight into staffing models, organizational structure, and resource distribution.
- Calculation:** The percentage is calculated by dividing the number of General Service staff by the total number of staff members and then expressing the result as a percentage.
- Notes:** The denominator includes all staff members on long-term and short-term contracts, as defined in this Glossary.

Percent of National Professional Officers (Relative to Total Staff)

- Definition:** The percentage of National Professional Officers (NPO) relative to the total number of staff members in the organization.
- Purpose:** This indicator reflects the extent to which the organization relies on nationally recruited professional expertise. It is particularly relevant for field operations, where National Professional Officer staff often represent the core professional workforce. Tracking this percentage supports workforce planning, nationalization strategies, and comparisons across duty stations with different staffing models.
- Calculation:** The percentage is calculated by dividing the number of National Professional Officer staff by the total number of staff members and then expressing the result as a percentage.
- Notes:** NPOs are counted based on their official classification in the HR system, regardless of funding source.
The Percent of NPOs is particularly relevant for field-based duty stations where NPOs constitute a significant share of the professional workforce.

Short-Term Contract Ratio

- Definition:** The percentage of workforce members on short-term or temporary contracts relative to the total workforce. Short-term contracts include all time-bound contractual modalities defined in this Glossary.
- Purpose:** This indicator provides insight into the organization's flexibility, surge capacity, and operational responsiveness. It helps assess the extent to which the workforce relies on temporary staffing arrangements versus more stable, long-term capacity. It also supports planning, cost management, and workforce sustainability analysis.
- Calculation:** The percentage is calculated by dividing the number of employees holding short-term or temporary contracts by the total number of workforce members and expressing the result as a percentage.
- Notes:** Includes all short-term and long-term workforce members, regardless of recruitment type (internationally or locally recruited).
The inverse of the ratio may also be presented, e.g., long-term ratio if clearly articulated.

Affiliate Contract Ratio

- Definition:** The percentage of affiliate workforce personnel relative to the total workforce at a given point in time. Affiliates include all non-staff contractual modalities defined in this Glossary.
- Purpose:** This indicator provides insight into the organization's use of affiliate contractual modalities to deliver specialized, time-bound, or project-specific functions. It helps assess the degree of operational flexibility, cost efficiency, and external expertise integration within the workforce. It also supports planning, resource allocation, and analysis of workforce sustainability and dependency on non-staff arrangements.
- Calculation:** The percentage is calculated by dividing the number of affiliate workforce personnel by the total workforce and expressing the result as a percentage.
- Notes:** Includes all affiliate workforce personnel, regardless of recruitment type (internationally or locally recruited).

The inverse of the ratio may also be presented, e.g., staff ratio if clearly articulated.

Locally Recruited Ratio

- Definition:** The percentage of workforce personnel who are locally recruited relative to the total workforce at a given point in time. Locally recruited personnel are those engaged for positions classified as locally recruited, sourced within the country of the duty station.
- Purpose:** This indicator provides insight into the organization's localization level, contextual expertise, and operational footprint. It supports analysis of cost efficiency, workforce sustainability, local capacity strengthening, and alignment with organizational goals related to national presence and community engagement.
- Calculation:** The percentage is calculated by dividing the number of locally recruited personnel by the total workforce, and expressing the result as a percentage.
- Notes:** Includes all workforce personnel classified as internationally or locally recruited, regardless of contract type. The inverse of the ratio may also be presented, e.g., internationally recruited ratio if clearly articulated.

Functional Area Distribution

- Definition:** The proportion of the workforce assigned to different functional areas is determined by grouping individuals according to the UN Common Classification of Occupational Groups (CCOG) structure—Job Networks and Job Families—to ensure consistency and comparability across duty stations and UN entities. When this distribution is presented specifically at the job-family level, it is referred to as the *Job Family Distribution*.
- Purpose:** To support evidence-based workforce planning by showing how the organization's entire workforce is distributed across functional areas or job families. It helps identify structural gaps, informs talent acquisition and development strategies, and enables benchmarking.
- Calculation:** The percentage is calculated by dividing the number of workforce members assigned to each functional area or job family by the total workforce, and then expressing the result as a percentage.
- Notes:** Uses the UN Common Classification of Occupational Groups (CCOG) to ensure comparability across entities. Workforce members are assigned based on their official job classification at the reference date. May be presented at Job Network, Job Family, or Job Code level depending on analytical needs.

Grade Distribution (Staff Categories Only)

Definition: The distribution of staff members in an organization based on their categories, grades or levels.

Purpose: Is essential for effective organizational design as it defines the hierarchical structure, clarifies roles and responsibilities, supports talent development and succession planning, and contributes to operational efficiency. It is a foundational element that guides the organization's workforce and resource management practices.

Calculation: Figure is produced by counting the number of staff members in each grade, level, or category at a given point in time. These counts are then usually presented as a table or visual distribution (e.g., bar chart, population pyramid) to illustrate the overall grade structure of the workforce.

Notes: Includes all staff members with an assigned grade or level. Affiliates are usually excluded (but may be included if they hold a grade-equivalent classification and if stated explicitly). Should be interpreted alongside workforce composition indicators to understand structural balance.

Headcount Distribution by Duty Station Location/Entity

Definition: The proportion of the workforce assigned to each duty station location or organizational entity at a specific point in time. It reflects how many staff members are based in each location or entity, expressed either as absolute numbers or as percentages of the total workforce. Duty stations may be grouped by location type (e.g., headquarters, regional offices, country offices, field locations, hardship levels) or by UN System entity groupings, depending on the analytical framework used.

Purpose: To provide insights into how the organization deploys its workforce across locations and entities. It supports strategic workforce planning, resource allocation, operational design, and benchmarking against UN Secretariat practices. Understanding geographic and entity-level distribution ensures that staffing aligns with operational priorities and service delivery needs.

Calculation: The distribution is calculated by counting the number of workforce members assigned to each duty station location or entity grouping at a defined point in time. These counts are then expressed either as absolute numbers or as percentages of the total workforce to illustrate how staff are allocated across geographic locations or organizational entities. The results are typically presented in a table or visual format (e.g., bar chart, map, or distribution chart) to highlight differences in workforce concentration.

Notes: Duty station groupings (HQ, regional, country office, field, hardship levels) should follow the organization's official classification.
Includes all workforce members with an active assignment at the reference date.
Affiliates are included if they are assigned to a duty station and contribute to operational capacity.
May be presented as absolute numbers or percentages depending on reporting needs.

Workforce Stability

Turnover Rate (Staff Categories Only)

- Definition:** The percentage of staff members on fixed-term, continuing, indefinite, or permanent contracts who leave the organization over a defined period. Turnover only includes separations from the organization (e.g., resignation, retirement, expiration of appointment, non-renewal, termination, etc.) and excludes all internal movements such as reassignments, transfers, or changes in post or duty station.
- Purpose:** Provides insight into the organization's workforce stability, retention capacity, and overall employment environment. It helps identify trends related to talent management, organizational health, funding stability, workload distribution, and potential risks to continuity of operations. Persistent increases in turnover may signal issues with employee experience, workplace satisfaction, leadership, or external labor-market pressures.
- Calculation:** Option 1: Number of staff who separated from the organization in the previous calendar year/average number of staff over the same period.
- Option 2: Number of staff who separated from the organization in the previous 12 months/ average number of staff between previous 12 months and as of the latest available snapshot (e.g., current date, last report, or the end of the previous year)
- Notes:** Applies only to staff on fixed-term, continuing, indefinite, or permanent contracts. The denominator should be clearly defined; for simplicity, Option 1 is generally recommended. However, if there has been significant fluctuation in staffing levels, Option 2 may provide a more accurate reflection.
- Includes all separations: preventable and non-preventable.
Staff on short-term or temporary appointments are excluded.
The denominator must match the population used for Preventable Loss and Retention Rate for consistency across stability metrics.

Preventable Loss Ratio (Voluntary Turnover) (Staff Categories Only)

Definition: The percentage of staff members on fixed-term or longer-term contracts who separated from the organization within the previous 12 months for reasons considered preventable, meaning voluntary separations that the organization could reasonably influence. Preventable separations include abandonment of post, resignation, rejection of further employment under equal or better conditions, early retirement, and inter-agency transfer, etc.

Purpose: To provide insights into why long-term staff choose to leave voluntarily. Tracking preventable loss helps assess whether retention strategies related to compensation, benefits, career development, work environment, and organizational culture are effective.

Calculation: Preventable separations in the last 12 months/total separations of staff on fixed-term or longer-term contracts during the same period.

Notes: Applies only to staff on fixed-term, continuing, indefinite, or permanent contracts.
Staff on short-term or temporary appointments are excluded.
Only separations classified as preventable are included in the numerator; non-preventable separations remain in the denominator for this metric.

Retention Rate (Preventable Loss) (Staff Categories Only)

Definition: The Retention Rate measures the percentage of staff members on fixed-term or longer-term contracts who remained with the organization over the previous 12 months among those who could reasonably have been expected to stay. It excludes non-preventable separations (e.g., mandatory retirement, death in service, end-of mandate, abolition of post) from the eligible base.

Purpose: To indicate how effectively the organization retains staff expected to remain beyond one year. High retention reflects stronger engagement, job satisfaction, and effective talent management. Monitoring this rate helps identify retention risks and assess the impact of interventions.

Calculation:

1. Eligible to remain population:
 - = all fixed-term and long-term staff
 - non-preventable separation in the last 12 months.
2. Retention rate
 - = (eligible to remain population - preventable separations)/eligible to remain population x 100

Notes: Only preventable separations reduce the retention rate
Non-preventable separations are excluded from the eligible population.
For comparability across time or entities, the same headcount reference and separation classifications should be used consistently.

Staffing Cost Ratio

- Definition:* The Staffing Cost Ratio measures the percentage of total organizational revenue (or expenditure) spent on staffing costs. Staffing costs include all organizational expenditures related to employing and supporting the entire workforce. This covers compensation for staff members (salaries, allowances, benefits, employer pension and health insurance contributions, and separation benefits) as well as workforce-related expenditures for short-term and affiliate personnel, in line with UN financial reporting practices.
- Purpose:* This metric provides insight into the financial sustainability and stability of the organization's workforce structure. By comparing staffing costs to revenue, the organization can assess whether its mix of long-term staff, short-term staff, and affiliate personnel is affordable and aligned with funding realities.
- Calculation:* Divide total staffing cost incurred over the reporting period (financial year) by total organizational revenue (or expenditure) over the same period and express the result as a percentage. The total staffing cost incurred over the reporting period is divided by the total organizational revenue (or expenditure) over the same period, the results of which are expressed as a percentage.
- Notes:* Staffing cost should be defined consistently with IPSAS and UN system financial reporting categories.

Diversity and Inclusion

Gender Ratio

Definition: The proportion of men and women within the organization's workforce. It is a quantitative measure used to assess gender balance across staffing categories, grades, duty stations, and contract modalities.

Purpose: To monitor progress toward gender equality, gender parity targets, and broader diversity and inclusion commitments. It informs gender responsive workforce planning, helps identify structural imbalances, and supports reporting against organizational goals and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Calculation: The ratio is calculated by dividing the number of men and women by the total workforce population and expressing the result as a percentage.

Notes: Recognizing ongoing discussions across the UN System on how best to reflect the full diversity of gender identities, some organizations are reviewing their workforce data collection practices to expand gender identities beyond the binary classification. Any future inclusion of non-binary or additional gender identities in reporting will follow organizational policy direction, as well as agreements reached through relevant UN System coordination mechanisms.

Age Distribution

- Definition:* The statistical breakdown or composition of a population or group of individuals based on their age.
- Purpose:* To support workforce planning, talent management, diversity and inclusion analysis, and policy development by identifying age patterns, generational trends, and potential succession risks.
- Calculation:* Option 1: Density distribution: Visualization of the density distribution shows the age curve of the workforce.
Option 2: Mean or median age: Provides a single summary indicator.
Option 3: Age brackets: Staff are grouped into predefined age brackets (e.g., <30, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60+), and the percentage in each bracket is calculated relative to total workforce.
- Notes:* Option 1 (density distribution) is recommended, as it provides the most comprehensive view of the workforce's age structure.
Age brackets or summary indicators may be used when required for reporting or comparability, but the chosen method should be applied consistently across time and entities.
Workforce categories included in the calculation should align with the organization's definition of "workforce" to ensure comparability with other diversity and inclusion metrics.

Geographical Distribution

Definition: The distribution of the workforce members by region, subregion or country of primary nationality, using the UN M49 standard country or area codes for statistical classification.

Purpose: To assess geographical diversity and representation patterns across the workforce. It supports analysis of hiring trends, potential biases in selection processes, and progress toward organizational diversity commitments.

Calculation: Divide the number of workforce members whose primary nationality falls within a given regional or statistical grouping by the total workforce population and express the result as a percentage.

This methodology can be also applied at the level of:

- M49 regions (e.g., Africa, Asia, Latin America & Caribbean, etc.)
- Countries of nationality
- Political or voting groups (if used by the organization)
- Custom organizational groupings (if applicable)

Notes: UN M49 Standard (Table 1): The UN M49 standard, prepared by the UN Statistics Division, classifies countries and areas into regions and subregions for statistical purposes. These groupings are politically neutral and ensure comparability across datasets.

DGACM Political Groupings: The UN General Assembly's political groups (African States, Asia-Pacific States, Eastern European States, Latin American and Caribbean States, Western European and Other States) are political classifications, not geographic ones. However, geographical distribution according to UNGA groups may still be requested by certain governing bodies, e.g., ACABQ.

"Developed / Developing" Terminology

When socioeconomic grouping is required, organizations may use:

- World Bank income groups
- UNDP Human Development Index (HDI) categories
- M49 regions (for geographic analysis)

Other groupings may be used when relevant, but they should not be mistaken for geographical distribution or representation.

Table 1. M49 Standard: Regions and Subregions

Regions	Subregions
Africa	Northern Africa Sub-Saharan Africa
Americas	Latin America and the Caribbean Northern America
Asia	Central Asia Eastern Asia South-Eastern Asia Southern Asia Western Asia
Europe	Eastern Europe Northern Europe Southern Europe Western Europe
Oceania	Australia and New Zealand Melanesia Micronesia Polynesia

Note. *Standard Country or Area Codes for Statistics Use, 1999 (Revisions 4), M, No. 49/Rev.4, 17.02.2026*

Recruitment

Vacancy Rate (Staff Categories Only)

- Definition:* The number of vacant positions over the total number of staff positions in all categories and locations and the number of vacancies, expressed as a percentage at a given date. Vacancies temporarily filled by short-term staff or affiliates are still counted as vacant positions.
- Purpose:* To assess an organization's human resource capacity, staffing levels, and readiness to fulfil its mission and mandate globally. It may further be used to identify patterns in the staffing of the planned and agreed upon structures in the organisation's budget. Vacancy Rates may be calculated separately for divisions, sources of funding or categories of staff.
- Calculation:* Divide the number of vacant positions by the total number of all staff positions and express the result as a percentage. Vacancy rate is calculated as a point-in-time indicator, using the number of vacant and total staff positions at the chosen reporting snapshot (e.g., end of month, quarter, or year).
- Notes:* Temporary backfilling does not change vacancy status.
Vacancy rate should be calculated using the same reference population across time for comparability.
In certain organization only pre-defined positions sub-set is considered for vacancy rate tracking, e.g., regular budget funded and/or institutional budget funded ones, excluding other types of funding.

Average Applicants Ratio

- Definition:** The total number of applications received over the previous 12 months divided by the total number of published vacancies. Applications include all submissions received through the organization's official recruitment platform.
- Purpose:** To assess the organization's competitiveness, recruitment efficiency, and ability to attract diverse and qualified candidates.
- Calculation:** Divide the total number of applications received over the previous 12 months by the total number of vacancies published during the same period.
- Notes:** The metric should use a consistent 12-month reference period. Applications withdrawn before screening may be included or excluded depending on organizational policy, but the approach must be applied consistently. The metric may be disaggregated by job category, duty station, or job family. Includes staff members and affiliates.

New Applicants Ratio

- Definition:** The average number of first-time applicants—individuals submitting an application to the organization for the first time—per vacancy published during the reference period. New applicants are identified based on unique applicant records in the organization's recruitment platform.
- Purpose:** To assess the organization's attractiveness to new talent and its ability to reach previously untapped candidate pools. This metric provides a more comparable measure across organizations with different recruitment platform structures, especially where some systems generate high volumes of repeat or low-effort applications.
- Calculation:** Divide the total number of new applicants (unique first-time applicants) over the previous 12 months by the total number of vacancies published during the same period.
- Notes:** Uses a consistent 12-month reference period.
"External applicant" must be defined consistently (e.g., not holding any active contract or affiliate status at the time of application).
May be disaggregated by job category, duty station, job family, or recruitment modality

External Applicants Ratio

- Definition:* The average number of external applicants—individuals who are not current workforce members—per vacancy published during the reference period. External applicants include candidates from outside the organization, regardless of contract type or prior affiliation.
- Purpose:* To measure the organization’s external market attractiveness, competitiveness, and ability to draw qualified candidates from outside its existing workforce. This metric helps assess whether recruitment processes are reaching diverse external talent pools and supports benchmarking across organizations with different internal mobility patterns.
- Calculation:* Divide the total number of external applicants over the previous 12 months by the total number of vacancies published during the same period.
- Notes:* Uses a consistent 12-month reference period.
Identification of “new applicants” must follow a consistent organizational rule (e.g., first appearance in the applicant tracking system).
May be disaggregated by job category, duty station, job family, or recruitment modality.
Complements Average Applicants per Vacancy by isolating the organization’s ability to attract new talent rather than repeat applicants.

Recruitment Cycle-Time

- Definition:* The duration of a recruitment process for processes that lead to hiring an employee. Recruitment cycle start time is defined as the day when the vacancy is closed, the end time is the date the selected candidate accepts the offer. Withdrawn or cancelled recruitments are excluded.
- Purpose:* To assess the efficiency and effectiveness of an organization's hiring process. A shorter recruitment cycle indicates the organization can fill vacancies more quickly, reducing operational disruption and supporting timely talent acquisition.
- Calculation:* Recruitment cycle-time is calculated by counting the number of calendar days between the vacancy closing date and the date the selected candidate accepts the offer.
- Notes:* Cycle-time may be analyzed by job category, duty station, or job opening type. Only completed recruitments (leading to hire) are included. Calendar days should be used consistently across all analyses. Includes staff members and affiliates

Recruitment Cycle-Time Owner-Ratio

Definition: A complementary metric to the Recruitment cycle-time that identifies where within the organization spent the most time administering the recruitment process. Only recruitment processes that lead to hiring of a staff member are included. Recruitment cycle start time is the vacancy closing date; the end time is the date the offer is accepted.

Purpose: To identify which parts of the recruitment process are the most time-intensive and where administrative bottlenecks may occur. By distinguishing the duration controlled by HR from the duration controlled by the hiring entity, the metric supports targeted process improvements and promotes accountability.

Calculation: The Recruitment Cycle time Owner Ratio is calculated by dividing the number of days in the recruitment process owned by HR by the number of days owned by the hiring entity. The metric may be further broken down by each actor involved in the recruitment process.

Notes: Actor ownership typically includes, but is not limited to:

- HR (e.g., vacancy preparation, screening, assessments, compliance checks)
- Hiring Manager (e.g., shortlisting, interview preparation, final selection)
- Interview Panel (e.g., interviews, scoring, consensus decisions)
- Compliance/Legal or other oversight bodies (e.g., eligibility, due diligence, clearances)
- Approving Officers (e.g., final endorsement of selection recommendations)

Career Development

Tenure (Organization Definition)

Definition: The average length of time staff members have continuously served within the organization. It measures only service within the current organization and does not include prior service in other UN System entities.

Purpose: To assess employee retention, organizational experience levels, and the effectiveness of career development and advancement policies. Average tenure provides insight into workforce stability, career progression patterns, and organizational culture.

Calculation: Organizational Tenure:
Calculated by measuring the length of continuous service for each staff member from the date of their most recent appointment or reappointment—regardless of contract type—up to the current reference date.
Average Organizational Tenure is the mean of these individual tenure values.

Tenure in the Same Grade:
Calculated by measuring the time elapsed from the date a staff member entered their current regular grade or level up to the current date.
Average Tenure in the Same Grade is derived by averaging these values across all staff members.

Notes: Following UN Secretariat practices on determining continuous service, continuity is generally preserved only when a former staff member on a fixed-term or continuing/indefinite/permanent appointment is re-employed within 12 months; otherwise, the tenure period restarts.
For staff on temporary appointments, any separation is treated as a break in service.
Tenure calculations should use consistent reference dates for comparability.

UN System Tenure

Definition: UN System tenure refers to the length of a staff member's most recent period of continuous service within any organization of the United Nations Common System. Tenure begins on the start date of the latest appointment that was not followed by a break in service and resets when a break in service occurs. This measure reflects how long a staff member has been continuously active in the UN System, regardless of contract type, grade, or employing organization.

Average UN System tenure represents the mean length of continuous service across all staff members within the Common System.

Purpose: To assess the maturity and experience of staff in an organization. It may be used for workforce planning, organizational design and career management further shaping the organization's culture, and its career development and advancement policies.

Calculation: For each staff member, un system tenure is calculated from the start date of their most recent uninterrupted appointment within the UN System up to the reference date, using the definitions on break of service outlined in the notes below.

Average UN system tenure is the mean of these values.

Notes: Administrative reinstatement rules do not always reflect actual service patterns; therefore, for system-wide analytics, tenure is approximated as cumulative service unless there is clear evidence of a substantial interruption. With annual snapshots, a break in service is considered to have occurred when a staff member is absent from two consecutive snapshots. UN System tenure should be interpreted alongside organizational tenure for a complete view of staff experience.

Percentage of Staff Eligible for Geographical Mobility

- Definition:* The percentage of staff members who meet the organization's criteria for geographical mobility eligibility. Eligibility is defined by organizational policy and may include factors such as contract type, grade level, mobility requirements, or minimum time in post.
- Purpose:* To assess the organization's capacity for global deployment and the readiness of staff to undertake assignments in different duty stations. It supports workforce planning, succession management, and mobility policy implementation.
- Calculation:* Divide the number of staff members who meet the organization's mobility eligibility criteria by the total number of staff members and express the result as a percentage.
- Notes:* Eligibility criteria must be clearly defined and applied consistently. The metric may be disaggregated by staff category, grade, or duty station. Eligibility does not imply willingness or readiness to move; it reflects policy-based eligibility only.

Geographical Mobility (Organization Definition)

Definition: The total number of assignments of one year or longer that a staff member has completed across their career within the organization

Purpose: To assess staff exposure to diverse operational contexts and support talent management, succession planning, and the development of a versatile workforce. Mobility patterns also inform retention analysis and career progression pathways.

Calculation: For each staff member, geographical mobility is calculated by counting the number of completed assignments of one year or more, accumulated across their career. Assignments following a formal separation from the organization are not counted as geographical moves.

Average geographical mobility is then calculated by taking the mean number of completed geographical moves across all staff members.

Notes: Mobility counts accumulate across all qualifying assignments, and breaks in service do not reset these counts.
Assignments following a formal separation are not counted as geographical moves.
Mobility should be interpreted in relation to organizational mobility policies.

UN System Geographical Mobility

- Definition:** The number of times a staff member has changed duty stations across their career within the United Nations Common System, as observed in system-wide snapshots. Mobility is defined strictly as a change in physical duty station location, irrespective of administrative framework, contract modality, or employing organization.
- Purpose:** To assess cross-system mobility, professional exposure, and adaptability. It supports inter-agency mobility discussions, system-wide workforce analysis, and policy considerations related to deployment and equitable access to diverse work settings.
- Calculation:** For each staff member, count the number of times their duty station changes between consecutive snapshots. Average UN System geographical mobility can be derived by calculating the mean number of observed duty station changes across relevant staff groups.
- Notes:** Averages are constructed for analytic purposes and are most meaningful when interpreted within comparable groups rather than as a single system-wide figure.

Mobility Cycle Time/Time in Duty Station

- Definition:** The length of time a staff member has spent in their current duty station. This metric may be analyzed by mobility category (e.g., E, D, C, H duty stations) or organizational mobility frameworks.
- Purpose:** To assess readiness for mobility, identify staff approaching or exceeding mobility thresholds, and support succession planning and deployment decisions.
- Calculation:** Count the number of calendar days (or years) from the date the staff member arrived at the current duty station up to the reference date. Average Time in Duty Station is the mean across all staff.
- Notes:** Time in duty station should be interpreted in relation to mobility policies and expected tour lengths.
Duty station classifications (e.g., E, D, C, H) should follow organizational or UN system standards.

Inter-Agency Mobility

- Definition:** The movement of staff members between United Nations Common System organizations through loan, secondment, or transfer, as defined under the Interorganizational Agreement concerning Transfer, Secondment or Loan of Staff. These movements maintain continuous service.
- Purpose:** To reflect structured and coordinated staff movement across the UN System. It supports career development, knowledge exchange, and exposure to different mandates and operational environments.
- Calculation:** Divide the total number of loans, secondments, and transfers completed in the reporting year or currently ongoing by the total number of staff, and express the result as a percentage.
- Notes:** Only formal movements under the Inter-organizational Agreement are included. The metric may be disaggregated by staff category, grade, or duty station.

Cross-Agency Career Movement (Broad Definition)

- Definition:** Refers to staff members who join the organization after having previously worked for another UN System entity, regardless of whether the movement occurred under the Interorganizational Agreement. This includes new appointments following separation from another UN organization.
- Purpose:** To capture broader career mobility across the UN System and provides insight into talent flows, reentry patterns, and the organization's attractiveness. It supports workforce planning, retention analysis, and understanding of systemwide career pathways, complementing the more formal Interagency Mobility metric.
- Calculation:** Divide the number of newly appointed staff from another UN System organization by the total number of staff members, and express the result as a percentage.
- Notes:** Includes new appointments following separation from another UN organization.
Complements Inter-Agency Mobility by capturing informal or post-separation movements.

Promotion Rate (Vertical Moving Rate)

- Definition:* The proportion of staff members who have been appointed to higher-level positions during the past 12 months. This includes promotions or any appointment that results in advancement to a higher grade or level.
- Purpose:* Is a key indicator of upward career movement within the organization. It reflects the availability of advancement opportunities and the organization's commitment to recognizing performance and supporting staff development. Higher rates may indicate strong internal career pathways, while lower rates may highlight structural or procedural barriers to advancement.
- Calculation:* Dividing the number of staff members appointed/promoted to higher-level positions over the previous 12 months by the total number of staff members, and express the result as a percentage.
- Notes:* May be disaggregated by staff category, grade, or duty station. Should be interpreted alongside tenure and mobility metrics for a full view of career progression.

Compensation, Benefits and Entitlements

Total Compensation Cost (to the Organization)

Definition: The total annual expenditure on staff compensation and benefits as recognized under the organization's financial rules and aligned, where applicable, with ICSC classifications.

Purpose: To provide insight into the organization's overall investment in its workforce. At the global level, this metric supports financial planning, budgeting, and cost-effectiveness analysis. When disaggregated by duty station, it highlights non-standardized cost variations across locations and informs workforce deployment, resource allocation, and organizational design. For comparative purposes, average costs per staff member or Standard Post Costs (SPCs) are generally more appropriate than total expenditure figures.

Calculation: Computed as the sum of the total annual expenditure on staff compensation and benefits. It can be calculated at the level of the UN system, an organization, or a specific duty station. Usually expressed in USD.

Notes: Compensation cost elements include all items classified by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) as components of staff compensation (see [ICSC Salaries and Allowances Booklet](#)), and the employer's share of pension contributions.

For International Professional staff, these elements comprise recurring components such as base salary (typically reported as the amounts before pension deductions), post adjustment, the employer share of pension contributions, hardship allowance, spouse allowance, child allowance, mobility, non-family service allowance, danger pay, rental subsidy, single parent allowance, the D&E pilot allowance, secondary dependent allowance, and the child disability allowance. They also include nonrecurring components such as the education grant, settling-in grant, relocation grant, removal shipments, statutory travel entitlements (e.g., education grant travel, home-leave travel, and rest-and-recuperation travel), repatriation grant, special education grant, termination indemnity, and the death grant.

For General Service and other locally recruited staff, as defined under ICSC standards, compensation elements include base salary according to the local

salary scale and increments, language allowance, overtime and night differential, special post allowance, dependency benefits, allowances related to children with disabilities, and applicable allowances for General Service staff recruited on a non-local basis.

In accordance with organizational financial rules, compensation costs may also include other payroll-based benefits recognized as compensation, as well as certain separation-related payments depending on IPSAS classifications. Social-security contributions may be included when they form part of payroll-based entitlements recognized as compensation under institutional frameworks.

Excluded: health insurance subsidies, After Service Health Insurance (ASHI) contributions, affiliate costs (such as consultants, service contract holders, interns, and volunteers), training, duty or mission travel (including Daily Subsistence Allowances), operational expenditures, and any administrative or overhead costs not processed through payroll.

The employer's pension contribution is excluded from most ICSC matters; whether pension is included must be clearly stated to ensure comparability.

Average Cost per Staff Member

Definition: The total annual expenditure on staff compensation and benefits divided by the number of staff members. It includes salary, post-adjustment, allowances, benefits, and pension contributions, as applicable under the UN Common System. Health insurance subsidies and after service health insurance are not part of compensation costs and excluded from this definition.

Purpose: To provide insight into the organization's investment in its workforce. At the global level, it supports financial planning, budgeting, and cost-effectiveness analysis. When disaggregated by duty station, it highlights cost differentials across locations and supports workforce deployment decisions, resource allocation, and organizational design.

Calculation: Organization-wide:
Total annual expenditure on staff compensation and benefits divided by the total number of staff members at the end of the year.

By duty station: Total annual expenditure on staff compensation and benefits for a given duty station divided by the number of staff members assigned to that duty station at the end of the year.

Total staff compensation cost: The total annual expenditure on staff compensation and benefits for the organization or for a specific duty station.

Notes: For further explanation of total staff compensation cost, please see Total Compensation Cost

Standard Post Cost (SPCs)

- Definition:** The average annual cost of a staff position is calculated using standardized assumptions rather than individual-specific personnel expenses. It provides a consistent budgeting value per grade and duty station, independent of the personal circumstances of the individual.
- Purpose:** To serve as the organization's primary budgeting mechanism for posts; support multi-year planning, funding proposals, and structural realignments; and ensure a data-driven, consistent basis for estimating personnel-related expenditures. By relying on standardized averages rather than actual costs, SPCs help maintain comparability across offices and planning cycles, simplify budget preparation, and reduce variability caused by individual entitlements or contractual situations.
- Calculation:** Derived by combining the standardized annual values of three cost components associated with a position:
- Salary: the base remuneration for the grade and duty station;
 - Common Staff Costs (CSC): allowances and benefits such as dependency entitlements, pension fund contributions, medical insurance, and security-related allowances (including hardship and danger pay);
 - Post Occupancy Costs (POC): centrally managed services supporting the position, such as global ICT software, shared back-office functions, and location-specific facilities or security services.
- Notes:** SPCs are planning tools and do not reflect actual individual costs. Components and assumptions should be updated regularly to maintain accuracy.

Health, Safety, and Well-being

Unplanned Absence Rate

Definition: The proportion of working days lost due to unplanned absences. Applies only to staff members and excludes planned or statutory leave such as annual leave and official holidays.

Purpose: To assess workforce productivity, efficiency, and engagement; identify potential health and well-being issues; and aid operational planning. High absenteeism rates can reduce productivity, increase workloads, and disrupt timelines, while also signaling underlying health or personal challenges that may require attention.

Calculation: Divide the total number of working days lost to unplanned absences by the total number of working days for staff members with active contracts during the same period and express the result as a percentage.

Notes: Included: certified/uncertified sick leave, special leave (with or without pay) administrative leave, parental leave, and any other unplanned absences recorded in the HR system.
Excluded: absence types include annual leave, official holidays, compensatory time off, training, duty travel, and other planned absences that do not reflect unavailability due to unforeseen circumstances.

Sick Leave Rate (Certified and Uncertified)

Definition: The percentage of working days that staff members are absent due to certified or uncertified sick leave.

Purpose: To monitor staff health, well-being, and overall workforce resilience. Analyzing certified and uncertified sick leave separately helps identify patterns, emerging health risks, or potential workplace issues. Benchmarking sick leave rates across units or time periods supports contextual analysis and helps identify root causes of absenteeism that may affect mandate delivery, productivity, morale, and engagement.

Calculation: Divide the total number of sick leave days taken during the selected period by the total number of working days in that same period and express the result as a percentage.

Notes: May be disaggregated by staff category, duty station, or type of sick leave. Should be interpreted alongside absenteeism and well-being indicators.

Closing Note

The UN System HR Analytics Framework represents the first version of a shared reference for HR metrics across UN organizations represented in the HR Analytics Community of Practice. It establishes a common language, consistent methodologies, and clear definitions to support transparent reporting, informed decision-making, and meaningful dialogue between HR, management, and operational teams. As organizations' systems, policies, and analytical practices evolve, this glossary should be treated as a living document—regularly reviewed, refined, and expanded to ensure it continues to reflect best practices and organizational needs.