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## Navigating Human Resource Statistics

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Researchers are increasingly interested in examining the composition of United Nations (UN) personnel regarding sociodemographic characteristics. In particular, existing studies focused on the composition of the staff in terms of nationalities (Parizek 2017; Novosad and Wercker 2019; Badache 2020; Oksamytna, Bove, and Lundgren 2021) and gender (Haack 2014). However, human resource data such as nationality, gender, and age of the personnel of UN organizations are not easily accessible and, when they are, can be partial. Available data can be used for certain purposes but also have some caveats.

Two sets of human resource data concerning UN organizations are publicly available. First, the UN Secretariat is the only UN organization that overtly publishes data on the composition of its personnel. These reports have been published on a yearly basis by the secretary-general since 1948. Initially limited to staff in posts subject to geographical distribution, their breadth has increased over time. Since 2007, these reports provide data on the nationality, age, contract type, and gender for all its staff irrespective of the categories of service and funding sources. The main advantage of these reports is to present raw information by countries. The comprehensive statistical tables at the end of these reports provide, for each member country, the number of staff by categories of service, appointment types, and gender.

The second available source includes the statistics gathered by the Chief Executives Board for Coordination.<sup>1</sup> They provide human resource data for all UN organizations on age, staff location, nationality, gender, length of

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1. <https://www.unsystem.org/content/un-system-human-resources-statistics>

service, grade, and category of service. These statistics are graphically presented on the website and can be downloaded. This database is very useful to make comparisons between UN organizations. However, since they are presented by organizations and by characteristics, they cannot be used for cross-sectional analyses such as studies that address the composition in terms of age and gender. Another limitation of this set of HR data is that they are limited to staff with fixed-term contracts of one year or more.

In addition to the above-mentioned limitations, it must be noted that the available data on UN personnel is limited to a small number of sociodemographic attributes (i.e., age, gender, nationality). In order to collect more human resource data such as education, professional background, and social origins, researchers should use other data collection tools such as conducting biographic interviews (see chapter 6—*Biographic Interviews*) and create their own database (see box u—*Building Databases on Individuals*).

## References

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