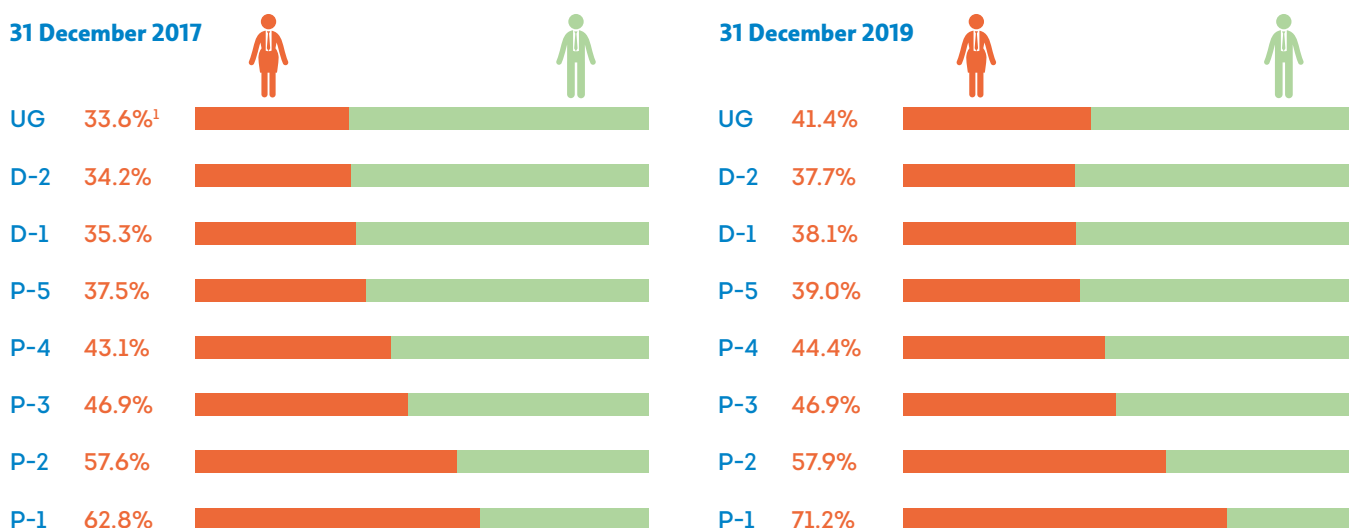# Representation of Women in the UN System

This brief is prepared as a supplementary document to the Secretary-General's Report on the 'Improvement in the status of women in the United Nations system'. The Report is published biennially by UN-Women, based on its mandate to monitor and report on the status of women and progress of gender parity in the UN system. Data visualization presented in this brief draws upon data from the Secretary-General's Report. Personnel statistics are collected by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB). Additional quantitative and qualitative data are collected through a biennial survey by UN-Women, distributed across the United Nations. For the full Report, please visit this page or visit UN Women's Reports and Monitoring page for past reports and resolutions.

Representation by level

31 December 2017

Level	%
UG	33.6%[1]
D-2	34.2%
D-1	35.3%
P-5	37.5%
P-4	43.1%
P-3	46.9%
P-2	57.6%
P-1	62.8%

31 December 2019

Level	%
UG	41.4%
D-2	37.7%
D-1	38.1%
P-5	39.0%
P-4	44.4%
P-3	46.9%
P-2	57.9%
P-1	71.2%

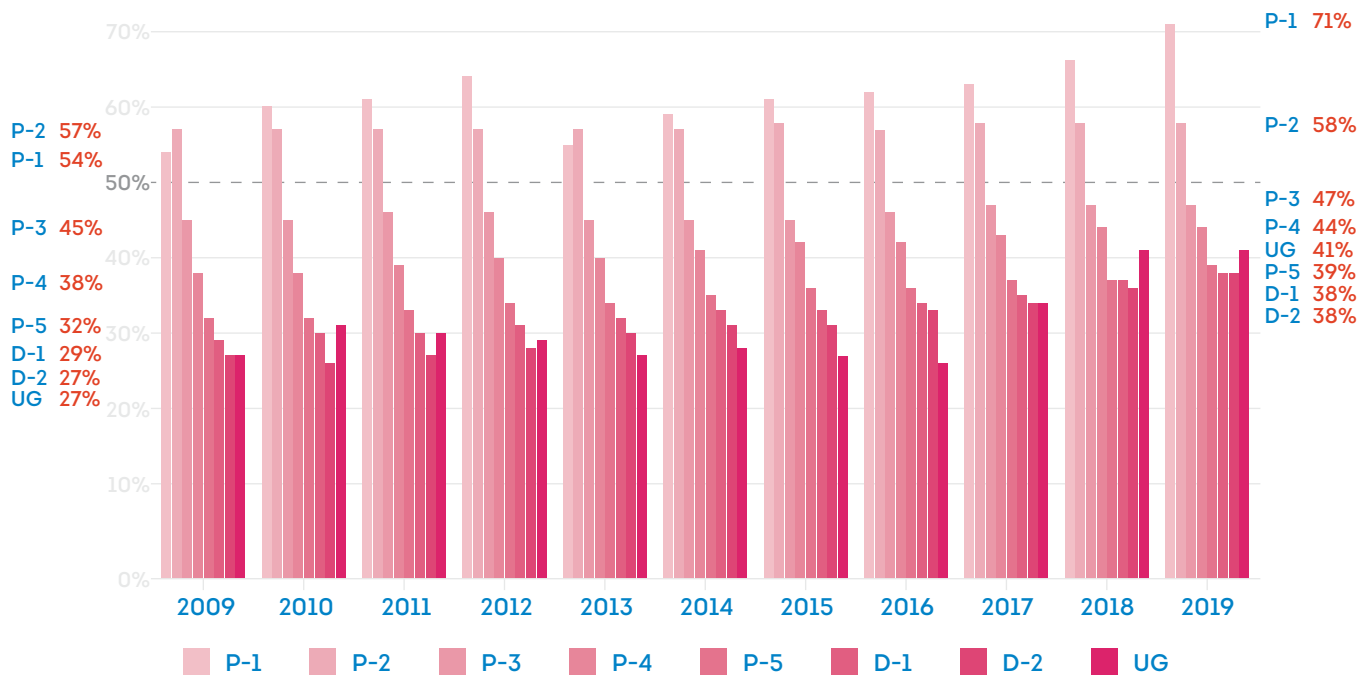**Overall, P-1 to UG**

45.3%

Senior levels, D-1 to D-2

38.0%

Only the P-1 and P-2 levels have representations of women of 50% or more. Overall, a persistent inverse relationship continues between the representation of women and seniority – as grade levels increase, the proportion of women decreases

[1] The 2019 Report on the Improvement in the Status of Women analyzed senior appointments by USG/ASG. 33.6% referenced here represents the combined representation of women at both levels, for comparative purposes to the 2021 report which analyzes UG (Ungraded) to align with CEB reporting standards. The UG level encompasses all levels above D-2, including Under-Secretary-General, Assistant Secretary-General, heads of specialized agencies and heads of funds and programmes.
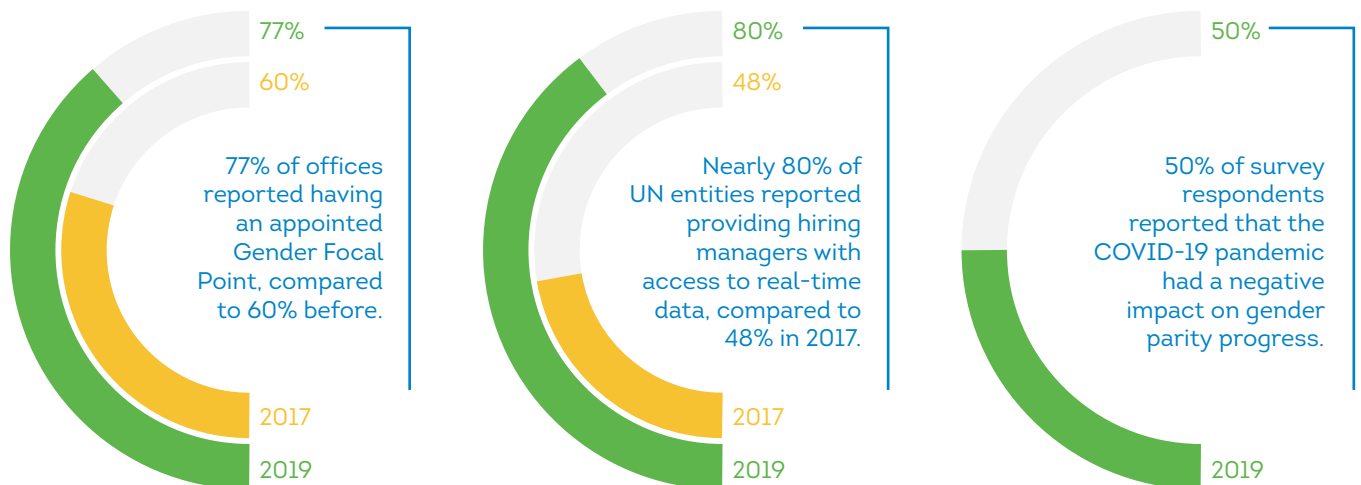
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Trends Over Time, 2009 to 2019

P-2 57%
P-1 54%
P-3 45%
P-4 38%
P-5 32%
D-1 29%
D-2 27%
UG 27%

P-1 71%
P-2 58%
P-3 47%
P-4 44%
UG 41%
P-5 39%
D-1 38%
D-2 38%

Years: 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019

Legend: P-1 P-2 P-3 P-4 P-5 D-1 D-2 UG

The Ungraded level's dramatic recent gain brought the level to its highest representation of women to date, nearly 15 percentage points higher from 27 per cent in 2009.

The steepest declines in the representation of women occur between the P-2 and P-3 as well as the P-4 and P-5 levels, suggesting a consistent hindering of the career advancement or retention of women when they reach the middle of their career or face life milestones such as parenting or other forms of caregiving responsibilities, which disproportionately affect women.

Snapshot of Results from the Biennial Survey on the Improvementof the Status of Women in the UN System

77%
60%
77% of offices reported having an appointed Gender Focal Point, compared to 60% before.
2017
2019

80%
48%
Nearly 80% of UN entities reported providing hiring managers with access to real-time data, compared to 48% in 2017.
2017
2019

50%
50% of survey respondents reported that the COVID-19 pandemic had a negative impact on gender parity progress.
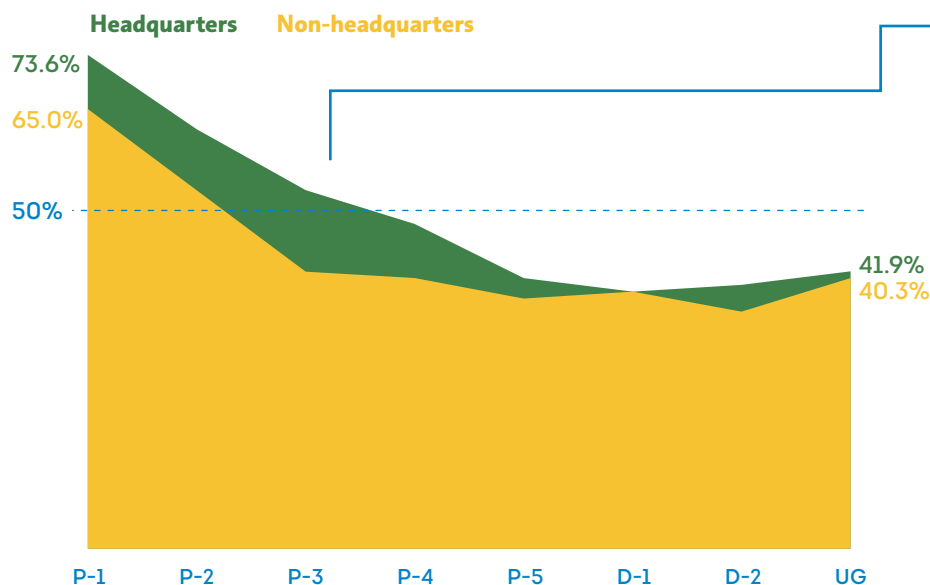2019

73% of surveyed entities viewed active support and buy-in from senior managers as a key to success to gender parity efforts

84% of surveyed entities featured gender diversity and inclusion in their communications, recruitment materials and vacancy announcements [2]

[2] UN-Women created guidance on inclusive vacancy announcements and provided good practice examples from the United Nations system on how to create value statements, use gender-neutral language and incorporate a gender indicator into the evaluation criteria.
http://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/gender-parity-in-the-united-nations/gender-parity-resources

Data is as of 31 December 2019, covering staff on fixed/permanent/continuous appointments and provided by UN entities, unless otherwise noted. Prepared by the Office of the Focal Point for Women in the UN System at UN-Women.

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Representation by location, as of 31 December 2019

Headquarters **Non-headquarters**

73.6%
65.0%
50%
41.9%
40.3%

P-1 P-2 P-3 P-4 P-5 D-1 D-2 UG

Disparities between headquarters and non-headquarters[3] locations signal a greater need to create enabling environments in various country offices and field operations. The level with the greatest disparity continued to be the P-3 level, where 53.9% of staff at headquarters are women but only 41.1% of staff at non-headquarters are women. Addressing the obstacles to greater representation of women in the field, where most of the UN's personnel serve, will vastly support efforts towards the goal of parity across the UN system.

Headquarters
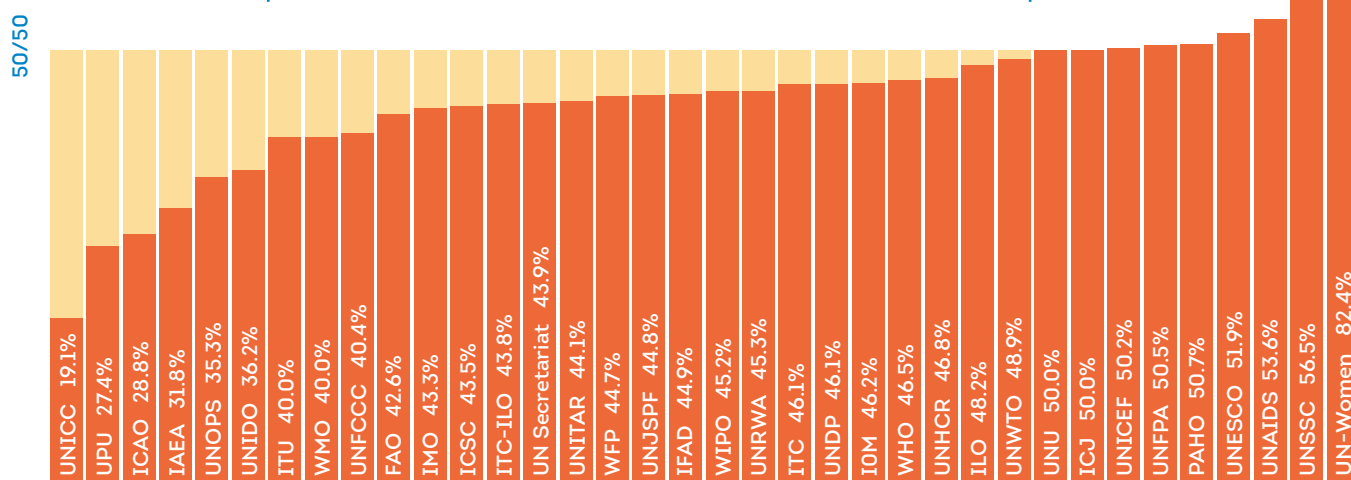**49.5%**

Non-headquarters
41.2%

Representation of women among Resident Coordinators[4]
51.4%

Field civilian staff
31.0%[5]

Representation by entity, as of 31 December 2019

While only nine entities had a representation of women of 50% or more at the overall Professional levels or higher, 21 out of 36 entities have an overall representation of women between 40% to 49%, within 10 percentage points of reaching 50%.

50/50

UNICC 19.1%
UPU 27.4%
ICAO 28.8%
IAEA 31.8%
UNOPS 35.3%
UNIDO 36.2%
ITU 40.0%
WMO 40.0%
UNFCCC 40.4%
FAO 42.6%
IMO 43.3%
ICSC 43.5%
ITC-ILO 43.8%
UN Secretariat 43.9%
UNITAR 44.1%
WFP 44.7%
UNJSPF 44.8%
IFAD 44.9%
WIPO 45.2%
UNRWA 45.3%
ITC 46.1%
UNDP 46.1%
IOM 46.2%
WHO 46.5%
UNHCR 46.8%
ILO 48.2%
UNWTO 48.9%
UNU 50.0%
ICJ 50.0%
UNICEF 50.2%
UNFPA 50.5%
PAHO 50.7%
UNESCO 51.9%
UNAIDS 53.6%
UNSSC 56.5%
UN-Women 82.4%

[3] Headquarters and non-headquarters locations are defined by the duty station of staff according to the headquarters location of each respective entity. Specifically, non-headquarters includes regional, subregional, country, other established offices, projects and field and branch offices.
[4] Data included in the Report for the representation of women among Resident Coordinators is as of 31 December 2020, made available by the United Nations Development Coordination Office (UNDCO).
[5] Source: UN Secretariat Gender Parity Dashboard, September 2021

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# Examining the Parity Gap at Senior Levels

Occupational Segregation

The low representation of women in field and mission settings is due in large part to the concentration of positions in the technical, security and logistics sectors which are traditionally male-dominated, despite a growing number of women graduating with advanced degrees in STEM fields. More targeted outreach, inclusive vacancy announcements that use gender-neutral language and job descriptions that maximize candidate pools are actionable steps to find female candidates for roles in male-dominated sectors, in addition to ensuring that the creation of enabling working environments are prioritized.

Professional and Personal Life Integration Challenges

The alignment of some women's mid-career progress with childbearing or caregiving years is one reason that retention, and not only recruitment, should be prioritized. Family-friendly policies and flexible working arrangements can enable personnel to effectively balance personal, family (i.e. having a child, caring for an ageing relative or self-care during life-changing events) and professional commitments. The Enabling Environment Guidelines, Supplementary Guidance, and Field-specific Enabling Environment Guidelines are resources for entities, leaders and managers to create a more supportive and inclusive work environment for all personnel and retain women especially.
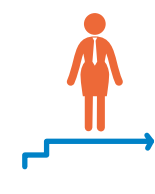
Less Career Advancements at Senior Levels

System-wide career advancements were at, near or above gender parity at P-1 to P-4 levels. However, women's career advancements continued to trail those of men at the most senior levels, apart from the Ungraded category where a number of appointments are made by the Secretary-General. Of the seven entities with the lowest proportions of career advancements for women, four were among those with the lowest representation of women overall. Leadership and mentoring programmes can have a positive impact on women's careers, but only when these are supplemented with concrete opportunities, on-the-job learning and equal recognition of achievements.

Few Openings for Senior Positions

One reason the representation of women in senior positions is low is the limited number of senior positions and few openings for those roles. Strategic workforce planning such as retirement projection exercises and succession planning can help managers build internal talent pipelines in anticipation of future human resource needs. Upcoming retirements will provide an opportunity to advance the representation of women and other underrepresented groups to ensure a greater gender and geographical balance.

Representation of Women in the UN System, P-1 to D-2, as of 31 December 2019

P-1	P-2	P-3	P-4	P-5	D-1	D-2
71.2%	57.9%	46.9%	44.4%	39.0%	38.1%	37.7%

Junior to Senior

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