

English only

# **Review of the use of non-staff personnel and related contractual modalities in the United Nations system organizations**

**Supplementary Papers to Report of the Joint Inspection Unit  
(JIU/REP/2023/8)**

**Review Highlights**

**Appendix: Results of the Survey to Non-Staff Personnel**

**Prepared by Tesfa Alem Seyoum and Gaeimelwe Goitsewang**



## REVIEW OF THE USE OF NON-STAFF PERSONNEL AND RELATED CONTRACTUAL MODALITIES IN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM ORGANIZATIONS

*Inspectors Tesfa Alem Seyoum and  
Gaeimelwe Goitsemanang*



### Background

The present review was initiated in response to successive requests from the JIU participating organizations and the realization that non-staff personnel constitute a significant portion of the total workforce of the United Nations system organizations. This topic was last covered by JIU in 2014.



### Objectives & Purpose

The ultimate objective is to apprise the legislative and/or governing bodies and the executive heads of the JIU participating organizations of the status of the policies and practices of using non-staff personnel and related contractual modalities in the United Nations system, with the aim of guiding ongoing and future workforce-related initiatives.



### What the JIU found

#### 1. There is no common system-wide nomenclature for non-staff personnel across the United Nations system organizations.

The term "non-staff personnel" has not been adopted by all the participating organizations as a common system-wide nomenclature. The reasons advanced by most organizations were that the term carried a negative connotation, as well as being derogatory and discriminatory. As a result, there is strong support for changing it to a more inclusive nomenclature. The recommended nomenclature "affiliate personnel" (**recommendation 1**) received overwhelming support from the interviewees, including non-staff personnel.

#### 2. There is no common system-wide functional definition of non-staff personnel.

Definitions vary among the organizations. It was apparent from the responses to the JIU questionnaire that some organizations had not even adopted a term, hence their

failure to provide a definition in their policy documents. The Inspectors therefore considered it necessary to recommend a common system-wide nomenclature and definition (**recommendation 2**) to ensure harmonization across the United Nations system organizations.

#### 3. The main reasons for the use of non-staff personnel across the United Nations system are the relative flexibility and lower cost implications compared with staff contracts.

As at the end of December 2022, non-staff contracts represented 43 per cent of the total workforce of the United Nations system organizations. However, it should be noted that this figure does not include non-staff contracts at the United Nations Secretariat, including the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and the Universal Postal Union, because the requested data were not provided.

The review found that there are three main reasons for the increase in the use of non-staff personnel, and these are: (a) flexibility; (b) cost-effectiveness; and (c) unpredictability of funding (leading to overreliance on extrabudgetary funds). While the reasons are valid, the Inspectors are of the view that such solutions should not be used as justification for unfair labour practices and misuse of non-staff personnel. It is critical to strike a balance between flexibility and cost-effectiveness, on the one hand, and the well-being of non-staff personnel, on the other hand. The necessity for the United Nations system, as a rule-based global body, to uphold the ethos of good labour practices cannot be overemphasized.

Many non-staff personnel have been working for extended periods of time under contracts that are practically equivalent to an employment relationship; a situation that is tantamount to unfair labour practices. To mitigate the situation, the Inspectors recommend that organizations periodically review their existing non-staff contractual modalities to identify critical positions of a continuous nature, with a view to the possible establishment of staff positions (**recommendation 3**).

#### 4. Many organizations have developed policies and contractual modalities to guide the use of non-staff personnel, but implementation is lacking, thus the principle of an employment relationship is disregarded.

It is common practice in many organizations for non-staff personnel to perform functions of a continuous nature without the provision of associated social benefits and entitlements. The Inspectors are of the view that, in cases where non-staff personnel perform functions of a continuous nature, they should be compensated accordingly. Many officials interviewed acknowledged that the prevailing labour practices went against the spirit of the principle of decent work for all, as promoted by ILO.

It is cardinal that United Nations system organizations put in place appropriate mechanisms and structures to ensure the effective implementation of non-staff policies and regulations so as to prevent the misuse of non-staff personnel. In order to ensure that non-staff personnel who are inevitably performing functions of a continuous nature receive adequate compensation, the Inspectors recommend that organizations develop social benefit policies or schemes applicable to non-staff personnel performing functions of a continuous nature (**recommendation 4**).

#### 5. Data collection and regular reporting have been improved, but periodic reviews need to be enhanced.

The number of non-staff personnel has reached a substantial level in the total workforce of many organizations. Constant monitoring and oversight are therefore important to ensure the proper utilization of non-staff personnel. In order to ensure effective oversight, the Inspectors recommend that the legislative and/or governing bodies request the executive heads of the organizations to report regularly on the use of non-staff personnel, supported by sufficient data and information (**recommendation 5**).

In terms of audits and evaluations, out of the 26 organizations that responded to the JIU questionnaire, only 8 had conducted dedicated internal audits or evaluations of the use of non-staff personnel over the previous five years. The Inspectors therefore recommend that the executive heads of the United Nations system organizations include non-staff contracts in their regular workforce assessments in order to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of their policies and practices relating to the use of non-staff personnel (**recommendation 6**).

#### 6. There is a need for system-wide coherence.

There have been substantive improvements in the development and updates of policies and contractual modalities guiding the use of non-staff personnel since the previous JIU review of the topic in 2014. However, challenges remain. There are no overarching criteria or system-wide frameworks on the use of non-staff personnel and related contractual modalities. Consequently, organizations have formulated individual policies and contractual modalities in a fragmented manner. The terms and conditions of these contractual modalities are also different, leading to unhealthy competition among the United Nations system organizations. Owing to the precarious nature of non-staff contracts, hiring and retaining good-quality non-staff personnel are major challenges for many organizations. Short-term contracts and job insecurity have given rise to high turnover and the lack of a stable and motivated workforce, a situation that may have a negative impact on organizational performance and sustainability.

The most common non-staff contractual modalities across the United Nations system organizations are consultants, individual contractors and service contracts. A sustainable solution to the fragmented non-staff policies and contractual modalities would be the harmonization of the commonly used non-staff contractual modalities within the United Nations system organizations. However, most of the organizations assert that this would present implementation challenges as they have diverse mandates, business and funding models, as well as different operational environments. Taking this into consideration and in order to bridge the gap among the organizations, the Inspectors recommend the development of minimum standards and principles for non-staff contractual modalities commonly used by the United Nations system organizations (**recommendation 7**).



### Approach & Methodology

In accordance with JIU internal standards and working procedures, the methodology used for the review combined quantitative and qualitative approaches for data collection and analysis, including the following:



**Desk review** of relevant documents



**3 questionnaires** to the participating organizations, the staff associations, and the CEB secretariat



**78 interview sessions** with 200 stakeholders, targeting the participating organizations with a large pool of non-staff personnel. The interviewees included human resources management officials, key hiring managers, representatives of non-staff personnel and staff representatives



**Online survey** to gather views of a wider sample of non-staff personnel



## What the JIU recommends

The JIU makes 1 formal recommendation to the legislative and/or governing bodies of the United Nations system organizations and 6 to the executive heads of the participating organizations for action, as well as 15 informal recommendations.

### The legislative and/or governing bodies are called on to:

**5** Request the executive heads who have not yet done so to include in their reports on human resources relevant data and information on the use of non-staff personnel, such as the number of non-staff personnel, years of service, location of employment, nationality and gender.

### The executive heads are called on to:

**1** Adopt, by the end of 2025, the term “affiliate personnel” as the common system-wide nomenclature for referring to all categories of contract holders who are not considered staff, and include the term in their relevant policy documents by the end of 2027.

**2** Adopt, by the end of 2025, the following as a common system-wide definition of all categories of contract holders who are not considered staff: “Any individual engaged by a United Nations system organization to perform work or services for a limited period of time or for a period of time tied to a specific project, and whose contractual relationship is not governed by a letter of appointment subject to the staff regulations and rules of the respective organization.”

**3** Conduct periodic reviews of their non-staff contractual modalities with a view to identifying critical positions of a continuous nature for the possible establishment of staff positions, funds permitting.

**4** Taking into consideration the employment relationship principle, by the end of 2026, develop social benefit policies or schemes applicable to non-staff personnel performing functions of a continuous nature, with clear guidelines for their implementation.

**6** Include non-staff personnel in their regular workforce assessments so as to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of their policies and practices relating to the use of non-staff personnel.

**7** Taking into consideration the various organizational mandates and the diversity of non-staff contracts, as well as the diverse operational environments, in their capacity as members of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), request the Human Resources Network of the High-level Committee on Management to review and set minimum standards and principles for non-staff contractual modalities commonly used by the United Nations system organizations, with a view to enhancing system-wide coherence and harmonization by the end of 2028.



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**JIU/REP/2023/6**, Review of flexible working arrangements in United Nations system organizations

**JIU/REP/2023/5**, Review of management and administration in the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

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**JIU/REP/2023/3**, Review of accountability frameworks in the United Nations system organizations

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The Joint Inspection Unit is the only independent external oversight body of the United Nations system mandated to conduct evaluations, inspections and investigations system-wide.

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thematic areas



2024  
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28 Participating  
Organizations

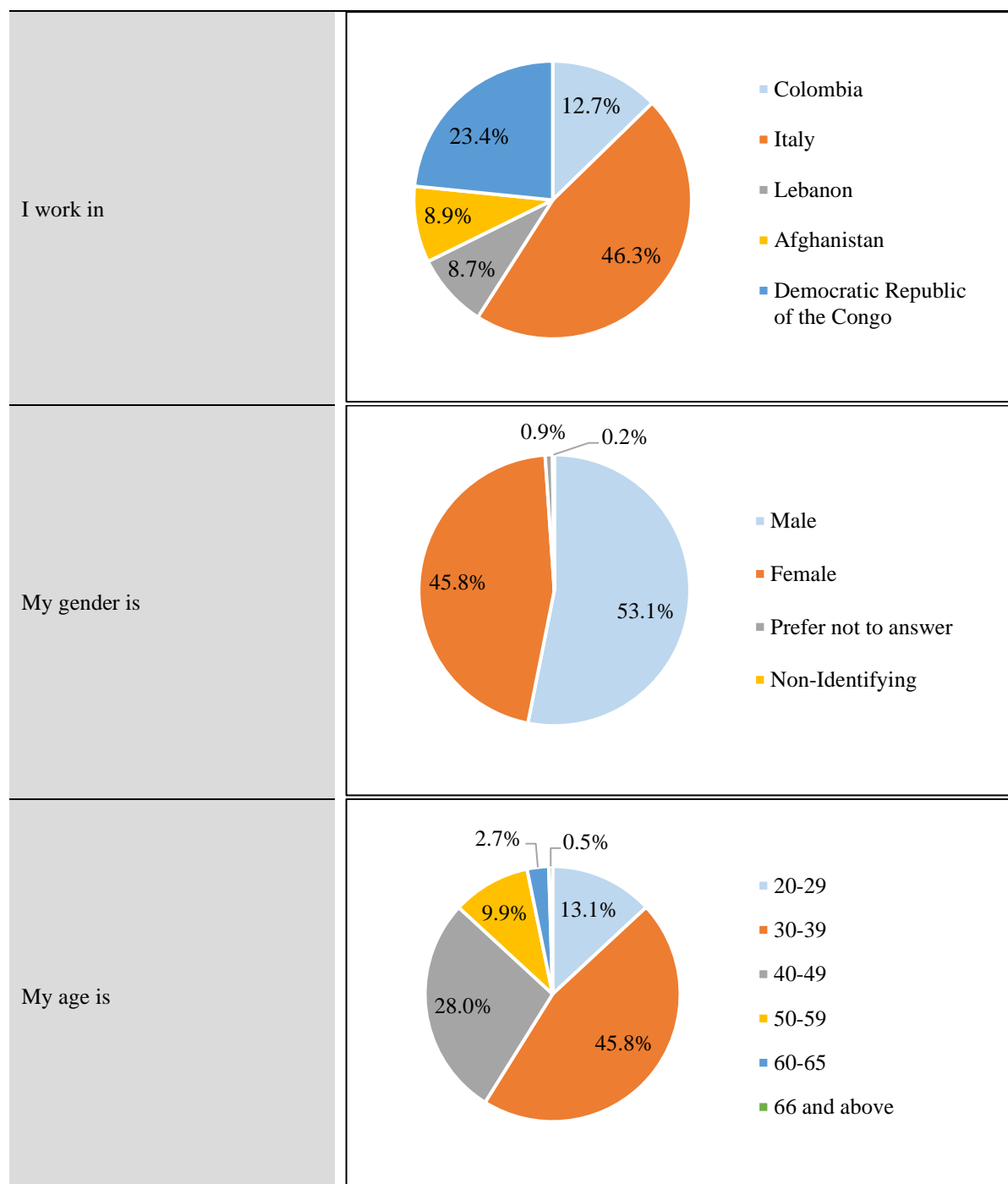
# Appendix to JIU report: Review of the use of non-staff personnel and related contractual modalities in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2023/8)

## Results of the Survey to Non-Staff Personnel

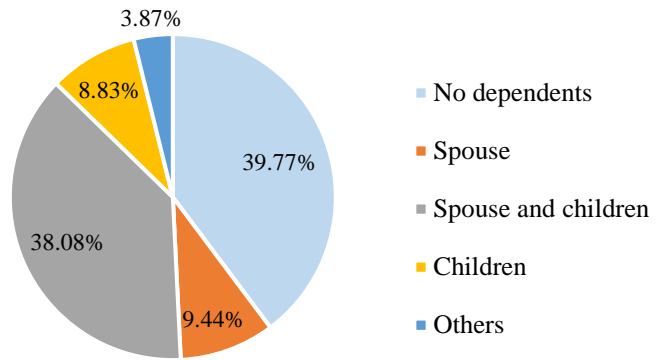
in Afghanistan, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Italy and Lebanon

An online survey was conducted by JIU from July to August 2023 to gather opinions from non-staff personnel working in five countries (one country per region), receiving 2,298 completed responses out of approximately 8,700 recipients.

### 1. Background information

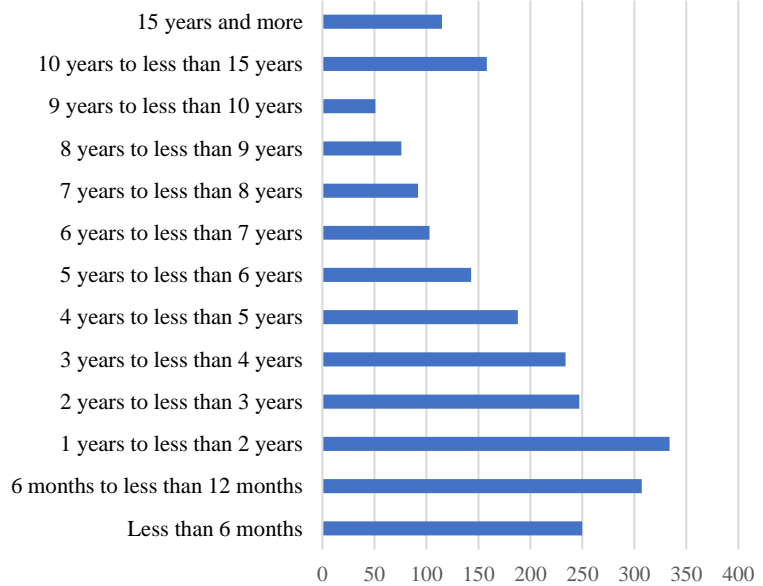


I have:  
 (1) no dependents  
 (2) a spouse  
 (3) a spouse and children  
 (4) children

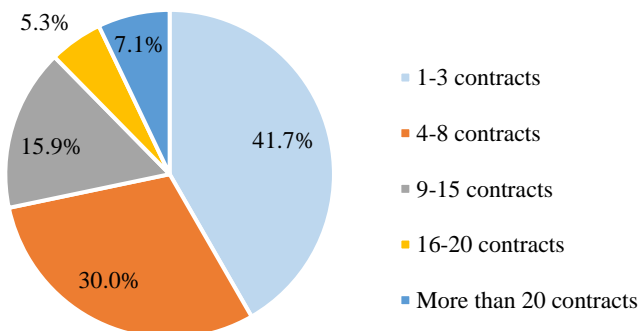


## 2. Contractual Status

The months/years of experience I have with the organization I currently work is



The total number of contracts I have had with the organization I am currently working with is

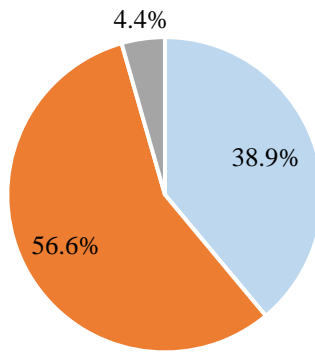


### 3. Functions and Practices

<p>The main area in which I work is</p>	<table border="1"> <caption>Data for Work Area Chart</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Work Area</th> <th>Count (Approximate)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>Data management/analysis</td><td>10</td></tr> <tr><td>Monitoring &amp; evaluation</td><td>15</td></tr> <tr><td>Legal</td><td>20</td></tr> <tr><td>Health/medical services</td><td>25</td></tr> <tr><td>Policy/strategy</td><td>30</td></tr> <tr><td>Conference related</td><td>35</td></tr> <tr><td>Technical support</td><td>40</td></tr> <tr><td>Security</td><td>45</td></tr> <tr><td>Protection/human rights</td><td>50</td></tr> <tr><td>Coordination/partnerships</td><td>55</td></tr> <tr><td>Training/workshop related</td><td>60</td></tr> <tr><td>Research &amp; analysis</td><td>65</td></tr> <tr><td>Procurement</td><td>70</td></tr> <tr><td>General administrative work</td><td>75</td></tr> <tr><td>Finance/budget</td><td>80</td></tr> <tr><td>Engineering</td><td>85</td></tr> <tr><td>Supply chain/logistics</td><td>90</td></tr> <tr><td>Human resources</td><td>100</td></tr> <tr><td>Information &amp; telecommunications</td><td>120</td></tr> <tr><td>Program &amp; operations</td><td>150</td></tr> <tr><td>Communication/public information</td><td>180</td></tr> <tr><td>Emergency response</td><td>250</td></tr> <tr><td>Project management &amp; implementation</td><td>620</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Work Area	Count (Approximate)	Data management/analysis	10	Monitoring & evaluation	15	Legal	20	Health/medical services	25	Policy/strategy	30	Conference related	35	Technical support	40	Security	45	Protection/human rights	50	Coordination/partnerships	55	Training/workshop related	60	Research & analysis	65	Procurement	70	General administrative work	75	Finance/budget	80	Engineering	85	Supply chain/logistics	90	Human resources	100	Information & telecommunications	120	Program & operations	150	Communication/public information	180	Emergency response	250	Project management & implementation	620
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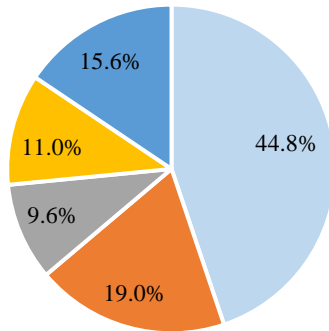


My work has a clear timeframe



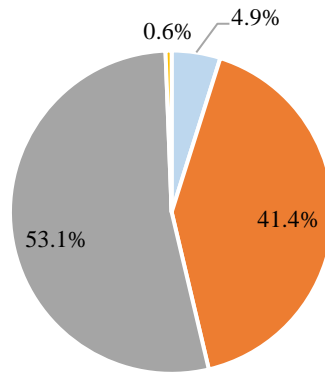
- Yes, it has a clear timeframe
- No, my work does not have a clear timeframe and it seems continuous in nature
- I don't know

During the time I have worked for the organization under multiple contracts



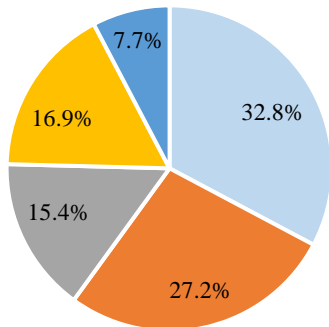
- I have done the same or similar work in the same office/unit
- I have done the same or similar work in different offices/units
- I have done different work in the same office/unit
- I have done different work in different offices/units
- I haven't had multiple contracts yet

The work I carried out in practice has been different from what was stated in my contract(s) or Terms of Reference



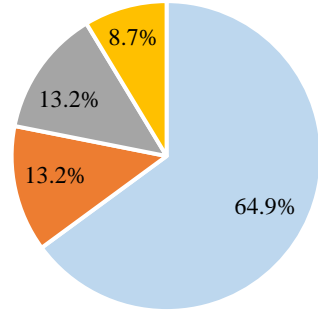
- Yes, it is totally different
- Sometimes different
- No, it is the same as stated in my contract/s or Terms of Reference
- I don't know

I am expected to work at the office or work remotely



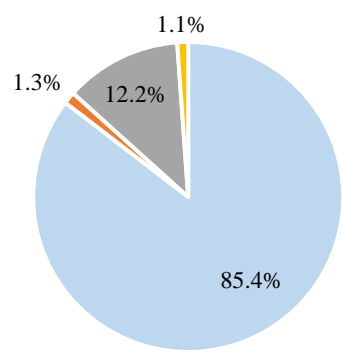
- Yes, I work full time at the office
- Yes, I work at the office 3-4 days per week
- Yes, I work at the office 1-2 days per week
- No, I work fully remotely
- Others

I have participated in training activities provided by my organization while holding a non-staff contract



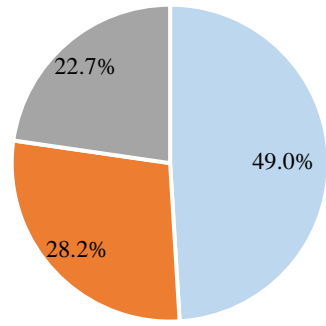
- Yes, I have participated in one or several training activity(ies)
- No, I am not allowed to participate
- I am allowed to participate, but I have not had any time to do so
- Others

I thoroughly reviewed and understood my contract prior to signing



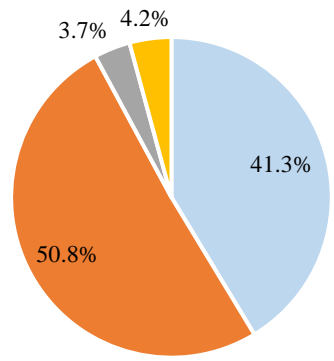
- Yes, I read through and fully understood my contract/s before signing it/them
- No, I did not read through and did not fully understand my contract/s before signing it/them
- I read through but could not fully understand my contract/s before signing it/them
- Others

I believe my contract complies with the labour laws of the country in which I work



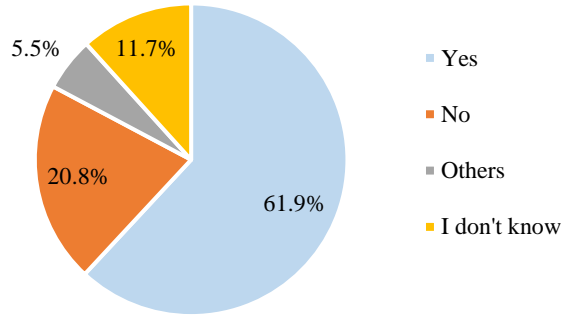
- Yes
- No
- I don't know

I am entitled to leave with pay (e.g., 1.5 days per month)

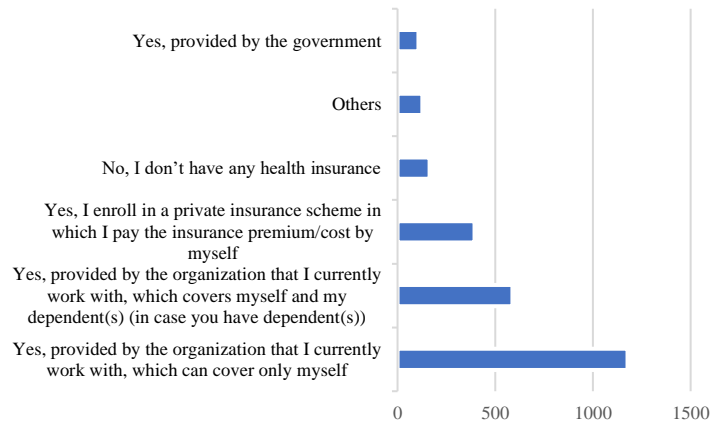


- Yes
- No
- Others
- I don't know

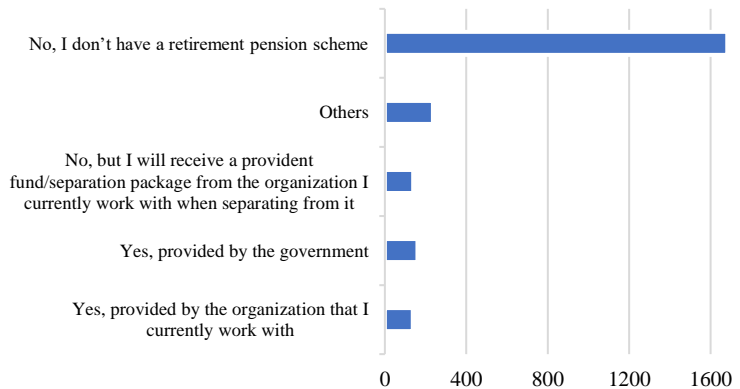
I am entitled to sick leave with pay



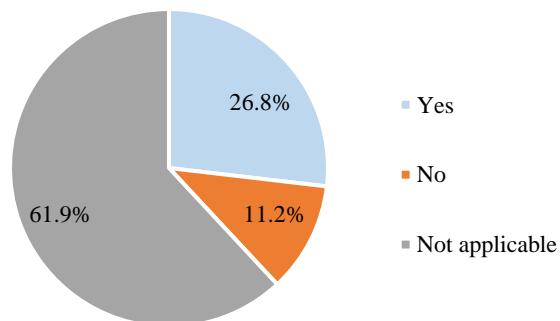
I am enrolled in health insurance scheme(s) (multiple answers)



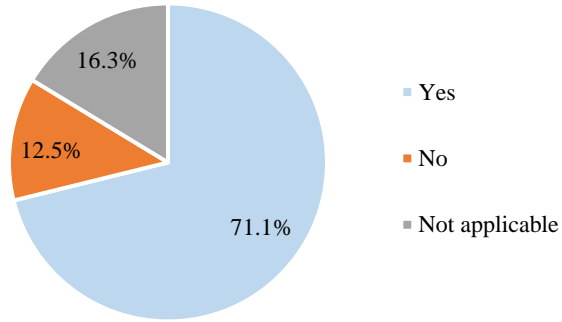
I am enrolled in a retirement pension scheme(s) (multiple answers)



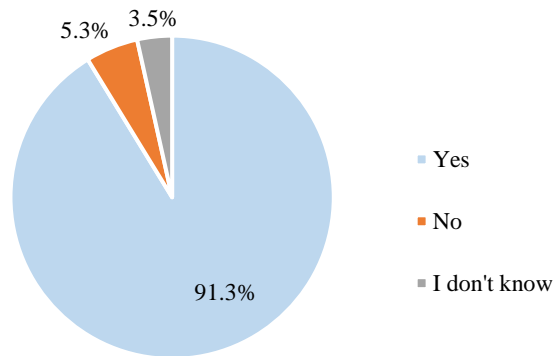
If I currently do not have a health insurance scheme, I would accept my organization offering this benefit and withholding part of my earning to fund it, hence reducing my net salary



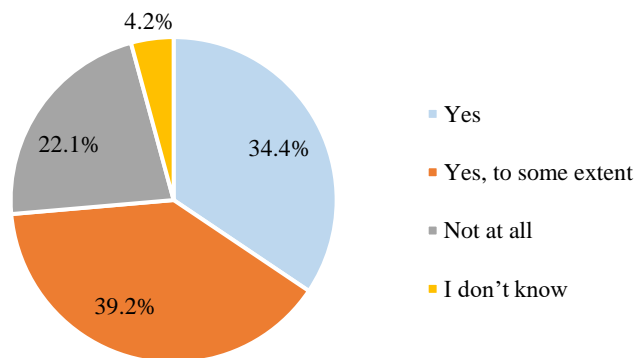
If I currently do not have a retirement pension scheme, I would accept my organization offering this benefit and withholding part of my earning to fund it, hence reducing my net salary



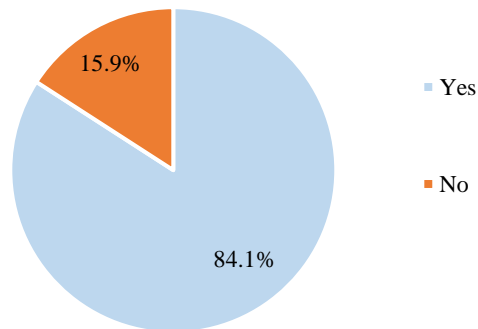
I was informed when joining my organization of any code of conduct or ethical standards applicable to me



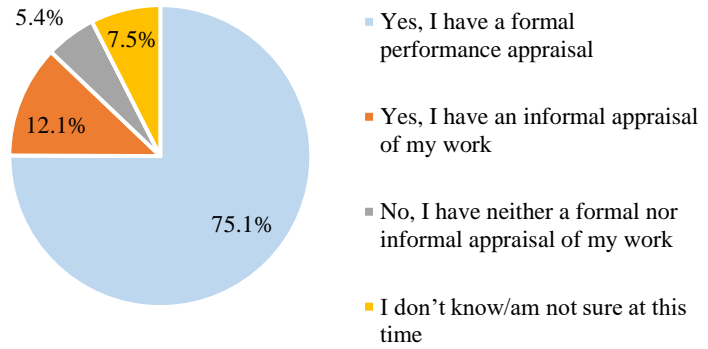
I feel that I can communicate any complaints/concerns in my workplace easily and without any fear of retaliation



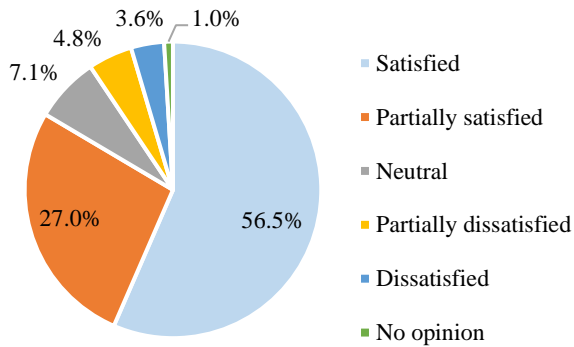
I am aware of formal or informal mechanisms to file a complaint of misconduct



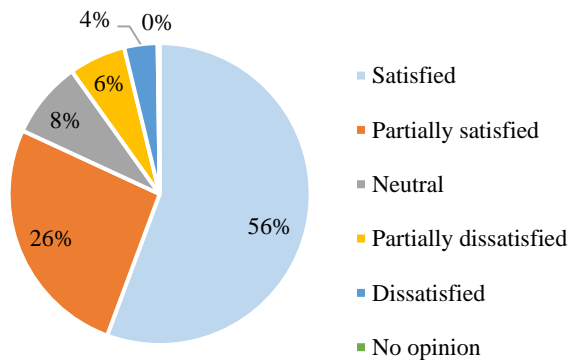
My work is formally or informally appraised



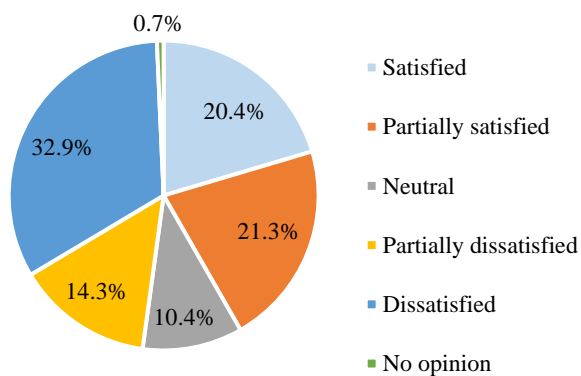
The degree of satisfaction with the work to perform included in the contract(s) I have/had is



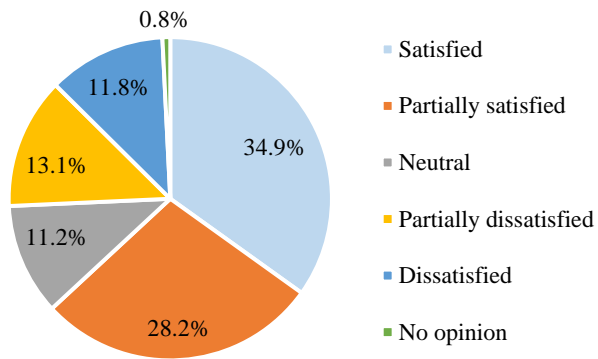
The degree of satisfaction with the clarity of job description/terms of reference included in the contract(s) I have/had is



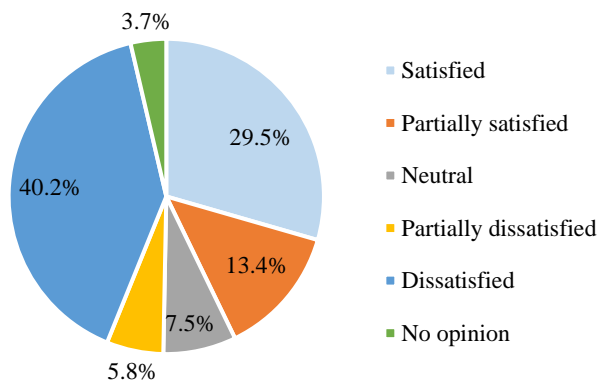
The degree of satisfaction with the duration of contracts included in the contract(s) I have/had is



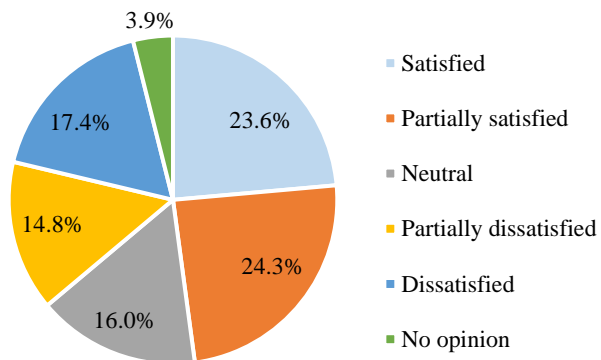
The degree of satisfaction with the salary/remuneration received included in the contract(s) I have/had is



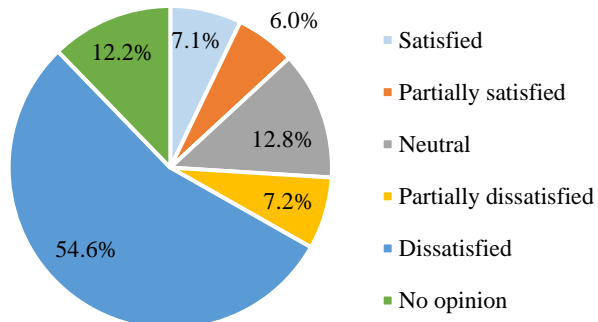
The degree of satisfaction with the leave entitlements included in the contract(s) I have/had is



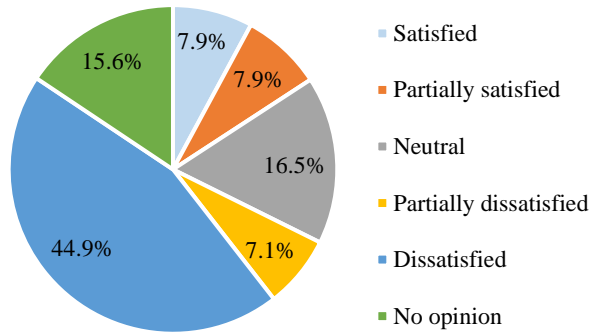
The degree of satisfaction with the health insurance options included in the contract(s) I have/had is



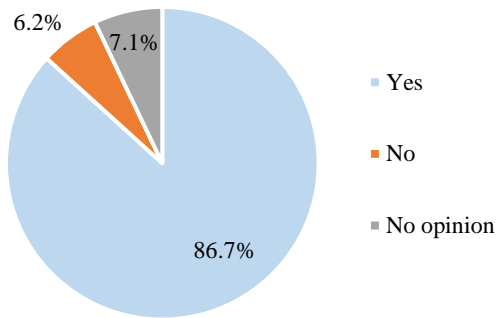
The degree of satisfaction with the pension scheme options included in the contract(s) I have/had is



The degree of satisfaction with the other social benefits included in the contract(s) I have/had is



I am committed to the organization I work for



I feel that I am valued and treated fairly by my supervisor

