

STATEMENT BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNAIDS SECRETARIAT STAFF ASSOCIATION

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INTRODUCTION

1. The UNAIDS Secretariat Staff Association's (USSA) mission is to:
 - advocate for fair, transparent, inclusive and supportive employment conditions that enable staff to make the most positive contribution to the global HIV response;
 - ensure that conditions of employment conform to commonly accepted standards established by the ILO and WHO Staff Rules and Regulations;
 - safeguard the rights and interests of members of staff; and
 - promote staff welfare and wellbeing so that all employees, and ultimately the organization, function at peak levels in contributing to national, regional and the global HIV responses.
2. The USSA represents the rights and interests of the 738 staff around the world, of whom over 70% were dues-paying members of the Staff Association, as of April 2021.
3. The USSA is governed by a Constitution, which has been ratified by all dues-paying members and it has an elected Executive Committee. The Executive Committee strives to maintain an open and constructive dialogue with the Senior Management Team on key issues affecting staff. The USSA's discussions with Management are guided by principles laid out in the *Agreement on Cooperation* between the UNAIDS administration and the USSA, which was formalized and signed with Management in 2010. This agreement commits Senior Management and the USSA to engage mutually and meaningfully in a timely and constructive manner on all issues affecting staff; to communicate openly, honestly and regularly; and to apply good faith in resolving issues.
4. As per the USSA Constitution, the Staff Association Executive Committee has 15 members. They are elected by all dues-paying members through an annual election process. Seven are Geneva-based and eight are in the field. The executive positions on the USSA Executive Committee are democratically elected by the 15 staff representatives. Since May 2021, both the Chair and the vice-Chair are, for the first time, field-based.
5. The USSA has reported annually to the Programme Coordinating Board since June 2004; it reported on an exceptional basis during the 47th meeting of the PCB in December 2020.
6. This report highlights key developments since the USSA's previous report to the PCB in December 2020, as well as the results of the annual USSA staff survey, which was completed in May 2021 and covers the period May 2020 through April 2021.
7. An oral statement to the Board will complement this report.

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE USSA AND MANAGEMENT

8. The USSA has continued to have robust exchanges and discussions, both in public and in private, with the Executive Director and senior management. We take this opportunity to thank the UNAIDS Senior Leadership for their engagement and collaboration with the Staff Association since USSA's previous report to the PCB. The Staff Association looks forward to continuing, improving and strengthening the cooperation and collaboration between the USSA and Management in 2021 and 2022.

9. The USSA will continue to represent staff concerns directly and clearly, and will continue to present the issues and concerns that staff communicate to the USSA through various mediums and channels. The USSA will also work with senior management in a constructive and solutions-oriented manner to the degree that this is possible.
10. In our interactions with the Executive Director and other senior managers in recent months, the USSA has underscored the importance of ensuring a stable and dignified work environment with minimum negative impact on staff as the organization moves into the more challenging and, for staff, alarming phase of the alignment process in the weeks and months ahead.
11. During the coming transition period, the Staff Association has prioritized issues concerning staff in its work plan related to the alignment.
12. The USSA will be making use of all opportunities over the coming year to work with UNAIDS management to strengthen a supportive working environment, which:
 - **ensures fair and equal employment conditions for all**, whether full-time, temporary or consultant staff, **consistent with UNAIDS rules and regulations**;
 - **is focused on the organization's duty-of-care to staff physical and mental well-being**, especially during the upcoming change and alignment processes;
 - **guarantees transparent, fair, consistent and accountable human resources management processes**;
 - **provides timely and accurate information on organizational changes underway**, making clear the logic and rationale for change;
 - **makes staffing decisions in the best interests of the HIV response through competency-based staffing selection, which also recognizes the importance of diversity** in the workforce;
 - **actively prevents all forms of incivility, harassment, sexual harassment or abuse of authority, and takes swift action** when such events occur; and
 - **promotes the development of staff capacities** that can maximize the organization's positive impact on the global AIDS response.
13. The Staff Association recognizes and welcomes a number of specific products developed jointly with Management and various staff working groups and committees over the past year through collaboration, inclusion and consultation, including (but not limited to):
 - development of the new UNAIDS policy on *Preventing and Addressing Abusive Conduct: Policy and Procedures Concerning Harassment, Sexual Harassment, Discrimination, and Abuse of Authority*;
 - development, translation, and dissemination of the *Know Your Staff Health Insurance (SHI)* brief which helps ensure that staff, retirees, and their dependents have easy access to important information to facilitate access to timely and quality care, in addition to resources in case of questions/need for further support; and
 - first-of-its-kind all-staff webinars on SHI in collaboration with SHI colleagues

DECISION POINT FROM 47TH PCB MEETING

14. The USSA notes Decision Point 11.2 from the 47th PCB meeting, which requested the Executive Director to "take note of concerns raised by Secretariat staff and to take swift actions as appropriate, reporting back on progress to the 48th PCB through the update

on strategic human resources management issues including an update on the implementation of the Management Action Plan”.

15. At the time of writing this report, the USSA has not had access to the Executive Director’s Report for the 48th PCB meeting. It address issues arising from the Executive Director’s report and Management Update during its oral statement to the PCB.
16. The USSA notes that the Decision Point put the task of addressing the issues of abusive behaviour, harassment, incivility and abuse of authority—raised by USSA in the 47th PCB meeting and clearly indicated in the global staff survey (in which, of the 113 cases reported, 61% reported that the perpetrator was a *senior* manager or director)—to the Executive Director.
17. The USSA notes that management subsequently devolved the task of addressing these issues to the Senior Leadership Team, departments and directors, and requested that teams hold discussions and develop healthy workplace codes of conduct. Senior leaders also discussed the issues at Cabinet level, and individual Cabinet members produced personal commitment statements based on their own reflections and understandings of the abusive behaviour staff have experienced and the lack of staff trust in management, identified in the general staff survey. The USSA commends these positive initiatives, but notes that it remains unclear to the majority of staff how their specific concerns will be heard and addressed, and how the lack of trust in management they have expressed through the survey will be reversed. To date, the actions taken have not, according to USSA staff survey findings (described in subsequent sections of this report), resulted in a clear perception of positive change or of increased trust.
18. The USSA staff survey feedback indicates that staff continue to feel that there has been a lack of clear and consistent messaging on the processes underway to resolve the issues raised at the 47th PCB. They continue, six months later, to express very low levels of trust in management. The USSA survey data showed that *only 8% of respondents fully agree* that Senior Leadership leads by example with regards to creating an equal, safe and empowering workplace.
19. Six months after management’s global staff survey, the USSA survey found that 149 respondents (31%) had experienced at least one event in the workplace which left them feeling humiliated, offended or intimidated, often by a senior manager. This is higher than was identified in the general staff survey (113 people reporting such behaviours). These findings remain at extremely concerning levels.

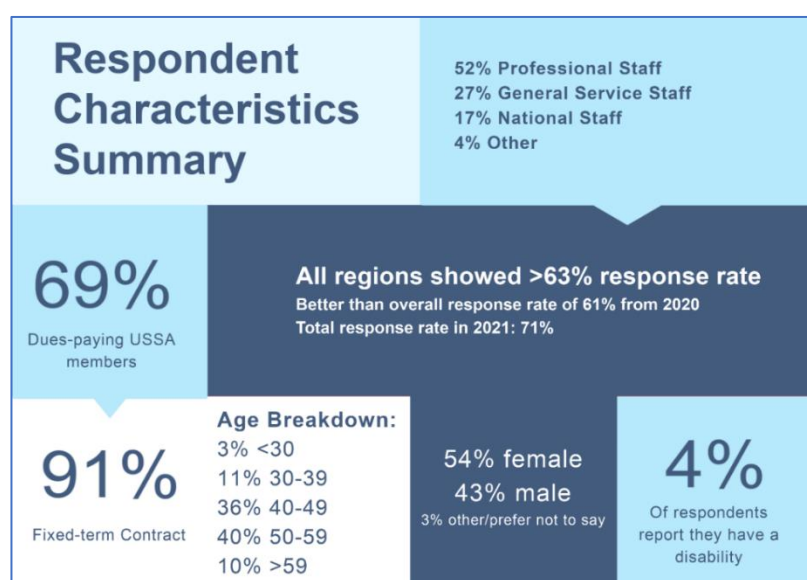
THE 2021 USSA STAFF SURVEY

20. In order to receive feedback from staff on their well-being and concerns, and to guide priorities and workplan of the USSA, the Staff Association has conducted an annual staff survey for eight years running (since 2013). The survey consistently has had some of the highest response rates for staff surveys in the UN system, according to the Federation of International Civil Servant Associations. Over these years, the Staff Association has amassed a wealth of data and trends analysis on issues affecting staff.
21. During the development of management’s global staff survey in 2020, the USSA provided seven years of data to assist in the development of management’s survey tool, as it had previously done to inform the development of the Management Action Plan.
22. The USSA also had a number of detailed discussions with the Human Resources Management Department during the development of the global staff survey. As a result,

it modified the USSA survey tool, which was rolled out in May 2021, eliminating sections which duplicated questions in the global staff survey, adding new topics not covered in the global staff survey, and integrating management feedback into specific sections of the USSA survey.

23. The USSA noted management's concerns about potential confusion for staff in being asked to complete both a management and an independent annual survey, spaced six months apart, and about the possibility of creating "survey fatigue". As a result, the USSA carefully considered a proposal from management to combine the USSA survey with the global staff survey.
24. Following extensive discussion and advice from independent experts on staff satisfaction survey development and use, the USSA concluded that there is significant benefit in maintaining an independent staff survey, and that it is in keeping with good practice recommendations and in the best interests of USSA's membership to continue an annual independent staff survey. Staff also told USSA that they value the fact that the USSA survey is staff-developed, -owned and -delivered.
25. The USSA appreciates management's extensive question-by-question review of the USSA survey tool, which provides good analysis and will help strengthen the USSA survey tool for 2022. This exercise will also assist the complementarity of survey tools.
26. The next section provides an overview of key findings from the 2021 USSA staff survey and highlights some significant personal, professional, organizational and HIV response concerns from staff.
27. The survey covered the period from May 2020 through April 2021, and was conducted between April and May 2021. The survey had a 71% response rate, one of the highest response rates the independent USSA annual survey has achieved in its eight-year history. Given COVID-19's impact on staff, their personal situations and working modalities, the alignment process, the culture-change initiative, and other processes underway at the same time, this high response rate further confirms for the USSA the importance of providing an annual independent assessment.
28. Response rates, including from Geneva, regions and countries, ranged from nearly 100% of staff in one region, to 63% in another. Overall, 69% of respondents were based in Country, Regional and Liaison Offices, and 31% were based in Geneva (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Respondent characteristics from the USSA staff survey, 2021



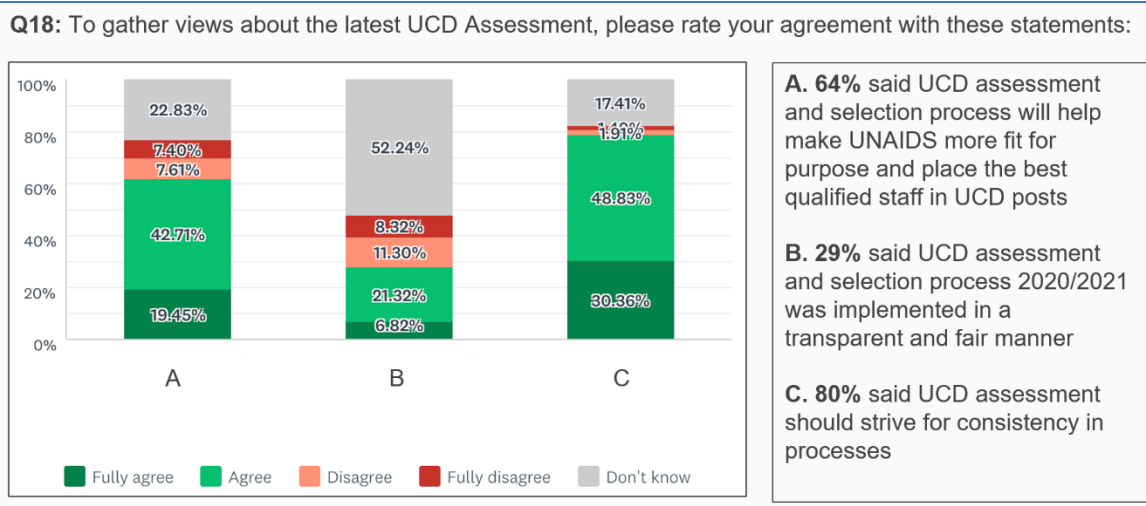
29. The 2021 USSA staff survey found that the priority issues of concern to staff are:
- the realignment process;
 - job security;
 - transparency and fairness;
 - work-life balance;
 - mobility; and
 - the Staff Health Insurance, including eligibility for retirees, disabled staff, or those staff whose positions have been or will be abolished.
30. The USSA annual staff survey is also used to assess the Staff Association's performance and as a planning tool. The 2021 survey found that staff believe the USSA should focus on continuing and strengthening its advocacy and engagement on issues related to fairness and transparency in the alignment process, promoting career development initiatives (including initiatives to support staff who may be displaced by the alignment process, especially our national and G staff colleagues), and the organization's duty-of-care to all staff.

UNAIDS ALIGNMENT EXERCISE PROCESS AND IMPLEMENTATION, AND UCD SELECTION

31. Responses from the USSA annual staff survey on the alignment were varied. Overall, 51% of respondents agree that the alignment process is being done transparently, and 65% of respondents outside Geneva agreed that there has been adequate consideration of risks to staff and dependents' health and well-being in the alignment process arising from COVID-19 to date.
32. Fully 48% of respondents indicated, however, that they did not know if they would be treated fairly if their position is changed or abolished in the alignment; 69% of respondents expressed concern about the timeline of the alignment process; and 73% expressed concern about adequate integration of feedback which staff have provided in the overall alignment process.
33. In terms of UNAIDS Country Direction (UCD) assessment, most respondents (64%) agreed that the assessment will improve UNAIDS and place the best-qualified staff in UCD posts (see Figure 2). However, 29% of respondents believed that improvements are needed to ensure greater transparency and fairness, and that the UCD assessment should strive for consistency in processes (80%), now that the UCD assessment process has been piloted and implemented.
34. The USSA is concerned that the current UCD recruitment process (which was underway in March–April 2021) was paused in May 2021 following completion of interviews and placement discussions. Affected applicants were notified that the halt was due to the ongoing alignment process and uncertainties related to the organization's financial health. No guidance has been provided on exactly when the more than 20 applicants may learn the results of the UCD recruitment process or how the process will be affected by the alignment. This has left the affected staff members unable to make personal and family decisions on matters such as school enrollments for their children, accommodation lease extensions, and other matters with personal and financial implications, and it has fueled the corridor chatter that a transparent and professionalized recruitment process will be overturned.
35. The USSA repeatedly raised staff concerns in 2020 on the wisdom of undertaking a full UCD assignment process with an alignment underway, and with COVID-19 impacting the potential to move a large number of staff to new duty stations. The USSA further

notes its concern at the significant time invested by the organization and by some of its most senior managers in a process that has left key positions unfilled and staff unhappy, and which has reinforced lack of trust and transparency concerns for staff.

Figure 2. Sample of staff responses regarding the UCD assessment process, USSA staff survey 2021



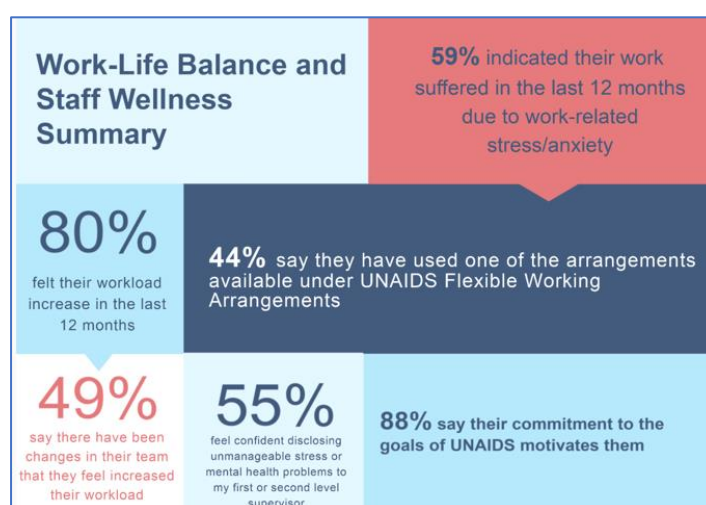
36. During the week of 17 May 2021, and as a result of increasing expressions of concern from staff, the Staff Association launched a pulse survey which asked staff to express in a single word how they were feeling about the alignment process. The full word cloud image is shown below (Figure 3).
37. Forty-one per cent of staff globally responded over the course of the three days of the survey. A total of 29 responses (8% of respondents) used positive language (including words such as *hopeful*, *optimistic*, *confident*, *transparent*, *excited* and *happy*); 279 staff members (92% of the respondents), however, expressed negative feelings (*anxious*, *worried*, *uncertain*, *stressed*, *confused*, *frustrated*, *fearful*, *insecure*, *overwhelmed*, *distrustful*, and more). These results, albeit impressionistic, are consistent with the findings of the USSA staff survey results on the alignment process, outlined above.

Figure 3: Staff opinions of the UNAIDS Secretariat alignment process, USSA staff pulse survey, May 2021



38. The USSA staff survey and feedback continue to tell the USSA that staff members are feeling weighed down; stressed by the personal impacts of living and working through more than a year of the COVID-19 pandemic; struggling to undertake normal work duties, while engaging in the multiple strands of the organizational culture-change process; an intense alignment process; and the development of the new Global AIDS Strategy. Added to those pressures, staff have managed to build momentum and engagement for the High-Level Meeting on AIDS, while fearing that they may not have a position in UNAIDS by the end of the year as a result of the alignment. These anxieties were heightened after the recent "townhall" announcement of donor cuts to UNAIDS.
39. As Figure 4 shows, work-life balance issues (discussed in more detail later in this report) remain a key issue: 80% of respondents reported through the USSA survey that their workloads have increased in the past 12 months, and nearly 60% reported that their performances were affected by work-related stress and anxiety.

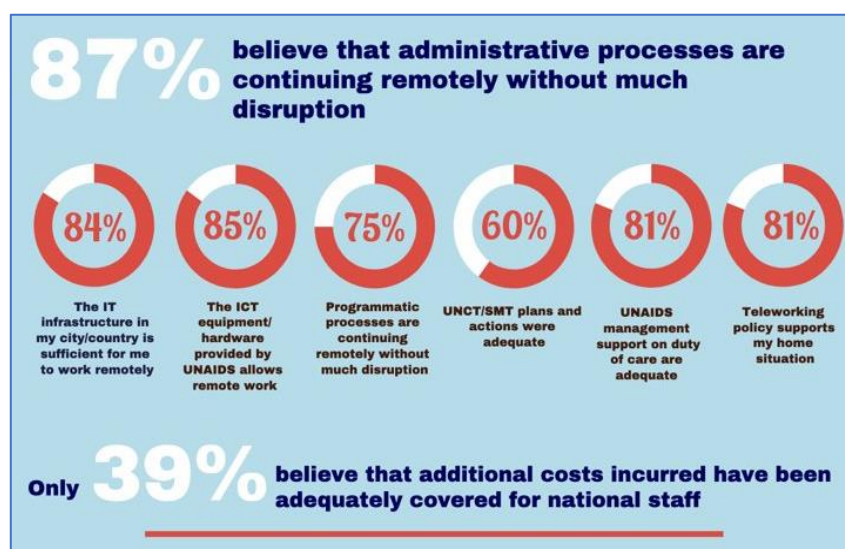
Figure 4: Staff work-life balance concerns, USSA staff survey, 2021



UNAIDS AND THE MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO COVID-19 IMPACT ON STAFF

40. Staff continue to express general satisfaction with management's business continuity efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Staff opinions regarding business continuity during COVID-19, USSA staff survey 2021



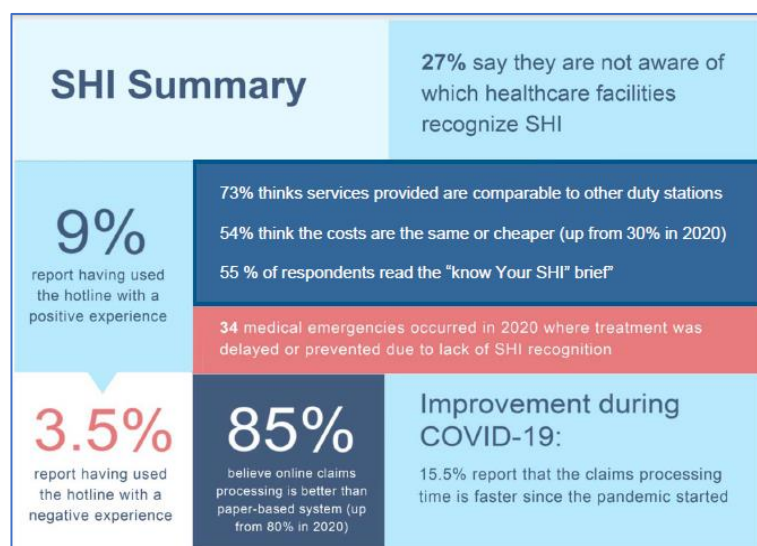
41. The 2021 USSA staff survey repeated questions about COVID-19 to learn how staff are coping with the impact of the pandemic on their performance and well-being. The vast majority of staff expressed satisfaction with management's efforts to ensure their safety and that of their dependents, and in exercising the organization's duty-of-care. Most respondents reported high satisfaction on all questions related to COVID-19 and emergency preparedness.
42. However, it is clear that the COVID-19 pandemic continues to present challenges to UNAIDS staff around the world, as the pandemic enters second and third waves in various countries and access to vaccines remains uneven and inadequate. Staff survey comments and feedback indicate that the inequalities in accessing vaccinations between and among staff in different duty stations has added to stress and anxiety levels, and has affected mental well-being at a time when the organization is undergoing change and transition and while staff have to function at peak levels. On 12 June, we received the sad news that our colleague Manuel da Quinta passed away from Covid-19 related illness in Buenos Aires, his duty station. Unfortunately, Manuel was diagnosed with Covid-19 one day before his scheduled appointment to receive his first vaccine shot. His death has made the issue of inequalities in accessing Covid-19 vaccines painfully real for all UNAIDS staff, with many staff and dependents in country and regional offices outside Geneva, Brussels, Washington D.C., and New York that have not yet been vaccinated. The USSA will initiate a rapid assessment of vaccine access among UNAIDS staff and their dependents and proposes to work with Management on a follow-up plan to ensure that all staff and dependents that are eligible receive Covid-19 vaccines as early as possible - prioritizing those who have pre-existing conditions (including HIV) that puts them at higher vulnerability to severe illness from Covid-19.
43. Staff expressed confidence that management has continued to ensure business continuity while allowing for flexible working arrangements so that staff can care for their own health and safety and that of their families. Comments submitted by survey respondents credited these good results to Geneva, as well as to the Regional Support Teams and Country Offices, which quickly mobilized to respond to the rapidly escalating emergency.
44. Nearly all respondents who answered questions about COVID-19 felt they had the required knowledge to use the tools UNAIDS provided for working remotely, and 81% of respondents said that UNAIDS' teleworking policy has supported them in dealing with their personal and family situations.
45. Eighty-five per cent (up from 80% the previous year) of survey respondents reported that the equipment and hardware provided by UNAIDS allowed them to work remotely and that the IT infrastructure in their duty stations was largely sufficient for remote work. In addition, 87% (up from 84% the previous year) felt that administrative processes in UNAIDS—including human resources, procurement, travel and payments—continued remotely without undue disruption; and 75% (a slight drop from 78% in 2019) felt that core HIV response business has been continuing, even during the use of remote-working modalities and without significant disruption.
46. More than a year into the COVID-19 pandemic, respondents also shared how teleworking has impacted the work, physical and mental health, and overall well-being. Responses included both positive and negative aspects, such as "teleworking has impacted my work positively, I have more time to spend with my family"; "I work longer hours"; "managing teleworking with children's learning from home is not easy"; "I often feel overwhelmed when I have to participate in several virtual meetings in a day. It increases stress."

47. Staff communicated that there is still room for improvement, with 61% of respondents noting that personal costs incurred from remote working modalities have not been adequately covered by the organization for national (both N and G) staff.
48. The Staff Association looks forward to working with management to take stock of the lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic response—including the move to alternative working and convening modalities, and how more extensive use of such modalities will affect staff well-being while facilitating cost-savings for UNAIDS.
49. We draw attention to the issues around duty-of-care, which the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted, and will work with management to continue to advocate for better access to medical evacuation services for both international and national staff with severe medical conditions, whether resulting from COVID-19 or other life-threatening medical conditions.
50. The addition of a second Staff Counsellor for Well-being and Mental Health has been welcomed as a significant support for staff, and 81% of respondents stated that UNAIDS Management's support on duty-of-care specifically related to COVID-19 is adequate.

STAFF HEALTH INSURANCE

51. SHI issues remain high priorities for staff, retirees and their dependents, with survey respondents identifying it as one of the top four priority issues. Specifically, staff continue to be concerned about access to quality care, reimbursement time, and support for staff and their families living with chronic illnesses.
52. COVID-19 has spotlighted the challenges staff have in accessing health services, which are an essential element of the organization's overall duty-of-care for staff, their families and retirees, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic and through extended periods of pandemic lock-down and social distancing.
53. COVID-19 has made clear the urgent need to ensure that staff have access to facilities in their duty stations that recognize SHI. Twenty-seven percent of survey respondents did not know whether there are SHI-recognized facilities in their duty stations. Even when SHI is recognized, 13% of staff have had difficulty accessing care at SHI-recognized providers (consistent with 2019 survey results); 4.5% said that the access to care they needed was COVID-19-related. Recognition of SHI was consistently rated "poor" or "very poor" in previous years (43% in 2019, for example).

Figure 6: Staff responses regarding Staff Health Insurance, USSA staff survey, 2021



54. There are currently over 400 existing agreements with health-care providers worldwide. The USSA is delighted that SHI has also just launched an additional network of 6,000 health-care providers in Africa and the Middle East.
55. The expansion of the service provider network is critical, and SHI recognition is especially important during times of crisis. Survey respondents reported 34 medical emergencies (10 of them COVID-19 emergencies) in the past 12 months where treatment was delayed or prevented due to lack of SHI recognition (up from 27 in 2019).
56. The survey also found that 31% of respondents (or a recognized dependent) are living with a chronic illness. Among them, 54% reported that up-front, out-of-pocket expenses for treatment, diagnostics or care affected their ability to access or stay on necessary treatment. Forty-eight percent of respondents said that the requirement that staff co-share 20% of medical expenses represents a significant financial burden; 8% reported that particular medications (for example, ARVs) were not available in their duty station; and 12% reported absence of direct payment (when cost is above 15% of a staff member's salary) for medicines or treatment.
57. Fifteen percent of survey respondents stated that the claims-processing times were faster than when the COVID-19 pandemic began, while 35% said processing times had not changed. Fully 86% reported that the online SHI claims processing is better than the paper-based system it replaced (up from 80% in 2020).

TRANSPARENCY AND FAIRNESS

58. The Management Action Plan specified the need to review and redesign the staff mobility policy, the organization's recruitment and workforce planning processes, and its career development modalities, including for national and G staff. The USSA looks forward to assisting in these policy revisions following the alignment.
59. At the June 2019 PCB, the USSA stressed that the organization's recruitment, promotion and mobility policies and practices are perceived by staff as lacking transparency, fairness and as enabling favoritism. Comments appended to the USSA staff survey indicate that perceptions remain unchanged. The USSA renews its call for any review or revision of fundamental human resources processes to be transparent and fully consultative, and for staff representation to be included in the review and development processes.
60. The USSA is pleased to have provided input on a number of issues of concern to staff in support of management action. To cite a few examples:
 - the USSA provided detailed reviews of the draft and final Alignment Implementation Guidelines, and independently developed a more user-friendly guide for staff; and
 - the USSA participated throughout the Alignment process, through the Alignment Task Team, the Senior Leadership Team and other mechanisms.
61. The USSA will continue to support management in ensuring that all staffing and other decisions are taken fairly, equitably, honestly and transparently, without patronage or favoritism. The USSA's position is clear that increasing transparency and the consistent application of rules are critical, not only for helping ensure accountability, but for helping build trust among staff that these processes are and will be fair.
62. The USSA has received a number of complaints from staff since our previous report to the PCB regarding external recruitments in the period leading up to an alignment which could displace a number of existing staff. External recruitments are occurring despite

other processes being suspended, such as UCD recruitment and reclassification and grading review process.

63. The USSA has also received a considerable number of expressions of concern regarding the number of consultancies contracted to individuals from international civil society organizations to work on initiatives through the Executive Office, despite the existing presence of skilled and experienced staff inside the organization. Such practices continue to fuel negative perceptions about transparency and fairness.
64. The USSA notes with appreciation the change in the policy which allows national staff to apply for international positions and the creation of short-term development assignments as initiatives that will contribute to skills development and career advancement.

INCIVILITY, DISCRIMINATION, ABUSE OF AUTHORITY, HARASSMENT AND OTHER MISCONDUCT

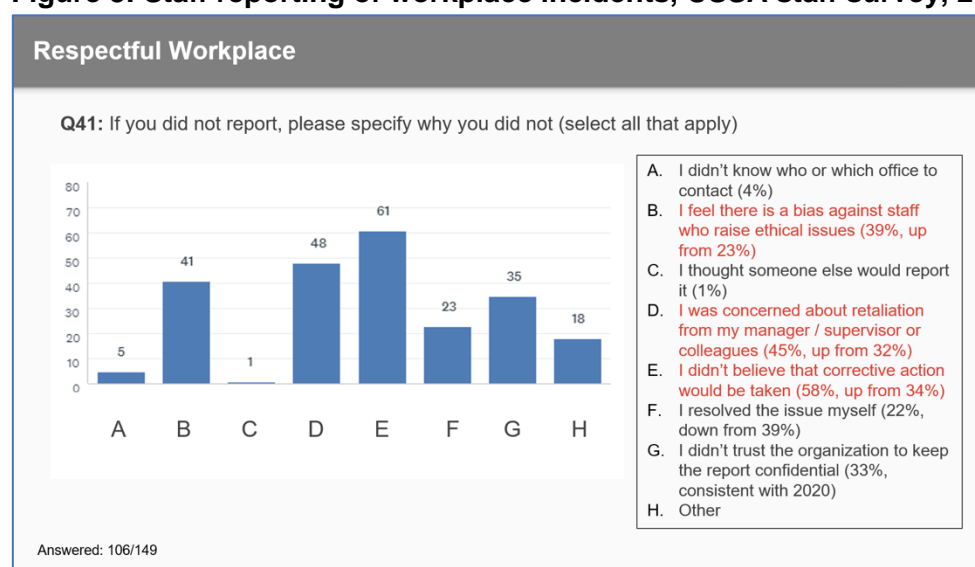
65. Following the launch of the UNAIDS policy addressing harassment, including sexual harassment, discrimination and abuse of authority in 2020, 31% of respondents (down from 43% in 2020) indicated that they had experienced incidents in the workplace which left them feeling offended, humiliated, or intimidated. However, only 26% of those who experienced such incidents reported them. Staff also responded specifically to whether they had experienced discrimination (58 respondents); abuse of authority (85 respondents); sexual harassment (3 respondents); incivility/ill treatment (78 respondents); and harassment (45 respondents).
66. Of the staff who reported incidents, 60% (down from 68% in 2020) did so to a supervisor and 38% did so to the USSA. While the absolute number of people who reported experiencing one or more incidents was 149 (down from 186 in 2020 and 229 in 2019), this is still far from our goal of a respectful workplace where staff do not experience incivility, discrimination, abuse of authority, harassment or other misconduct.

Figure 7: Staff responses regarding a respectful workplace, USSA staff survey, 2021



67. The USSA repeats its call for management to apply a zero-tolerance approach to incivility, intervene quickly when receiving complaints, and strengthen the engagement of the Dignity-at-Work Advisers, the Gender Action Plan Challenge Group, UN Plus, Young UN, UN Globe, and the Diversity Task Force as potentially critical contributors to ensuring that UNAIDS provides a safe environment for all staff.
68. The USSA recognizes the efforts of management in addressing sexual harassment over the past year. During the past 12 months, three incidents of sexual harassment were reported via the USSA staff survey, compared to ten in 2019. The USSA congratulates management for this excellent result and continues to call for zero tolerance for all forms of harassment, including sexual harassment, in the workplace.

Figure 8: Staff reporting of workplace incidents, USSA staff survey, 2021

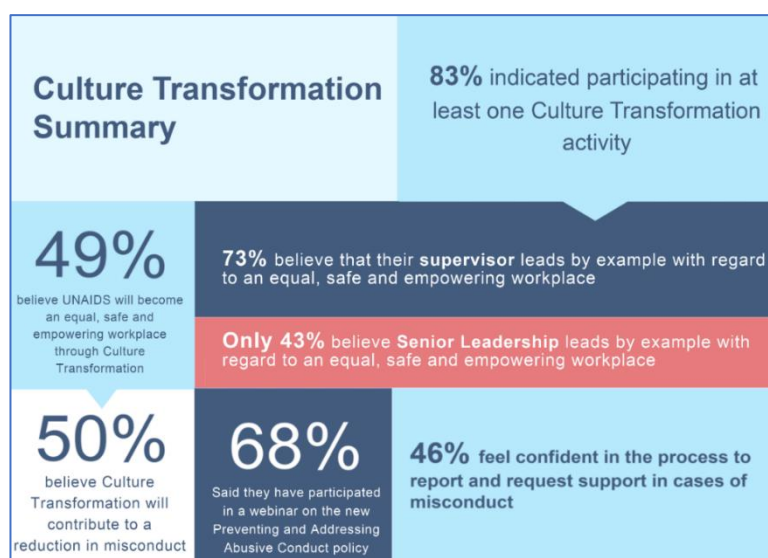


69. Among respondents who did not report workplace incidents, an increasing number expressed the following kinds of concerns:
- “I feel there is a bias against staff who raise ethical issues” (39%, up from 23%);
 - “I was concerned about retaliation from my manager/supervisor or colleagues” (45%, up from 32%), and
 - “I didn’t believe that corrective action would be taken” (58%, up from 34%).
70. It should be noted that, following the release of the global staff survey results in early 2021, the USSA offered assistance to management via a letter to the Executive Director, as follows:
- We propose that you [EXD] and Cabinet meet with the USSA Executive Committee as soon as possible, as Cabinet develops its action plan. Particular issues that the USSA would like to discuss at this meeting include: how the issues which staff bring to the USSA contextualize the [management] survey results; concrete actions that can address the lack of confidence that staff have in senior leadership; what the results mean for alignment, as this process is underway and a source of anxiety for staff; and ensuring that staff in departments / teams / regions with particularly negative results feel safe to continue to express their views.”*
71. At the time of writing this report, the USSA has received no response to its offers of assistance. The offers were repeated in discussions with senior management in late May 2021.

72. The USSA also remains concerned that discrimination persists at UNAIDS. We note with particular concern that the staff survey shows that 58 people indicated that they had experienced discrimination in the workplace (an increase from 54 people reporting in 2020). The USSA appreciates Management's engagements with UN Plus and the Staff Association, while also investing in programmes that sensitize staff on the core issues which UNAIDS champions.
73. Advancing gender equality is integral in reaching zero discrimination. This year's survey shows that there has been progress in addressing discrimination related to gender and gender identity (20% of survey respondents in 2020 reported at least one incident of discrimination based on gender, and 12% did so in 2021). The USSA supports the full implementation of the Gender Action Plan to 2023, along with the Secretariat's plan to implement a gender-action learning programme. The Staff Association will continue to work with management and the Gender Action Plan Challenge Group towards achieving a gender-equal and equitable workplace.

Trends in Misconduct		
Changes in Survey Questions and Responses, 2020-2021		
	2020	2021
Discrimination	54	58
Abuse of authority	64	85
Sexual harassment	3	3
Incivility	186	78 indicated "Ill Treatment", not comparable
Harassment	Only witnessing harassment measured	45

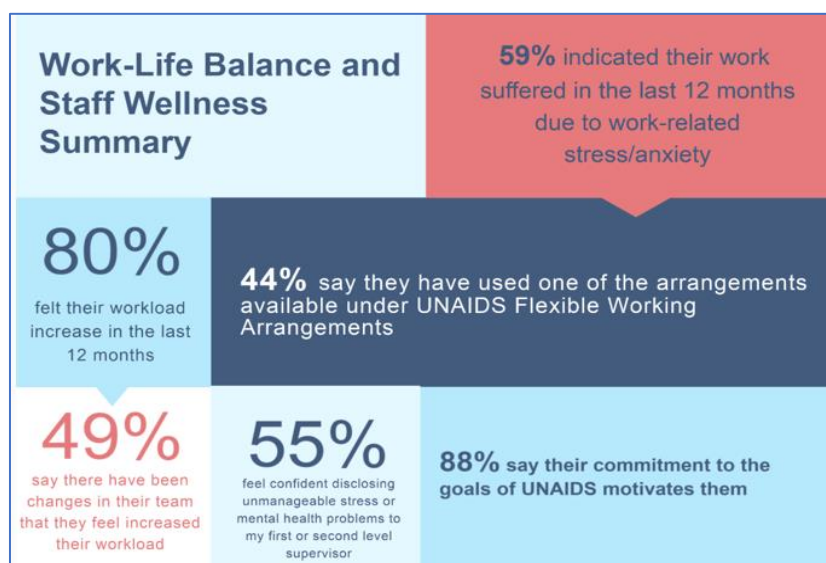
74. The USSA survey results show that there has been an increase in the number of staff witnessing or experiencing incidents of abuse of authority (83 people reported this in 2021, and 64 people did so in 2020). We urge management to provide refresher courses for existing UCDs, RST Directors and all other managers (including our most senior managers) to refresh their understanding of their responsibilities in ensuring a workplace free of harassment, bullying, abuse of authority and misconduct.
75. The USSA applauds the efforts of the Culture Transformation team and staff who fully engaged in these change activities. Eighty-three percent of respondents stated they had participated in at least one Culture Transformation activity (Figure 9). Respondents also stated that they believe UNAIDS will become an equal, safe and empowering workplace through Culture Transformation (49%) and that it will contribute to a reduction in misconduct (50%). However, respondents appear to have a more favorable opinion of supervisors than senior leadership with regards to leading by example and creating a safe, equal, and empowering workplace (73% of survey respondents felt that their immediate supervisor lead by example, but only 43% felt that senior managers do so).

Figure 9: Staff perceptions of Culture Transformation, USSA staff survey, 2021

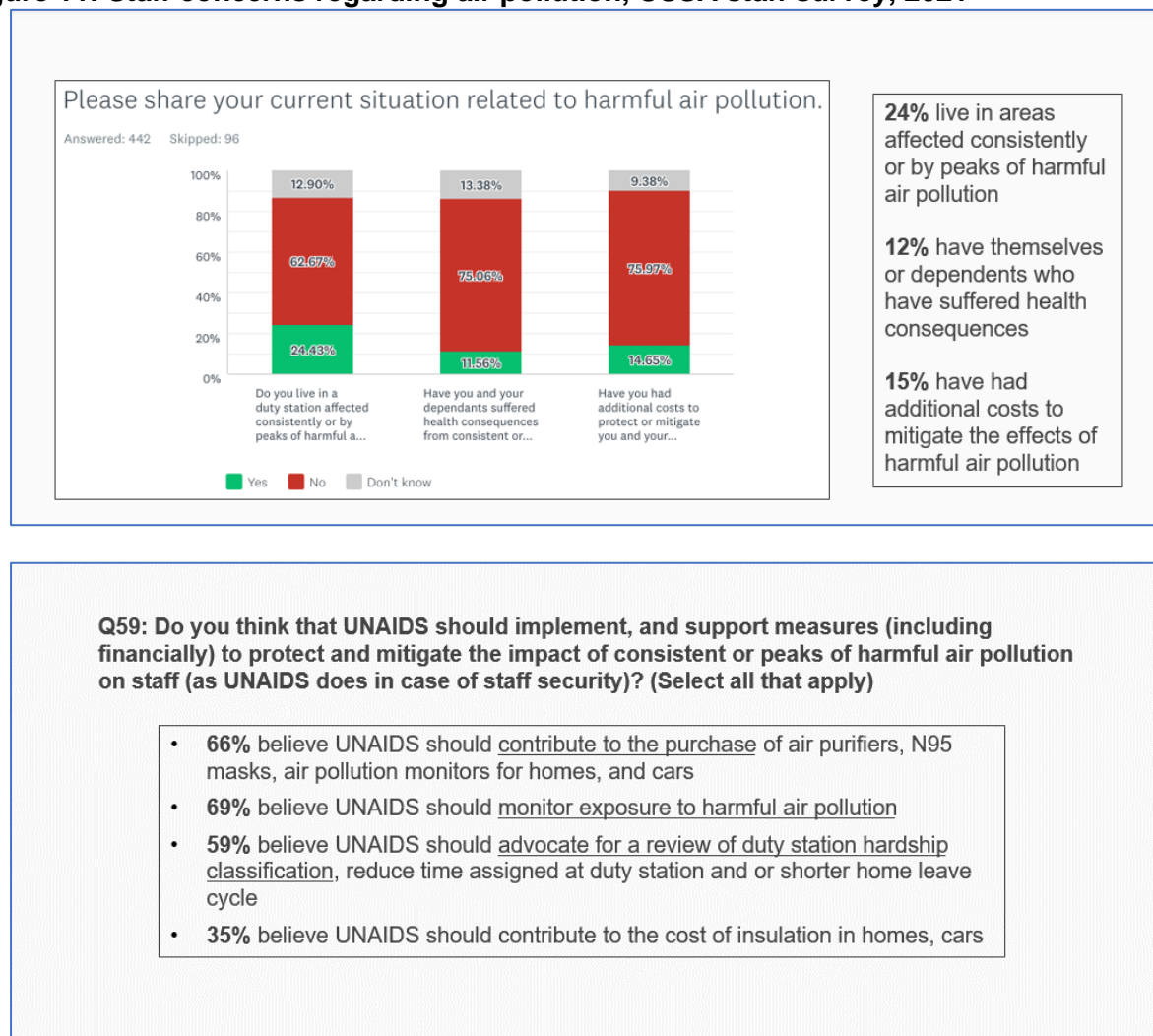
76. The USSA notes that staff are unclear about the planned next steps in the culture-change process and what performance and success indicators have been developed to help gauge the success of this work. The USSA requests that management provide regular updates to staff on implementation of the Management Action Plan and the Gender Action Plan, on addressing recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit report, and on how these processes relate to the alignment.

STAFF WORKLOADS—BURNOUT AND STRESS

77. As noted earlier in this report, the 2021 staff survey shows that 80% of respondents (up from 73% in 2020) felt that their workloads had increased in the previous 12 months. Fifty-nine percent (up from 46% in 2020) of respondents felt that their performances suffered due to work-related stress or anxiety in the previous 12 months.
78. Eighty-two percent of staff respondents (up from 72% in 2020) reported having worked extra hours in response to internal UNAIDS requests in the previous year. It should be noted that the two main reasons for performing extra hours were to respond to internal requests and for special initiatives / priorities, at the request of the organization. Responding to external requests was ranked third, indicating that a significant majority of additional work and work stress is internally generated, without the corresponding prioritization that would reduce other demands on time. Fifty percent of respondents said there had been changes in their teams, which they feel increased their workloads; 67% who said "yes" to this question also stated they had reported the issue to a supervisor, with 27% of them saying this had led to positive changes.

Figure 10: Staff work-life balance and well-being, USSA staff survey, 2021

79. The Staff Association continues to note with great concern the negative impacts that increased workloads and stress have had on staff well-being, productivity and overall organizational performance, and we reiterate our call on management to seek ways to strengthen staff support services and to better prioritize work through improved planning and workload distribution.
80. The USSA notes with particular concern the existing, heavy workloads carried by our Human Resource Management colleagues due to the departure of staff from that department. These staff face a potential increase in their workloads as a result of the alignment. The USSA asks that management consider the staffing needs of Human Resource Management to implement the alignment without undue stress on its staff.
81. In 2021, staff participated throughout the intensive process of developing the new Global AIDS Strategy and they are handling multiple assignments: core/regular work, the UBRAF, the High-Level Meeting on AIDS, culture transformation, and alignment, in addition to coping with COVID-19. The numbers of referrals which the USSA makes to mental health services has more than doubled in the past 12 months.
82. Staff also raised concerns regarding the effects of harmful air pollution on their health and that of their dependents (Figure 11): 24% of respondents stated that they live in areas affected consistently or by peaks of harmful air pollution and 12% said they or their dependents have suffered health consequences as a result. The majority of respondents raising this concern also noted that they have incurred expenses to mitigate the impact of pollution on themselves and their dependents.
83. The USSA will develop a position paper with recommendations for management to consider the most appropriate support measures for affected staff and for management to join in existing UN discussions on this important issue.

Figure 11: Staff concerns regarding air pollution, USSA staff survey, 2021

84. At the same time, 88% (up from 82% in 2020) of survey respondents reported that they are happy to go to work. This positively reflects staff commitment to UNAIDS and its mission and reinforces the importance of moving quickly to address workload and work-related stress and anxiety issues.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT: LEARNING AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES

85. The USSA continues to urge management to explore opportunities for staff to undertake appropriate learning and training programmes, and for staff to be allowed adequate time within work schedules for such initiatives. The USSA believes this is an important element in addressing staff concerns about lack of opportunities for career progression and growth, especially as staff face the potential of significant change resulting from the alignment process. The USSA notes that the Alignment Implementation Guidelines contain provisions for capacity strengthening and skills building for staff as part of the effort to ensure staff can access capacity development support.

USSA ISSUES, PRIORITIES AND REQUESTS

86. The USSA recognizes that the finalization and operationalization of the organizational alignment will dominate the conversations and thoughts of staff and the organization (and thus the USSA) over the coming year. It calls for clear, unfiltered, timely and regular

communication from management on the process and impact on staff in order to allay escalating staff anxieties about restructuring.

87. We note that, while there has been considerable discussion around elements of the alignment process, it is evident from staff comments appended to the USSA survey that there are also many matters that are not being communicated with transparency, clarity and regularity to staff.
88. While staff have heard management say that the organization's donors require UNAIDS to be aligned to the new global HIV strategy as rapidly as possible, we do not believe that they would expect this to be done to the detriment of staff well-being and overall health.
89. As such, we request management to recognize the extent to which UNAIDS staff are stressed; on the verge of burnout; or already burnt out. We call on management to offer more support to enable staff to cope better with their high workloads and stress, perhaps in the form of time-off for staff who have been working consistently beyond their normal workloads in the past six months.
90. In addition to the many issues that will emerge from the strategy and alignment processes, the USSA will continue to focus on advocating for staff around their critical concerns:
- fairness, inclusiveness, and transparency during the alignment and as an organizational norm;
 - staff wellness and related SHI issues, especially those brought to light during the COVID-19 pandemic;
 - the review and reform of the recruitment and mobility policies;
 - zero tolerance around harassment, bullying, discrimination, sexual harassment and other forms of abuse including abuse of authority;
 - the performance management system;
 - remote working modalities; and
 - professional and career development opportunities.

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