



COMMUNICATION

The ICSC Global Out-of-area Survey

23/24

Frequently Asked Questions

Geneva
8 October 2024

To: FICSA members – Please distribute widely to staff members in your organizations especially those targeted by the survey (International Professionals and higher categories).

From: Oleksandr Martynenko, FICSA Executive Committee Member

1. Q: What is the ICSC global out-of-area survey?

A: ICSC runs global out-of-area survey every five years and aim to calculate the index that is incorporated into the overall post adjustment index (PAI). The out-of-area index was first introduced in 1987. It is meant to measure the proportion of salary that staff spend outside of the country of their duty station. Since then, it has been since refined in terms of its weight in PAI.

2. Q: Why do I need to fill out the questionnaire?

A: The out-of-area survey is one of the five components that are considered to calculate PAI. Each of the five components of PAI (in-area expenses excluding housing; housing expenses; pension contribution; medical insurance; out-of-area expenses) have different weights and are aggregated to calculate the final PAI for each duty station.

3. Q: Who should complete the survey?

A: All internationally recruited staff members who have joint an organization of the United Nations (UN) Common system before 01 July 2024 and are in either professional and higher categories (P-1 to D-2) or in the field service category (FS-6 and FS-7) should participate in the survey.

4. Q: I am on a temporary appointment/My appointment ends soon. Should I participate in the survey?

A: Yes. Regardless of the type of your contract (continuous, fixed-term or temporary appointment), all staff who meet the requirements, as outlined in the question 3 above, should participate in the survey. If you are separating from the organization soon, it is nevertheless important that you contribute to the survey, in line with the spirit of solidarity with the colleagues who will continue their employment in the UN Common system.

5. Q: How do I participate in the survey?

A: All staff should have received a personalized survey invite that was sent on 02 October. If you did not receive the email or the email has been withdrawn/deleted by the IT system of your organization, please liaise with your IT colleagues to recover the email.

6. Q: Can I use the survey's link that a colleague of mine forwarded?

A: No, you should not use the survey's link of your colleague. ICSC sent a personalized email to each UN staff member. Therefore, each response is unique. If you use your colleague's survey link, you will be amending the responses, as provided by your colleague and vice versa.

7. Q: By when do I need to fill out the survey?

A: Current deadline to complete the survey is 31 October 2024.

8. Q: How does the survey look like?

A: The survey is available in three languages (English, French and Spanish). It has 8 questions.

9. Q: What expenses are meant in question 6 of the survey?

A: Out-of-area expenses are all expenses that you incurred for purchases made outside of the country of your duty station. These include the following:

- a) expenses on items that you brought abroad due to limitations of the local market or because of personal choice;
- b) costs of private travel outside of the country of the duty station (including for home leave, R&R, vacations, etc.) for which you were not reimbursed. For instance, in case of a home leave or R&R, you should not calculate the cost of the air ticket, as it is refunded by the organization. However, you should include other costs that you incurred during home leave/R&R;
- c) fees for education and support of dependents who live abroad;
- d) costs for maintaining housing in your home country; and
- e) other financial commitments, known as nonconsumption commitments (NCCS), such as property taxes, mortgages, personal loans, life insurance, income tax, etc.

10. Q: Should I answer “Yes” or “No” to question 6 of the survey?

A: If you incurred any of the expenses, as mentioned in question 9 above, you must answer “yes” to the question 6 of the survey. Chances are high that you have spent some time outside of the country of duty area during the previous 12 months for private purposes. If you have done so, then you are very likely to have incurred expenses. Therefore, you should answer “yes” to the question 6 of the survey.

11. Q: Do I need to calculate expenses that I incurred outside of the country of my duty station towards myself and my recognized dependents?

A: No. You should calculate all expenses that you incurred outside of the country of your duty station, regardless whether these expenses were towards yourself, your recognized dependents or other beneficiaries that are not your officially recognized dependents. The survey is meant to measure the expenses that **you** incurred using **your** salary.

12. Q: Should I use my total income (base salary, PA, mobility incentive, child allowance, hardship, etc.) as the basic for the calculation of my total income?

A: No. You should use the sum of only your base floor salary and a respective post adjustment as the basic for the calculation. If you receive other benefits and entitlements, such as hardship allowance, mobility incentive, rental subsidy, dependent allowance, child allowance, danger pay, etc., you should deduct them. **Only the sum of your base floor salary and a respective post adjustment should be used as the basic for the calculation of your total income.**

13. Q: I am based in a remote duty station, very far away from the capital and often buy items there (but still within the same country). Should I calculate expenses that I incurred within the country of my duty station but in a different city?

A: No. You should calculate only the expenses that you incurred outside the country of your duty station. While many of UN colleagues who serve in hardship duty stations may opt to buy items in other, less hardship duty station within the same country, **only expenses that are incurred outside of the country of the duty station should be calculated.**

14. Q: My spouse is also a UN staff member. Should we both submit responses?

A: Each staff member who meets the requirements, as outlined in the question 3 above, should submit their individual answer. If two or more family members work for UN Common system, each family member should submit their own response reflective of their personal expenses outside of the country of their duty station.

15. Q: I calculated my total out-of-area expenses and the figure is not what is offered in the drop-down menu. Which number should I include?

A: You should round the percentage of your out-of-area expenses to the nearest zero and select one of the answers from the drop-down menu.

16. Q: Is there anything else that I should be aware of when answering this survey?

A: When calculating the proportion of NCCs for the question 8 of the survey, remember that the percentage of NCCs should be less than the percentage that you indicate in the question 7 of the survey. NCCs percentage is a part of the overall out-of-area expenses.

17. Q: During the last year I spent only in three different countries. But the survey asks to list five countries. What should I list?

A: You should indicate up to five countries where you spent the most of your salary. If you incurred your expenses in less than five countries, list only those which are relevant. Remember that the total percentage that you indicate in the list of countries should be equal to the percentage that you indicate in the question 7 of the survey.

For instance, if you spent 30% of your total salary outside of the country of your duty station in four countries (A, B, C and D), then the sum of the individual spendings in each of the countries A, B, C and D should be equal to 30%.

18. Q: I only spent 5% of my salary outside of the country of my duty station? Should I report this small amount?

A: Yes. All expenses incurred outside of the country of your duty station – no matter how small or big they are – should be reported. It is important to accurately calculate out-of-area expenses. Staff who are based in lower cost duty station and who under-report their out-of-area expenses, may see their PA reduced because of skewed out-of-area index. Similar, staff who are based in higher cost duty station and who over-report their out-of-area expenses, may see their PA reduced because of skewed out-of-area index.

19. Q: Where can I get additional support?

A: Offline version of the current ICSC global out-of-area survey can be found [here](#). ICSC manual on the UN post adjustment system contains a sub-section on out-of-area component of PAI and can be found [here](#) (pp.25-29).

20. Q: Can FICSA help me respond to this survey?

A: If you have questions regarding this survey, please email your inquiry to ficsa@ficsa.org for possible assistance.

[Reference Communication 22-24](#)

[Link of the recording from the Ask for the Expert session](#)
