



2023 GLOBAL STAFF SURVEY ON COMPENSATION PACKAGE

Frequently Asked Questions

October 2023

INTRODUCTION

The federation of International Civil Servants' Association ([FICSA](#)) came into being on 1 May 1952. Today, FICSA is a federation of 30 Staff Associations/Unions of organizations belonging to the United Nations Common System, as well as 18 members with consultive status and 18 associate members. The diversity of membership ensures that all staff in the field and at headquarters duty stations have an opportunity to exchange views and information about the conditions of service, seek the Federation's assistance and support when difficulties arise, and organize collective action.

The International Civil Service Commission ([ICSC](#)) periodically runs global staff surveys aimed at assessing the engagement of UN staff as well as their perceptions of the Compensation Package for the UN common system. In 2023, the Survey was adjusted to accommodate the UN General Assembly Resolution [A/RES/77/256 A-B](#) which, "Requests the Commission [ICSC] to conduct a system-wide survey to assess factors affecting workforce retention." The survey was officially launched on 3 October and runs to 31 October 2023. It is open for all staff with an active UN contract, regardless of the staff grade, category or contract type and duration.

The purpose of this document is to provide answers to the most frequently asked questions from staff to assist them in completing 2023 Global Staff Survey. The document provides information about the overall process of the Survey, ongoing trends with the current compensation package and provides some tips for staff to take into account when submitting their responses.

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2023 Global Staff Survey on Compensation Package

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Q: Why does the ICSC run a Global Staff Survey on Compensation Package in 2023?

A: The 2023 Survey is part of a regular series of staff perception surveys carried out approximately every five years, aimed at assessing the engagement of UN staff as well as their perceptions of the UN Compensation Package. This year, the Survey has been adjusted to accommodate the UN General Assembly resolution ([A/RES/77/256 A-B](#)) which, “*Requests the Commission [ICSC] to conduct a system-wide survey to assess factors affecting workforce retention and to submit the results and analysis of the survey to the General Assembly at its seventy-ninth session*”. A prime objective of the survey is to inform decisions regarding the ongoing Comprehensive Review of the Compensation Package, which will impact the future of the salaries, benefits and allowances provide to staff.

2. Q: Does the survey look at the current compensation package only?

A: No. The survey looks at many factors, including those that drive staff to continue working for or wishing to leave the UN Common System (retention). In addition to looking at the current compensation package, the survey aims at collecting staff views on such issues as multilingualism, and staff attitudes towards flexible working arrangements, to mention a few.

3. Q: Does ICSC run such a survey for the first time?

A: No. The UN General Assembly periodically requests the ICSC to conduct system-wide surveys. The two most recent were in 2014 and 2019. The reports can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

4. Q: Is there any other reason why the UN General Assembly requests the ICSC to run these surveys every five years?

A: Since the first survey, the ICSC has been using the Survey as a source to formulate recommendations to the UN General Assembly and other governing bodies on the suitability of the entire compensation package for the UN common system. The desired outcome of this exercise is to ensure that the Compensation Package is fit for purpose by providing decision makers with real data on staff opinion about what works and what does not. At the same time, in recent years UN Member States have been voicing their preoccupation with the rising staff costs. Those concerns have been accompanied by calls to explore, and implement, non-financial incentives for staff, most notably related to mobility and hardship allowances.

5. Q: What are non-financial incentives.

A: For example, in August 2022, based on the periodic review of the hardship allowances that are paid to staff who are based in B, C, D or E duty stations, the ICSC recommended to the UNGA 5th Committee a very modest increase of the allowance by 3,1%. During the same period, the ICSC recommended a modest increase of 4,5% in the amounts that are paid for mobility incentives. [2022 ICSC Annual Report](#) provided justification for these modest increases. However, the UNGA 5th Committee overruled the ICSC recommendations and [recommended to the UN General Assembly](#) that ICSC should “reconsider its decision on the levels of the hardship allowance...assess the calculating methodologies... [and reiterated] its encouragement to the organizations of the United

Nations common system... the application of... non-financial incentives to promote staff mobility.”

6. Q: Who can participate in the survey?

A: All staff who hold an active contract with any UN Common-System entity can participate in the survey. The survey is open to both internationally- and locally-recruited staff members in all categories (D/P, NO, G, FS), regardless of the type of contract (continuing, fixed-term or temporary) and regardless of probation status. **If you have a valid staff contract with your organization, you are eligible to take part in the survey.**

7. Q: I am retiring at the end of 2023/in 2023. Should I complete the survey?

A: Yes. In solidarity with fellow UN colleagues, **each response matters**, as the results of the survey will be an important source of data to both the ICSC and the UN member states about all the elements covered. Staff who will be retiring in 2023/2024 have valuable knowledge and a plethora of experience with the compensation package. Their input is equally important to ensure that the UN remains an employer of choice for current and future staff members.

8. Q: What happens if I don't complete the survey?

A: It is not mandatory to complete the survey. However, regardless of the number of responses, decisions will be made based on the data received. Therefore, to ensure that the current compensation package stays attractive, fit-for-purpose and competitive, staff should ensure that they provide their honest feedback.

9. Q: Where can I access the survey?

A: The survey can be accessed through this [link](#) or by typing www.icscglobalstaffsurvey.org into the browser. The survey can also be completed on a mobile device.

10. Q: Is the survey available in English only?

A: The survey is available in English, Spanish or French.

11. Q: What does the survey look like?

A: The questions in the 2023 survey are based on the 2019 ICSC Global Staff Survey to ensure maximum comparability between the data, while updating some areas as needed. It is a 'smart survey' that uses embedded branching logic throughout for a personalized experience and efficient completion. It means that the flow of questions is determined by the answers. Please refer to questions 19-25 in this document for specific guidance on some of the questions.

12. Q: What is the timeline for completing the survey?

A: The survey will run till 31 October 2023. During winter 2023-2024, the ICSC will review the survey and will prepare its recommendations for the UN General Assembly during its March 2024 ICSC session. The UNGA 5th Committee will consider the ICSC recommendations during the fall /autumn 2024 and will submit their recommendations before the final decision of the United Nations General Assembly during its 79th session (September - December 2024).

13. Q: How much time does it take to complete the survey?

A: The Survey should take an average of 15-20 minutes to complete, depending on how many questions you are asked. Most of the questions are multiple choice and do not require comments to be provided by the respondents. At the same time, it is crucial for staff to properly understand their allowances and benefits so that their response is adequately informed. We recommend taking time to fill this survey and not to rush, as your answers will directly feed into the recommendations for UN General Assembly. We strongly encourage you to refer to questions 19-25 in this document for specific guidance on some questions.

14. Q: I am visually impaired. How can I complete the survey?

A: The survey can be read by a screen reader. It has good contrast levels and can be zoomed in on-screen to increase the size.

15. Q: I am based in a duty station that does not have Internet/has very poor Internet/frequent power cuts. Can I fill out the survey offline?

A: The survey cannot be completed offline because it saves the data on every page. Colleagues with an unstable Internet/electricity should make sure that they write down their unique password so that they can log back in, when possible and if necessary. ICSC kept graphics and links to a minimum so that the survey is not too heavy, and one can move through it with a reasonable speed.

16. Q: Does the survey need to be completed in one go or can I pause and resume my submission?

A: Yes, the survey may be completed in sections, and all responses can be re-entered and revised up until the submission. To re-enter the survey and pick up where you left off, you will need your unique password which is provided immediately after your initial log-in to the survey. There is only one opportunity to record this password, so please make sure you save it if you plan to complete the survey in more than one sitting. No edits can be made following submission.

17. Q: How can I create a unique password?

A: First, the respondents should use the generic password provided in the email from your organization to enter the survey. After logging in with the generic password, the system generates a unique password for every user. It is imperative that this unique password be recorded. This unique password will allow going back to the survey until the respondent submits the complete survey.

Note that at least one page of the survey needs to be completed and submitted for the system to save some data. Upon next log in with the unique password the users can continue completing the survey. Unique passwords cannot be resorted/recovered.

18. Q: I lost/did not save my unique password. What should I do?

A: If a respondent forgets the unique password and the survey has not been submitted, the respondent can start the process from the beginning by using the generic password given in the email from your organization about the survey. The system will then generate another unique password that can be used to complete the survey. Previous responses cannot be retrieved unless the respondent logs in back with the unique password.

19. Q: Do you have some tips on how to fill out the survey?

A: The most important is to complete the survey using the information to the best of your knowledge. Do not compare your benefits with one another. When completing the survey, follow these steps:

STEP 1: Make all efforts to understand the question as well as the benefit/allowance in full.

STEP 2: Voice your candid and truthful opinion about the specific benefit without comparing it to other benefits or allowances.

STEP 3: If in doubt, consult your organization's focal point or your staff association/union for clarification. A list of dedicated focal points for each organization can be found on the survey's webpage under the "Help" function.

20. Q: What is the advice regarding answering the question about current compensation and whether it is fair and competitive?

A: The stronger your agreement with these statements, the more likely that your compensation might be perceived as being overly generous, with the possibility that it could be reduced in the future.

21. Q: What is the advice regarding answering the question whether I understand how my salary and allowances and benefits are determined?

A: In general, suggested answers to this question link essentially to the same point. The stronger your disagreement with these statements, the more likely that your compensation might be perceived as too complicated, and the more likely that efforts could be made to simplify it and, in the process, cut it.

22. Q: What is the advice regarding answering the question about the reasons for joining the UN Common System?

A: You should indicate all valid reasons that you took into consideration when applying to work in the UN system. At the same time, bear in mind that if you do not include "salaries" and "allowances" among your selection, it is more likely that these might not be seen as important, and the more likely the chance that it could be cut / reduced.

23. Q: What is the advice regarding answering the question about the reasons for staying within the UN Common System?

A: You should indicate all reasons that you take into consideration to retain your employment with the UN Common System. At the same time, bear in mind that if you do not include "salaries" and "allowances" among your selection, it is more likely that these might not be seen as important, and the more likely the chance they could be cut / reduced.

24. Q: What is the advice regarding answering the question about my awareness of allowances and benefits?

A: Non-awareness by staff of a particular benefit has been used in the past as a reason to eliminate it. Even if you don't receive a particular benefit at present, you may do in the future. It therefore helps to be aware of each benefit and indicate if it does not apply to you as the case requires.

25. Q: What is the advice regarding answering the question about career progression and performance?

A: The stronger your agreement with suggested statements that are offered as answer options, the more possible that within-grade steps could be removed, and / or a bonus

system introduced, as was the case following the last Comprehensive Review. It remains unclear how performance would be objectively measured and how much would even be paid into a bonus pool by fiscally conservative UN Member States. Experiences elsewhere in the public sector have not been positive. It should be recalled that agreement with these statements in the 2013 survey led the ICSC to reduce the number of within-grade steps and their frequency, with the money returned to the UN Member States.

26. Q: Can I provide additional feedback during the survey?

A: Yes. In addition to selecting possible answers to a question, the respondents can provide general comments in the free text questions. The responses will be collated and shared in the final report, but no individuals will be identified against any comments. As an example, those of you who have expressed dissatisfaction with the education grant grant, or other benefits could use your response to this open question to highlight your dissatisfaction with that element of the new compensation package.

27. Q: Are my responses confidential?

A: According to the ICSC, all responses to the survey are confidential. Responses will only be used to compile aggregate reports and ICSC will only have access to reports on groups with a minimum of 7 respondents. A third-party vendor, Agenda Consulting, is the only entity seeing the raw survey data. Agenda Consulting is committed to protecting the privacy and security of your personal information. You can read [this Privacy Policy](#) for important information how the data is collected and stored.

28. Q: Can I submit responses on behalf of my colleague(s)?

A: No. The survey's objective is to collect individual staff feedback regarding current compensation package. Responses that are submitted on behalf of other staff members may severely skew the overall picture and misinform the ICSC when they consider recommendations to the General Assembly.

29. Q: Where can I find more information about the current compensation package?

A: The ICSC website has plenty of information about the current compensation package. More information is available [here](#) and [here](#). In addition, the ICSC has developed FAQ on the 2023 Global Staff Survey that you can access [here](#).

30. Q: I have more questions. Who is the focal point within my organization? Where can I find more information?

A: Each organization has a dedicated Survey focal point. The list of focal points can be found on the survey's page. Additionally, you are welcome to contact the FICSA secretariat if you have additional specific questions regarding this survey.

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