

WHO Gender Parity Policy, 2023 - 2026

1 March 2023

I. Background

1. Gender equality is a human right. Gender equality has been a tenet of international human rights law since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in 1948, with its recognition that all people are born free with equal dignity and rights, without distinctions of any kind. Over 75 years, the right to gender equality has been recognized through additional international legal instruments. The WHO prioritizes the advancement of gender equality because it is a fundamental right and foundational to a just society.
2. Key dimensions to address for promoting equality are as follows: women and men have equal representation in the organization, and decision-making power to shape legislative frameworks, policies, and programmes; women and men have equal access to organizational resources and services, and equal control over the resulting benefits; parent's workload is reduced by enhancing policies for families. Gender parity, meaning the equality in terms of numbers and proportions of women and men employed by the Organization.
3. In 2017, the UN Secretary-General launched the United Nations System-Wide Strategy on Gender Parity which states that the overall goal for parity across the UN system at all international staff levels should be set for 2026. Since 2017, WHO has reached significant milestones in this respect: updated policies and practices to attract, recruit and promote women and to improve the work environment in support of greater inclusion.
4. In December 2022, for the first time, WHO achieved overall parity, i.e., 50.1% women and 49.9% men holding long term contracts (international and national staff). Notwithstanding this important achievement, more progress is required as each international professional level must be targeted and monitored independently. Since 2017 target setting is applied by all UN-system Agencies to the international staff population, P1 level and above, on long-term positions. Monitoring of data by the UN system also includes General Service (GS) and National Professional Officer (NPO) positions. The goal, however, is not only about hitting the numbers. It is about modernizing the Organization and strengthening organization so that WHO can access and capitalize on its full potential.
5. The latest workplace surveys conducted in 2021-22 showed that more work is required to improve our workplace environment and the opportunities for our women workforce, especially at the managerial level. The actions defined in the WHO DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) Agenda and its Action Plan (published on 16 May 2022) are expected to guide steps to improve diversity and create a more supportive environment. Being mindful of gender parity targets, creating a supportive environment, providing professional development, career advancement opportunities and enabling a healthy work-life balance are essential components for attaining gender parity.

6. This policy will contribute to the attainment of the WHO workforce diversity objectives and for the benefit of women with disabilities through reasonable accommodation arrangements at each stage of their career life cycle.

II. Scope and Approach

7. Key changes envisaged by the new policy: new targets per professional level, an intersectional approach to highlight diversity factors, temporary measures to apply by hiring managers, regular reporting and compact for senior managers to strengthen accountability, higher reliance on disaggregated gender, nationalities and disability reporting supported by HR systems at each stage of a selection, and corresponding Implementation Plan for the next two years. The updated WHO Gender Parity Policy (2023-26) envisage setting gender parity targets for each level of international staff on fixed-term and continuing appointments and for all major offices and HQ departments of WHO. Data for all WHO workforce, regardless of staff category and contract type (e.g., Temporary Appointment, GS/NPO national staff) will be included in the data analysis to monitor whether temporary appointments, which are short-term, and national staff positions are being used in greater numbers for recruiting women or men; and conduct analysis to understand the underlying reasons behind this. Such assessments are important, as these positions are viewed as pipelines for addressing not only gender disparity but also under-representation from certain Member States. Implementation of this policy aims to further geographical diversity, particularly from un/underrepresented Member States, and the twin goals of parity and diversity will be mutually reinforcing rather than exclusive.
8. The overall gender parity achieved by WHO in December 2022 shall be sustained across all major offices; in addition to parity achieved at aggregated level, reaching parity is required at each professional level and in different categories of staff. This goal will be further supported by an enabling environment framework for WHO workforce, with a focus on retaining and preparing internal women talent for senior roles. The new measures will also promote a zero-tolerance culture for prohibited conduct, expand outreach and intensify organizational culture initiatives.

III. Refining targets

9. The WHO Gender Parity Policy and its Implementation Plan (2023-24) will guide our efforts to achieve gender parity at each professional level by 2026. As of December 2022, for the entire WHO, 55.7 per cent of General Service staff, 42.3 per cent of National Professional Officers and 46.8 per cent of International Professionals were women. This policy recognizes that women are disproportionately underrepresented at the managerial and senior levels, being particularly acute at the country and regional levels of organization. Human Resources and Talent Management Department (HRT) at WHO HQ will continue to engage with hiring managers at HQ departments, in regions and country offices to remedy instances of gender inequality.

10. With the recognition that women are underrepresented in management and senior leadership positions, Gender Parity Implementation Plan prioritizes achieving parity at the senior leadership level (D1 and above), and parity across all international professional levels by 2026. This plan includes baseline data on men and women staff at each professional level as of end of December 2022; sets targets at each level to be reached annually for progress towards parity; and counts International professional staff on fixed-term and continuing appointments, as well as national staff (General Service and National Professional staff categories) on long-term contracts. It is important to prioritize equal representation of women at senior levels, given limited number of senior posts that are vacant, and retirement forecast for the next four years.

11. Annual targets

As of December 2022, WHO nearly achieved the aggregate parity target in the representation of women in the international Professional and higher levels holding long-term contracts, where women accounted for 46.8 per cent (please see Annex 2). The representation of women (holding long-term appointments) is highest at the entry professional levels, P-1 and P-2 at 77 % and 58%, respectively, and decreases at the middle and higher professional levels, P3 level at 53%, P4 level at 45%, P5 at 46%, with wider gaps at senior grades showing 35.6 % (D1) and 35.9 % (D2). Gender imbalances persist at non-headquarters locations, except for Western-Pacific (58.6%) and European regions (51.1%).

In view of the December 2022 baseline and taking into account limited number of D level positions, retirement forecast, current appointment and separation trends, average number of applications from women candidates, speed of gender parity progress since 2017, and ultimate objective to achieve parity at each professional level by the end of 2026, the following targets for Organization were defined: 1.5 % year to year increase of women representation at P4 and P5 levels; 3% year to year increase at P6/D1 and D2 levels.

Level	31-Dec-22	Gap to Parity	31-Dec-23	31-Dec-24	31-Dec-25	31-Dec-26	Year to Year increase
USG	50%	0%	50%	50%	50%	50%	to retain parity
ASG	41.7%	8.3%	44.7%	47.7%	50.7%	50.0%	3.0%
D2	35.9%	14.1%	38.9%	41.9%	44.9%	47.9%	3.0%
P6/D1	35.6%	14.4%	38.6%	41.6%	44.6%	47.6%	3.0%
P5	46.0%	4.0%	47.5%	49.0%	50.0%	50.0%	1.5%
P4	45.0%	5.0%	46.5%	48.0%	49.5%	50.0%	1.5%

IV. The Policy focuses on the following areas

- Leadership and accountability
- Gender-sensitive recruitment, progression and development
- Creating an enabling environment
- A workplace culture that is free of discrimination, harassment and abuse
- Monitoring and Evaluation

12. Leadership and accountability

Accountability for achieving gender equality in staffing stays with the most senior staff in organization and is supported by cascading accountability mechanisms. To accelerate the progress, this policy emphasizes accountability and responsibility of the senior leadership, that were formulated in WHO Gender Equality in Staffing Policy issued in January 2017:

- Regional Directors and Assistant Director-Generals are accountable to meet annual targets on gender parity targets, and report to the Director-General on an annual basis.
- Directors of Administration and Finance in the Regional Offices and Management Officers in HQ are responsible for monitoring the implementation of this policy in their respective regions and departments.
- HRT department is responsible for the administration and reporting on the policy implementation.
- Every hiring manager and supervisor is accountable for consistent use of a gender-inclusive performance management goal to support a more diverse workforce. Annual performance evaluations of gender targets per hiring office are used to both highlight progress in achieving gender parity targets and acknowledge and recognize initiatives that are working well.

13. Gender-sensitive recruitment, progression, and development

Over 180 men and 120 women in international professional and higher-level positions are expected to retire over the next four years, providing opportunities to diversify workforce. Applications from women candidates to professional and higher positions stood at 31 percent in 2022, meaning more must be done in terms of outreach.

Temporary recruitment measures

Hiring managers have the responsibility to monitor data on the recruitment of P4 and above (under-performing grades) to ensure gender and geographical diversity at each stage of recruitment. The HR staff will work with hiring managers to provide access to data on the representation of women at each stage of a recruitment process (applications received, screening, short-listing and selections); and ensure that reasonable accommodation requests from persons with disabilities are addressed.

For job openings that fail to yield a minimum 30 per cent women applicants, for grades that are not at parity, as a temporary measure, hiring managers will be requested to reopen the job opening to facilitate additional outreach to the under-represented gender, women from un/underrepresented Member States, women with disabilities etc.

The job openings (for underperforming grades) will be re-opened when shortlist does not have at least 2 women to ensure further outreach to attract women from underrepresented groups, including job applicants from the Global South.

Another temporary measure for the achievement of gender parity: if a woman has applied for a position for which she is equally or better qualified than a man who is also shortlisted and recommended, at a level in which parity has not yet been reached, woman shall be selected for a position.

These recruitment measures are temporary in nature to the extent that they should assist to reach parity and then cease once parity has been achieved but should also be continued should parity not be sustained.

Managers and HR staff will use the HR BI Dashboard and regular HRT reports to WHO Governing Bodies to facilitate analysis of staffing decisions. All hiring managers will be given access by HRT to real-time staff data to better understand how hiring decisions impact progress towards gender parity.

Hiring managers will be required to attend refresher training sessions on competency-based interviewing (CBI), including the unconscious bias course, every three years. All WHO workforce will be encouraged to attend Respectful workplace events, and DEI Dialogues.

14. Creating an enabling environment

All employees will be strongly encouraged to undertake gender related trainings, information sessions on Flexible Working Arrangements (FWA) and updated parental policies; supervisors will be encouraged to exercise flexibility to support the work-life balance of both staff members and managers. The HR staff will encourage managers to comply with the FWA policy and the parental policy to ensure that staff and parents are supported to achieve work-life balance.

15. A workplace culture that is free of discrimination, harassment, and abuse

Unaddressed recruitment biases, inadequate career management and retention policies, and, in some contexts, bullying and sexual harassment in workplace culture undermine the objectives of the gender parity policy. An intersectional approach will be used to update recruitment processes, relying on exit questionnaires and global workforce surveys to understand how gender, sexual orientation, nationality, ethnicity, disability, and other factors impact the way

staff experience the workplace. The intersection of these parts of a person's identity can further compound discrimination and exclusion.

The HRT Department will conduct a biennial survey of all WHO workforce to access employees' perceptions on workplace culture, including gender equality and other dimensions of diversity. Surveys can provide a better understanding of diversity within WHO's workforce and workplace issues, while identifying where experience and engagement differences might exist. This will be useful not only in tracking gender and geographical diversity within WHO, but also in understanding how the experiences of underrepresented groups might differ from the rest of the workforce.

16. Management, Reporting, Oversight, and Evaluation

HRT will monitor the progress of actions implemented, and suggest enhancements for consideration, based on semi-annual analysis of appointments and separations in WHO. Managers who meet their targets will be acknowledged in internal communications. The Global HR community will meet at least once a year to discuss the progress of policy implementation and other matters related to promoting an inclusive environment.

HRT will produce a six-monthly report with metrics on gender parity staffing, by major office and departments in HQ to determine progress and challenges. Progress will be reported to the Director-General's Office and to WHO's Governing Bodies, and reports will be disseminated throughout WHO. It is recommended that the WHO Evaluation Office will conduct an independent evaluation of the policy after two years. Based on risks assessments, the WHO Office of Internal Audit and Oversight will develop, and apply as appropriate, tools for auditing compliance with this policy.

V. Entry into force

This policy becomes effective as of 1st March 2023 and replaces WHO Gender Equality in Staffing Policy issued in January 2017.

Annex 1, Gender Parity Implementation Plan, 2023-24

Annex 2, WHO gender representation by grade and major office, December 2022

Annex 2, WHO gender representation by grade and major office, December 2022

GENDER PARITY - DISTRIBUTION OF IP STAFF HOLDING LONG-TERM APPOINTMENTS BY GRADE											
Grade	12/31/2017					12/12/2022					Difference (women as a percentage of total)
	Men	Women	Total	Percentage		Men	Women	Total	Percentage		
				Men	Women				Men	Women	
UG2	1	2	3	33.3%	66.7%	1	1	2	50.0%	50.0%	-16.7
UG1	8	11	19	42.1%	57.9%	7	5	12	58.3%	41.7%	-16.2
D2	29	11	40	72.5%	27.5%	41	23	64	64.1%	35.9%	8.4
P6/D1	142	74	216	65.7%	34.3%	134	74	208	64.4%	35.6%	1.3
					46.6%					40.8%	
P5	389	266	655	59.4%	40.6%	422	359	781	54.0%	46.0%	5.4
P4	419	350	769	54.5%	45.5%	518	424	942	55.0%	45.0%	-0.5
P3	178	184	362	49.2%	50.8%	243	284	527	46.1%	53.9%	3.1
P2	33	59	92	35.9%	64.1%	51	71	122	41.8%	58.2%	-5.9
P1	4	6	10	40.0%	60.0%	2	7	9	22.2%	77.8%	17.8
Total	1204	963	2167	55.6%	44.4%	1420	1248	2668	53.2%	46.8%	2.3

GENDER PARITY - DISTRIBUTION OF IP STAFF BY GRADE (ALL CONTRACT TYPES)											
Grade	12/31/2017					12/12/2022					Difference (women as a percentage of total) 2019-2022
	Men	Women	Total	Percentage		Men	Women	Total	Percentage		
				Men	Women				Men	Women	
UG3	1	0	1	100.0%	0.0%	1	0	1	100.0%	0.0%	0.0
UG2	1	2	3	33.3%	66.7%	1	1	2	50.0%	50.0%	-16.7
UG1	8	12	20	40.0%	60.0%	7	5	12	58.3%	41.7%	-18.3
Subtotal UG	10	14	24	41.7%	58.3%	9	6	15	60.0%	40.0%	-18.3
D2	29	11	40	72.5%	27.5%	43	23	66	65.2%	34.8%	7.3
P6/D1	144	74	218	66.1%	33.9%	136	75	211	64.5%	35.5%	1.6
Subtotal D	173	85	258	67.1%	32.9%	179	98	277	64.6%	35.4%	2.4
P5	424	295	719	59.0%	41.0%	451	387	838	53.8%	46.2%	5.2
P4	661	455	1116	59.2%	40.8%	753	612	1365	55.2%	44.8%	4.1
P3	319	311	630	50.6%	49.4%	419	534	953	44.0%	56.0%	6.7
P2	63	120	183	34.4%	65.6%	108	159	267	40.4%	59.6%	-6.0
P1	8	16	24	33.3%	66.7%	3	23	26	11.5%	88.5%	21.8
Subtotal P	1475	1197	2672	55.2%	44.8%	1734	1715	3449	50.3%	49.7%	4.9
Total	1658	1296	2954	56.1%	43.9%	1922	1819	3741	51.4%	48.6%	4.8

GENDER PARITY - DISTRIBUTION OF IP STAFF HOLDING LONG-TERM APPOINTMENTS BY GRADE AND MAJOR OFFICE

DATA AS OF 12-DEC-2022

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