



Survey Reveals Strong Interest Amongst Staff for Flexible Work Arrangements

Background

In July and August 2009, the Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women (OSAGI), conducted a survey on iSeek in order to identify areas for further improvement in the use and implementation of flexible work arrangements (FWA). In addition, to further managerial and departmental accountability, the Secretary-General, through a Policy Committee Decision, has asked that each Department and Office of the United Nations Secretariat report on gender-related issues, including those of improved work-life-fit, through gender balance scorecards. The results of this survey, therefore, will feed into these scorecards.

During the two month period the survey was open (21 July to 22 September 2009), a total of 2082 staff completed the survey.

Key Findings

- **Most staff view FWA as a positive organizational tool:** The majority of respondents (57 per cent) stated that flexible work arrangements should be available to all persons irrespective of their situation if it maintains or increases productivity and work-life-fit balance.
- **There is a strong interest among staff for FWA:** A high percentage of staff indicated a strong interest in using compressed work schedules (74 per cent), telecommuting (73 per cent), staggered working hours (72 per cent), and schedules break for external learning activities.
- **The use of FWA has a significant impact on staff productivity, job satisfaction, motivation, and organizational commitment:** Staff indicated that as a result of taking a FWA option they are working more efficiently (69 per cent); they are more satisfied with their job (67 per cent); their motivation has increased (65 per cent); and their desire to stay at the UN is much stronger (64 per cent).
- **Overall, UN staff members are not aware of the basic provisions of existing FWA policies:** A majority of staff reported having poor or very poor knowledge of the policies on scheduled break for extended learning activity (50 per cent), telecommuting (49 per cent), compressed work schedules (39 per cent) and staggered working hours (38 per cent).

- **Staff perceives FWA as receiving little support at senior management levels:** Only a small percentage of staff members perceived senior management (20 per cent), executive offices (21 per cent) and middle management (27 per cent) as supportive towards the use of FWA in their departments.

- **Only a minority of staff members have actually requested the use of FWA options:** Nearly 60 per cent of the survey respondents have not proposed (formally or informally) any flexible work arrangement options during the past two years. Those respondents who provided explanations for not applying for a FWA application mostly cited a lack of knowledge of FWA policies and a lack of support by their managers and supervisors as the reasons for not applying.

Call for Action

Based on the main findings of the survey and the suggestions offered by the respondents, OSAGI has recommended the following actions, which are to be considered by senior leadership and management in particular:

- **Raise awareness about the availability of flexible working arrangements.**
- **Clarify the application procedures and facilitate the approval process.**
- **Ensure consistent implementation across departments.**
- **Make the use of flexible work arrangements a strategic priority.**
- **Demonstrate support and commitment to the use of flexible work arrangements.**
- **Enhance technical tools.**

For a detailed report of the survey's methodology, findings, and recommendations, please visit the [Office of the Focal Point for Women website](#).