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International Organizations  
and the Future of Global Governance  
Technical Report - GLOBE Survey

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**GLOBE**  
GLOBAL GOVERNANCE AND THE EUROPEAN UNION  
Future Trends and Scenarios

## IBEI WORKING PAPERS

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International Organizations and the Future of Global Governance.  
Technical Report - GLOBE Survey

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## **Abstract**

In this working paper, we present the results of a survey completed by 1,004 staff members of 30 international organizations (IO) across six key areas of governance: trade, climate change, development, migration, finance, and security. The selected organizations also include United Nations (UN) agencies as well as three Directorates-General (DG) of the European Union. Respondents were asked to share their opinions on the main trends shaping the future of global governance. Looking specifically at the 2020–30 decade, we focused our questions on perceptions about the role of IOs in the increasingly complex global governance environments they are involved in. We were also interested in staff members' perceptions of their own organizations' internal dynamics and performances, as well as in their perceptions of the main difficulties and problems their organizations face. Overall, the survey reveals that IO staff are sensitive to global trends and challenges, notably climate change, global inequalities, and geopolitical clashes. While respondents are aware of certain organizational shortcomings, and the risks of unfavourable external environments that might undermine the work of IOs, they are nevertheless hopeful about other aspects, including the prospect of evidence-based policymaking; the effectiveness of international instruments such as treaties and regulation; the autonomy of their IOs in relation to member states and lobbying influences, and their interactions with other IOs.

## INTRODUCTION

The online survey ‘International Organizations and the Future of Global Governance’ is based on the views and opinions of staff members within selected international organizations (IO), in particular regarding the different policy areas in which they are involved. The survey design was inspired by the GLOBE<sup>1</sup> project’s research analyses, with most of the questions aimed at identifying the perceptions of IO staff members about how their organization could cope with the challenges of future global governance.

In the survey we asked various sets of questions. We included questions about which global trends staff members would identify as being relevant for the 2020–30 decade, and whether global governance has effective tools to manage them. We also included several questions with a relational perspective which were aimed at capturing the respondents’ perceptions of the dynamics of the organizational complexities they are involved in, while considering the policy areas we focused on in our research. We asked IO staff members about their own organization and its relationship with member states. We were interested in their own IO’s relationship with other IOs, as well as with other actors in their policy areas in global governance. We also asked them about several potential problems that might emerge internally, and how their IO might evolve during the 2020–30 decade. In addition, we collected basic demographic data to get a better understanding of how representative our sample was. These data are presented in the in the section demographics.

This working paper introduces the main results of the survey answers, based on 1,004 completed questionnaires that we collected from the staff of 30 IOs. The paper also includes some methodological details about how the survey was conducted. We expect that this dataset will be used in academic open-access publications in the near future, and will provide sectoral insights into a forecasting exercise that will also be part of the GLOBE project.<sup>2</sup>

The survey was carried out by the GLOBE team at the Institut Barcelona d’Estudis Internacionals (IBEI) between May 2021 and November 2021. It was supported by GLOBE’s research partners, who provided helpful comments and suggestions for the questionnaire design. We are thankful to the many experts, most of whom are currently working in IOs, who contributed and provided valuable advice. We cannot

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<sup>1</sup> The survey is part of the ‘Global Governance and the European Union: Future Trends and Scenarios’ (GLOBE) project, which is funded by a European Union Horizon 2020 grant (no. 822654). GLOBE addresses the six strategic priorities identified in the EU Global Strategy – trade, climate change, development, migration, finance, and security – which aim to forecast global governance developments in these fields.

<sup>2</sup> All the research results will be made public by open access after the finalisation of the research project. The anonymised dataset will be made available for replication and further research through the data repository of the Universitat Pompeu Fabra (e-repositori UPF).

list all their names, but we would like to express our deepest gratitude for their support and encouragement. We would also like to acknowledge the advice of the Research and Expertise Centre for Survey Methodology (RECSM) at Pompeu Fabra University, in particular its deputy director, Wiebke Weber, regarding the questionnaire design and its implementation. Lastly, we are indebted to the numerous IO employees who provided their time and insights when filling out the survey.

The GLOBE project is coordinated by IBEI, a graduate school and research institute focusing on international studies based in Barcelona/Spain. Other GLOBE members are: the Leuven Centre for Global Governance Studies (GGS), Leuven/Belgium; the Global Governance Institute, University College London (UCL), London/United Kingdom; Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (WZB), Berlin/Germany; the Center for Global Economy and Geopolitics (ESADEgeo), Barcelona/Spain; the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (HUJI), Jerusalem/Israel; Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales in Buenos Aires (FLACSO), Buenos Aires/Argentina; Universitas Bina Nusantara (BINUS), Jakarta/Indonesia, and Fundación Privada Instituto de Salud Global Barcelona (IS Global), Barcelona/Spain.

## METHODOLOGY

Our primary interest was surveying the perceptions and opinions of people working in IOs. Since there are thousands of IOs with many different characteristics, we first narrowed the scope by focusing mainly on formal intergovernmental IOs (IGOs), established by countries through international agreements. Here, we benefited from previous studies that had focused on the characteristics of IGOs and identified suitable samples of IGOs, stratified by sector and by territory<sup>3</sup>.

Despite initially restricting our sample population to a limited number of formal IGOs, we considered that, given the GLOBE research design, we should include a few other IOs in the sample – informal, private-sector, etc. – wherever this was justified by the sector-based mapping exercises included in GLOBE. The six targeted sectors were: finance, security, environment, migration, trade, and development. Notably, for multi-issue IOs, we included either the core bodies or the sectoral bodies for cases in which they presented a substantial and relatively autonomous entity (e.g., we targeted the specialised departments of European Commission, known as Directorate-Generals, rather than its central Secretariat-General). Additionally, we included a few more IOs to more evenly distribute the sample across the sectors included in GLOBE (see Annex 1 for a list of organizations selected).

The survey focused on IO secretariats and their related organizational units and targeted IO staff members who had a policy-oriented professional profile. Hence, we avoided purely managerial profiles, administrative support, and/or service activities with IOs, as well as temporary, short-term staff members, local employees, and consultants. Neither did we target country representatives and their accompanying staff within IOs. Instead, we strived to collect the views and opinions of experienced staff members on the future of global governance.

A key criterion for contacting IO staff members was their status as employees of a given IO included in our sample. In accordance with the survey's privacy policy, IO staff were identified by searching through publicly available information. In most cases, employee directories were pulled from LinkedIn, where users can self-identify as working for a certain institution. To avoid wrongly identifying staff, we emailed survey invitations to official institutional emails, thus ensuring that respondents really did work for a certain organization. In some cases, where full or partial employee directories were publicly available (e.g., for the European Commission's various DGs), we used these directories to complement the LinkedIn data, or they were used instead of it. Approximately 12,000 staff members from 30 IOs received personalised email invitations to participate in our survey. The emails ensured confidentiality and included an explanation of the purpose of the survey. After two rounds of emailing, we registered

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<sup>3</sup> See for example WZB's *International Authority Database* (Zürn et al. 2021), the *Transnational Access to International Organizations* (Tallberg and Sommerer 2017), or the *International Authority Project* (Hooge et al. 2017) .

1,004 full responses, resulting in a response rate of 8.4%.

The questionnaire included five parts. In the first part, there was an initial set of questions about the personal and professional characteristics of the respondents. This included one question about their personal identification in the context of their professional activity. The second part included two questions: one set asking about the importance of different global challenges that might shape the 2020s, and another set focusing on the effectiveness of different policy instruments IOs may use to advance their goals. In the first case we were interested in the respondents' perceptions of how likely a particular issue would become a challenge for global governance, and in the second case we inquired about the perceived effectiveness of each policy instrument.

The third part of the questionnaire included four questions and concentrated on staff members' opinions about their own IO. First, we asked how they perceived their IO's autonomy from member states for the different activities they usually performed. Second, we asked them to assess how their IOs would perform during the 2020 decade regarding different internal organizational aspects. Third, we asked which external factors might affect the dynamics of their organization during the current decade. In the fourth section, we asked how they perceived their IO's relations with other actors within the global governance domain in which they were embedded.

The fourth part of the questionnaire was composed of sectoral questions based on the sector to which the respondent's IO belonged. Finally, the last part of the questionnaire included two conjoined experiments for IO staff members, both designed by the WZB team. One experiment was designed to gauge staff members' perceptions of IO autonomy relating to variables such as fairness, enforcement, knowledge, and monitoring capabilities. The other experiment aimed to identify successful legitimation narratives for the justification of political authority and to examine how international legitimation narratives differ from national ones. The results of the sectoral questions and the experiments will be reported in following GLOBE papers and blogs.

This working paper provides a preliminary analysis of the 1,004 completed responses to the first three parts of the survey. Note that the reporting does not follow the order of the questions as posed to the survey participants. The next sections present aggregated results and brief discussions of the most relevant aspects of the survey. When calculating percentages for this report, we excluded answers to questions with a *'don't know'* option, unless otherwise stated. Our purpose was to examine the opinions and perceptions of IO staff members regarding the future of global governance and the main trends across policy areas, as well as to identify the current challenges confronting those staff members. Further analysis will allow us to examine the specifics of the organizations operating in each of the policy areas selected, and to develop more analytical research based on the introduction of a theoretical framework and the support of statistical methods.

# PERCEPTIONS OF GLOBAL CHALLENGES AND POLICY INSTRUMENTS

## Trends that will shape the 2020–30 decade

Previous GLOBE reports<sup>4</sup> have identified seven major trends shaping global governance (see figure 1). To understand how the urgency and likeliness of these trends is perceived from within IOs, we asked respondents to assess them from their perspective: *‘In your opinion, how likely will the following trends shape the upcoming decade 2020–30?’* Survey respondents could rate each trend on a three-point scale from ‘very likely’ to ‘not likely’.

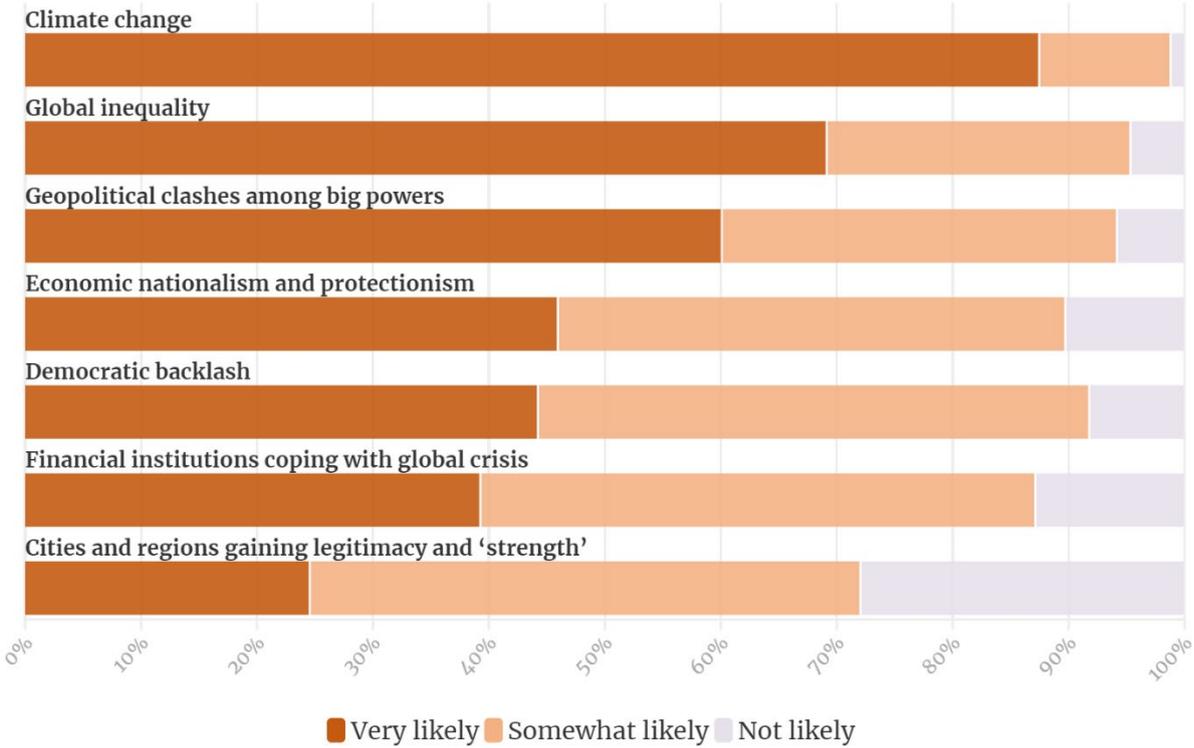


Figure 1: Trends that will shape the 2020-2030 decade

The respondents identify **climate change** – defined in the GLOBE survey as ‘climate change becoming more visible and salient worldwide’ – as the most important trend. The highest percentage of the respondents (87%) see climate change as a ‘very likely’ challenge, 11% as ‘somewhat likely’, and only 1% as ‘not likely’. In other words, virtually all respondents acknowledge the relevance of climate change as a key challenge of the decade.

Second comes **global inequality** – defined as ‘global inequality challenging global governance arrangements’ – which 69% of the respondents’ rate as ‘very likely’, 26% as ‘somewhat likely’, and 5%

<sup>4</sup> [www.globe-project.eu/en/reports\\_9705](http://www.globe-project.eu/en/reports_9705)

as *'not likely'*. Respondents rate **geopolitical clashes among big powers** – defined as ‘geopolitical clashes among big powers, creating a world increasingly split into “spheres of influence”’ – and more generally the overall geopolitical logic, third among the main global trends. This is an issue of major concern for over 60% of respondents, while 34% see it as *'somewhat likely'* and 6% as *'not likely'*.

As to the other trends, there is a group of three trends which the respondents rate in a similar manner: **rising economic nationalism and protectionism undermining global trade** (46% *'very likely'*), **democratic backlash across the world with decreasing protection for political rights** (44% *'very likely'*), and **financial institutions coping with the global crisis** (39% *'very likely'*). For these, respondents' perception of the likelihood decreases considerably, although these trends are still perceived as being likely for a significant proportion of the respondents. Finally, the trend that respondents rate as being least likely is **cities and regions gaining legitimacy and 'strength' vis-à-vis national governments** (25% *'very likely'*).

In summary, IO staff members worry most about climate change, but inequality and geopolitics will also require much attention. Notably, these findings are consistent across all sectors included in our survey.

#### **Are treaties still the gold standard? On the effectiveness of global governance instruments**

A well-functioning system of global governance is essential to address the pressing supranational problems associated with the challenges we have identified here. Collective action needs to be organized effectively to tackle climate change, international cooperation is essential to combat global inequalities, and the solution to geopolitical clashes is most likely to be found through international agreements and negotiations, for which IOs provide a natural forum. Also, IOs and states engaged in the international arena have a number of tools at their disposal to ensure a well-functioning system of global governance. Hence, we were interested in shedding light on how effective IO staff members consider these different instruments to be.

To answer this question, we listed five common instruments used in many different policy areas and asked: *'How effective do you consider the following policy instruments to be for global governance?'* The respondents could rate each instrument on a five-point scale from *'very effective'* to *'very ineffective'* (figure 2).

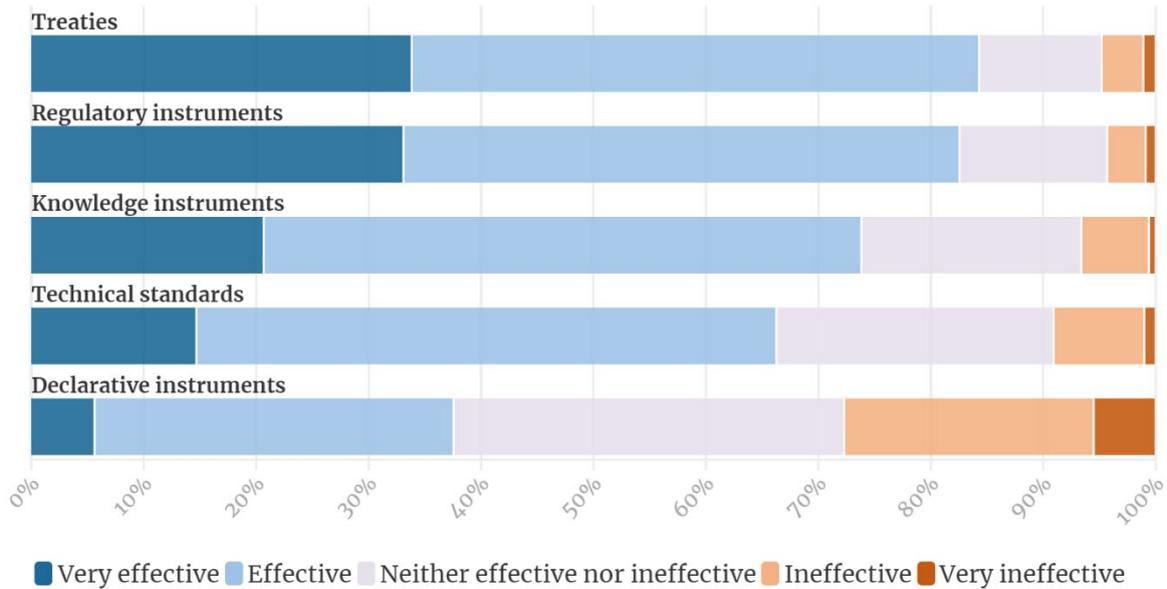


Figure 2: Effectiveness of global governance instruments

The results show significant variation, with effectiveness ratings ranging from 84% down to 38%. Most of the respondents see **treaties** – legally binding international agreements among states – as ‘*very effective*’ or ‘*effective*’ (84%), closely followed by **regulatory instruments** (83%) – directive/ binding rules by international organizations to be adopted by states – which often do not require formal agreements between states. **Knowledge-based instruments** – best practices, models, rankings, etc. – show a lower value (74% ‘*very effective*’ or ‘*effective*’), as do **technical standards** – voluntary rules by international organizations addressed mainly to private actors – which 66% of the respondents consider as ‘*very effective*’ or ‘*effective*’. Finally, the survey respondents are not very convinced of the effectiveness of **declarative instruments** – statements, resolutions, recommendations, etc. Actually, only 38% of respondents considered these instruments to be ‘*very effective*’ or ‘*effective*’.

Our results on the effectiveness of global governance instruments reinforce the view that international treaties and regulation are crucial for the effectiveness of global governance. Moreover, they suggest that IO staff members are not blind to the limits of their organizations’ competences. While the articulation and implementation of agreements between states may constitute a key component of IO activity, states clearly have the final word regarding the most relevant treaties. On the other hand, regulatory instruments – which are considered almost as effective as treaties – are in many cases developed directly, and at least partially, by IOs.

# OPINIONS ON IOS' RELATIONSHIPS WITH MEMBER STATES AND OTHER IOS

As mentioned before, IOs do not operate in a vacuum when engaging in global governance. They interact with other IOs through formal and less formal channels, they depend to varying degrees on input and guidance from their member states, and are subject to national agendas, business interests, and global public opinion. We designed a number of questions to get a better understanding of how these interactions and dependencies are perceived from within the IOs themselves.

## Free rein? Autonomy of IOs from member states

To better understand the relationship between IOs and their member states, we proposed a number of activities that IOs are typically engaged in and asked respondents to assess how autonomous their IO is in respect to member states: *'In your opinion, how autonomous do you see your organization to be from individual member states' influence in the following areas?* The respondents could rate each item on a five-point scale from *'extremely autonomous'* to *'not at all autonomous'* (figure 3).

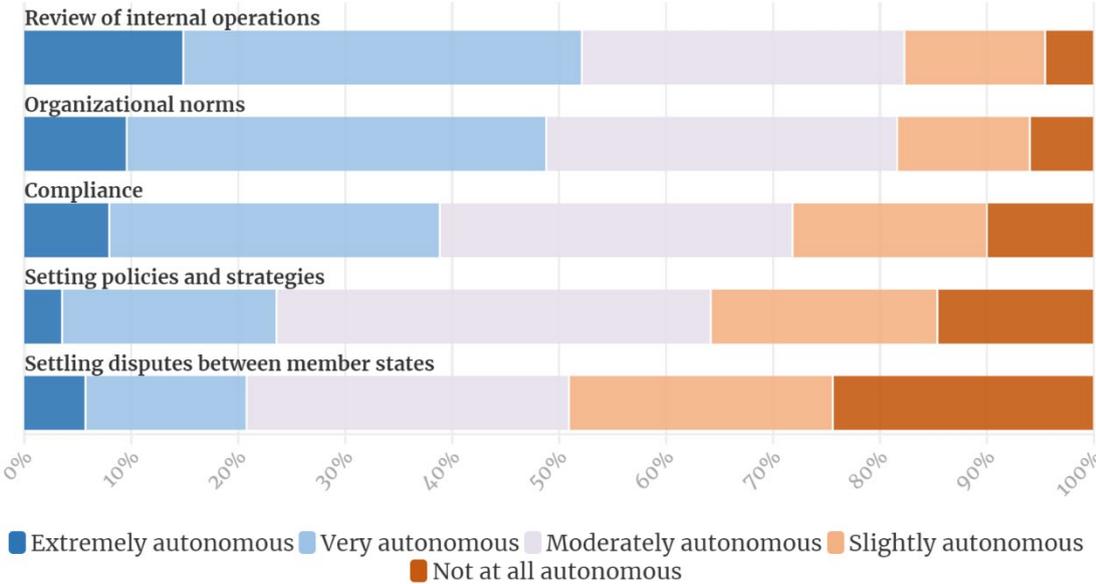


Figure 3: Autonomy of international organizations from member states in selected activities

The aggregated results are intriguing, with respondents generally rating the autonomy of their organization as high. In all cases, a majority of respondents considered their organizations in relation to member states as at least *'moderately autonomous'*, with the different answers ranging from 82% down to 51%.

IO employees perceive the highest level of autonomy for the area of **review of internal operations**. This is considered highly autonomous by 52% of the respondents (rated ‘*extremely autonomous*’ and ‘*very autonomous*’). **Organizational norms** are considered autonomous by 49% of respondents. The respondents are slightly less optimistic about the area of **compliance**: 39% of respondents consider their IO to be highly autonomous (‘*extremely autonomous*’ and ‘*very autonomous*’), while 28% consider this area as ‘*slightly autonomous*’ or ‘*not at all autonomous*’. The survey respondents are more reserved about the areas of **setting policies and strategies** (23% ‘*extremely autonomous*’ and ‘*very autonomous*’ vs 36% ‘*slightly autonomous*’ or ‘*not at all autonomous*’) and **settling disputes between member states** as less autonomous (21% ‘*extremely autonomous*’ and ‘*very autonomous*’ vs 49% ‘*slightly autonomous*’ or ‘*not at all autonomous*’). These results suggest relatively high levels of perceived autonomy regarding IOs’ internal affairs, and they also suggest a certain degree of realism that IOs are bound by their principals, and autonomy may be more limited when it comes to dealing with member states directly.

**Under pressure: External factors influencing IOs**

The following question focused on external pressures and influences that staff members expect their IOs to experience during the current decade: ‘*Over the upcoming decade (2020–30), how likely is it that your organization will suffer from?*’ The respondents were asked to assess the likelihood of five problems – previously identified by GLOBE research – becoming realities, on a three-point scale ranging from ‘*very likely*’ to ‘*not likely*’ (figure 4).

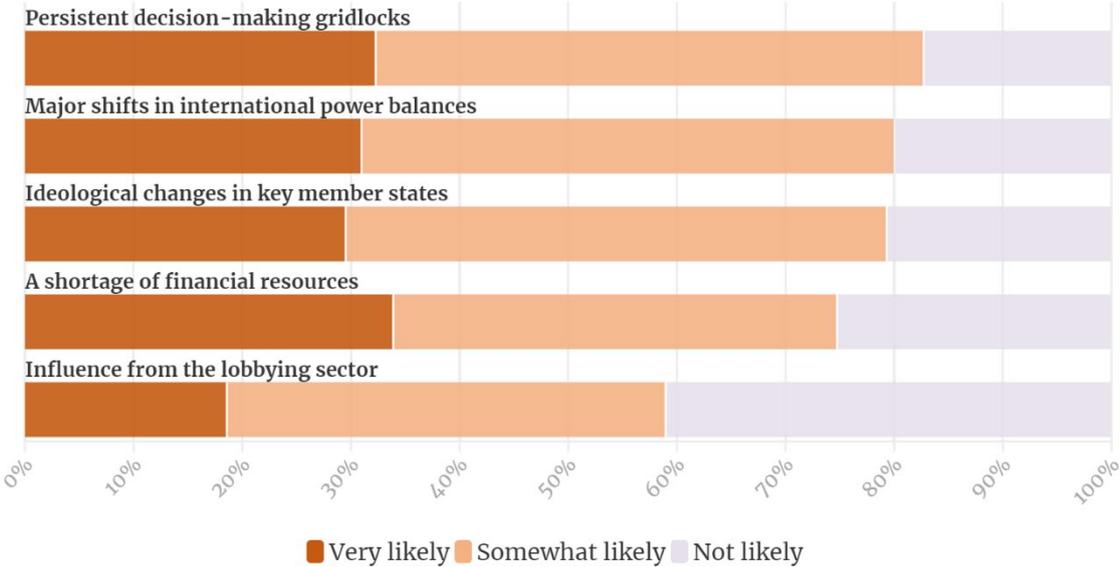


Figure 4: Future problems of international organizations

As figure 4 shows, most of the suggested problems are considered quite relevant. The responses highlight that four out of the five identified problems are especially likely: between about 75% and 80% when adding the ‘very likely’ and ‘somewhat likely’ options. Most respondents point to **persistent decision-making gridlocks**, with 82% of them rating this problem as ‘very likely’ and ‘somewhat likely’. As a second problem, **major shifts in international power balances** was rated by 80% as ‘very likely’ and ‘somewhat likely’, followed by **ideological changes in key member states**, seen by 79% as ‘very likely’ and ‘somewhat likely’. Fourth came the **shortage of financial resources** problem, which 75% rate as ‘very likely’ and ‘somewhat likely’ to become a reality. The **influence from the lobbying sector**, while still important, seems to less crucial, reaching a combined 59% when adding the ‘very likely’ and the ‘somewhat likely’ ratings.

**Ready to mingle: Few problems of interactions between IOs**

Lastly, we were interested to gauge perceptions of IO staff regarding their relations with other IOs. We focused on several potential problems that might emerge, which were related to the interactions of their own organization with other IOs: ‘*When your organization interacts with other international organizations, how problematic do you think the following challenges are?*’ The respondents had to rate each item on a five-point scale from ‘very problematic’ to ‘not problematic’ (figure 5).

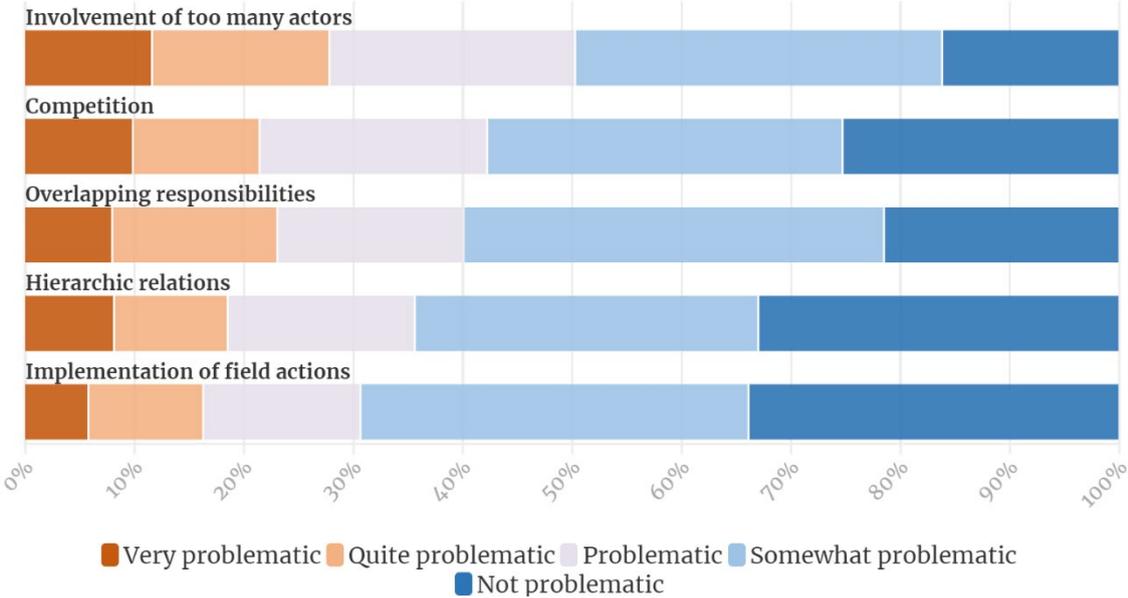


Figure 5: Perceptions about problems related to interactions between international organizations

In general, interactions between IOs are not perceived as very problematic. The most problematic case, as perceived by staff members, is the **involvement of too many actors**. This is seen as ‘very problematic’ by 12%, ‘quite problematic’ by 16%, and ‘problematic’ by 22%. These three levels of rating together represent only 50% of respondents, while an additional 35% considered this problem as

'*somewhat problematic*', and 15% considered it as '*not problematic*'. In any case, it seems that the concentration of participants in some global policy areas can become a significant difficulty, either because of related coordination or transaction costs, or just because of competition. Actually, the respondents rated **competition** as the second most problematic challenge to IO interactions, which 10% saw as '*very problematic*', 12% as '*quite problematic*', and 21% as '*problematic*'. It might be that competition can be related to the concentration of actors in this specific area, although concentration is not always related to competition.

These two perceived difficulties were followed by the problem of **overlapping responsibilities**, which 8% see as '*very problematic*', 15% as '*quite problematic*', and by 17% as '*problematic*'. This can also be considered as a problem related to the involvement of different IOs in similar issues or in similar policy areas, and those IOs having very similar responsibilities to cope with the same global challenges. The perception of overcrowding can be manifested from different directions – the high concentration of actors, competition, or the overlapping of tasks – but as a whole, these results indicate the perception of a particular problem that is probably more acute in global governance than in other levels of government, where the hierarchical nature of public administration prevents some of these effects.

Finally, there are the two less-perceived problems for cooperation between IOs: the existence of hierarchic relations and the implementation of field actions. Both appear significantly less relevant from the IO staff's point of view. In the case of **hierarchic relations**, only 35% of respondents consider these as '*very problematic*', '*quite problematic*', or as '*problematic*', while a majority of respondents see them as '*not problematic*' (33%) or only '*somewhat problematic*' (31%). As to the challenges related to the **implementation of field actions**, only a small proportion of respondents (30%) consider it as a problem ('*problematic*' 14%, '*quite problematic*' 10%, or '*very problematic*' 6%). In turn, most of the respondents do not consider interaction challenges related to the implementation of field actions to be a significant problem. This is also an interesting result, as implementation problems, which are very common at various levels for most public policies, do not emerge as very relevant issues. To the contrary, the proliferation of actors and related problems of competition and overlapping responsibilities are perceived as more pressing difficulties.

## VIEWS ON IOS’ INTERNAL MATTERS AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHALLENGES

Having examined the broader global context in which IOs operate, as well as their relationships with other stakeholders, we now turn our attention to staff members’ perceptions regarding internal matters and the organizational challenges likely to be experienced by IOs in the current decade.

### No lack of challenges: Internal problems of IOs

For the next question, we focused on staff perceptions of potential problems their IO might face in the current decade: *‘In your opinion, how often do you think that your organization will face any of the following problems until 2030?’* Respondents were asked to rate the frequency of five common IO problems, based on a 5-point scale ranging from *‘almost always’* to *‘never’* (figure 6).

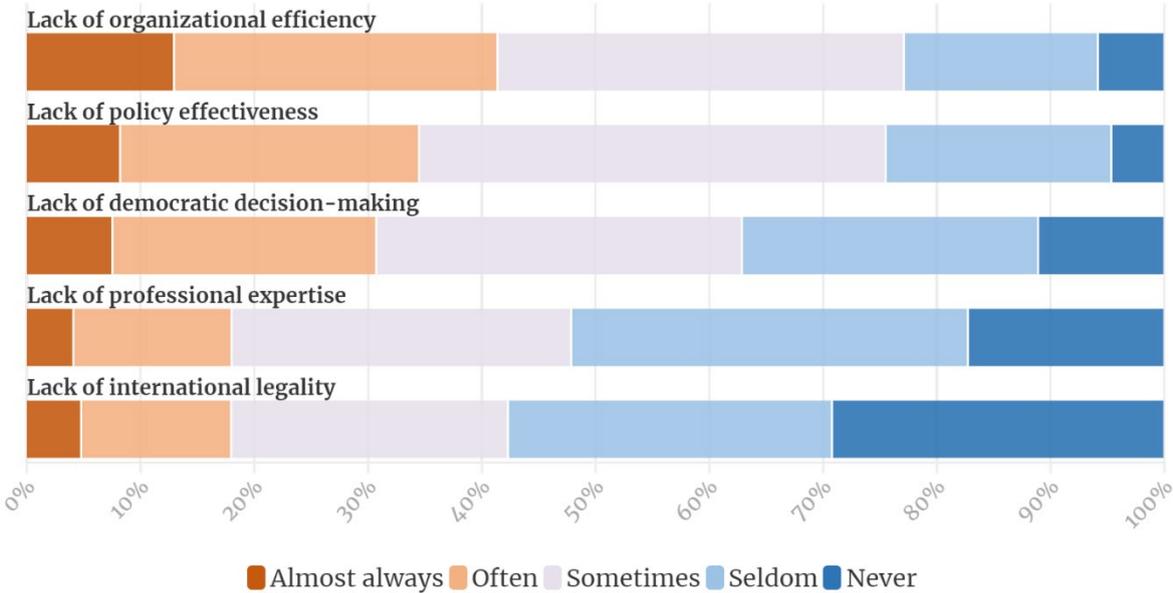


Figure 6: Main problems which international organizations will face before 2030

Survey respondents point to the **lack of organizational efficiency** as the most relevant internal problem (41% responded *‘almost always’* or *‘often’*). This challenge is followed by the **lack of policy effectiveness** (34%) and the **lack of democratic decision-making** (31%). **Lack of professional expertise** and **lack of international legality** (*‘almost always’* or *‘often’* both rated 18%) are seen as less problematic. In this sense, it is quite significant that the concerns about organizational efficiency rank first among the list of five problems presented to respondents to assess. Also, the second most important problem, lack of policy effectiveness, is a type of internal problem related to managerial and policy implementation. In contrast, problems related to the legitimacy to act (lack of international legality) or to the professional capacities (lack of professional expertise), are ranked very low.

**A bright future: IOs stand for evidence-based policies**

We also asked IO staff members about the future of their organizations during the 2020–30 decade. We formulated a number of scenarios their IOs might experience, and asked how likely they perceived them to be: *‘Over the upcoming decade (2020–30), how likely do you think it is that your organization will...’* The respondents were asked to rank them on a three-point scale ranging from *‘very likely’* to *‘not likely’* (figure 7).

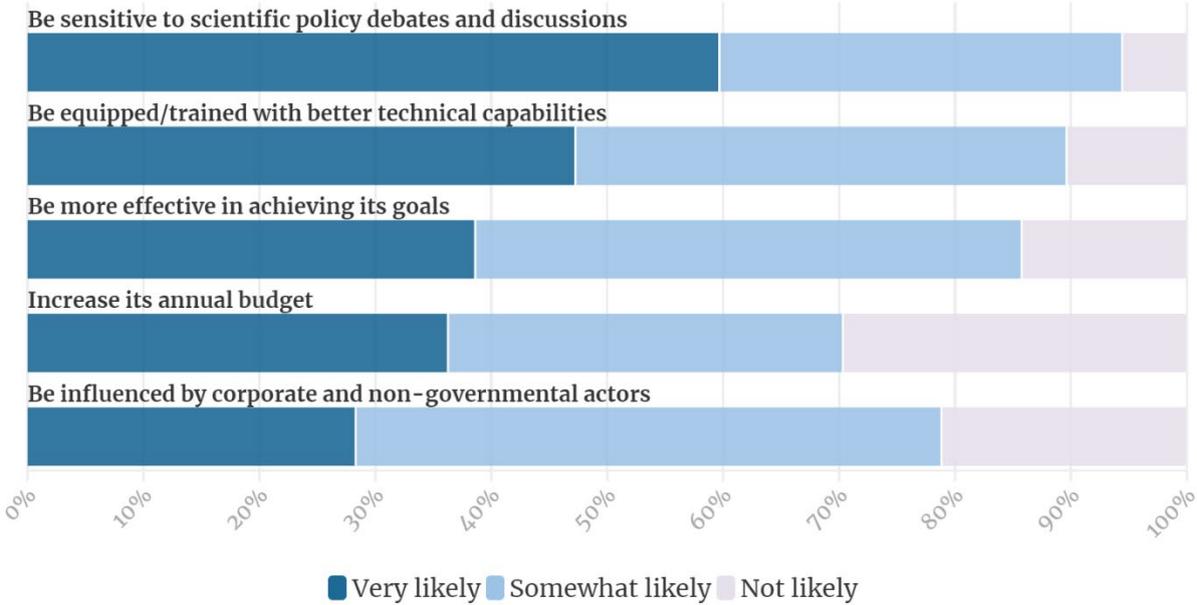


Figure 7: How will international organizations evolve over the 2020–30 decade?

Staff members are overwhelmingly optimistic that their organizations will **be sensitive to scientific policy debates and discussions**: 94% of respondents consider it as *‘very likely’* or *‘somewhat likely’*. In an era of post-truth politics and increasing politicization of IOs, this is an unexpectedly optimistic outlook, although perhaps the reason for the high rating is that respondents perceive the current environment as being detached from science, and consider that it can only get better. Second, there was the likelihood to **be equipped/trained with better technical capabilities**, which 47% see as *‘very likely’* and 42% as *‘somewhat likely’*. This answer complements the previous one, as scientific and technological resources combine easily in the respondents’ perception to make IOs stronger. However, it may also be that staff are dissatisfied with the current technical capabilities, and what we are really measuring here is their hope or desire for improvement.

Other answers also give relatively high levels of likelihood among staff members: 39% of respondents see it as *‘very likely’* and 47% as *‘somewhat likely’* that the organization will **be more effective in achieving its goals**. This is very interesting, as respondents tend to perceive as highly probable that their organizations will be better equipped to cope with relevant challenges, thanks to science and technical capabilities, but that their organization could experience effectiveness problems in achieving their goals.

The other two dimensions show lower levels of likelihood. The respondents are undecided about whether their IO would be able to increase its budget, with 36% seeing it as ‘*very likely*’, 34% as ‘*somewhat likely*’, and 30% as ‘*not likely*’. The views are very divided here, without clear tendencies. Finally, 28% of respondents see the risk that their IO could be influenced by corporate and non-governmental actors as ‘*very likely*’, 51% as ‘*somewhat likely*’, and 21% as ‘*not likely*’. Similarly, we find that the risk of lobbying (capture or strong influence by special interest groups) is perceived as relatively low, in particular when compared with the other dimensions.

**DEMOGRAPHICS**

In this section, we report on the demographics of the survey respondents. Although we presented the questionnaire to a large number of staff members, the distribution of those who answered is not randomised and is unlikely to be representative. For this reason, and given the nature of the survey, we assume that some unknown biases might be present in our sample. However, the breadth of demographic answers suggests that we managed to survey a rich and diverse pool of respondents. With the purpose of comparing our resulting distribution to an approximated target population distribution, we take as a proxy the reference of official staff statistics from UN organizations, which included data on 116,388 staff members from 38 organizations for the year 2020<sup>5</sup>. About half of these organizations are included in our sample. As the comparative percentage figures in this section show, we approximated the composition of the UN workforce to a reasonable level.

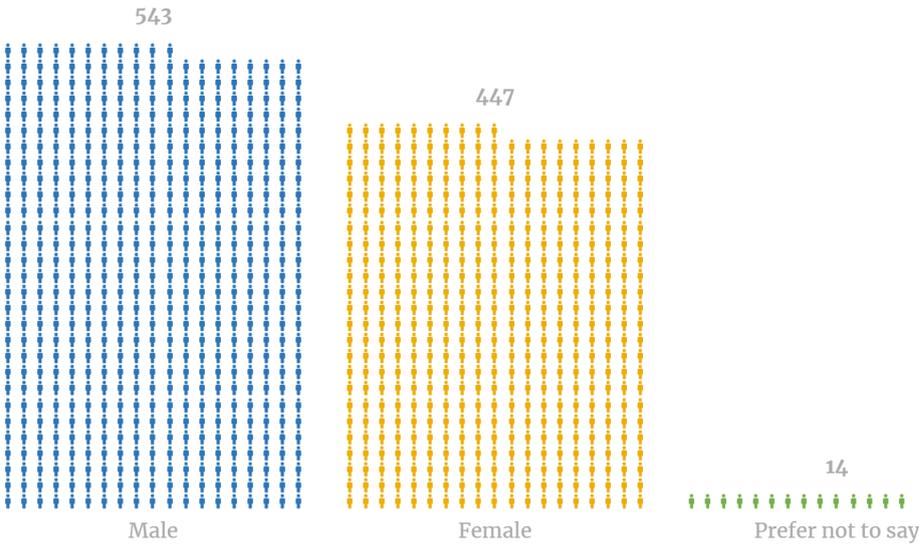


Figure 8: Gender distribution of respondents

<sup>5</sup> See UN System Chief Executives Board of Coordination (CEB) website, Human Resources Statistics (<https://unsceb.org/human-resources-statistics>). Last access 14 January 2022.

Regarding gender distribution (figure 8), the survey was completed by 543 male and 447 female respondents. In addition, 14 preferred not to identify their gender, while no one opted for the ‘other’ option. This represents a distribution of 54.1% men and 44.5% women. Comparing our numbers to the gender distribution of the UN system staff, we find a very similar pattern (54.9% male and 45.1% female). It is also noteworthy that among younger cohorts, women represent the majority, both in our sample and in the UN organizations as a whole.

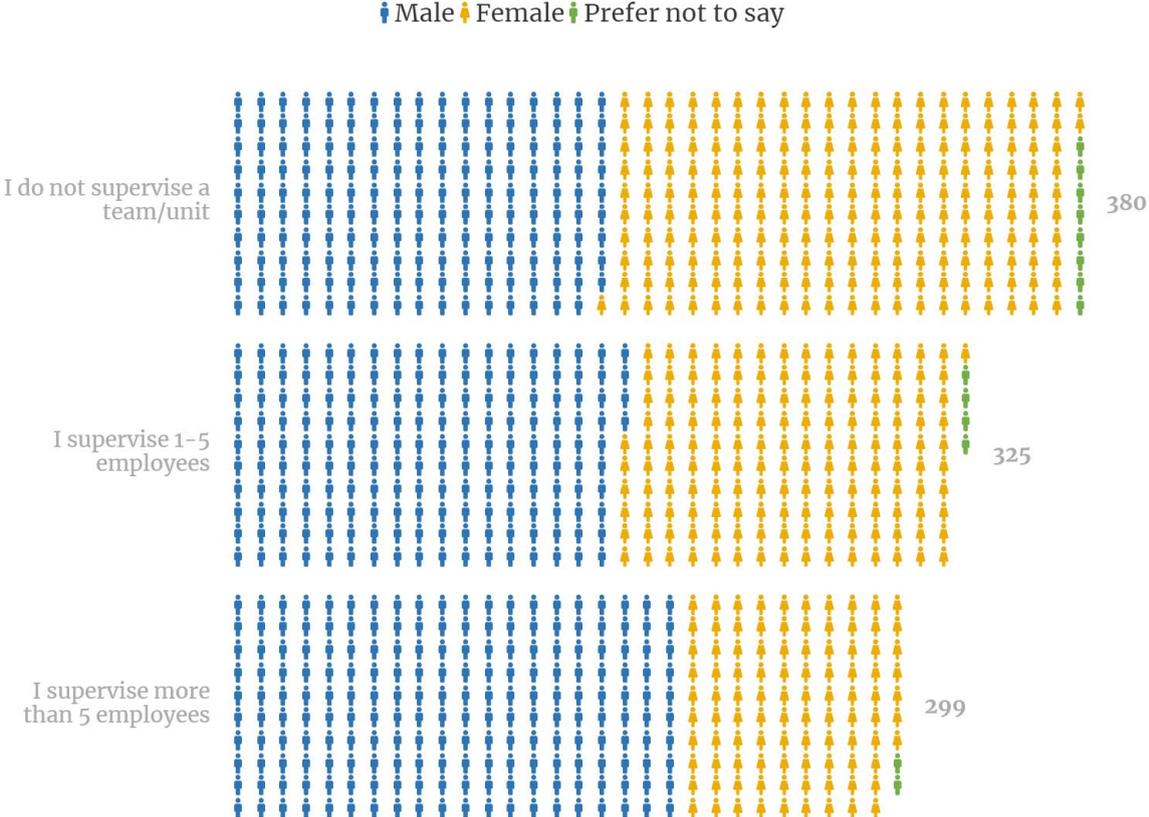
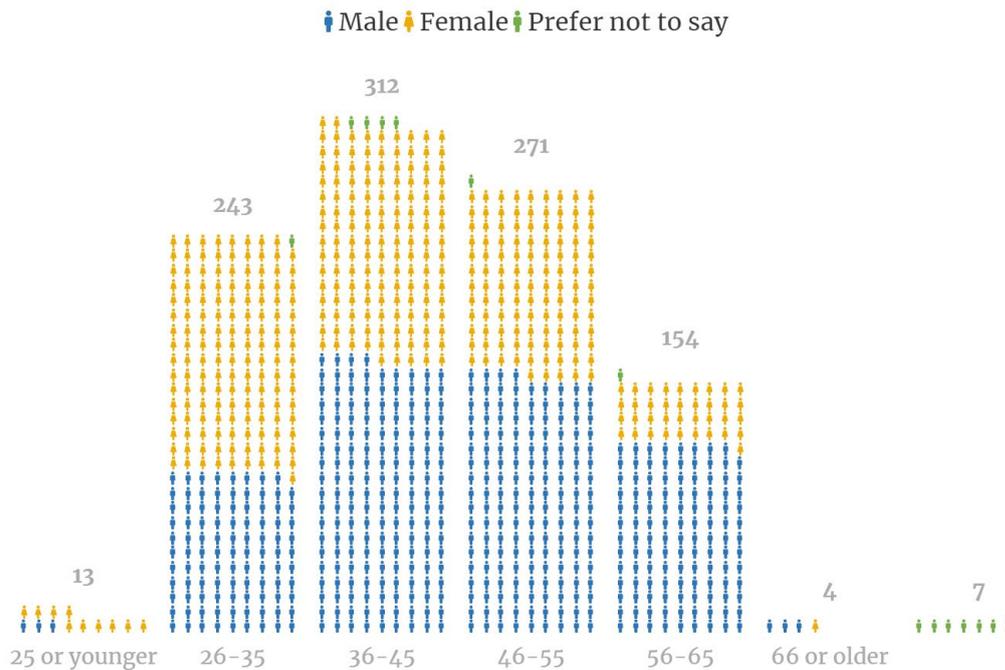


Figure 9: Seniority level of respondents

In the survey, we also asked about the level of seniority that respondents have within the hierarchy of their IO. As a proxy for this, we asked about the number of employees supervised by the respondent (figure 9). Of the respondents, 38% did not have any supervisory responsibilities, 32% supervised between one and five employees, and 30% supervised more than five employees. The significant proportion of respondents having a responsibility to supervise other employees (62%) indicates that the seniority of those staff members who answered the questionnaire is quite high. When considering the gender gap across the different levels, it also emerges that a higher share of male staff members has supervisory responsibilities, with a proportion of one to two in the highest level bracket.



*Figure 10: Age distribution of respondents*

Looking at the age distribution of respondents, we find that 57% of our respondents are younger than 46 years old, while only 16% of the sample are over 55 (figure 10). As we only targeted active personnel, it is to be expected that very few respondents fall into the over-65 age bracket. The reported age distribution is quite similar to the age distribution of staff in UN organizations, in particular for those over 45 years old. The only difference is that we observe more younger respondents under 36 (28%), compared to the age distribution in the UN organizations (12%).

Figure 10 also shows that the proportion of women decreases significantly with increasing seniority. While women younger than 36 years old are in a clear majority (60%), their numbers decrease as we move up the seniority ladder. Actually, for staff members over 55, the proportion of women is only 25%. This can be related to changing trends in gender policies among IOs, but could also be attributed to many other factors that will be the subject of future research.

From the comparison with the population distribution of the UN organizations, we may infer that the distribution of individuals in our sample does not differ very much from the general distribution of the population in a similar – but not identical – group of IOs. The pattern of a higher proportion of female staff members in younger cohorts is also mirrored in the UN organizations. This suggests that opinions and perceptions expressed by respondents in the survey originate from a similar distribution of age and gender in the general population of IOs that we refer to.

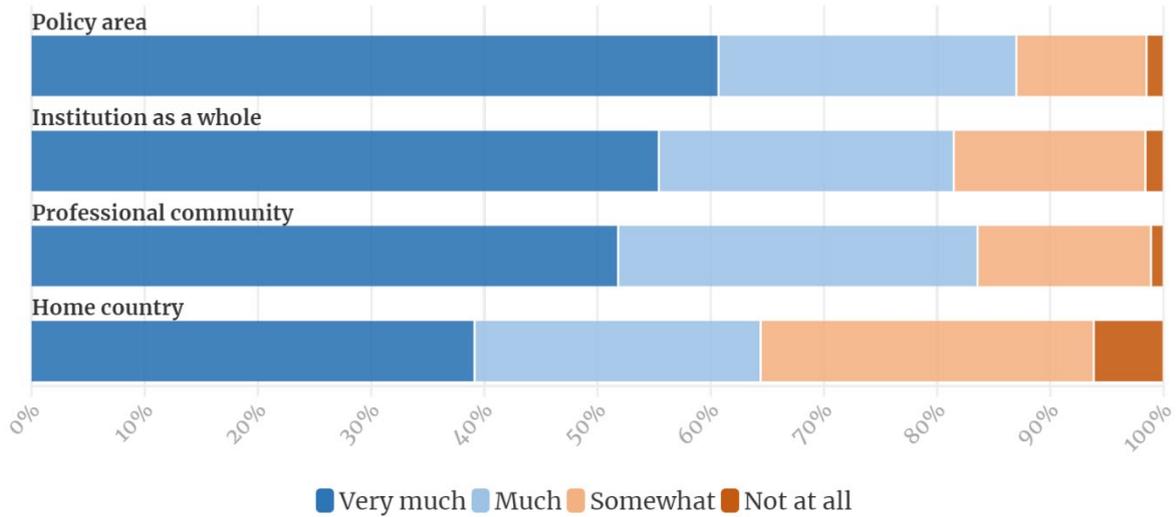


Figure 11: Level of identification by respondents

In order to get a better understanding of the identification patterns of our survey respondents, we asked them to what extent they identify with the different social dimensions that can be related to their working environment (figure 11). We were interested in the intensity of staff identification for each dimension, taking into account that having multiple identifications was possible. Indeed, many respondents recognise strong identification with several of these dimensions. Results show that 87% of the respondents identify *‘very much’* or *‘much’* with their **policy area**, followed by those who identify *‘very much’* or *‘much’* with their **professional community** (84%).

These are very intriguing results, insofar as they indicate a strong connection between the policy sector they work in, the professional community they belong to, and how their identity is framed. Also, their identification with their IO as an **institution** is quite high (81%), and very close to the previous two (policy area and professional community). On the other hand, identification with the **home country** is the least intense preference among all the options (64%), although this majority still affirms that respondents identify *‘very much’* or *‘much’* with their home country.

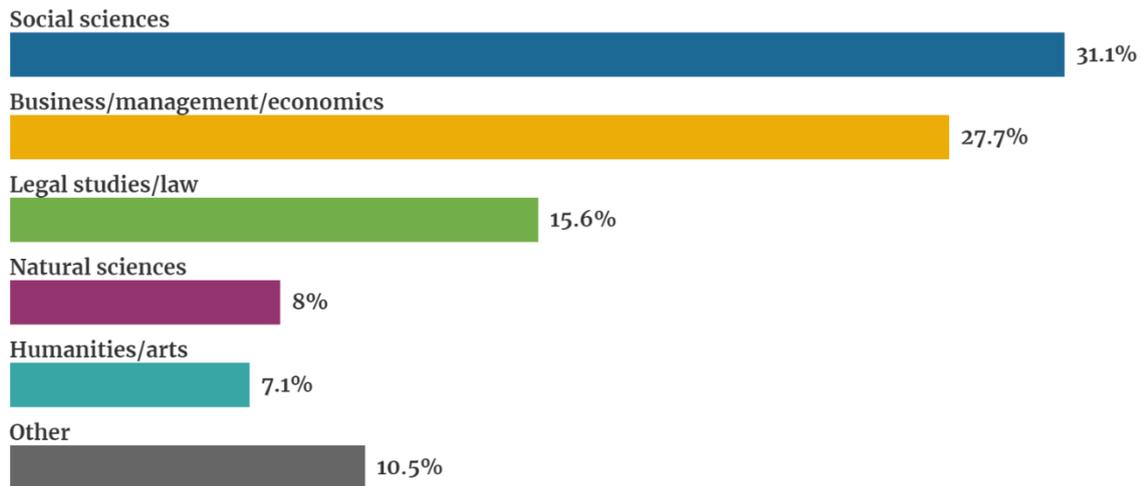


Figure 12: Educational background of respondents

Examining other demographic characteristics of respondents, such as educational background, we find a significant concentration of respondents in particular disciplines (figure 12). The survey offered eight different options: four fields in the social sciences and humanities, and four in science and technology. Respondents could select several options. Most surveyed employees had a background in **social sciences** (31.1%) or **business/ management/ economics** (27.7%), followed by **legal studies/ law** (15.6%). Less than 10% studied either **natural sciences** (8.0%), which included studies of sustainability, or the **humanities/ arts** (7.1%). Unfortunately, we do not have similar information from the UN organizations to compare this distribution. The concentration of educational background in social sciences is not surprising, given the high level of policy and managerial tasks in most IOs and the typical profiles they attract.

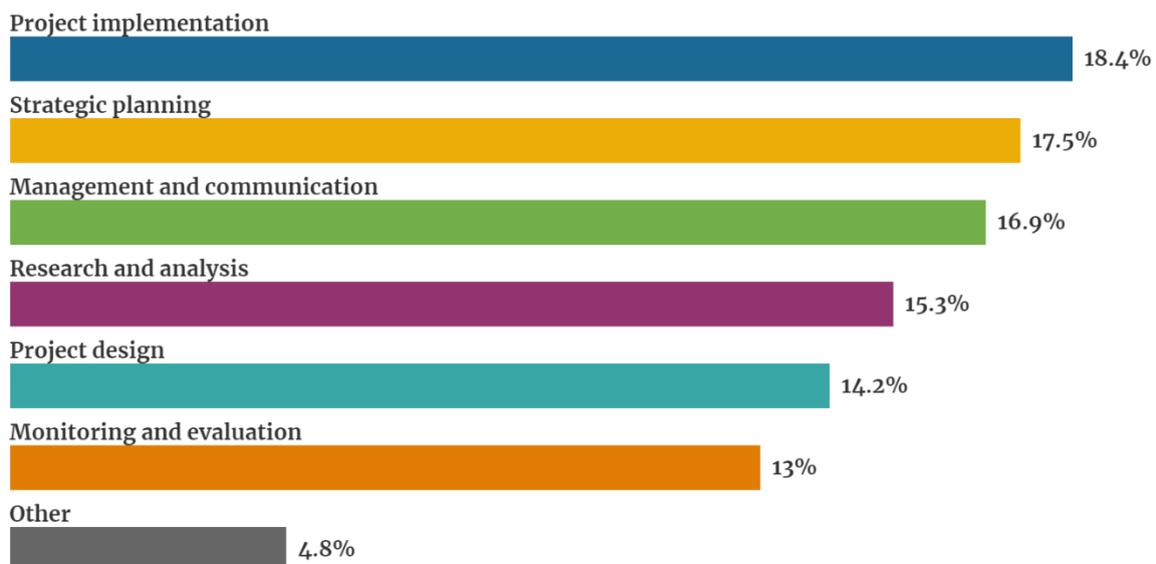


Figure 13: Most common work activities of respondents

Finally, when we asked about the characteristics of the respondents' work activities, we offered answer options covering most of the tasks and responsibilities that are common within IOs. Respondents were asked to select up to three options, as we expected that in many cases staff would be involved in more than one type of activity.

As figure 13 shows, the most common activities – in relative terms – were **project implementation** (18.4%) followed by **strategic planning** (17.5%), **management and communication** (16.9%), and **research and analysis** (15.3%). Moreover, we find that staff members are usually involved in more than one type of activity, with an average of 2.4 different work activities per respondent. When adding together all multi-choice answers (so total percentages exceed 100%), results show that half of the respondents work in the area of **project implementation** (50.2%). This is followed by **strategic planning** (47.8%), **management and communication** (46.1%), and **research and analysis** (41.7%). Only a few respondents indicated that they were involved in **other** work tasks, suggesting that the tasks we included in the questionnaire covered most of their activities.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

In our survey, which was carried out between June and October of 2021 by the GLOBE team at IBEL, we examined 1,004 IO staff members' perceptions of the future of global governance and related problems. The results obtained shed light on how some global challenges are perceived by IO staff members, and also on how they envisage the potential of global governance structures, tools, and goals to address those challenges in the current decade. First, we were interested in the opinion of staff members about what are going to be the major global challenges for this decade. The survey reveals that IO staff are sensitive to global trends and challenges, notably climate change, global inequalities, and geopolitical clashes. Respondents are aware of certain organizational shortcomings as well as the risks of an unfavourable external environment undermining the work of IOs. They are nevertheless surprisingly hopeful regarding the prospect of evidence-based policymaking; the effectiveness of international instruments, such as treaties and regulation; the autonomy of their IOs in relation to member states and lobbying influences, and their interactions with other IOs.

In detail, the effectiveness of global governance is a major concern for IOs themselves, and is also a highly discussed topic among academics. IO staff members were asked to identify which instruments are effective in global governance and which are not effective. Although many respondents do not deny the effectiveness of the policy instruments we suggested, they largely agree that treaties and regulations are the most effective instruments in global governance. Both state-backed international treaties and IO-promoted regulations are considered similarly effective, and are not seen as opposing each other.

Despite the highly prominent and decisive role of member states in most IOs, staff members have a perception that IOs are relatively autonomous in many aspects, in particular those related to internal

organizational matters. On the other hand, they are particularly concerned about the difficulties of policy effectiveness and the negative effect of poor organizational efficiency. We observe that staff members do not perceive the level of the IOs' autonomy from states as the main obstacle to pursuing their global governance goals, although they are particularly concerned about the existing internal difficulties of transforming the current levels of autonomy into an effective design and of developing global public policies. As many IOs are quite large organizations with complex managerial and procedural structures, such risks are perceived as particularly salient by IO staff members.

Staff members continue to perceive internal difficulties as major constraints to the effective performance of IOs in the near future. This emerged when they were asked about the future problems their organizations might confront. However, in this 'near future' framework, they also consider the role of states as a source of potential problems, for example, due to ideological shifts of geopolitical tensions. Against such problems, respondents expect that their IOs will be better equipped in the future, with stronger scientific and technical knowledge, capable of reacting to such problems and providing effective added value to their involvement in different global governance sectors. Finally, when asked about which problems they perceive in the interactions with other IOs, staff members tend to highlight the large number of actors involved and the problems deriving from such cases. This is a particularly interesting finding, as it signals a very different policy environment compared with other levels of government, in which hierarchical aspects are much more salient.

We find that respondents identify more with their professional community and the policy area in which they are involved than with their own institution. Also, identification with the home country is less relevant for many IO staff members. Altogether, their answers indicate the emergence of a strong policy-sector identity among those directly involved in global governance.

In this paper, we have been exploring and discussing the main aggregated results of the survey to identify certain common perceptions among IOs staff members. Although the surveyed staff population is not fully representative, we are encouraged by the fact that the obtained age and gender distributions quite accurately resemble the distribution of the UN organizations. Still, inferences from the results should be made with great caution. Further research will explore variations in perceptions across policy areas as well as the role of a particular variable in influencing perceptions of IOs staff members.

The aggregated results of the survey examined in this working paper reveal some interesting elements about the perceptions of staff members on the future of global governance and the role IOs may play. The findings may easily generate exciting dialogues with some of the current theoretical debates on global governance, relating to issues such as the legitimacy, efficiency, or autonomy of IOs. The answers provided by respondents to our questions may contribute to exploring new perspectives related to the relevance of these issues, or to better understand which IOs mechanisms of intervention we can expect to be in operation in the near future.

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## **ANNEX 1.**

### **LIST OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS INCLUDED IN THE SURVEY**

- African Union (AU)
- Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)
- Bank of International Settlements (BIS)
- C40 Cities
- Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)
- European Commission Directorate-General for Climate Action (DG CLIMA)
- European Commission Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME)
- European Commission Directorate-General for Trade (DG TRADE)
- European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)
- Financial Stability Board (FSB)
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
- Inter-American Development Bank (IADB)
- International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)
- International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)
- International Labour Organization (ILO)
- International Monetary Fund (IMF)
- International Organization for Migration (IOM)
- International Organization of Securities Commissions (IOSCO)
- New Development Bank (NDB)
- Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)
- Organization of American States (OAS)
- Southern Common Market (Mercosur)
- The World Bank
- United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
- United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)
- World Trade Organization (WTO)