

Representation on the Global Stage

As the world becomes more globally connected, international institutions should reflect the demographics for which they are making decisions. Every constituent should feel represented in organizations that affect their everyday life. Even though this should be the case it has been proven that this is not true in some international organizations. At the international level, some demographics that could feel underrepresented are race, nationality, and gender. These demographics tend to overlap depending on the constituent which makes some civil society actors feel as if they are even at a greater disadvantage than their peers. Some have argued that the concept of [representation](#) has been neglected in the ongoing debates about good governance and democratic deficits within IOs. It is easy for concepts like representation to be neglected in discussions about good governance and democratic deficits when the underrepresented people are not present.

The staff recruitment process for international organizations like the United Nations heavily focuses on education and experience. Access to higher education and job opportunities in which people can gain experience vary based on location. Therefore, the concept of representation in international organizations is dependent upon the said demographic's access to education and job opportunities. A study found that “variables measuring countries' supply of educated candidates have no particular impact. Yet countries which possess a higher supply of candidates with crucial experience within or around the UN system are more highly represented.”¹ This study shows that a country's ability to be highly represented in the UN is heavily influenced by the accessibility of job opportunities that are within or around the UN system. The process of joining the UN is competitive, while it has been discussed that it is easier to be a part of the UN staff if you know someone already in the system along with merit bureaucracy. With these components, if they are part of the same demographics that are generally well represented, it will be harder for the other underrepresented groups to infiltrate.

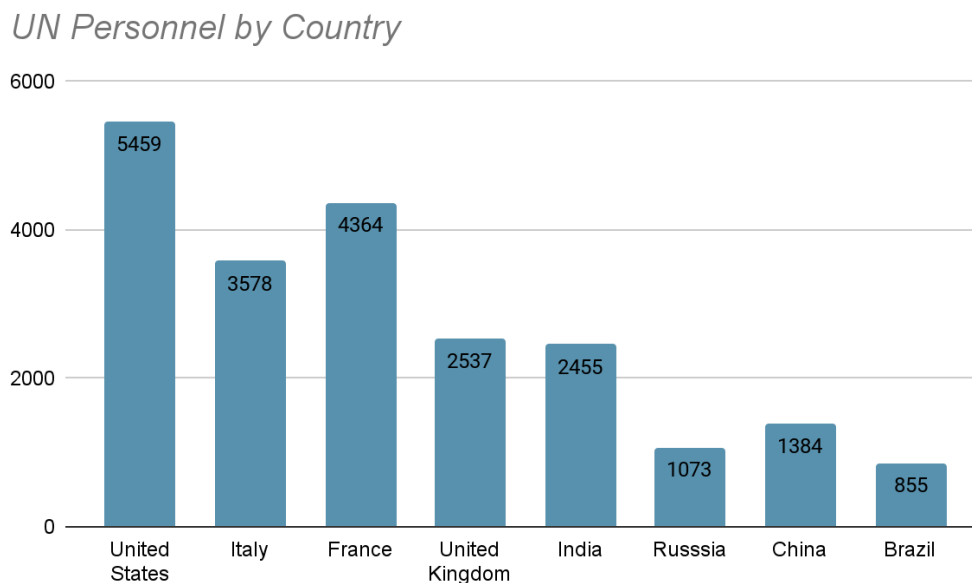
A demographic that may be underrepresented in international organizations is nationalities. Even though the UN includes 193 member states, that does not mean they are all adequately represented and share equal power. “Nationals from emerging powers are still strongly underrepresented in international secretariats in comparison with those from established powers.”² Figure 1 shows that countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, and countries from the European Union have a higher personnel amount in comparison to emerging countries like those of BRIC. This underrepresentation has led [countries like Brazil, Russia,](#)

¹ Steffen Eckhard and Yves Steinebach. “Staff Recruitment and Geographical Representation in

² Michal Parizek and Matthew D Stephen. “The Long March through the Institutions: Emerging Powers and the Staffing of International Organizations.” *Cooperation and Conflict* 56, no. 2 (June 2021): 204–23. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836720966017>.

[India, and China \(BRIC\) to make it a foreign policy priority to secure greater control over key international institutions, and this can only come at the expense of established powers such as the United States \(US\) and countries of the European Union.](#) From this, it is understood that representation in international organizations has its perks as it allows countries for more control and power. Additionally, it allows for their voices to be heard on the global stage which allows for more perspectives rather than the constant established powers' influence.

Figure 1:

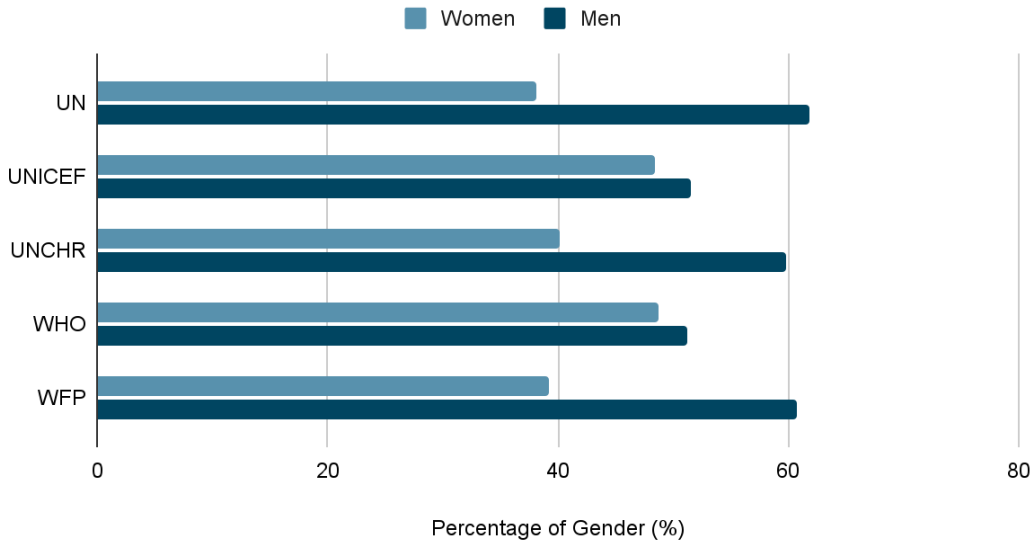


Data sourced from: <https://unsceb.org/hr-nationality>

A group that is commonly underrepresented on the international level and national level is women. Women should always be included at every level because they make up society just as much as men. Women's voices should not only be heard but valued because they offer new perspectives as opposed to their male counterparts. Over the years women have been included in more leadership roles and executive positions, but there is still work to do. In the UN, [women](#) make up 45% of personnel while men make up the remaining 55%. Figure 2 displays that in the UN system, men hold the majority of the roles as in some organizations there is almost a fifty-fifty split between men and women, and in others, there is a drastic amount of roles fulfilled more by men. Even though this is a glimpse into the UN system, the trend does stand pretty clear. In [organizations](#) like the International Organization for Migration and the International Labour Organization, the percentage of female workers is higher.

Figure 2:

Gender Representation in the UN System



Data sourced from: <https://unsceb.org/hr-composition>

Every group should have some sort of representation at the international level. It is essential that people feel represented on the global stage since our actions affect each other. Having more representation in these institutions allows for all ways of life to be considered. To ensure that nations or nationalities feel represented at the international level, representation should be based on merit and the population of that nation. This could be achieved by having a certain quota for certain roles within international organizations. Likewise, to guarantee the representation of women a quota could be useful. Women should also be supported within these institutions to promote inclusion and to promote to younger generations that there is space for them on the international level. Representation is a concept that should not be forgotten when assessing good governance because good representation allows for more than one party to govern.

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