

An independent and accessible investigation function

November 2021

MANDATE

In line with UNHCR's [Policy on Independent Oversight](#) and [Administrative Instruction on Conducting Investigations in UNHCR](#), the Inspector General's Office (IGO) has the sole authority in UNHCR to investigate suspected misconduct involving UNHCR personnel, partners, and other parties with whom UNHCR has a contractual arrangement (such as vendors and other contractors), subject to the conditions in those agreements.¹

Within the IGO, the Investigation Service is responsible for receiving, assessing and, where appropriate, investigating such allegations of misconduct. It also gathers, collates, processes and analyses information in order to prevent or mitigate risks of, or detect or disrupt misconduct.

MISCONDUCT

The United Nations defines misconduct as "any failure by a staff member to comply with his or her obligations under the Charter of the United Nations, the Staff Regulations and Staff Rules or other administrative issuances, or to observe the standards of conduct expected of an international civil servant."

Types of misconduct may include:

- Sexual exploitation and abuse of people of concern.
- Fraud (e.g. falsifying a document to obtain a benefit).
- Corruption (e.g. taking money from refugees or others).
- Fraud related to the registration and resettlement process
- Theft and embezzlement (e.g. stealing equipment or money).
- Workplace harassment (e.g. treating staff members in an unfair manner).
- Sexual harassment (e.g. unwelcome sexual behaviour).
- Abuse of authority (e.g. showing favouritism or discrimination against staff).
- Assault upon or threats to others.
- Misuse of UNHCR assets.
- Breach of confidentiality.

All UNHCR staff members and others working with UNHCR commit to uphold these standards through the [Code of Conduct](#).

PROFESSIONALISM

IGO investigations are conducted effectively and in accordance with professional and internationally recognized investigative standards, consistent with applicable regulations and rules, administrative procedures as well as due process requirements. The purpose of the investigation is the search for the truth, to provide a full, fair and clear picture of all the facts involving the alleged misconduct.

The rights of all participants are respected during the investigative process, including the presumption of innocence of the alleged perpetrator, the principle of 'do no harm' in respect to all participants, and a victim-centred approach towards aggrieved individuals. All investigation participants, are treated with respect for their dignity, safety and wellbeing. Age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and other individual factors that may lead to increased vulnerability (including disability, socio-economic circumstances, legal status, health status) are taken into consideration at all times.

INDEPENDENCE

The Investigation Service works independently, without prejudice. Investigations are carried out free of interference from any internal party (including the High Commissioner and senior managers) or external party (including governments and other actors).

GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE

The IGO has made strong efforts to ensure that investigative staff are as accessible as possible. Staffing has been regionalized, to ensure that UNHCR colleagues have the possibility to access the investigation function as directly as possible. The Investigation Service is continuing to work on increasing its presence in other regions during the coming years.

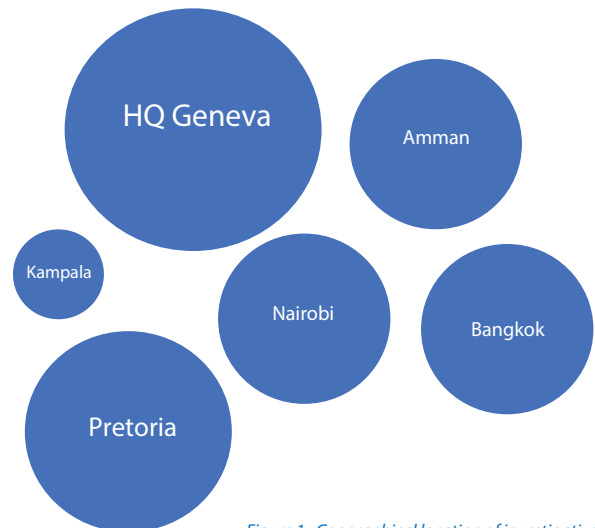


Figure 1: Geographical location of investigative staff

DIVERSITY

The IGO is committed to ensuring that UNHCR colleagues feel comfortable and trust the IGO to deal with complaints of all forms of misconduct in a manner that is fair and impartial, ensuring due process rights whilst having a victim-centred approach. The investigative process is multi-layered and subject to many levels of quality assurance, oversight and review, including the independent UN internal justice system.

The IGO recognizes the benefits of diversity and has been making progress on this in recent years. Investigators are now majority female; with a wide age distribution; and from a range of geographic, national, ethnic, cultural and sexual orientation backgrounds.

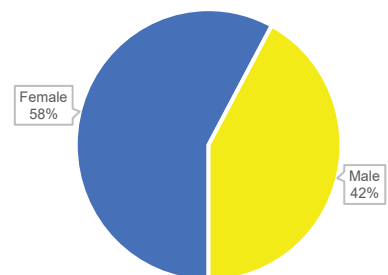
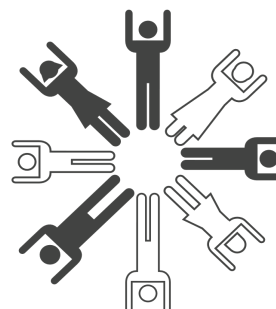


Figure 2: Investigative staff by gender

With an ongoing commitment to improve, the IGO continues to further develop a diverse pool of future leaders for the investigation function.



The IGO has professional criteria for the application of skilled resources for complaints and investigations. Investigations include inputs and reviews by a diverse group of IGO colleagues, to ensure the right quality of investigative response and achieve a just outcome from the investigations of complaints. The IGO's improving diversity ensures that the available talent for these purposes is increasing.

¹ For misconduct conducted by other parties and integrity issues not amounting to misconduct, the IGO has no formal mandate or remit, although it does provide support and advice.