Geographical Representation at WHO

Strengthening a balanced and inclusive global workforce

In the context of organizational restructuring and enhanced focus on workforce composition

8 May 2026

Member State Consultation session

World Health Organization



Strengthening Workforce Balance: Why Representation Matters

Relevance of Diversity

A diverse workforce ensures context-aware policy advice and strengthens response across different cultural and political environments.

Credibility and Trust

Representation signals inclusiveness, increasing Member States' confidence in the organization's neutrality and global mandate.

Impact Through Representation

Diverse perspectives enhance problem-solving and decision-making, improving global health outcomes through stronger collaboration.



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Where We Stand - Current Status

Current Representation Status

As of 31 December 2025, 66% of countries are well represented, while 34% are un/underrepresented.

Operational Implications

The projection drives targeted actions to improve representation and prevent widening gaps.

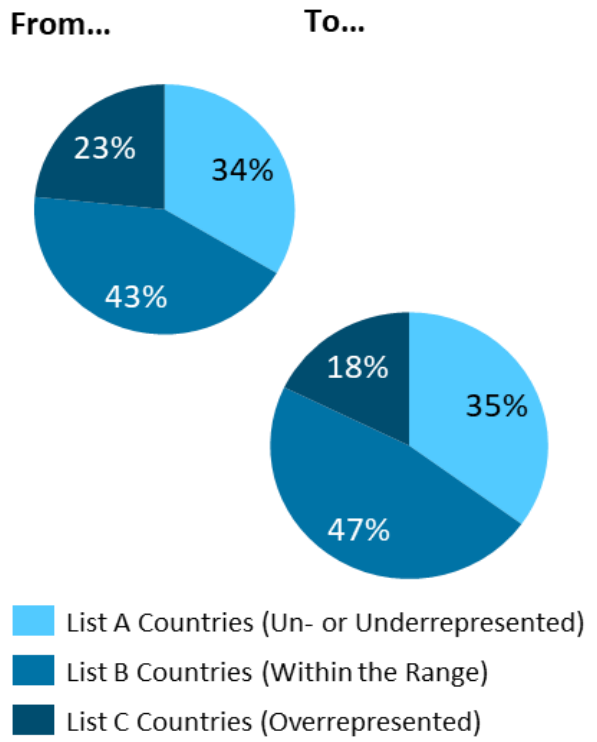
Importance of Active Management

Representation does not self-correct and depends on talent outreach strategies, hiring decisions, restructuring context, and opportunities.

Geographical Representation (from–to)

Overrepresented countries: −11; within range: +8;

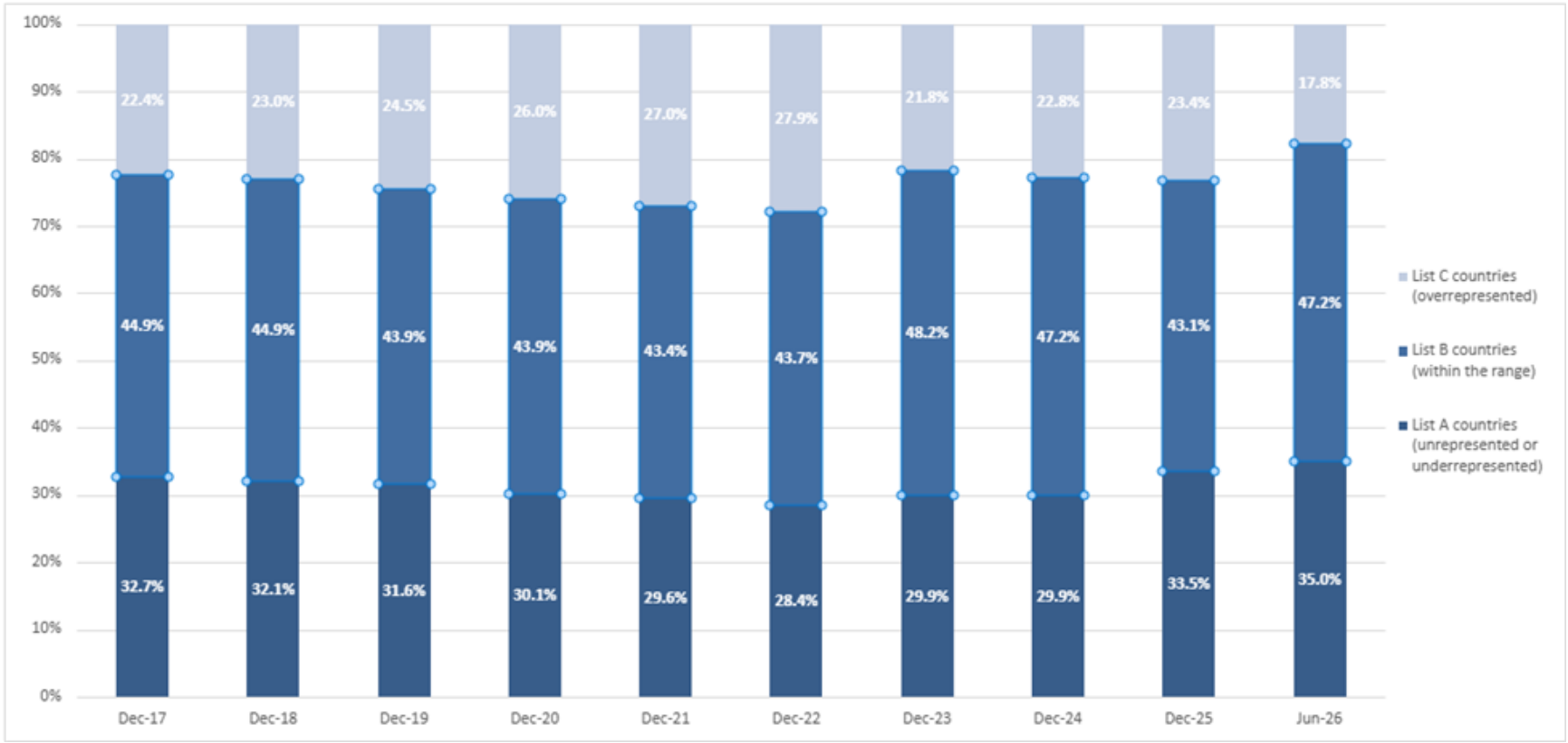
under/unrepresented countries: +3



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Note: For geographical representation, the official WHO methodology is used to calculate List A, B, and c country groupings. The From data reflects the latest data available as at 31 December 2025, while the To data is based on projections as at 30 June 2026. Global headcount composition 'From' January 2025 - 'To' June 2026 for DEI metrics. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding

Where We Stand – Projected Evolution from 2017 - 2026



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Our Response:
From Reactive to System-Wide Management

Shift from Reactive Approach

WHO moved away from vacancy-driven reactive actions focused mainly on compliance and reporting.

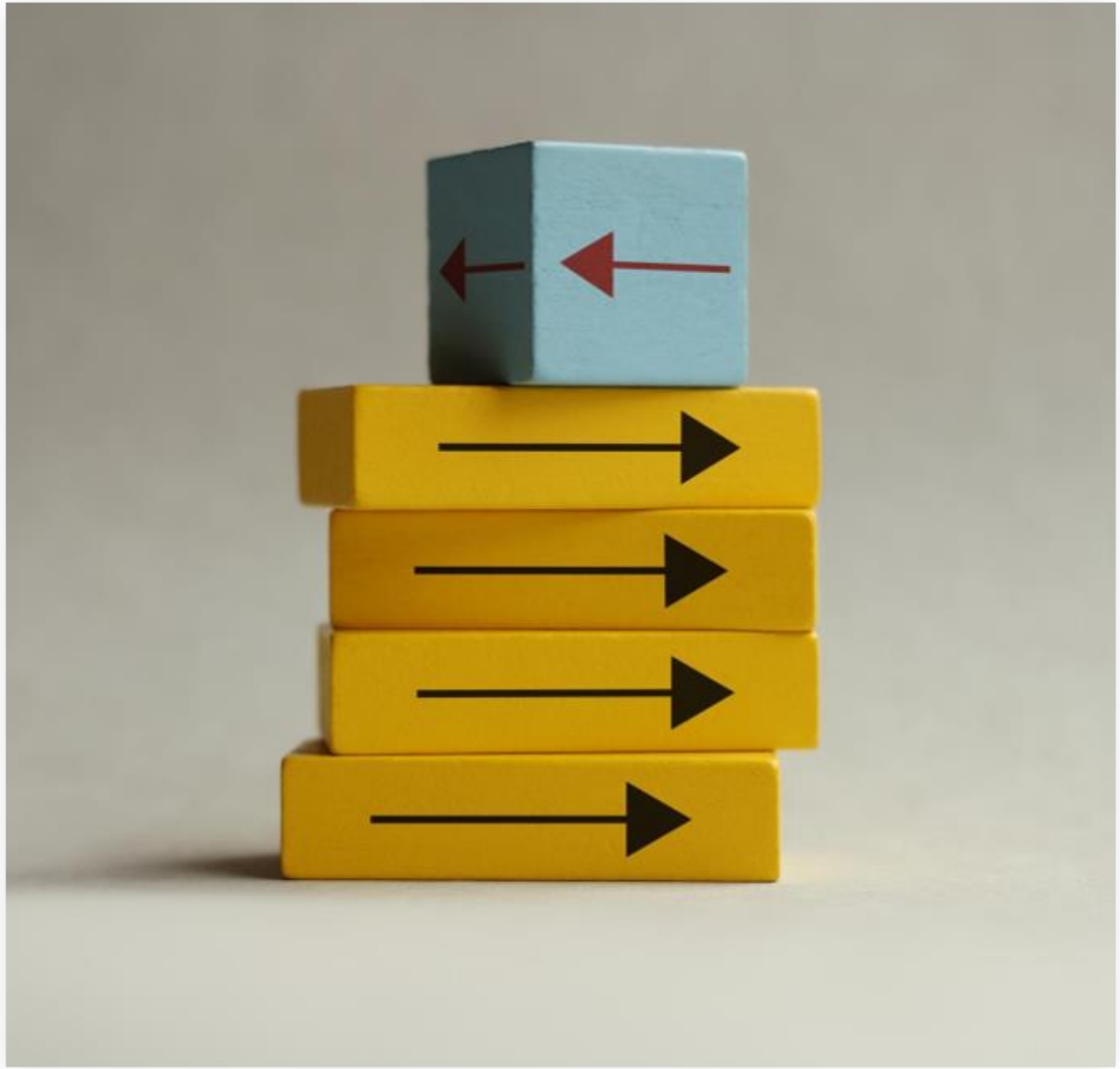
Adoption of System-Wide Management

The new approach involves coordinated, proactive management and strategic workforce representation across organizations.

Outcome-Focused Transparency

The model emphasizes transparency, coherence, and deliberate management benefiting Member States.

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3-Pillar Approach:
Access, Accountability, Sustainability (Merit-Based)



Access to Talent

Expands WHO's reach through targeted outreach and global talent networks, driving equitable access to opportunities, especially in underrepresented countries.



Accountability in Selection

Strengthens transparency and accountability across the selection process, ensuring fair and consistent consideration of all qualified candidates, while maintaining merit at the centre.



Sustainability of Workforce

Advances long-term talent development through sustained investment in early-career pathways and workforce retention, linking entry, growth and continuity across the organization

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Action Underway: From Framework to Implementation



Talent Outreach Actions

Establishing a global outreach repository and mobilizing regional focal points to broaden talent access

Access

- Global outreach repository established and being populated
- Regional focal points identified and mobilized
- Map outreach channels for priority countries
- Collaboration with UN networks and global talent pools



Selection Process Improvements

Enhancing nationality data visibility and introducing structured shortlisting to ensure accountability

Accountability

- Strengthened visibility of nationality data in selection processes
- Enhanced guidance to selection Panels on shortlisting
- Process mapping across regions and HQ



Talent Development Initiatives

Focusing on early-career pipelines and linking outreach, recruitment, and development efforts sustainably.

Sustainability

- Increased focus on early-career pipelines and nurturing
- Exploration of pathways into longer-term roles and career development
- Strengthening links across outreach, recruitment and talent development

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Sustainability in Action: Strengthening Talent Pipelines

Internship Programme – resuming end May 2026

Internships offer an early entry point to broaden exposure and expand access to opportunities, engaging diverse, qualified candidates from underrepresented regions through targeted investment in early-career pathways.

JPO Programme – opportunities available in headquarters from 1 July 2026

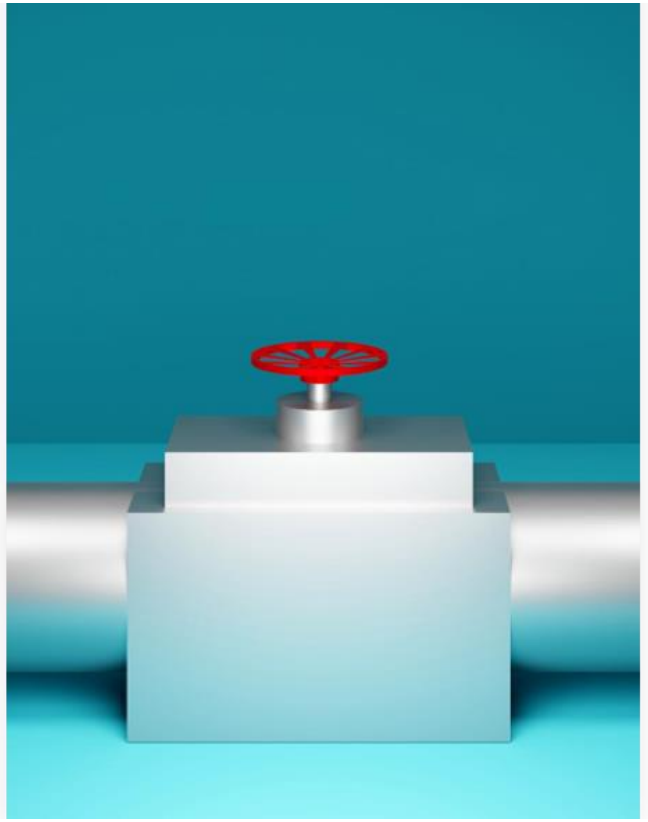
JPOs provide critical pathways for national participation, supporting the development of future international professionals from diverse countries through sustained investment in talent pipelines and global mobility.

Secondments – new secondments available from 1 July 2026

Secondments enhance collaboration and knowledge exchange, offering exposure and pathways to longer-term opportunities.

Balanced Geographical Representation

The integrated pipeline aims to improve access and readiness, shaping talent development with merit-based, inclusive approaches.



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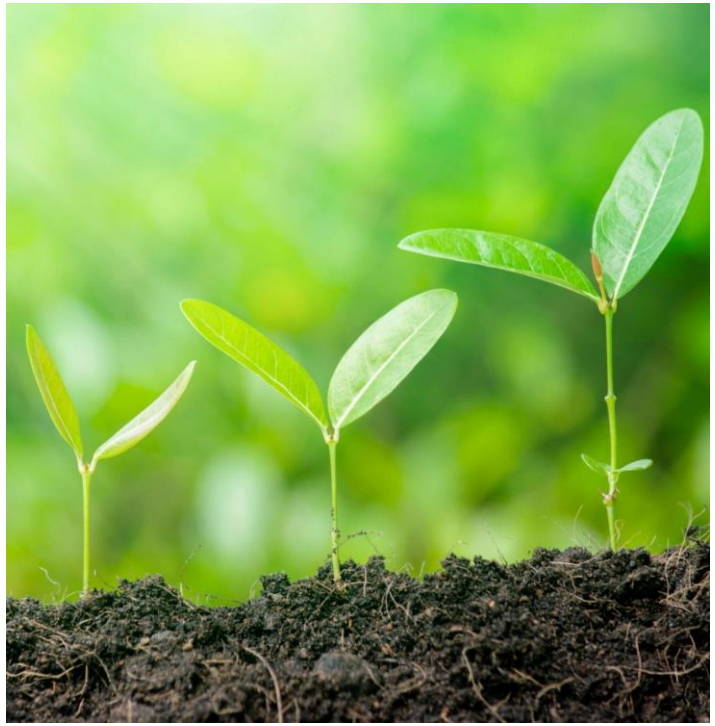
Current Challenges and Longer-Term Approach

Current Staffing Challenges

Staffing constraints include restructuring impacts, limited fixed-term roles, restricting short-term progress.

Implications for Representation

Smaller candidate pools and the need to ensure organizational continuity constrain the scope for immediate improvements in geographical representation metrics.



Long-Term Investment Strategy

WHO focuses on building a resilient and diverse talent pipeline through sustained outreach and early-career development.

Building Readiness and Resilience

Preparing a strong candidate pool ensures future representational improvement without compromising merit when opportunities arise.

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Partnering to Strengthen Geographical Representation

Member States can contribute to:

- Ensuring that vacancies are shared in a timely manner through relevant channels
- Supporting and expanding JPO opportunities
- Promoting access to internship pathways and early-career entry points
- Enabling secondments and institutional collaboration at all 3 levels of WHO
- Connecting WHO with national technical networks, talent pools, and professional communities
- Facilitating access to universities, research institutions, and specialized training programmes
- Supporting targeted outreach to priority countries and talent segments

Key questions:

- How can Member States **strengthen collaboration with WHO by mobilizing national talent ecosystems**—including academic institutions, professional associations, and public sector networks—to support current and future workforce needs?
- What **mechanisms or entry points could be leveraged at country level** to better identify and connect WHO with relevant talent pools, particularly in priority technical areas?
- Which **additional channels or partnerships should WHO explore**, in the view of Member States, to expand its outreach and ensure access to diverse, high-quality, and geographically balanced talent?

- We invite Member States to engage in a collaborative discussion, share inputs and experiences, and continue exploring joint approaches to strengthen equitable access and sustainable talent pipelines.

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Thank you

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