

State of Change Management in the UN System 2025

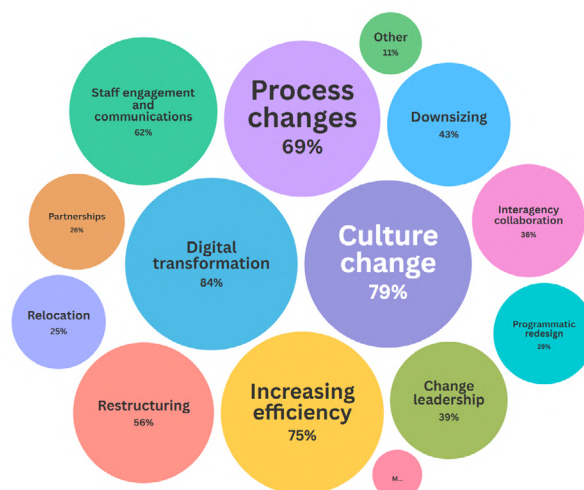
Change management priorities

In brief

- A wide range of change initiatives is underway across the UN system, from culture change and digital transformation to relocation and mergers.
- The priorities of change can look different to various stakeholders, depending on their role and where they are positioned in the system.
- Downsizing, relocations and mergers are not among the top change initiatives currently being worked on by respondents, but they are rapidly increasing in relevance.

The top five initiatives cited by respondents were (in descending order): digital transformation (84%); culture change (79%); increasing efficiency (75%); process changes (69%); and staff engagement and communications (62%).

Types of change initiatives currently underway



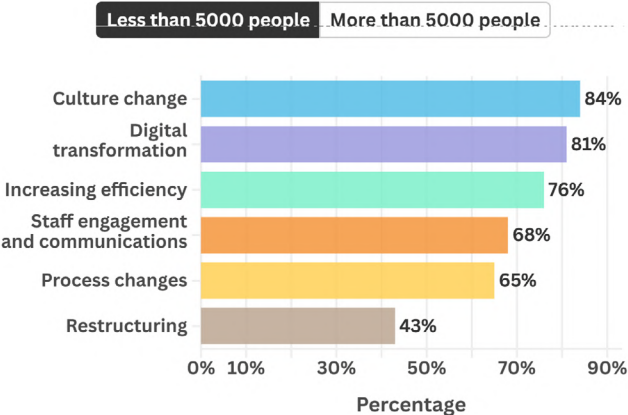
1 Top organizational change initiatives

The survey was issued in June 2025. Survey respondents reported a wide range of major organizational change initiatives underway across the system.

Q7: What types of change initiatives are currently happening in your organization? Please select all that apply (n=123)
Source: *The State of Change Management in the UN System 2025* (UNSSC, 2025)

Over half of the organizations (56%) were working on restructuring, and 43 percent were working on downsizing. Larger organizations (those with over 5,000 people) were more likely to be working on restructuring than those with fewer than 5,000 people. Over one third (36%) of all organizations were working on interagency collaboration, with 7 percent working on mergers.

Types of change initiative currently underway, by organization size



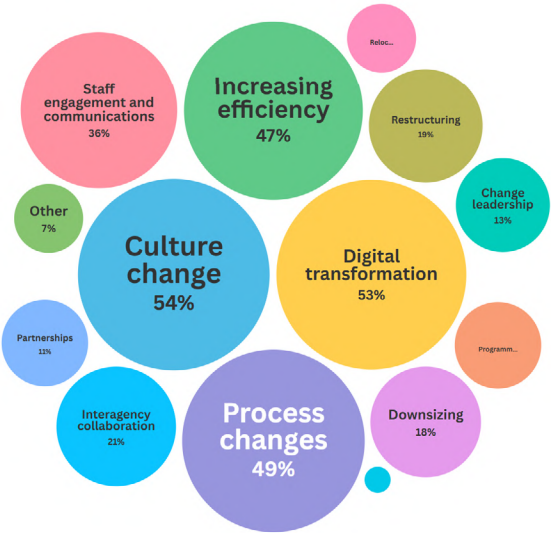
Q7. What types of change initiatives are currently happening in your organization? Please select all that apply (n=123)
Source: *The State of Change Management in the UN System 2025* (UNSSC, 2025)

[Click here for the interactive version of this graph](#)

2 What respondents are personally working on

When asked what types of change initiatives they are personally working on, respondents identified the same top five change initiatives, though in a slightly different order: culture change (54%); digital transformation (53%); process changes (49%); increasing efficiency (47%); and staff engagement and communications (36%).

Types of change initiative that respondents are working on



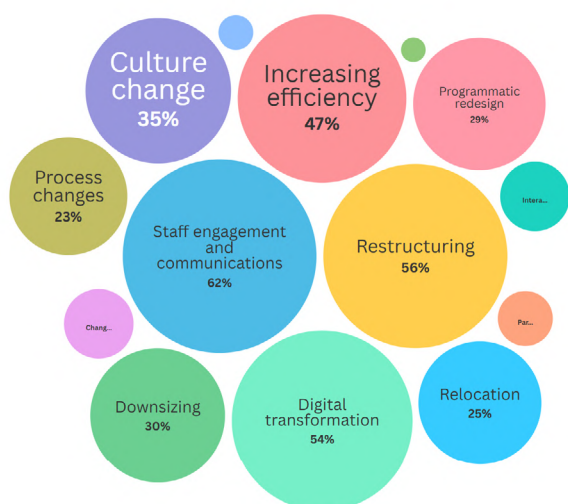
Q17. Which types of organizational transformation and change initiatives are you personally working on? (n=120)
Source: *The State of Change Management in the UN System 2025* (UNSSC, 2025)

3 What leaders are seen to be focusing on

When asked what types of change initiative are currently receiving the most attention from senior leadership, respondents were most likely to say staff engagement and communications (62%), followed by restructuring (56%).

- Although restructuring is not among the top five change initiatives that respondents are currently working on, they see it as one of the top five areas receiving the most attention from leaders.
- While culture change was chosen by respondents as the type of change initiative they were most likely to be working on, it was identified as only the fifth most likely change initiative being given attention and focus by senior leaders.

Types of change initiatives receiving the most attention from leadership or senior management



Q8. Which of these are currently receiving the most attention or focus from leadership or senior management? Select up the three (n=126)
Source: *The State of Change Management in the UN System 2025* (UNSSC, 2025)

In summary, at the time of the survey, respondents are most likely to be working on culture change, while seeing the leaders in their organizations focusing on staff engagement and communications, and organizational restructuring. The reverse is also true: senior leadership sees change professionals as working on culture change, while being focused themselves on restructuring.

4 Downsizing, relocation, and mergers

In the context of external and internal drivers for change, including **UN80**, downsizing, relocation, and mergers are – or are likely to become – more prevalent across the UN system in the months and years ahead.

To help change sponsors and change managers and practitioners benefit from the insights of those with hands-on experience of these change priorities, UNLOCK has produced three reflection papers on the strategic, operational, and people management aspects of **downsizing**, **relocations**, and **mergers**, which you can access on these links.

5 Implications

- Read the UNLOCK papers on **mergers**, **downsizing**, and **relocation**, and convene a discussion with other senior leaders on the implications for your organization.

Implications for change sponsors

- Align priorities by establishing clear accountability for centralized change portfolio management across an organization. This will help ensure that change management priorities are clearly understood, dependencies are clear, and change initiatives are coordinated.
- Bring change managers and practitioners together to understand and leverage their skills and experiences in change management – for instance, around strategic insight, assessing organizational change readiness, and relationship-building.

Implications for change managers and practitioners

- Maintain a close relationship with senior leadership to ensure that you are aware of current and likely future change priorities.
- Make sure you are clear about the strategic, operational, and relationship-building skills you can bring to the range of organizational change initiatives and share this with your change sponsor/senior leadership.
- Familiarize yourself with the UNLOCK papers on mergers, downsizing, and relocation; they may not be at the top of your priority list now, but they will very likely become more important in the months and years ahead.

