

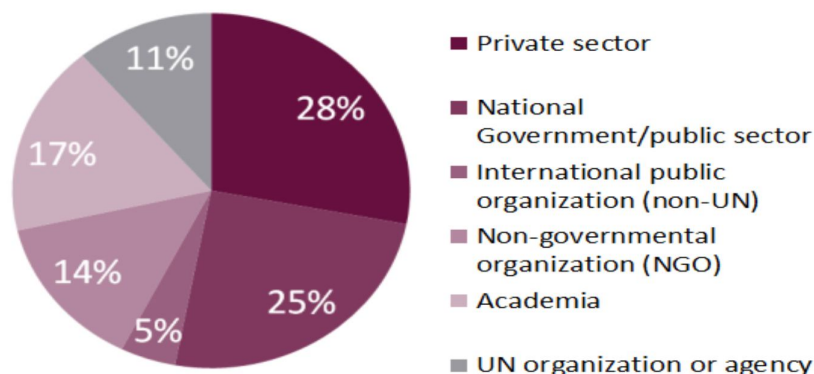


## Introduction

Development agencies are increasingly the subject of evaluations. Some undertake their own client surveys. More often, however, evaluations are at the instigation of major donors. For instance, the 16-donor Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) regularly prepares reports on relevant UN organizations. (Unless otherwise specified, the term “organization” is used generically to describe the different specialized agencies, organizations, funds, and programmes of the UN development system.) Some individual donors also conduct their own reviews. These evaluations are targeted and provide valuable feedback for the organizations concerned. But surveys have never sought opinions on the UN development system (UNDS) as a whole from a wider global constituency representing “We, the peoples” from major occupational groups.

In 2010, the Future of the UN Development System (FUNDS) Project of the Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies conducted the first independent global perceptions survey of the UNDS and its constituent parts. The results were sufficiently original and interesting to prompt a repeat of the exercise in early 2012. This survey had 3,345 respondents and was based on a trilingual questionnaire (English, French, and Spanish). It was designed by Dalberg Research, a Copenhagen-based public opinion consultancy with substantial experience working with the United Nations and its stakeholders and partners. FUNDS team member, Vikas Nath, assisted with the design, dissemination and analysis.

The FUNDS respondents came from all regions. Twenty-two percent were from donor countries, and 78 percent were from developing and transition-economy countries. The “BASIC” countries (Brazil, South Africa, India, and China) as well as middle-income countries (including Mexico, Peru, and Turkey) accounted for nearly one-fifth of respondents. The three most represented countries were India, the United States, and Peru. More than one-tenth of respondents were located in the main seats of the UNDS (New York, Geneva, Vienna, Nairobi, Addis Ababa, and Bangkok).



All major categories of stakeholders were represented: 41 percent of respondents came from the public sector (national governments and intergovernmental organizations [IGOs]), including the UN) and 59 percent of respondents from the non-state sector (private sector, nongovernmental organizations [NGOs], and academia). In terms of current occupations, the breakdown by the “three UNs” was as follows: First UN (governments), 25 percent;

Second UN (UN staff), 11 percent; and Third UN (private sector and civil society), 64 percent. Given mobility, it is worth noting that almost one-third of respondents had worked for the UN at some stage in their careers.

The results of the survey stimulated discussions at two off-the-record, international meetings (in the United Kingdom and the United States), and a full report called *Making Change Happen: Enhancing the UN's Development Contributions* will be published in late August and distributed widely by the World Federation of UN Associations. While some of the results might have been anticipated, the full outcome of the survey has provided many revelations, particularly when the data is parsed to bring out the contrasting views of different respondent groups. Without attempting a summary of the findings here, suffice it to say that the survey underlines graphically two challenges currently facing the UN's development activities: the lack of system-wide coherence; and the possible increasing irrelevance for contemporary development problems. The survey evidence makes starkly obvious that the UN accelerate major structural reform if it is to be an effective vehicle of development in the future. The FUNDS Project has identified a third critical challenge confronting the UNDS: organizational inertia and complacency.

This report presents the findings of the 2012 survey. It focuses only on the issue of perceived "relevance." In asking respondents for their opinions about the relevance of different UN organizations, the survey sought feedback about their roles as advocates of solutions and development problem-solvers in areas for which the UN has a solid reputation. Respondents were asked to declare their familiarity with the component parts of the UNDS, and the rankings here are based only on answers from those who declared themselves relatively better versed about particular organizations.

This extract is itself revealing. There are wide-ranging perceptions about the UN system as well as consistent positive and negative views about particular agencies.

As always, we welcome comments from our readers.

Stephen Browne and Thomas G. Weiss  
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August 2012

## Part 1

### Perceptions of Relevance of the UN Development System: Comparisons across Selected Organizations

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

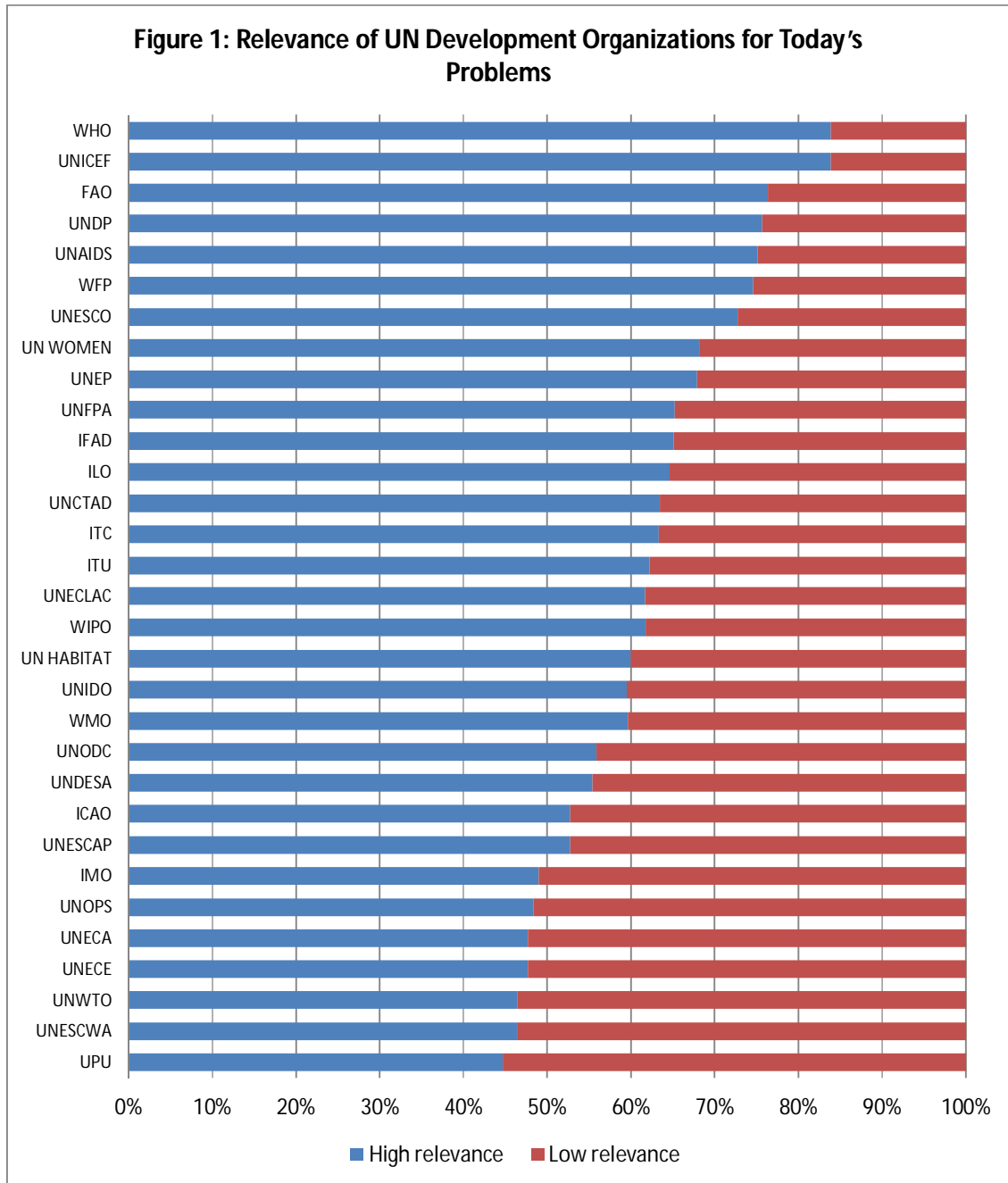
***WHO and UNICEF are consistently perceived as the most relevant UN organizations by all professional categories***

***Four of the five UN regional commissions (UNECA, UNECE, UNESCAP, UNESCWA) are perceived as having low relevance by all professional categories, including governments (1<sup>st</sup> UN)***

***Among the UN specialized agencies, the technical agencies are more lowly ranked than the others***

***UN respondents (2<sup>nd</sup> UN) are the harshest critics of their own system: UN staff consider one-third of the organizations of the UNDS to be of low relevance (50% or less)***

The different UN development organizations were ranked by “relevance” as shown in Figure 1. By a significant margin, the two judged most relevant were WHO and UNICEF. At the other end of the spectrum, seven agencies, including three of the regional commissions, fall below even a rating of 50 percent.



The rankings, however, show marked differences between the North and global South (See Figure 2). While the top two remain UNICEF and WHO, the five regional commissions ranked low by developed country respondents were ranked somewhat higher by respondents from developing countries—although four of them remained in the bottom ten. Many other

organizations were also considered markedly more relevant by respondents in developing than developed countries—including FAO, UNESCO, UNCTAD, UNDESA, UNIDO, and ITC. Organizations judged markedly less relevant by developing countries included the regulatory agencies (ITU, WMO, ICAO, IMO, WIPO, and UPU) as well as UNFPA (17<sup>th</sup> instead of 6<sup>th</sup>), WMO (21<sup>st</sup> instead of 5<sup>th</sup>), UNAIDS, UNEP, and UNODC. A possible interpretation of such differences is that developing countries tend to consider more relevant those organizations over which they believe that they exercise influence, and less relevant those that are perceived to be more strongly influenced by donors; and depending on their economies and stages of development, developing countries are likely to consider more relevant those organizations that are concerned with economic production and trade. Meanwhile, the North gives higher priority to emergencies, extreme poverty, and population pressures; and so WFP, UNAIDS, UNDP, and UNFPA fare well in their ratings.

**Figure 2: Relevance of UN Development Organizations, Views from the North and Global South**

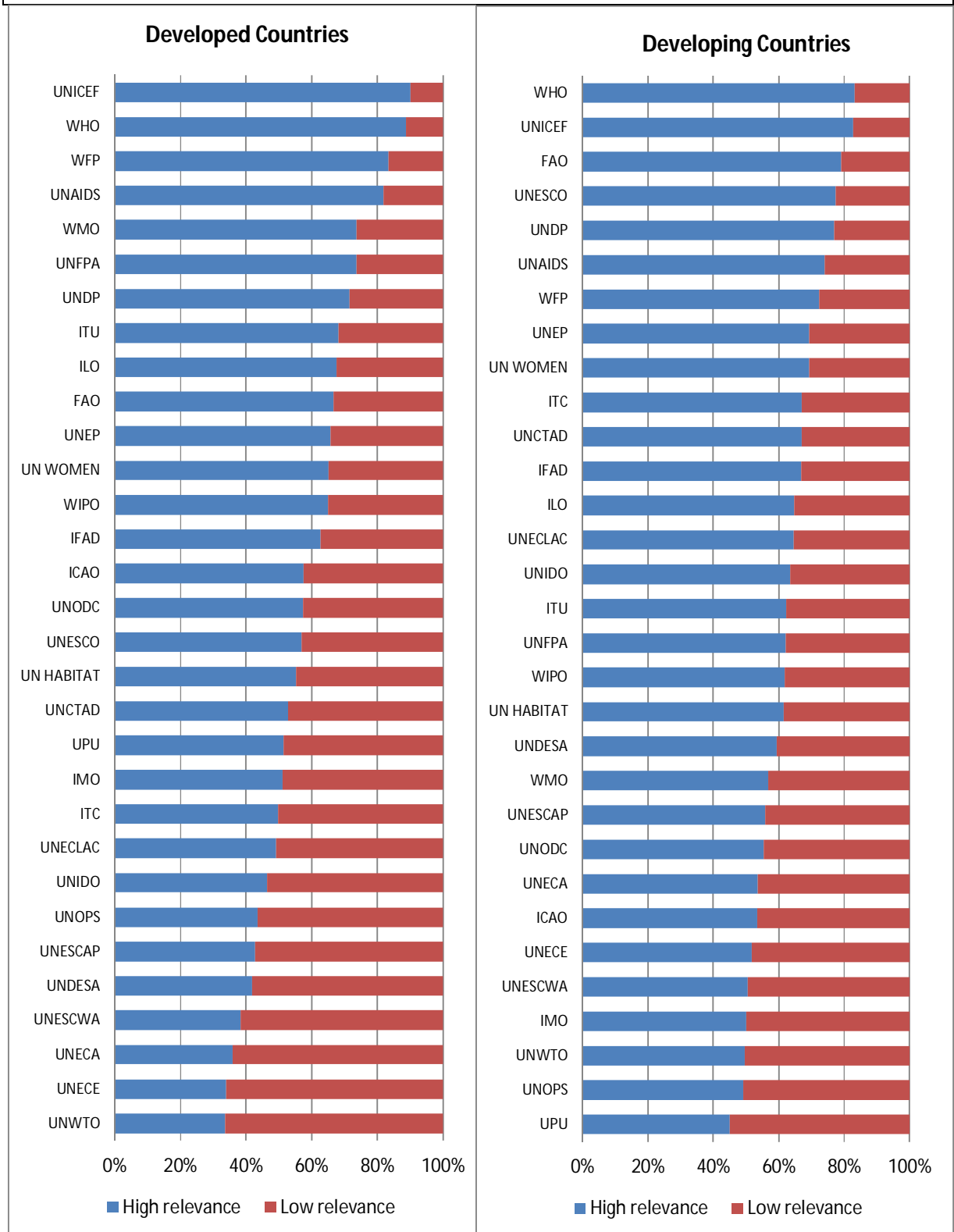
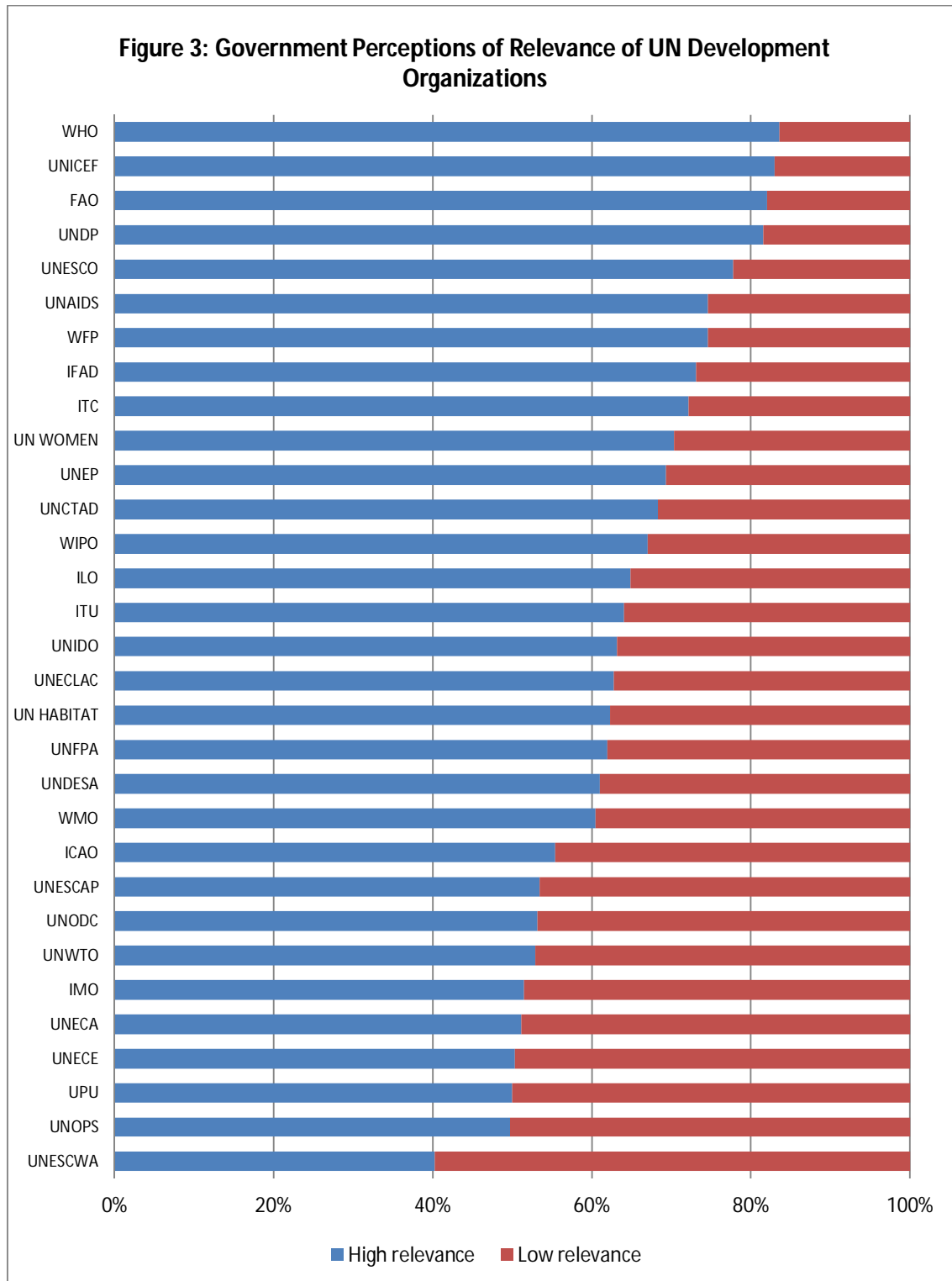
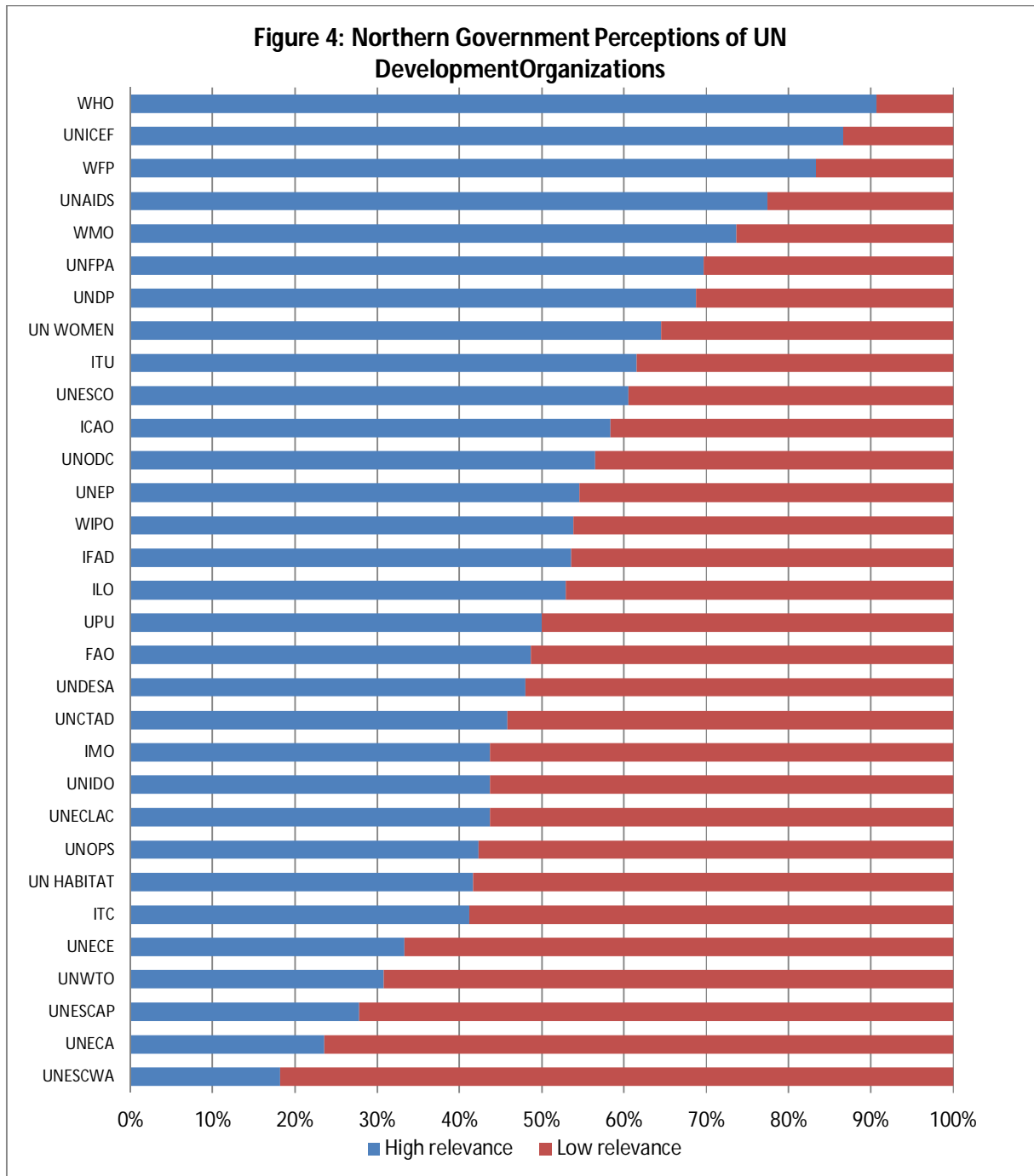


Figure 3 reflects the views of the First UN (member states) of the system's components. Again, WHO and UNICEF are considered the most developmentally relevant. Four of the five regional commissions have low relevance, the exception being UNECLAC.

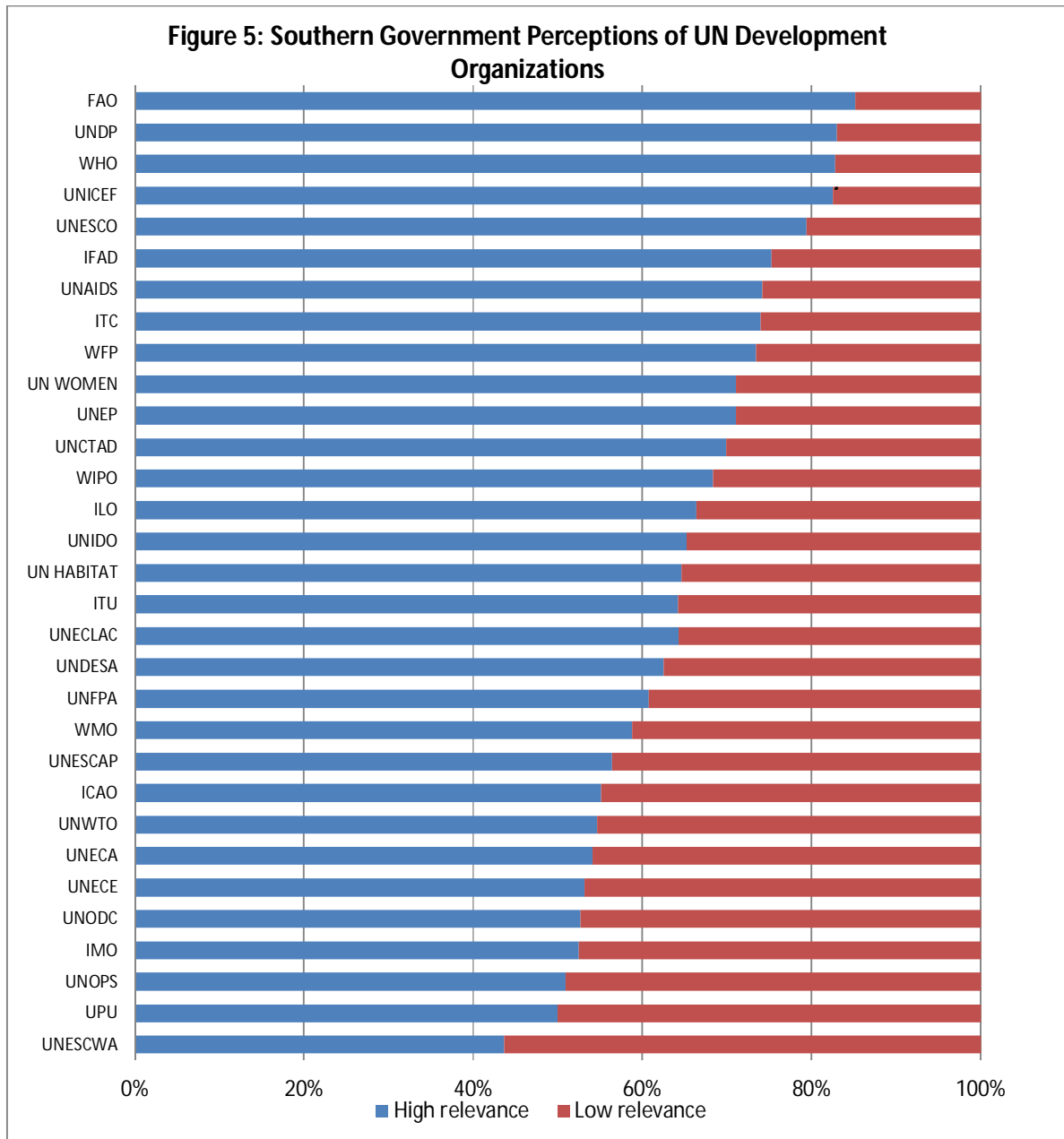




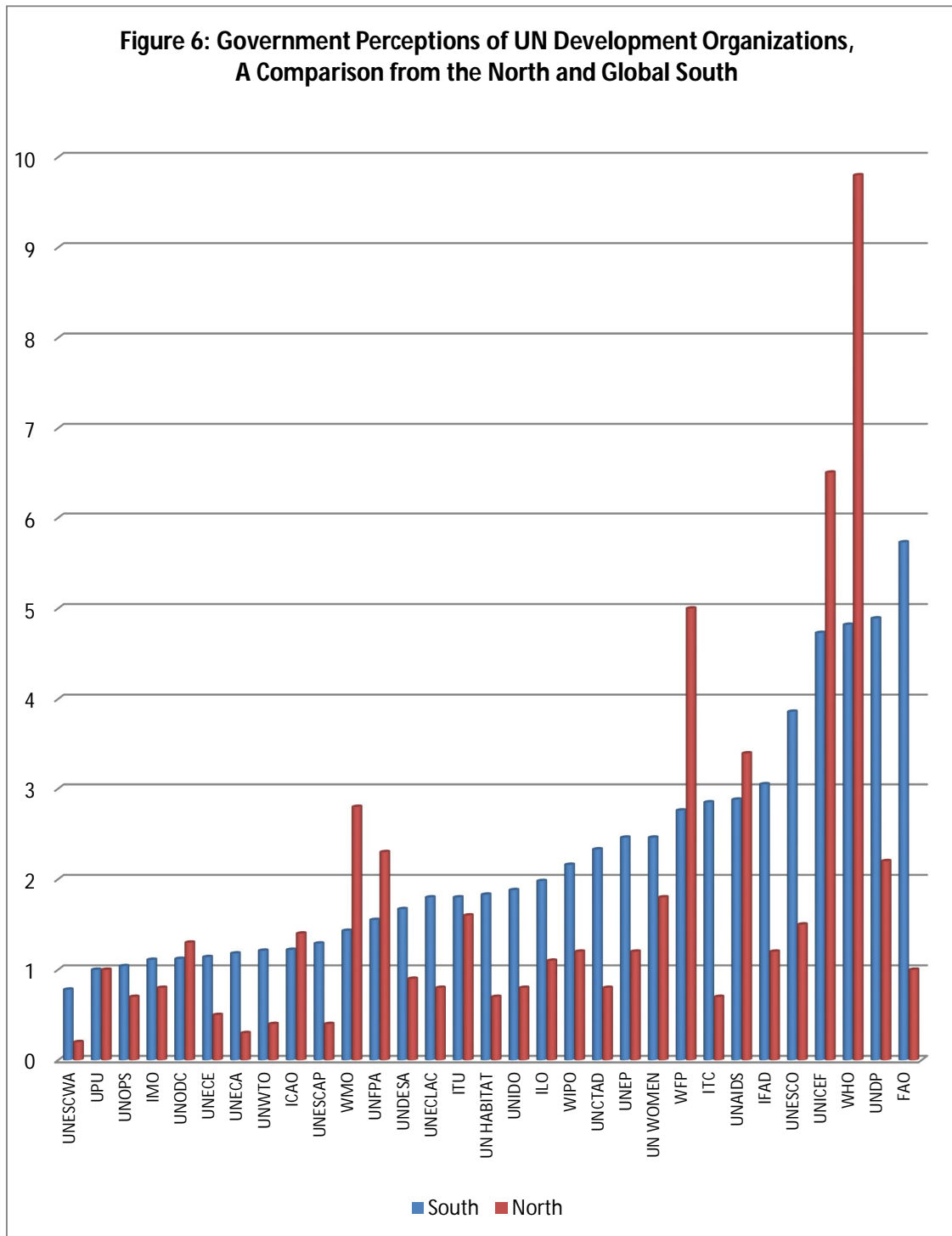
Government perceptions also have been broken down further into views from the North and global South. There is a much greater range of perceptions of relevance by northern governments as compared with southern ones (although the numbers of northern respondents is smaller). About half of the UNDS are considered by northern government respondents as more irrelevant than relevant (that is, below 50 percent). The five regional commissions are among the ten lowest-ranked organizations (See Figure 4).



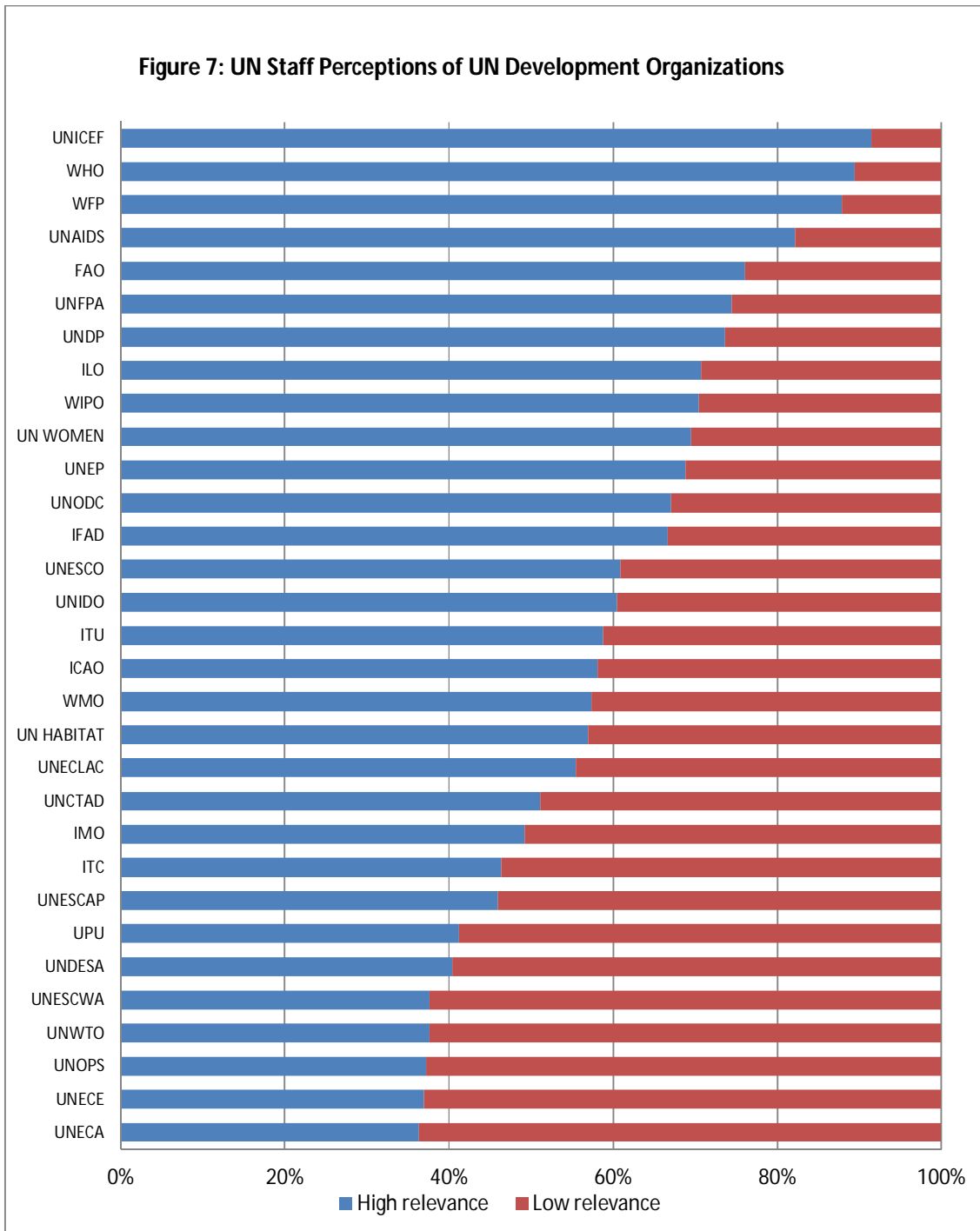
There are large contrasts in perception between North and South for some individual agencies. Developing country governments rated FAO, UNDP, UNESCO, IFAD, ITC, and UNCTAD far more highly than developed country governments. They also gave lower ratings to WFP, UNFPA, and WMO, among others. Within the developing country sample, three of the regional commissions nonetheless are among the lowest-ranked organizations (See Figure 5). There is a clear convergence of opinion among the North and South regarding those organizations.



The ratings of developed and developing country governments are combined in Figure 6, which illustrates the contrasts in perception about individual organizations.

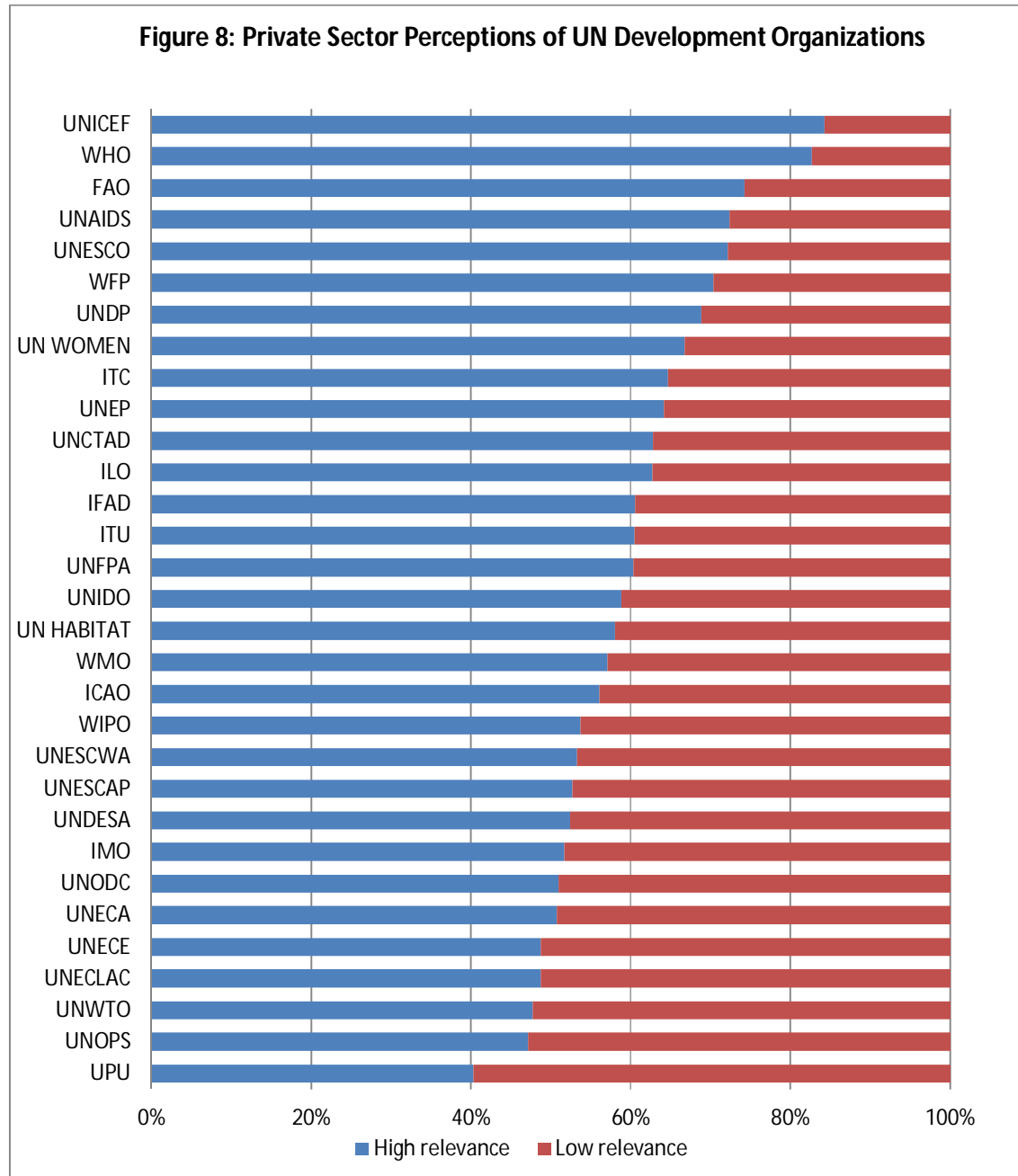


The Second UN (secretariat staff) shows the widest variation in perceptions about relevance (See Figure 7), probably reflecting the fact that they tend to hold quite firm opinions about organizations that they perceive to be competitors. Perhaps contrary to expectations, UN staff are among the harshest critics of the UNDS. Ten organizations (one third of the total) are considered more irrelevant than relevant, including four of the five regional commissions. At the same time, the Second UN is highly supportive of the work by UNICEF, WHO, and WFP.

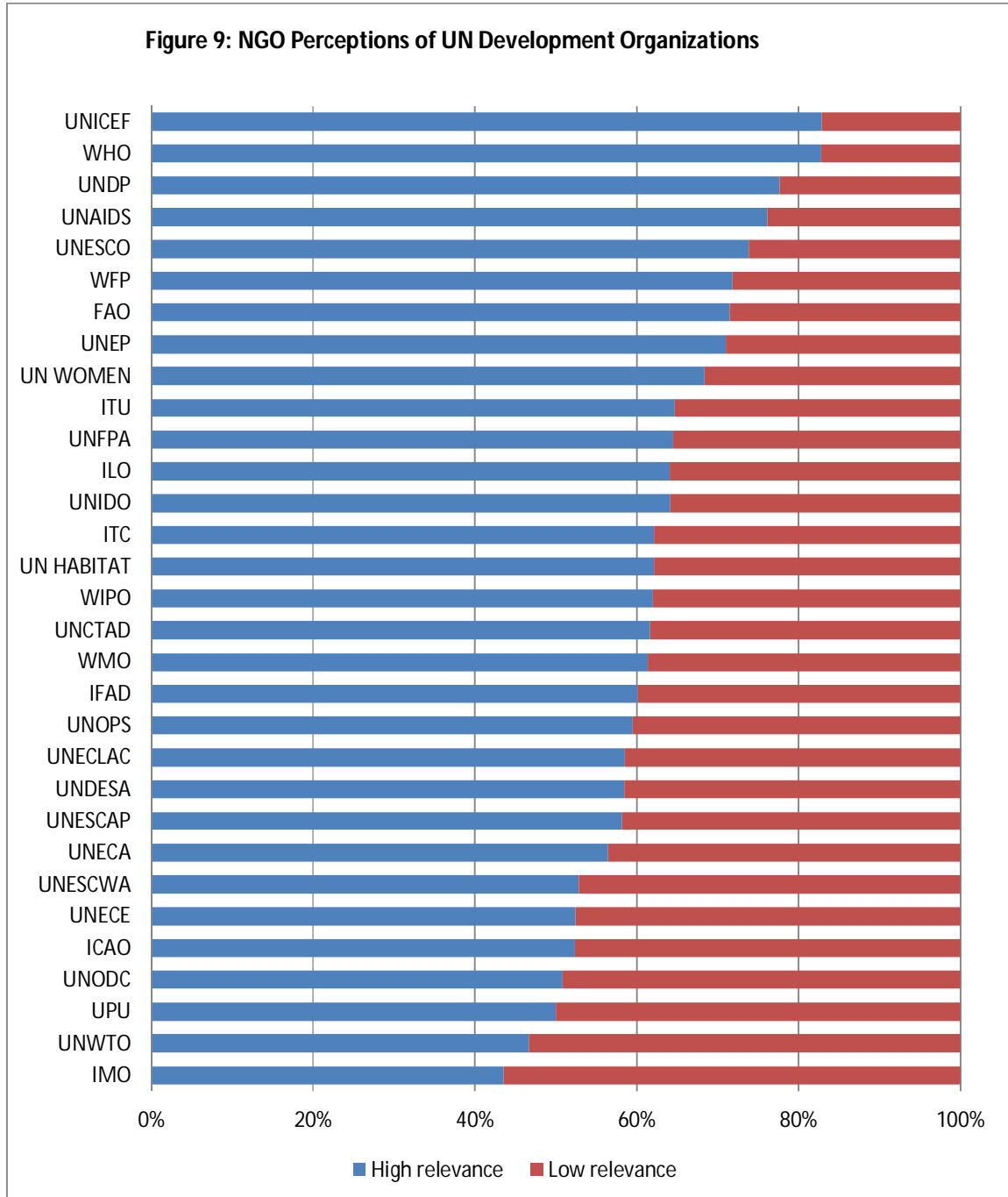


One of the more original features of the survey was that it canvassed the views of those from the interested and informed global public, or the Third UN, comprising the for-profit private sector, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), academia, and other (non-UN) intergovernmental organizations.

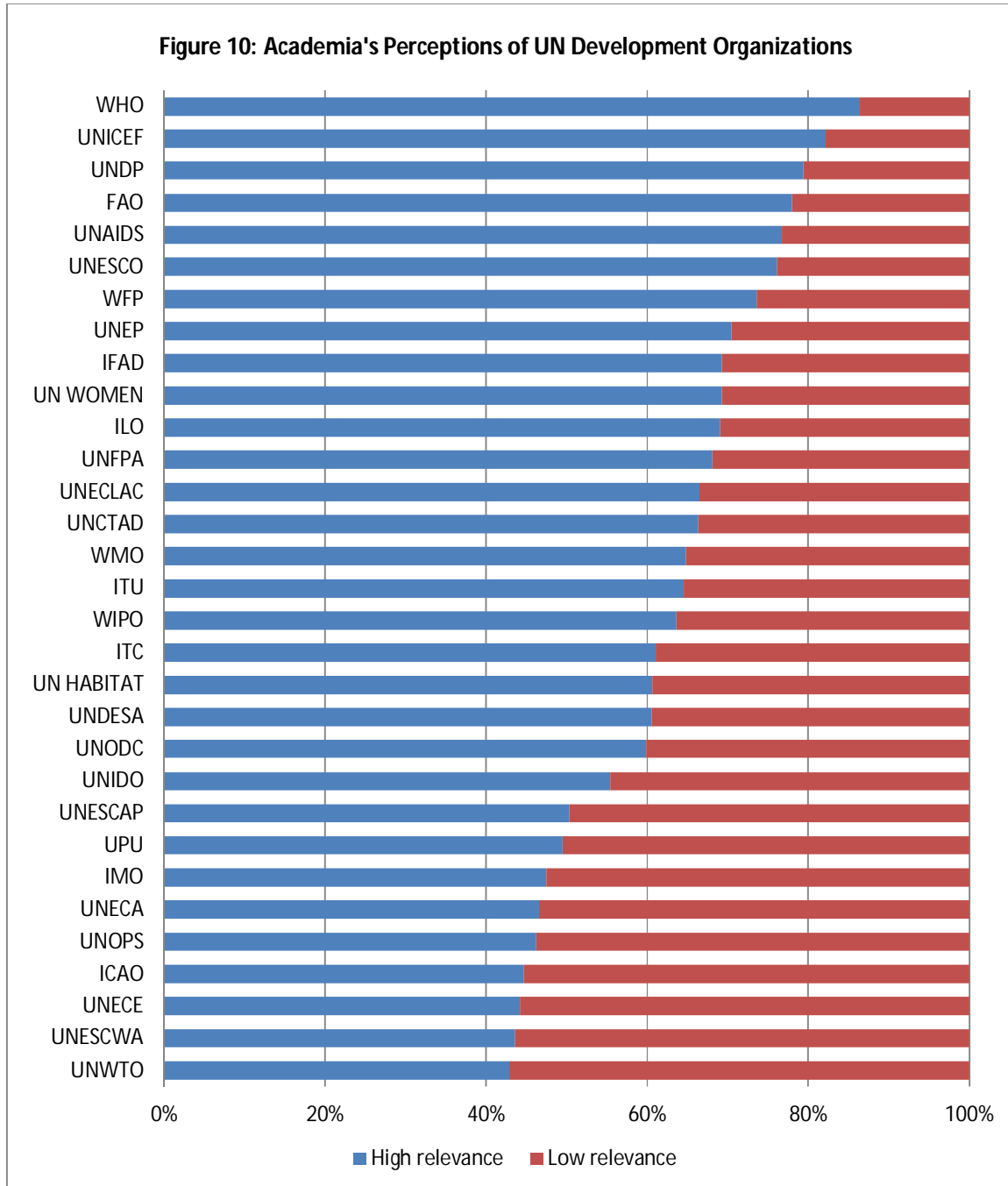
The perceptions of respondents from the private sector may reflect judgments about the complementarity and compatibility of UN organizations with business. Opinions may also reflect the degree to which individual organizations utilize private consultants. In any case, UNICEF and WHO are considered the most relevant by a significant margin (See Figure 8).



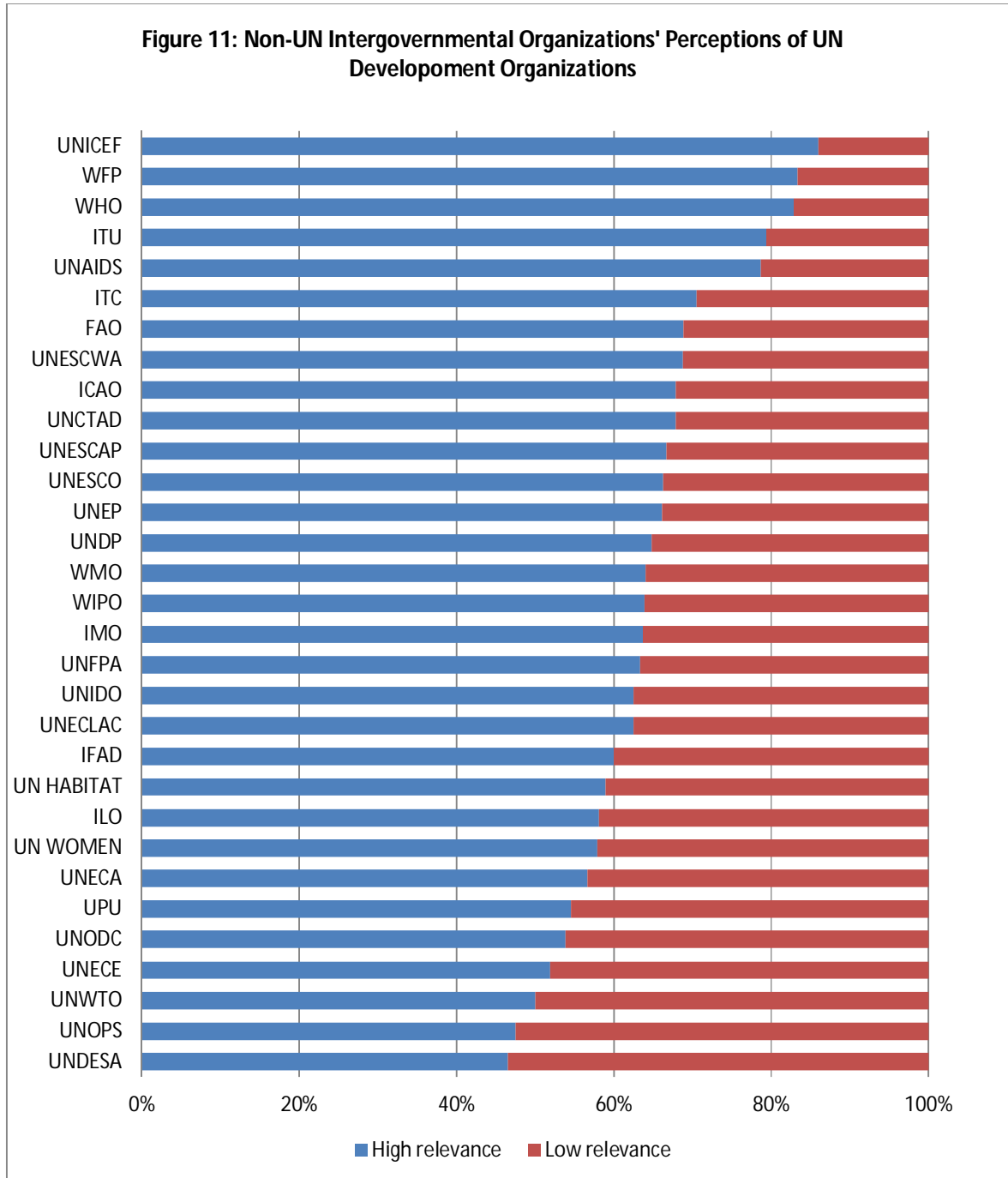
NGO perceptions also may reflect by the frequencies of partnerships with individual UN organizations. Many of the top ranked commonly contract and work with NGOs while those in the lower part are less likely partners. UNICEF and WHO are again ranked at the top, while the regional commissions are all ranked together and below 60 percent (See Figure 9).



To a degree, it should be assumed that respondents from academia judge individual UN agencies in terms of their activities of research and information. This may account for the high ranking of UNDP, which annually produces the widely-cited *Human Development Report* and its controversial Arab states version. It also accounts for academia's relatively high ranking of ECLAC, which has maintained a strong research tradition (See Figure 10).



The perceptions of other IGOs show interesting contrasts from those of other respondents. Some—including ITU, ITC, ICAO, and two of the regional commissions, ESCWA and ESCAP—are rated significantly higher by this occupational group. The technical bodies also are generally considered more relevant, while other organizations are ranked significantly lower by this group, including UN Women, ILO, and UNDESA (See Figure 11).

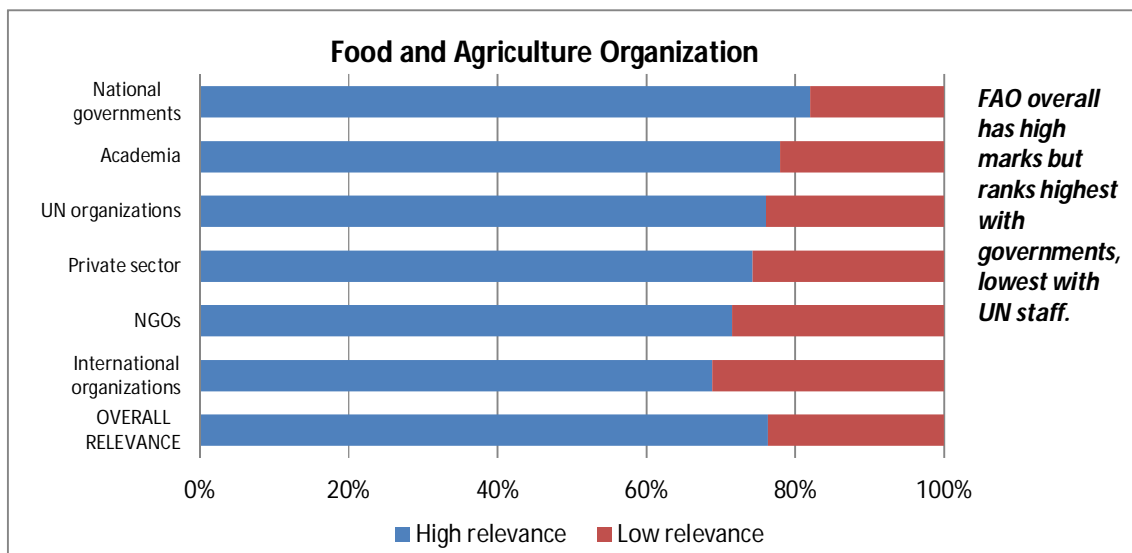
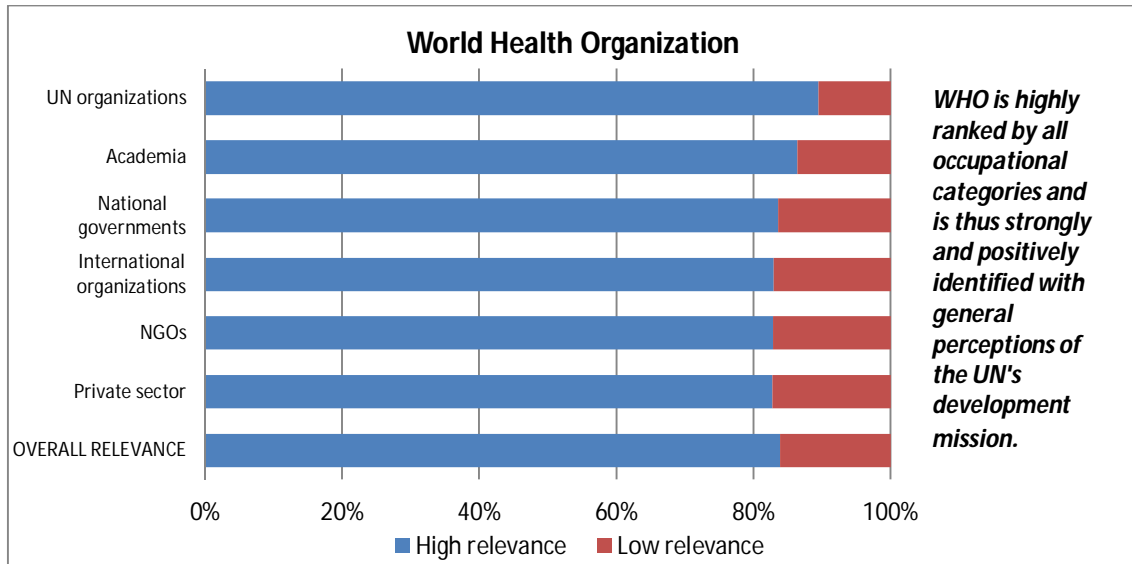


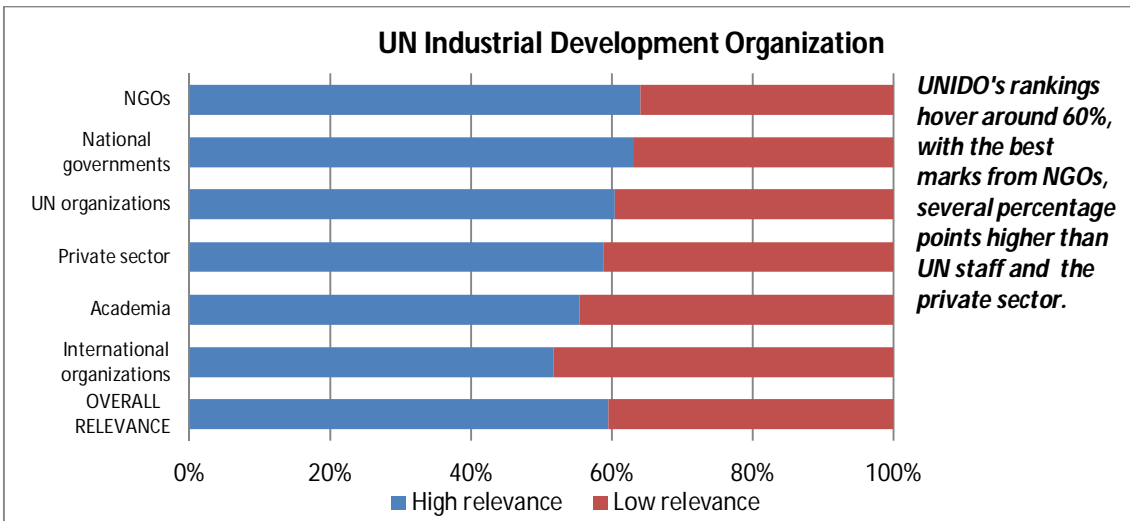
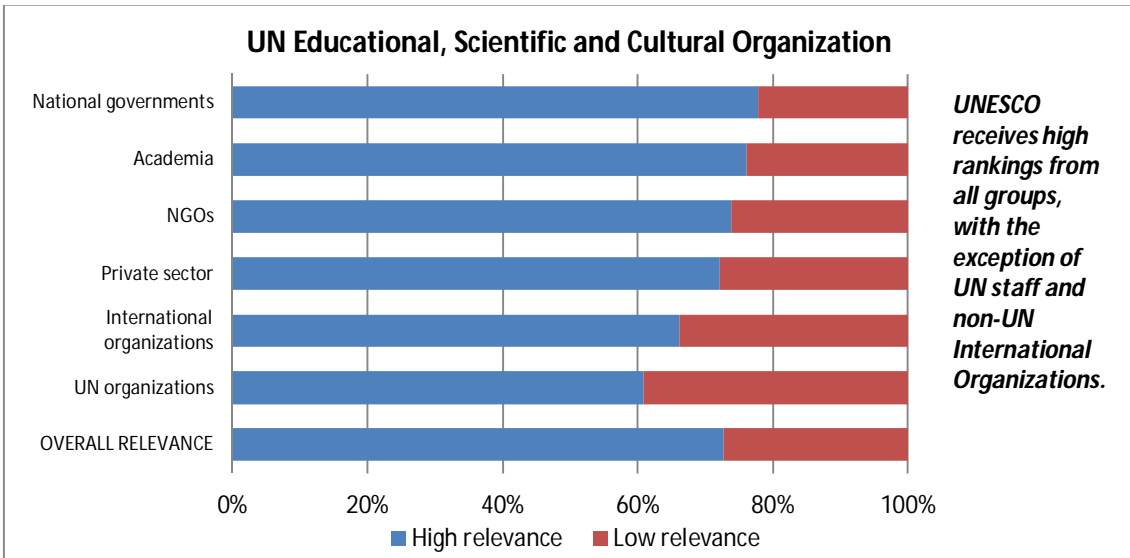
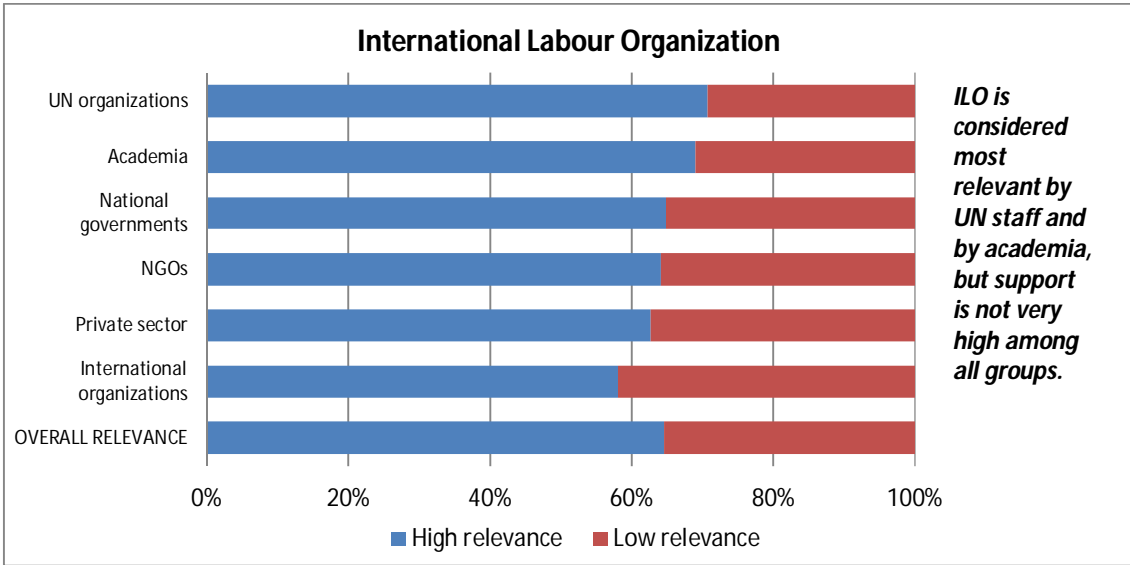


**Part 2**  
**Perceptions of Relevance of the UN Development System:**  
**Individual Agencies and Organizations**

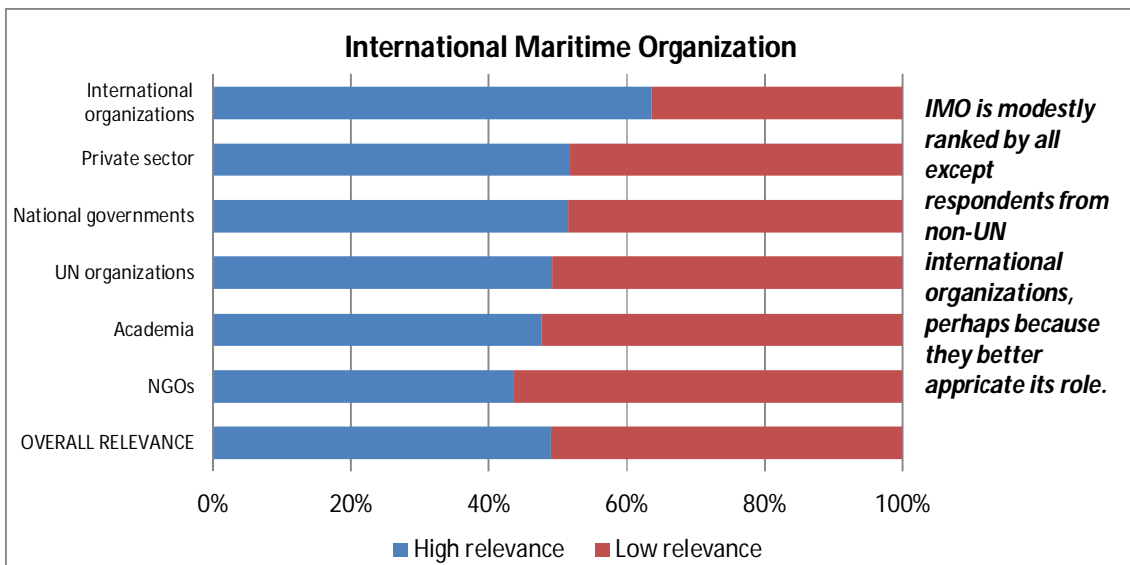
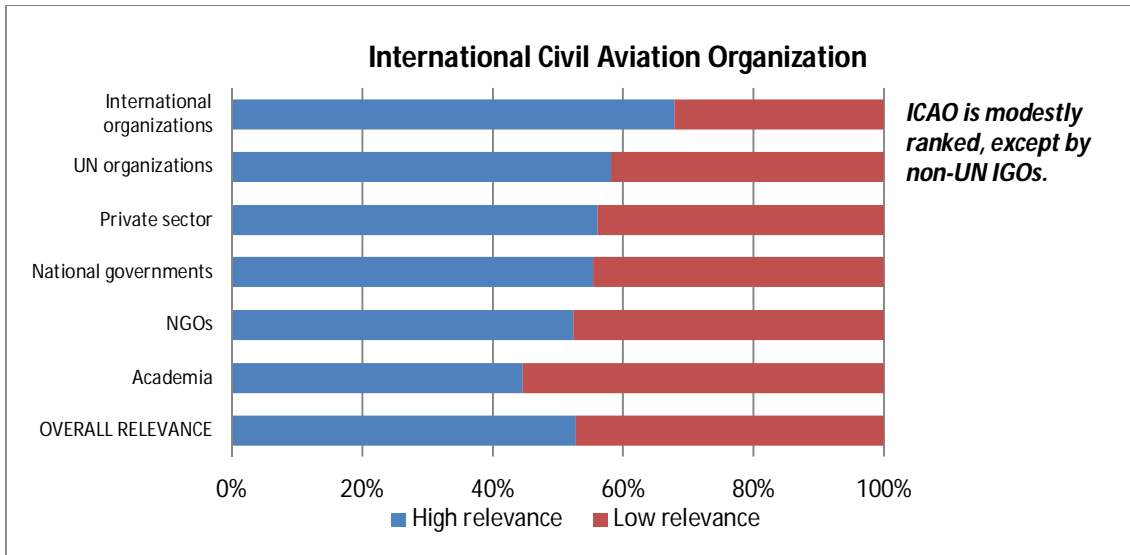
This second part depicts graphically the perceived relevance of individual organizations by occupational group. The illustrations largely are self-explanatory although short summaries appear in the side-bars. For ease of reference, they appear in the following order: the five largest specialized agencies; the six technical specialized agencies; two other specialized agencies; five regional commissions; four funds and programmes; and nine selected other organizations.

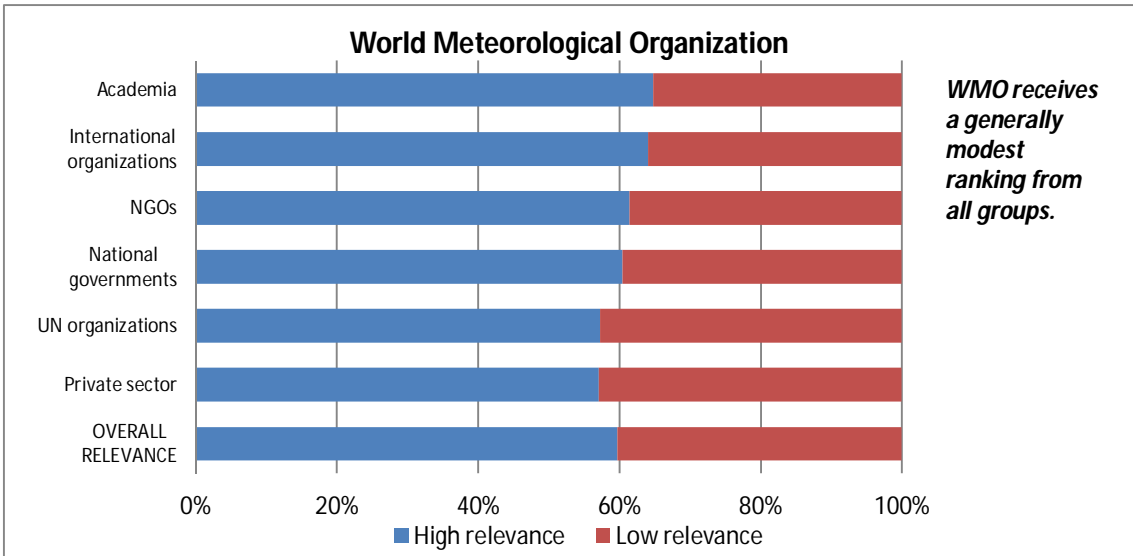
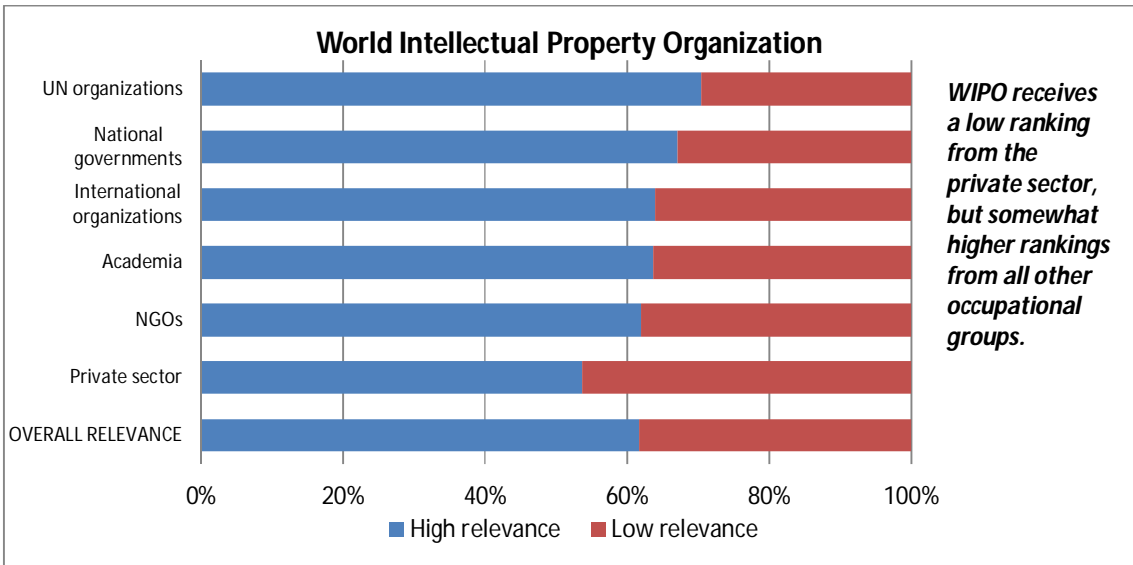
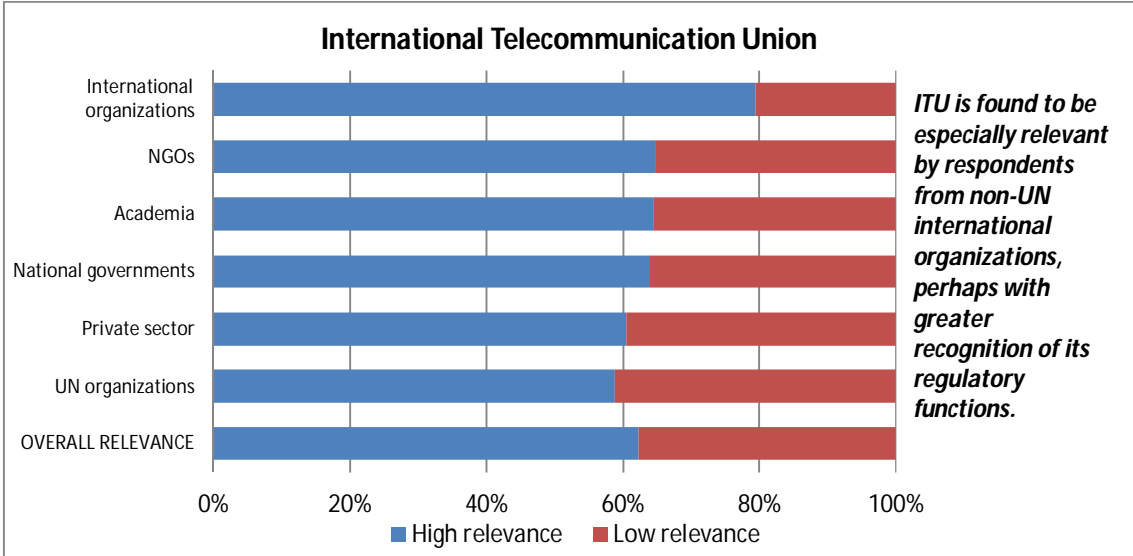
### The Five Largest Specialized Agencies

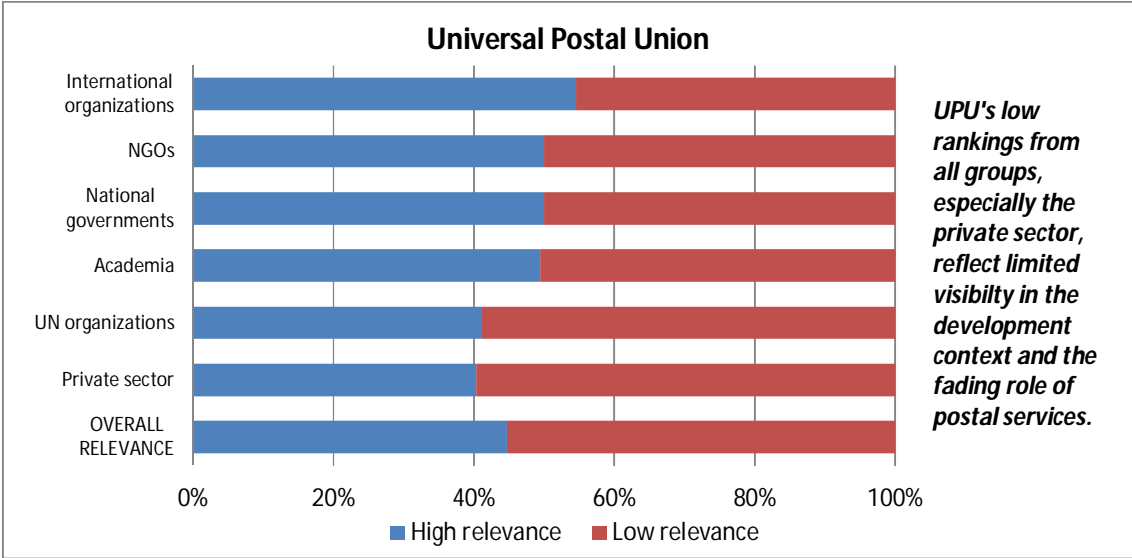




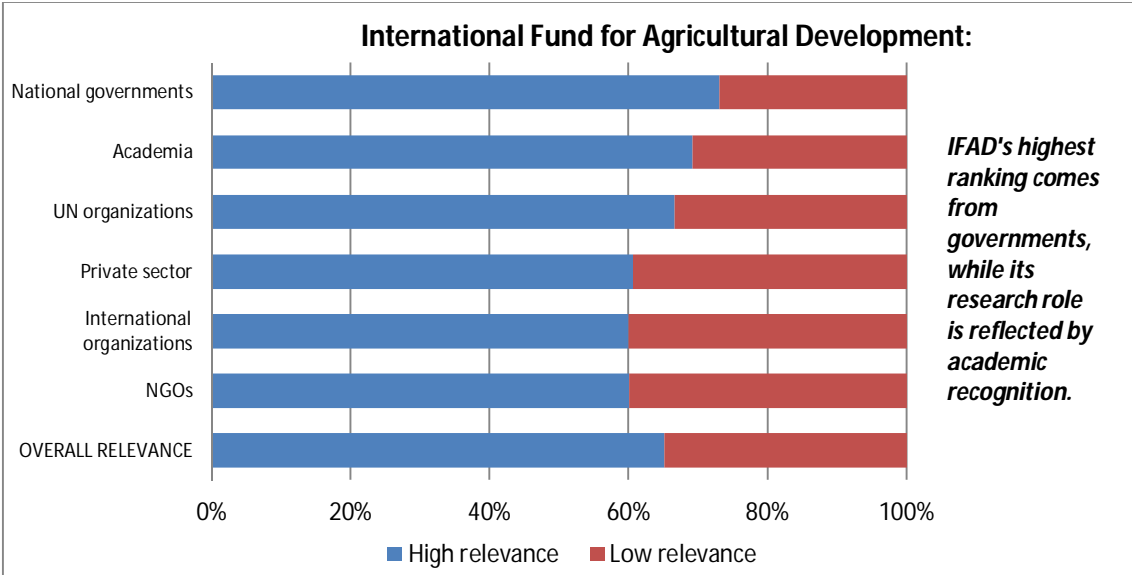
## The Six Technical Specialized Agencies

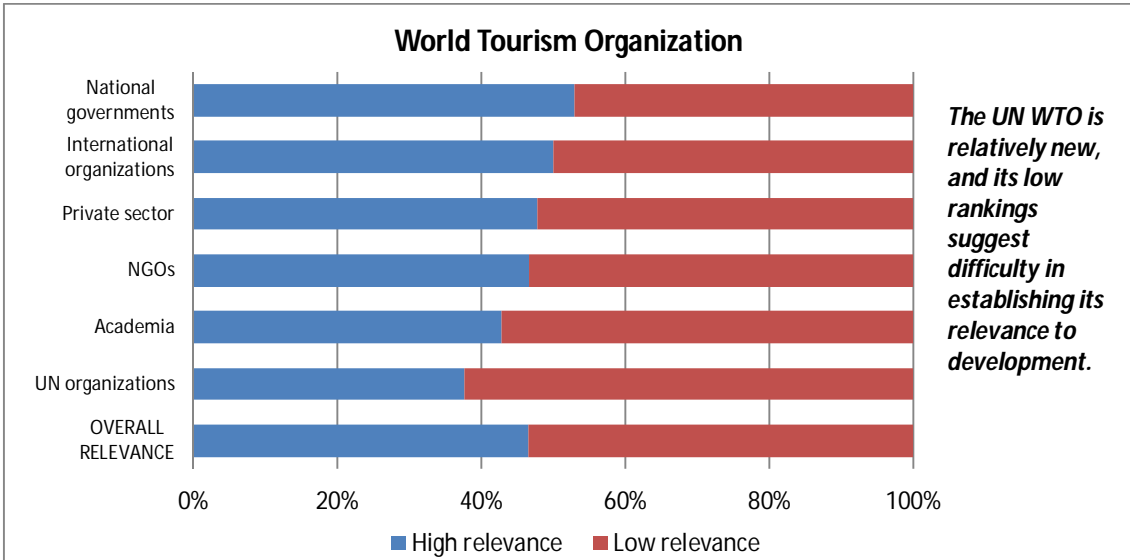




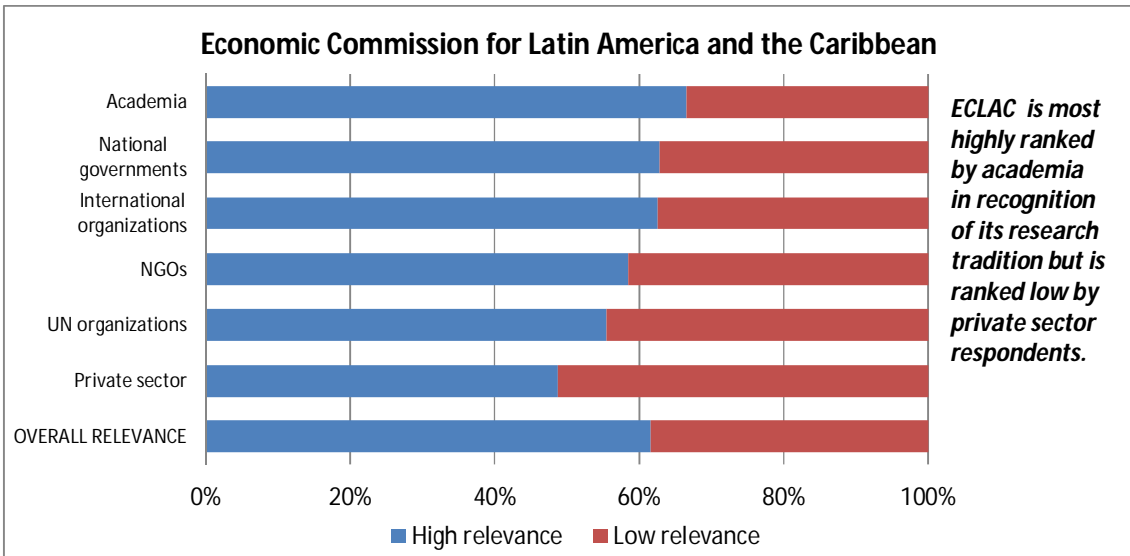


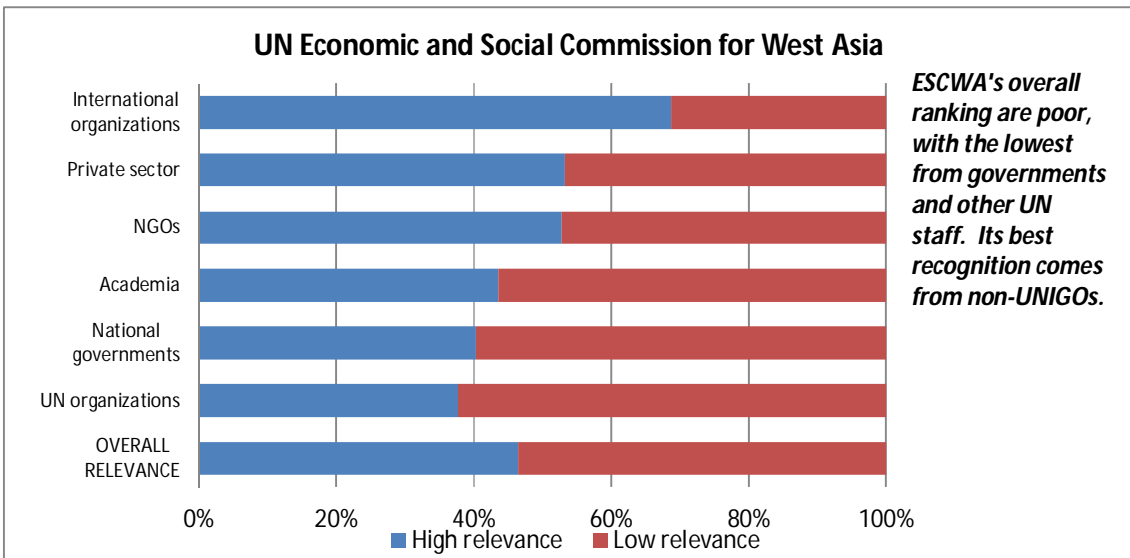
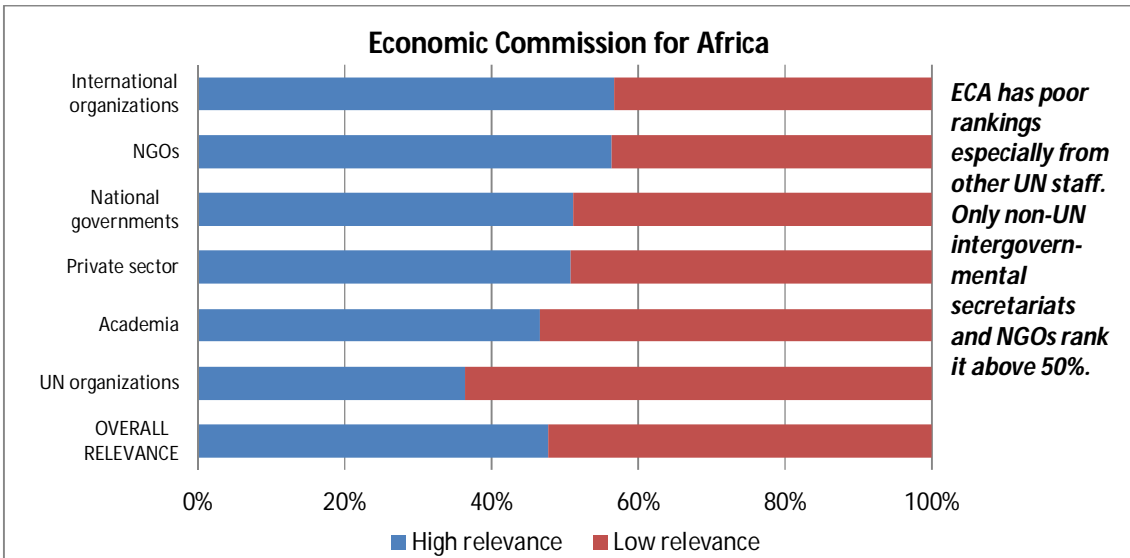
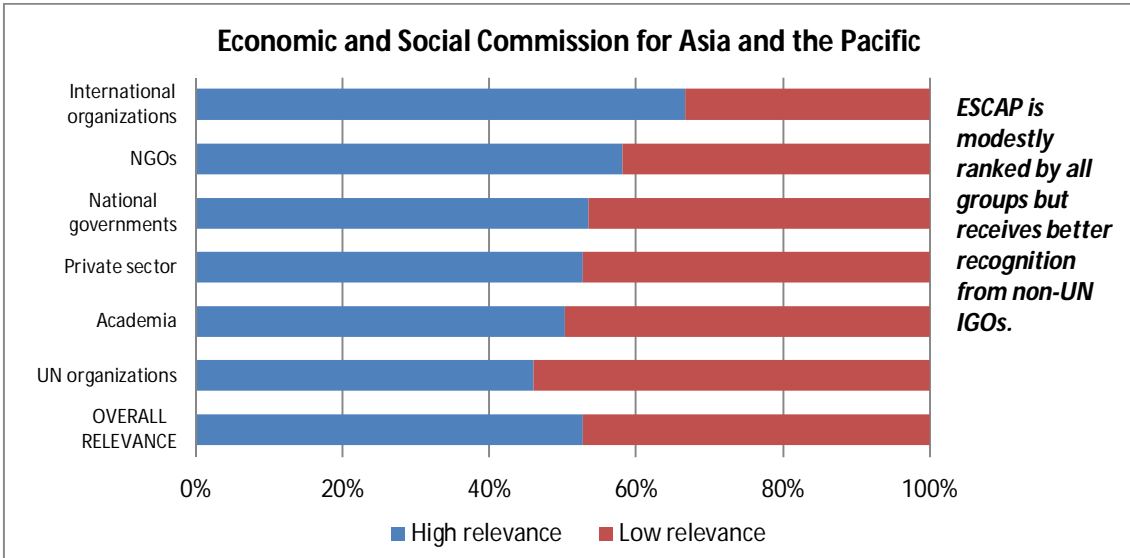
### Two Other Specialized Agencies



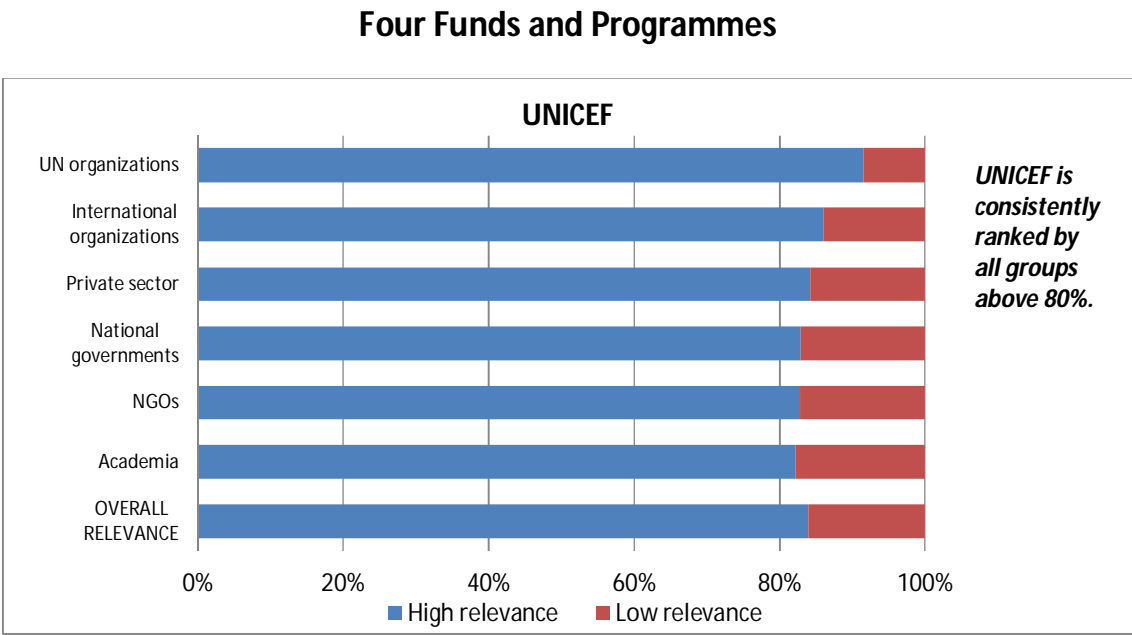
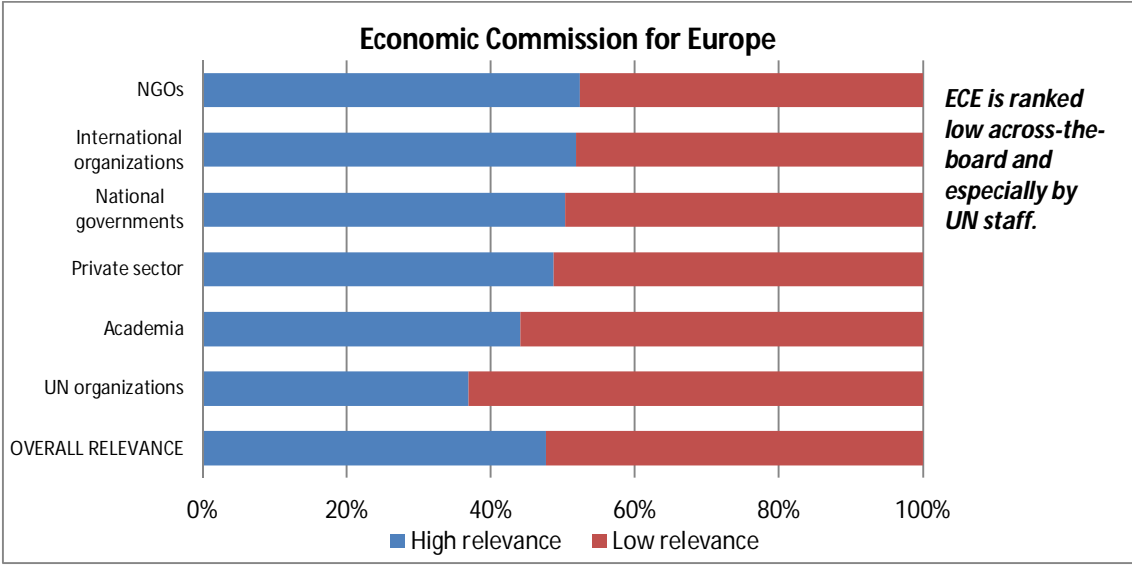


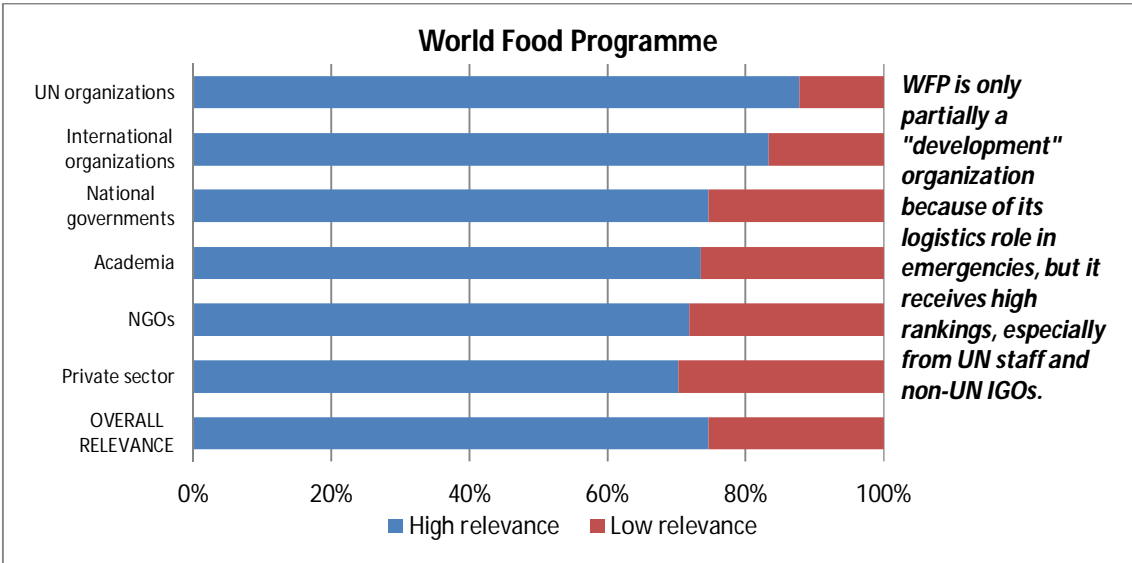
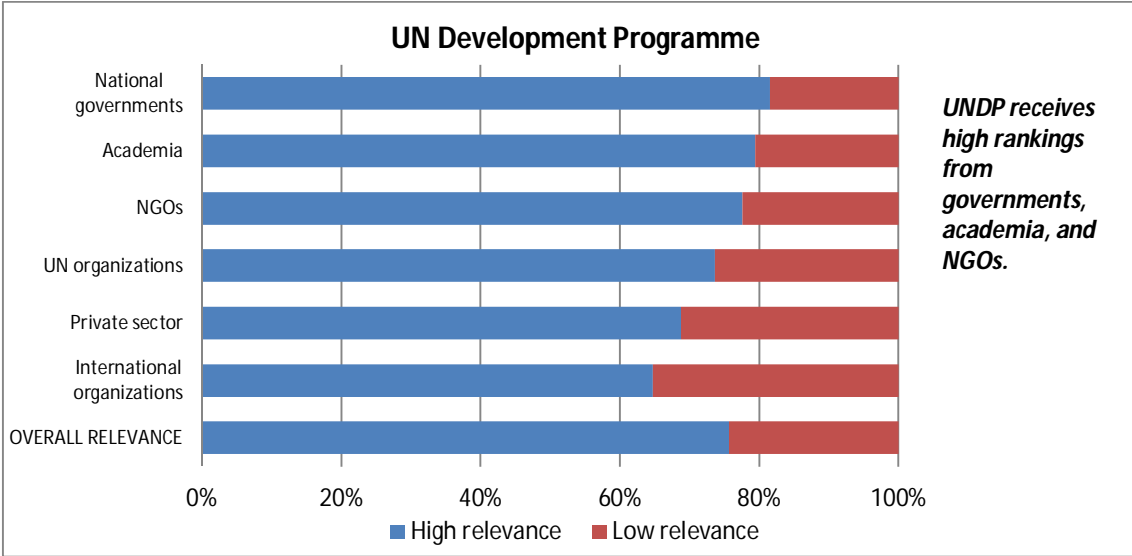
### The Five Regional Commissions

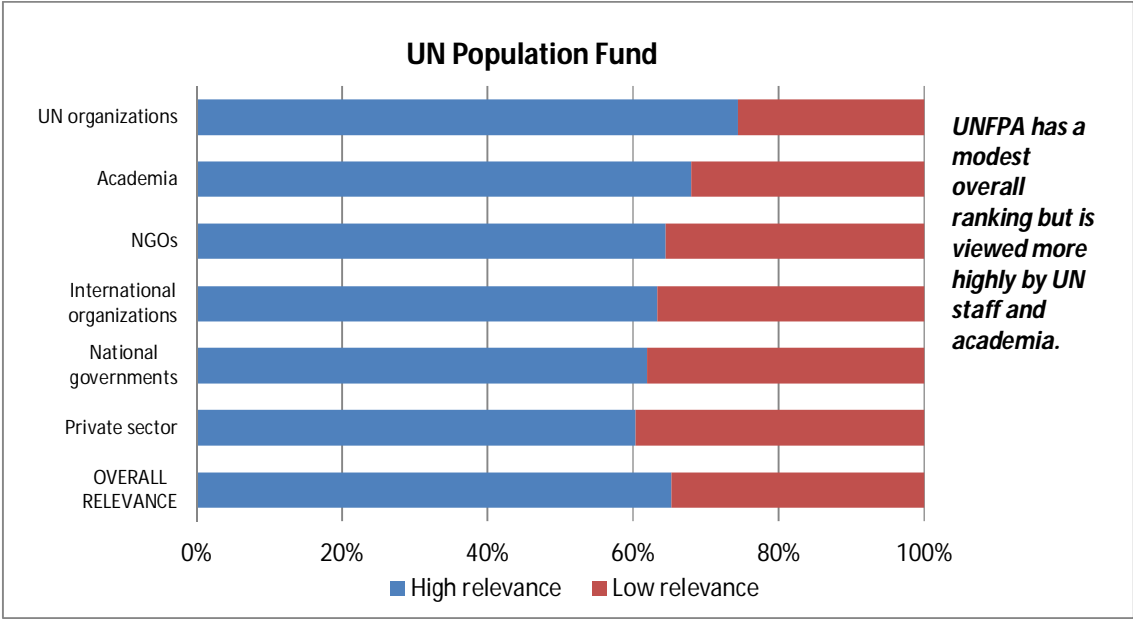












**Selected Other UN Organizations**

