



COUNTRY GENDER ASSESSMENT FOR UZBEKISTAN 2024



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Executive Summary

1. Addressing gender gaps is critical to the success of Uzbekistan’s inclusive transformation. Uzbekistan’s national income would be about 29 percent higher if women were to participate in equal measure to men. If working women were simply to catch up to the wages earned by men, the increased income would pull more than 700,000 people out of poverty. What prevents Uzbekistan from realizing such massive potential? This Country Gender Assessment identifies strengths and examines the remaining barriers to greater equality within Uzbekistan’s ongoing social and economic transformation. It consolidates existing analytical work by the government, the World Bank, development partners, academia, and others. Ultimately, it proposes a set of high-priority goals essential to closing the gap between Uzbekistan’s current performance and its potential for more inclusive prosperity.

2. The enduring challenge of gender inequality holds Uzbekistan back from its development potential. Comparing to global benchmarks identifies many of the strengths and weaknesses in Uzbekistan’s recent performance with regards to gender equality. In the 2022 global Gender Development Index, which measures gaps in human development achievements across health, knowledge, and living standards, Uzbekistan is ranked 106 out of 189 countries. Since monitoring began, life expectancy is the only component of the index for which women have ranked higher than men. Legal impediments to equality measured by the Women, Business, and the Law (WBL) index in 2023 revealed that Uzbekistan, with a score of just 70.6, ranked at the bottom of the list of Europe and Central Asia (ECA) countries (Table 1)—especially with respect to legislation addressing gender-based violence (GBV), equality in the workplace, equal pay, parenthood, and pensions. It should be noted however that recent legislation promises to raise the country’s future performance on the WBL measure in 2024, especially with respect to GBV and workplace protections introduced in the country’s new labor code (see sections IV and V). Despite challenges, Uzbekistan performs relatively well in several critical dimensions—above all with respect to equal access to basic health and education services—as is highlighted in the country’s strong performance in the global Gender Inequality Index. Collectively, these comparisons suggest that while Uzbekistan has a strong tradition investing in human capital for both men and women, an urgent agenda to foster a more inclusive society remains incomplete. But success promises to generate a virtuous circle of gender equity and economic growth (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Gender Equality Index vs. GDP per person

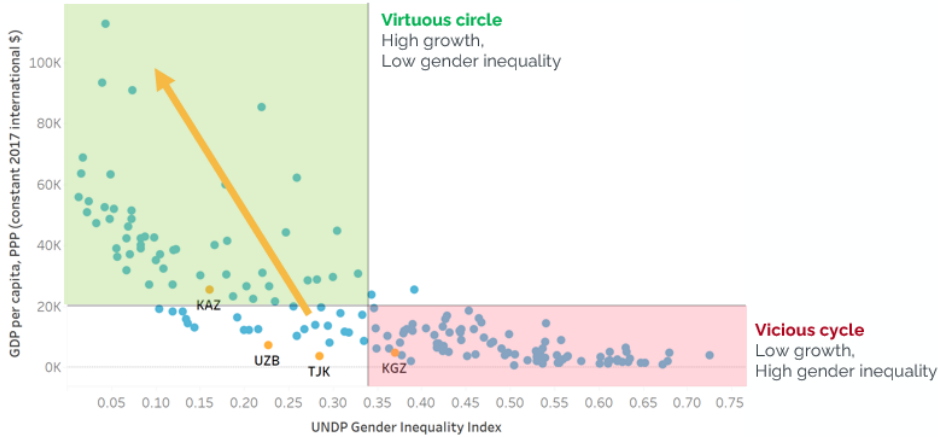


Table 1: Gender Equality Indicators Benchmarking

Index	UZB Score	ECA	Global
Gender Development Index (UNDP 2022)	0.94	0.96	0.96
Gender Inequality Index (UNDP 2022)	0.23	0.26	0.47
Women, Business, and the Law (World Bank 2023)	70.6	84.1	76.5

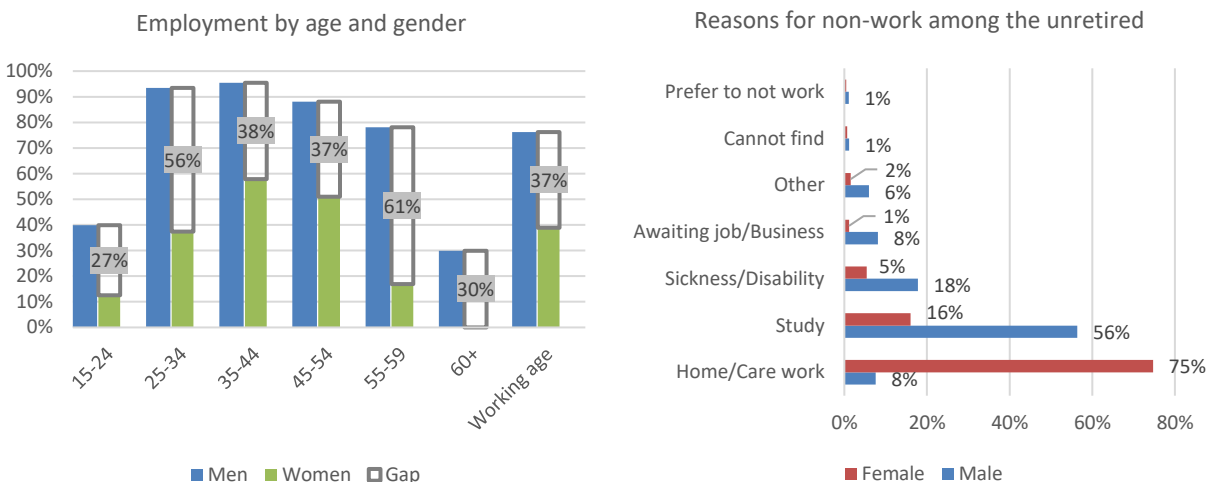
Notes: In the Gender Development Index, a higher score indicates greater gender balance. In the Gender Inequality Index, a higher score indicates less equality. In the Women, Business, and the Law assessment, a higher score indicates more supportive legal environment for women.

3. The struggle with economic inequality between women and men is especially stark in the labor market. Despite having achieved gender parity in some areas, harmful gender norms contribute to highly unequal economic opportunities between men and women. Due to differences in employment and wages, in 2017 gross national income (GNI) per capita per woman was more than 45 percent below GNI per man.¹ The trend has also worsened in recent years. Women’s labor force participation fell from 50 percent in 2010 to 45 percent in 2021 according to the International Labor Organization (ILO). The share of young men who were not in employment and not in education or in training (NEET) was 8.8 percent between the ages of 15 and 25 years old, compared to 42 percent among women of that age group. Entrepreneurial activity has exhibited similar imbalances, with the share of men accessing credit for a business or farm is more than twice that of women according to the government’s gender statistics portal. Low labor force participation, lower wages, and occupational segregation combined have resulted in a remarkably large gender pay gap. According to government statistics, in 2022 women earned 34 percent less than men on average, a much larger gap than the 20 percent global average.

4. Limited economic opportunities for women are linked to discriminatory attitudes and stereotypes about a women’s place being at home. Around 30 percent of respondents to the World Bank surveys believe that wives should earn less than husbands to sustain peace in the family, and around 75 percent believe that woman should work less than men to focus on the household. These attitudes result in a double burden, with women often shouldering both paid work and nearly all caregiving responsibilities at home—for children, the elderly, and other household members in need of support. On average, men contribute just 2.15 hours per day toward household tasks, compared to 5.27 hours among women. About 75 percent of working-age women who were not working in 2022 said they did so due to homemaking and care responsibilities, and women were more than 30 times more likely to not work for these reasons than men (Figure 2). The strong tendency for disproportionate duties limits career advancement and earning potential especially among younger women and those with young children and/or elderly household members.

¹ USD 5,064 vs. 9,230

Figure 2: Employment and reasons for non-work



Source: World Bank staff estimates using the Household Budget Survey, 2022

Note: The retirement age for men is 60 and the retirement age for women is 55 in Uzbekistan. Because of the difference in the retirement age, the figure shows that there is a large gap in employment rates between men and women at age 55.²

5. A growing body of evidence shows that plain discrimination and perceptions of women’s work being of lower value also play an important role in constraining women’s labor force participation.

When women choose to work, they disproportionately face discrimination in terms of the jobs that are considered appropriate for them, and the wages that are deemed sufficient for their work are systematically lower than that of men regardless of qualifications (Muradova & Seitz 2022). Results from World Bank research revealed clear and systematic bias against women’s wage setting in Uzbekistan. A survey experiment (Seitz, 2023) used randomized vignettes which described a worker engaged in a well-known occupation (such as a doctor or teacher) and at the end, each story stated the amount the worker was paid. The stories were fictional and standardized so that all workers were described the same way, except for one key difference: in half of the stories, the worker’s name was female, and in the other half, the worker’s name was male. Survey respondents were asked whether they thought the person described was underpaid, fairly paid, or overpaid. Over the course of two months, more than 70,000 evaluations on the fairness of earnings were collected across Central Asia. Even though the prompts were identical in every other respect, respondents were 13% more likely to say wages were too high when the subject of the vignette was a woman, and 34% more likely to say they were too low when the subject was a man.

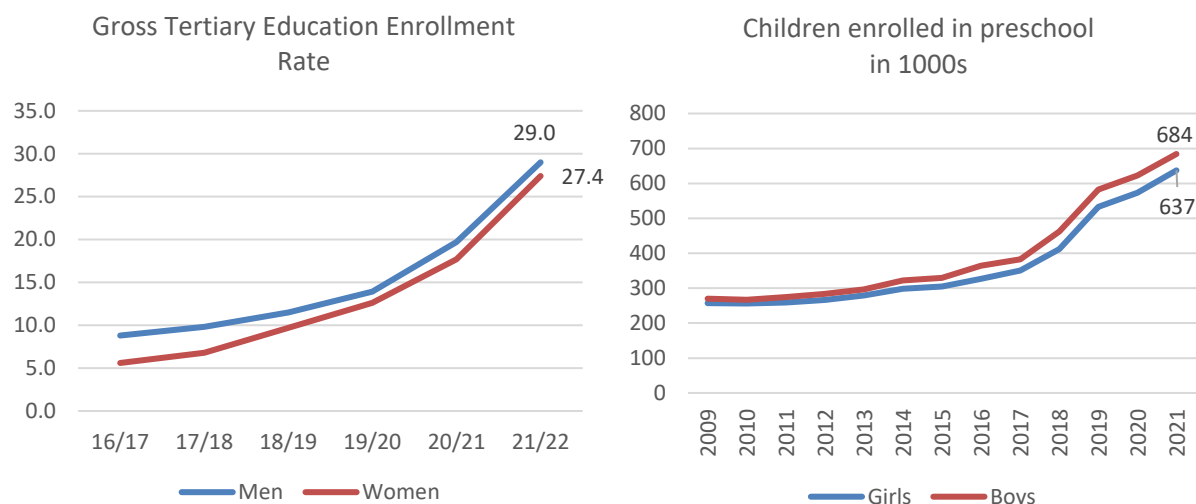
6. Education reforms enacted since 2017 have achieved remarkable improvements in access to early childhood and tertiary education, while also supporting a stronger labor market.

Thanks to a rapid expansion of early childhood education (ECE) programs beginning in 2017, Uzbekistan’s enrollment rate surged ahead of all comparators in Central Asia—rising from around 20 percent of children ages 3-6 in 2015 to 62 percent in 2021, with gains balanced between boys and girls (Figure 3). A World Bank assessment based on data from the Listening to the Citizens of Uzbekistan study found that each new public childcare center brought about 23 women to the labor market, while each private childcare center brought about 5 women to the labor market. In total, the expansion of childcare facilities in Uzbekistan

² According to Article 161 of the Labor Code (effective from April 30, 2023), it is illegal for an employer to terminate an employment contract due to an employee’s reaching retirement age. The labor code also allows pensioners to continue working full-time and receive full monthly wages and pension.

likely brought at least 72,000 women to the labor market in 2023 especially in urban areas where employment prospects were the strongest. The program was highly progressive, disproportionately increasing employment among low-income families. Before the 2017 reforms, Uzbekistan also struggled with the lowest tertiary enrollment rate in ECA, and indeed one of the lowest rates of any middle-income country in the world. But the rapid expansion of tertiary education since 2017 has led to dramatic change—enrollment in the 2021-2022 school year was more than quadruple for women and more than triple for men compared to the 2016-2017 school year (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Enrollment in tertiary and preschool education



Source: World Bank staff estimates using the data from the Agency of Statistics, 2022

7. Women and men still fall short of their full human development potential, but in different ways.

With an annual adolescent fertility rate at 23.6³ births per 1,000 girls aged 15-19, Uzbekistan was well above the ECA average of 15.8 in 2010. The adolescent fertility rate has worsened since, rising to 34 births per 1000 girls aged 15-19 in 2021. Such early pregnancies usually lead to a decrease in women’s participation in the labor market in the future.⁴ Other dimensions of health and education are also strongly gendered. Large gaps in life expectancy between men and women are linked to smoking, alcohol use, and diet, with men living from 5 to 7 years less than women. Until recently, women’s higher education enrollment rates have been much lower than men, and despite improved inclusiveness in recent years, women account for 36.1 percent of STEM graduates in 2022.

8. Though relatively few women have attained formal positions of authority, representation has recently improved.

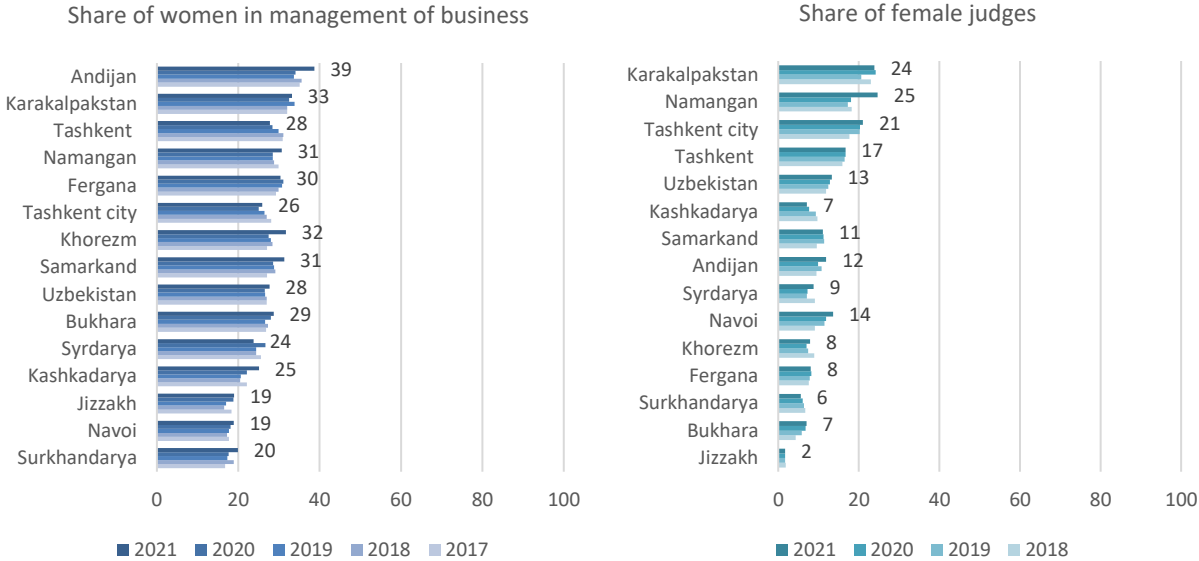
Following the 2019 elections, the number of women holding seats in the lower chamber of parliament doubled to 48. Women held 32 percent of seats in the lower chamber (where it remained through 2021), bringing Uzbekistan to the 37th position among 190 parliaments in the world in terms of the share of women in parliament (OSCE, 2020). The share of women holding seats in the senate rose from 20 percent in 2018 to 25 percent in 2022. The share of women in ministerial equivalent positions in government rose from 2.9 percent in 2018 to 5.7 percent in 2022. The share of women among local community (mahalla) leaders rose from 10 percent in 2018 to 13 percent in 2022. However, in the private

³ <https://gender.stat.uz/uz/qo-shimcha-ko-rsatkichlar/huquq>

⁴ UNICEF (2022) reports global and national estimates of impacts from adolescent motherhood available [here](#).

sector, progress has not been as consistent. The share of firms with any women participating in ownership fell from 40 percent in 2008 to just 26 percent in 2019, and only about one in ten firms have at least one woman in top management. In business managerial positions, the share of women was up just slightly from 2018 to 2021 (from 27 to 28 percent), but with regional disparities: in higher performing regions (e.g., Andijan and Karakalpakstan), as many as 2 out of every 5 managers is a woman, which is double the performance of the least equal regions (e.g., Surkhandarya and Navoi) (Figure 4). The share of women working in internal affairs (the body often involved in addressing cases of domestic violence and other offenses) rose from 8.7 percent in 2018 to 10.2 percent in 2022, and the share of female judges rose from 12 to 13 percent, with notable differences between higher performing regions (e.g., Karakalpakstan, Namangan) where one in every four judges is a woman, compared to less well performing regions (e.g., Bukhara, Jizzakh) where as few as 1 in 50 judges is a woman.

Figure 4: Share of women in management positions and judgeships



Source: Agency for Statistics, 2021

9. The incidence of gender-based violence (GBV) is unknown in Uzbekistan due to a lack of representative survey data and underreporting, but it is believed to be highly prevalent.⁵ There is no systematic survey that measures gender-based violence in Uzbekistan using internationally comparable standards. Administrative data and alternative sources suggest that violence is prevalent and widely unreported. In 2022 almost 38 thousand protection orders were issued in relation to violence cases, up from 30 thousand in 2021 likely due to improved reporting standards. About 87 percent of protection orders were requested by family members against other family members, with husbands registered as perpetrators against their spouses in more than three-quarters of all cases. Although anonymous channels for reporting cases of violence are available, most cases are believed to go unreported. However, recent legislation has instituted a correctional program under resolution No. 3 of the Cabinet of Ministers dated January 4, 2020. The program is focused on implementation of a correctional program to change the violent behavior of individuals who have committed or are prone to committing acts of violence and coercion.

⁵ CEDAW (2015)

10. Uzbekistan is undertaking a transformative agenda of political, social, and economic reforms, including a focus on gender inequality. Following the 2016 appointment of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, Uzbekistan began implementing transformative policy changes intended to liberalize the economy and prioritize the wellbeing of citizens. Summarized in the government’s development strategy for 2017-2021, the program emphasized the importance of both greater access to opportunity, and the need to cushion the costs of reform among vulnerable people. The program was especially focused on generating more inclusive growth with bold commitments to rapid poverty reduction, investing in human capital, expanding the social safety net, and accelerating job creation. Announced in 2022, the Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan builds on the priorities of its predecessor while further stressing the strategic themes of fairness, dignity, and inclusiveness (see Quote 1). Laws and state programs launched in 2022 guarantee equal rights and opportunities for women and men. Active programs aim to increase participation of women in public administration, and public financing to support low-income women with tertiary tuition are among many new initiatives to promote greater equality⁶.

Quote 1: Excerpt on Closing Gender Gaps from the Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan 2022-2026

Goal 69: Support women and ensure their active participation in society. Create an atmosphere of intolerance towards oppression and violence against women in society, guaranteeing women’s rights and legitimate interests. Continue policies directed at gender equality by increasing women’s social and political activity, and the continuation of reforms aimed to support them. Provide women with education and professional skills. Assist women with job placement, support entrepreneurial activity, and identify talented young women for focused career development. Improve the quality of medical and social services provided to women, especially in rural areas, and work to ensure healthy lifestyles. Establish systemic measures to provide housing for women in need, improve living and working conditions, and increase income. Provide socio-legal, psychological assistance to women in difficult social situations and ensure targeted support. Target work with the “Women’s Book” through the timely resolution of women’s problems by the authorities.

11. In 2021, Uzbekistan adopted a new strategy aimed at achieving gender equality by 2030. The strategy includes an action plan for the years 2021-2022, as well as key principles for achieving gender equality in various sectors such as electoral rights, civil service, education, sciences, and sports. The strategy also focuses on ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men in the social-

⁶ In 2021-2022, Uzbekistan adopted more than 40 reforms and programs aimed at protecting the rights and interests of women. For example, the Law (December 2022 ORQ-809) introduced the “gender audit” rule. The Law dated April 11, 2023, aimed at reliably protecting the rights, freedoms and legal interests of women and children, introduced amendments and additions to 5 codes and 10 laws (ORQ-829, 31.10.2023). This Law introduced concepts such as “family (domestic) violence”, “harassment”, “sexual harassment” in the relevant legal documents, also administrative and criminal liability was established for these violations. In addition, interest-free educational loans were introduced to pay the educational contracts of women studying in higher education institutions, vocational schools and colleges. The procedure for state reimbursement of the contract fees of all women studying at the master’s level was established; and for nonrepayable funding of the educational contracts of socially vulnerable families’ members, orphans, or students who are deprived of their parents’ care at the expense of additional sources of the state budget has been introduced (Decree No. PF-87 dated March 7, 2022, paragraph 3). Moreover, the Code of Administrative Liability amended eliminates discrimination based on gender, including establishment of a liability responsibility for openly denying the equal rights of women and men (ORQ-874, 31.10.2023).

economic sector, including job creation, entrepreneurship, access to credit, and prevention of harassment and violence. Additionally, it addresses gender-related issues in family affairs, childcare, legal documents, and gender statistics. To ensure effective implementation of the strategy, a Gender Commission comprising relevant stakeholders and civil society organizations will monitor progress.

12. This country gender assessment concludes with recommendations for Uzbekistan's next phase of reform. To reach its potential, Uzbekistan's society must address a range of pressing challenges, including harmful social norms that prevent the full economic participation of women, gaps in access to tertiary education (especially in highly remunerative STEM fields), healthcare limitations and worsening family planning options, incomplete protections against GBV, and imbalanced representation of women in positions of authority. But Uzbekistan is also building from a strong record of improving conditions, many of which are auspicious for greater gender equality in the coming years. If maintained, the rapid increase in enrollment in two pivotal sources of human capital accumulation – early childhood education and tertiary education – bode particularly well for a more inclusive and prosperous Uzbekistan.

I — Introduction

13. Uzbekistan’s policy makers aim to achieve gender equality across a wide range of dimensions and have enshrined the principle of equality in the country’s constitution, stating plainly that: “women and men shall have equal rights.” In the new Constitution of the Republic in 2022, the commitment to gender equality was further strengthened, and it was established that the State provides women and men with equal rights and opportunities in the management of society and state affairs, as well as in other areas of society and state life (Article 58). Since the last Country Gender Assessment for Uzbekistan was published in 2018, the country has made rapid progress in closing a range of key gender gaps.⁷ One of the most helpful advances which encourages progress across a range of areas is the improved availability of data and evidence. Disaggregated statistics and information on gender-relevant development issues, while incomplete, are increasingly available in critical areas—including the labor market, in human capital, and with respect to voice and agency—and many statistical measures are converging with the coverage available from advanced statistics agencies. This information is of vital importance for both public engagements, as well as instrumentally in efforts to track the country’s progress towards its ambitious reform agenda. Increasing openness to information-sharing and public consultation has also transformed the policy landscape—both in terms of the issues prioritized and the diversity of partners involved in policymaking. But the work of achieving true equality is unfinished, and Uzbekistan faces challenges on the path to reaching its vision.

Uzbekistan’s transforming policy landscape

14. A rapid series of policy and legislative reforms since 2017 have transformed the landscape with respect to gender equality in Uzbekistan. In 1995, Uzbekistan joined the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, followed by several national laws protecting women and children from violence. But the 2000s represented a lull in legislation and reform aimed at addressing gender inequality. Starting in 2017 and under new presidential leadership, policy to promote greater equality returned to the center stage and has since progressed rapidly. For instance, in 2019, a law on gender equality was adopted, including guarantees for equal opportunities for women and men, non-discrimination provisions, equal access to public services, promotion of equal participation in state affairs, and improved access to economic opportunities for women. The 2019 law also improved the security of women’s property rights within marriage. Also in 2019, a law to protect women from violence established a legal basis for GBV police complaints, opening the door for the systematic protection of victims. In 2022, changes to Uzbekistan’s Labor Code added guarantees of equal work for equal pay, removed restrictions on women working in protected occupations, prohibited sex-based discrimination in hiring and firing, and expanded regular and parental leave provisions for women and men. The new labor code came into force in 2023, followed by a landmark GBV law strengthening protections for survivors and introducing criminal penalties for violent abusers. Administrative liability was established for sexual harassment (Article 41 of the Administrative Liability Code).

Opportunities and Challenges

15. Implementation of the many recent policy reforms will be challenging. While Uzbekistan has undertaken substantial policy reforms to promote gender equality, their effective implementation

⁷ Conducted by the Asian Development Bank and available at the following link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22617/TCS199904>

remains a challenge. Gender disparities persist in multiple spheres, from the labor market to social norms and GBV. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach, encompassing legal reforms, institutional strengthening, awareness-raising, and targeted interventions. Capacity building with ministries, agencies, and other parts of government charged with the implementation of new initiatives will be paramount their success.

16. Uzbekistan has made notable progress in improving gender equality in access to health services and education. Efforts focused on ensuring gender parity in access to education have successfully closed gaps, particularly in attaining tertiary education and accessing early childhood education. This achievement builds upon a strong foundation of human endowments in the country. However, it is essential to consolidate these gains and address the persisting gender imbalances in the labor market. Despite advancements in education, gender disparities in labor market outcomes remain pronounced. This failure to translate human capital potential into more meaningful progress in the labor market means that individuals and the country are not fully benefiting from the promise of increasing investments in people.

17. The challenges associated with gender gaps are concentrated in specific regions. Differences between women, especially between women living in different regions of the country, are also highly relevant to effective policy design. Several regions face equality challenges across many dimensions simultaneously. Notably, Samarkand ranks last with respect to early marriages, has the highest gender gap in the employment rate, and faces the highest early motherhood rate. Kashkadarya also struggles with higher-than-average unemployment among women, high early marriage rates, and the lowest share of elected female mahalla leaders (followed by Samarkand).⁸ These and several other regions experience particularly large gender gaps in various dimensions. Beyond the general recommendations of this study, it may be beneficial to adopt targeted approaches that address the unique needs and challenges faced by these regions.

18. Encouraging inclusive social norms is a prerequisite for a more gender-balanced society. Surveys of social norms suggest widespread views limiting the role of women in economic activities and public life, and tolerance toward violence against women. In a recent World Bank survey, more than half of women (52 per cent) indicated that all or most people in the community believe violence between intimate partners is acceptable in certain circumstances. This prevailing norm perpetuates gender inequalities and undermines efforts to effectively combat GBV. Sexual crimes and domestic violence remain prevalent despite being under-reported. Monitoring of GBV is stymied by incomplete statistics, while barriers to accessing justice remain. It is crucial to address these harmful social norms and promote a culture of respect, equality, and non-violence.

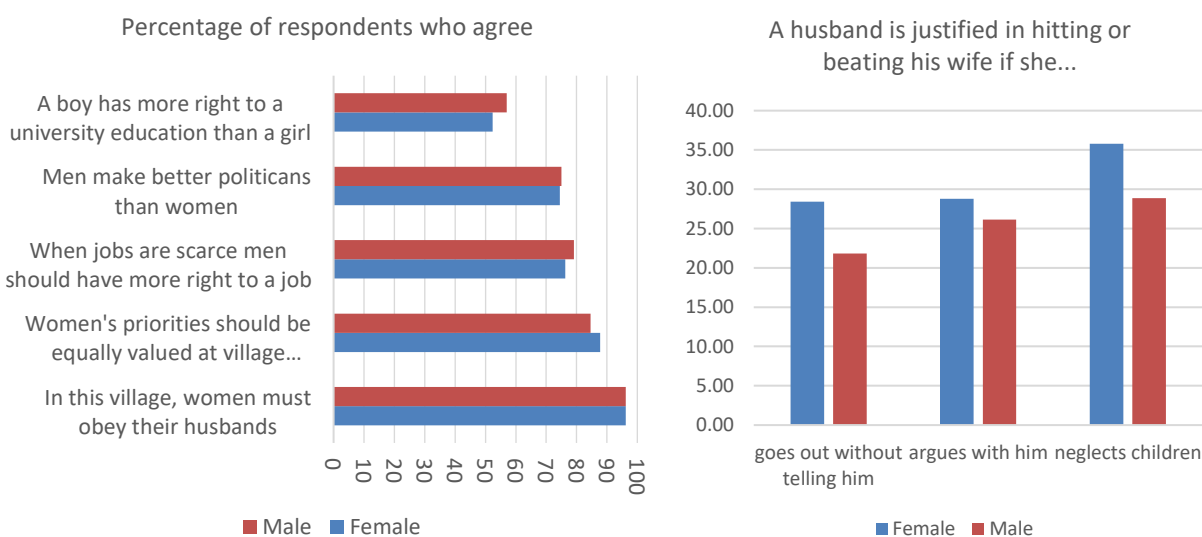
19. The structure of the report is as follows. Section 2 focuses on gender norms and social expectations. Section 3 discusses gender gaps in human endowments. Section 4 provides an assessment of gender equality from the perspective of economic opportunities. Section 5 focuses on voice and agency. Section 6 concludes with recommendations.

⁸ According to Article 8, the Chairman of the Citizens' Assembly is elected by the Citizens' Assembly for three years. Each citizen has the right to vote for the candidate of their choice, whether male or female. Citizens cannot be compelled to vote for a specific female candidate.

II — Gender Norms and Social Expectations

20. Progress toward greater gender equality often stalls due to harmful gender norms. Cultural norms are commonly the upstream cause of gender disparities in social and economic outcomes, and although linked, economic development alone is unlikely to eliminate damaging norms (Alesina, Giuliano, and Nunn 2013; Jayachandran 2021). In Uzbekistan, social surveys reveal that traditional views on the appropriate roles of women and men are widespread—regardless of the respondents’ sex, age, and income level. Perceptions placing men in higher esteem than women are common, as are views suggesting women should have less access to economic opportunities. Although views condoning violence are in the minority, a meaningful share of the public believe that intimate partner violence is appropriate in some circumstances (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Views on Women’s Roles, Rights, and Treatment



Source: World Bank estimates using the Rural Infrastructure Development Project (RIDP) survey, 2021

Note: The RIDP survey covers 4013 households and was collected together with government partners.

21. Although greater female employment is privately popular and labor legislation guarantees the rights of men and women to participate in the labor market with equal opportunities, many believe public opinion is against women working. Respondents to the L2CU survey resoundingly object to the idea that “fewer women should be working outside the home”. When asked this question, more than 80 percent disagreed. When asked which are the most important economic challenges in the country, job creation for men and job creation for women attracted nearly equal rates of concern among the public. But when asked to predict what share of other citizens would agree that more women should not be working, nearly all expected their fellow citizens to be more conservative than was truly the case. Thus, while a minority (18 percent) said that fewer women should work outside the home, less than 2 percent of respondents expected the share to be that low. This is reminiscent of findings from a range of studies that shows gender related norms can be self-reinforcing. At times, people behave with respect to their perception of a social norm which itself is only maintained by the expectations that others expect them to uphold it. The following research insight highlights how misperceived norms can perpetuate, with an

example from Saudi Arabia. Many of the same authors have recently extended these findings, replicating them across 60 countries (Bursztyn et. al, 2023).

22. Mahalla leadership tend to have views on gender roles that are either typical or more conservative than the communities they serve. According to a representative sample of mahalla leaders interviewed across the country in the Listening to the Citizens of Uzbekistan survey,⁹ 2 out of 3 mahalla leaders say that women should work less than men to take care of home-related tasks, slightly less than the general population. However, at 60 percent, the same leaders were much more likely to endorse the view that wives should earn less than their husbands for the sake of family harmony. Responses to both questions did not vary substantially between female or male mahalla leaders. The gap between relatively conservative mahalla leaders and less conservative constituents tended to be greatest in urban areas of the country.

Research insight: Misperceived social norms: female labor force participation in Saudi Arabia.

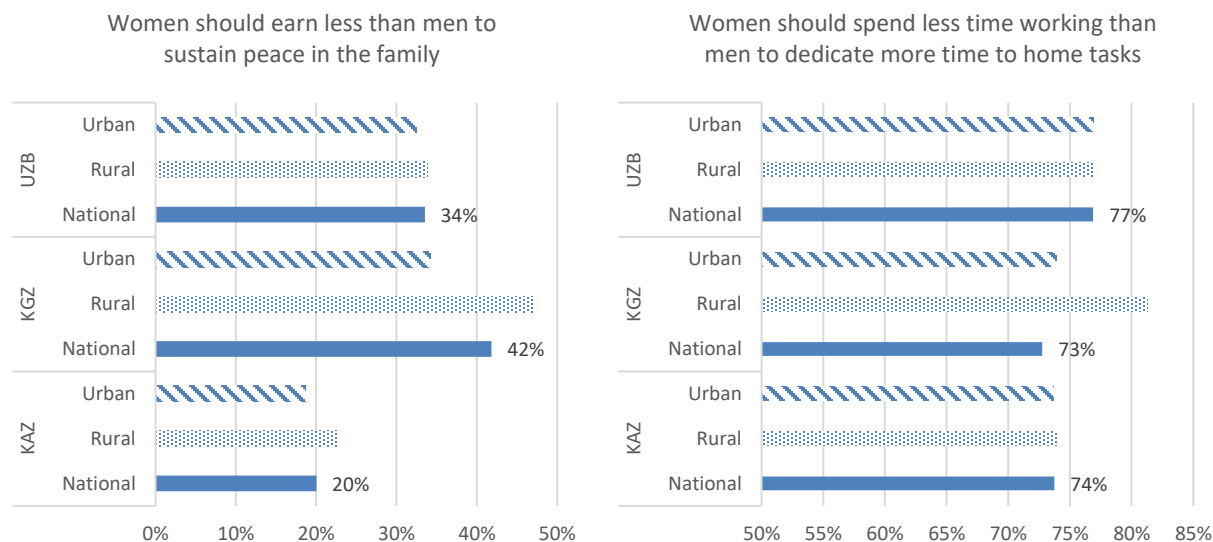
Through the custom of guardianship, husbands typically have the final word on their wives' labor supply decisions in Saudi Arabia, a country with very low female labor force participation (FLFP). We provide incentivized evidence (both from an experimental sample in Riyadh and from a national sample) that most young married men in Saudi Arabia privately support FLFP outside of home from a normative perspective, while they substantially underestimate the level of support for FLFP by other similar men – even men from their same social setting, such as their neighbors. We then show that randomly correcting these beliefs about others increases married men's willingness to let their wives join the labor force (as measured by their costly sign-up for a job-matching service for their wives). Finally, we find that this decision maps onto real outcomes: four months after the main intervention, the wives of men in our original sample whose beliefs about acceptability of FLFP were corrected are more likely to have applied and interviewed for a job outside of home. Together, our evidence indicates a potentially important source of labor market frictions, where job search is underprovided due to misperceived social norms.

—Bursztyn, Leonardo, Alessandra L. González, and David Yanagizawa-Drott. *Misperceived social norms: Female labor force participation in Saudi Arabia*. No. w24736. National Bureau of Economic Research, 2018.

23. World Bank research points to restrictive gender norms and the ways these norms translate into discrimination. The World Bank's Listening to Central Asia surveys thousands of households on a monthly basis across four countries of the region. Over two-thirds of respondents across the region in 2022 said that women should prioritize caregiving and home responsibilities over work outside of the home, while men should be the primary breadwinners (see **Error! Reference source not found.**). Between 20-50% also said that married women should earn less than their husbands for the sake of family harmony. And these patterns were relatively similar whether respondents lived in urban or rural areas.

⁹ In the Listening to the Citizens of Uzbekistan survey, approximately 600 mahalla leaders were interviewed per month and covered 7,200 mahallas per year.

Figure 6: Survey-based perceptions of women's role in work and family life



Source: World Bank estimates using the Listening to Central Asia surveys, 2022.

Note: The analysis is based on interviews with 72, 000 respondents in the Listening to Central Asia surveys (2022).

24. Although some segments of the population highly value gender equality, harmful social norms and practices remain prevalent, hindering women's access to education, healthcare, employment, and decision-making power. For instance, though it is closing, preference for male attendance in university persists, especially in the most prestigious fields. Fewer women who complete tertiary education end up in paid work compared to men, often because women are expected to prioritize domestic duties over career development. Biases in hiring practices, including questions about marital or parental status, also discourage women's participation in the workforce. While legislation guarantees equal economic opportunities for women, the lack of access to credit due to insufficient collateral remains a challenge for many women. Additionally, expectations of female obedience and tolerance of domestic violence in certain situations indicate persistent gender-based inequalities in women's agency and voice.

25. Recent legislation demonstrates the government's commitment to addressing gender inequality in its reform agenda, but careful implementation will be essential to making progress. Tackling the reality of ongoing gaps in gender equality, especially in the areas of economic opportunity and women's empowerment will be essential for achieving gender equality in Uzbekistan. Recent reforms such as measures to reduce poverty among women as well as reforms that address pay gaps, discrimination, and basic issues of equality are steps in the direction of gender equality. However, their success will depend on the systemic and systematic implementation by the central government and regional authorities to address the constraints women face daily.

Research insight: Reshaping Adolescents' Gender Attitudes

[the experiment] engaged seventh to tenth graders in classroom discussions about gender equality, with a 45-minute session held every three weeks for two and one-half school years. The sessions taught facts and endorsed gender equality, and as importantly, prompted students to reflect on their own and society's views. Discussion topics included gender stereotypes, gender roles at home, girls' education, women's employment outside the home, and harassment. Some sessions taught communication skills to help students convey their views to others so that they can, for example, persuade their parents to permit them to marry at a later age. The program's messaging combined a human rights case for gender equity with pragmatic reasons to value women, such as their economic contributions....

We find that the intervention made gender attitudes more progressive by 0.18 standard deviations in the short run (three and one-half months after the program ended, or three years after baseline). The measure of attitudes is an index that aggregates several survey responses pertaining to support for gender equality. The effect size is equivalent to newfound support for gender equality in 16 percent of the cases where a student initially held a gender-regressive view. What is especially striking is that these effects persisted. We continue to find a large effect on attitudes—0.16 standard deviations—in the medium run (two years after the program ended, or five years after baseline).

—Dhar, Diva, Tarun Jain, and Seema Jayachandran. "Reshaping adolescents' gender attitudes: Evidence from a school-based experiment in India." *American economic review* 112.3 (2022): 899-927.

26. Women's participation in public life and positions of authority is constrained by gender norms and cultural perceptions. Despite legislative reforms aimed at increasing women's involvement in public life, gender norms and cultural perceptions continue to hinder their participation. A World Bank study by Romanova and coauthors identified several barriers to women's participation in public life in Uzbekistan. Both formal and informal community institutions are dominated by men. Female participation is often perceived as encroaching on what is considered "male space" and can be met with harassment, intimidation, and even physical abuse.¹⁰ Additionally, World Bank surveys and opinion polling consistently find most of the public (including both women and men) believe that men make better political leaders than women.¹¹

27. Norms condoning violence continue to be persistent throughout Uzbekistan. The 2021 Rural Infrastructure Development Project (RIDP) survey asked men and women several different questions related to GBV. One question asked how often violence occurred. About 70 percent of women and 65 percent of men stated that it never occurs, with nearly one third of respondents admitting to the presence of violence in the village. A different question aimed at understanding norms related to violence against women asked respondents whether there were cases in which violence against women is justified. According to interview results in the 2021 RIDP survey, more than one-third of women strongly agreed that husbands were justified in hitting their wives if the wives neglected the children (Figure 5). While figures condoning violence against women do not represent most respondents' opinions, they demonstrate the degree to which people are willing to admit their support, representing between a quarter and one-third of the population in certain situations.

¹⁰ Romanova et al. (2017)

¹¹ Approximately 82% of women and 79% of men

III — Human Endowments

28. The accumulation of human capital is essential for economic growth. People’s human capital—their skills, health, knowledge, and resilience—is a pre-requisite of sustainable growth and poverty alleviation because it shapes a person’s ability to reach their full potential in society (World Bank 2018). The 2012 World Development Report identified gender differences in endowments of human capital as a key challenge in reducing global gender inequality (World Bank 2012). Investments in women’s health and education not only reduce gaps in wage and productivity between women and men but have also been shown to reliably boost opportunity to future generations through higher education and better health outcomes for children.

29. The most successful transition economies prioritize human capital for men and women alike. In addition to the fast-growing transition countries such as Viet Nam, Estonia, and Poland, the most successful Asian “tiger” economies all prioritized education and have continued to increase educational attainment by performing well on international assessments. The most successful transition countries also achieved near eradication of child malnutrition and universal access to clean water and improved sanitation. By improving the quality of public health services, they drove declines in mortality, especially among infants and mothers, as well as increased years of healthy living. While Uzbekistan is seeking to address both its education and health challenges through policy changes and best practices, it will also need to work to address the norms that drive the challenges, which require continuing current reforms as well as thinking beyond them.

30. Though gaps remain, Uzbekistan’s Human Capital Index score is nearly balanced for girls and boys, an auspicious trend for equal access to opportunity in the future. The World Bank’s Human Capital Index (HCI) measures the amount of human capital girls and boys can expect to accumulate by the age of 18, given their country’s measures of survival, health, and education. In 2019, girls reached .61 and boys .63, signifying that overall, boys and girls can expect to attain about 62 percent of their potential human capital. On average, girls had only slightly lower test scores than boys, similar expected years of schooling, and a significantly higher adult survival rate. However, larger gaps emerge moving beyond the provision of basic health and education measured in the HCI, and Uzbekistan remains from its potential in building human capital for boys and girls alike.

Education

31. In basic education, the quality and the content of materials boys and girls receive is a bigger challenge than imbalances in access. In Uzbekistan, primary and secondary education is mandatory, and both boys and girls have universal access to it. But a child born in Uzbekistan will achieve only 62 percent of their potential productivity due to gaps in education and health. This gap is most strongly related to the overall quality of education, rather than imbalances between girls and boys. Article 41 of Uzbekistan’s constitution and the 1997 Law on Education guarantees universal access to education, with primary and secondary education being free and compulsory for all school-age children. The number of expected years of schooling is presently 11 years and the figure drops to just 9.1 year for girls and 9.2 years for boys after

adjusting for the quality of their learning.¹² Although Uzbekistan achieves more balanced basic educational outcomes for boys and girls than many comparator countries, boys and girls both underperform their potential. Comparing to Uzbekistan’s neighbors, expected years of schooling for boys and girls are lower than Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and the ECA region (13.1). Looking at the harmonized test scores yields similar results. On a scale where 625 represents advanced attainment and 300 represents minimum attainment, girls score 474, nearly identical to the boys’ 475 on average. Uzbekistan’s harmonized test scores are higher than its neighbors (see Table 2), but slightly lower than the ECA average for boys and girls (479).

Table 2: Indicators of human capital in Central Asia

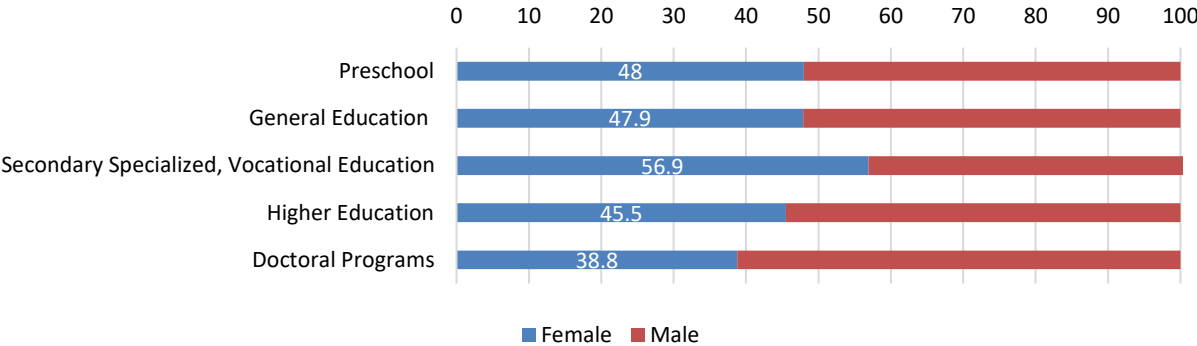
		Expected Years of Schooling	Harmonized Test Scores
Uzbekistan	Female	12.0	474
	Male	12.1	475
Tajikistan	Female	10.4	n.d.
	Male	11.3	n.d.
Kazakhstan	Female	13.8	422
	Male	13.6	411
Kyrgyz Republic	Female	12.9	426
	Male	12.9	414

Source: World Bank Human Capital Index Database, 2020

32. Improving human capital through higher quality education is vital for Uzbekistan’s economic transition. Successful transition economies prioritize education at all levels. For example, Vietnam and Estonia that prioritized excellence in education have seen especially large improvements in harmonized test scores, in many cases overtaking peer countries and increasing the competitiveness of their workforce. Tertiary enrollment has rapidly increased in almost every example of a fast-growing transition country, especially in high-demand sectors with rising wages. Poland, for instance, increased in its gross tertiary enrollment rate from less than 20 percent in 1989 to about 69 percent in 2018. Early childhood education also offers some of the largest potential human capital gains for transition countries, as research on efficacy suggests that investments from an early age can help sustain higher lifelong human capital accumulation and in addition plays a positive role in encouraging higher labor force participation among parents with young children (especially mothers). But although universal access to basic education has been the norm for decades in Uzbekistan—referring in this case to primary and secondary level schooling—the same cannot be said for tertiary and early childhood education, both of which were deprioritized and underfunded after independence. These two critical and gender imbalanced gaps in the education system have been among of the highest priorities of the reform agenda laid out in 2017, as they represent some of the most urgent challenges for Uzbekistan’s goals of rapid and including growth.

¹² According to the Law “On Education” No. O’RQ-637 adopted on September 20, 2020, in Uzbekistan, compulsory education in Uzbekistan is eleven years.

Figure 7: Share of girls and women in education by level (at the beginning of the 2020/2021 academic year)



Source: The Agency on Statistics, 2021

33. Once a straggler, Uzbekistan now leads the region in early childhood education enrollment. Uzbekistan’s preschool enrollment lagged behind all regional comparators until recently, with limited access being a more common issue in regions with higher poverty rates and faster population growth. In 2018, respondents to the L2CU survey commonly noted that the lack of preschools was particularly hard on working mothers, who disproportionately shoulder care responsibilities. The lack of preschool options occasionally necessitated they take their children to work, suggesting preschool availability was an important bottleneck to female labor force participation in Uzbekistan. But thanks to a rapid expansion of enrollment beginning in 2017, the enrollment rate surged ahead of regional comparators, reaching 62 percent of age-appropriate children in 2021. In the 2020-2021 academic year, enrollment of 6-year-old children in preschool education became compulsory. In addition, enrollment rates for children ages 3-6

increased from around 20 percent in 2015 to 62 percent in 2021, with balanced gains for both boys and girls. (See Figure 8).

Figure 8: Preschool coverage and preschool enrollment

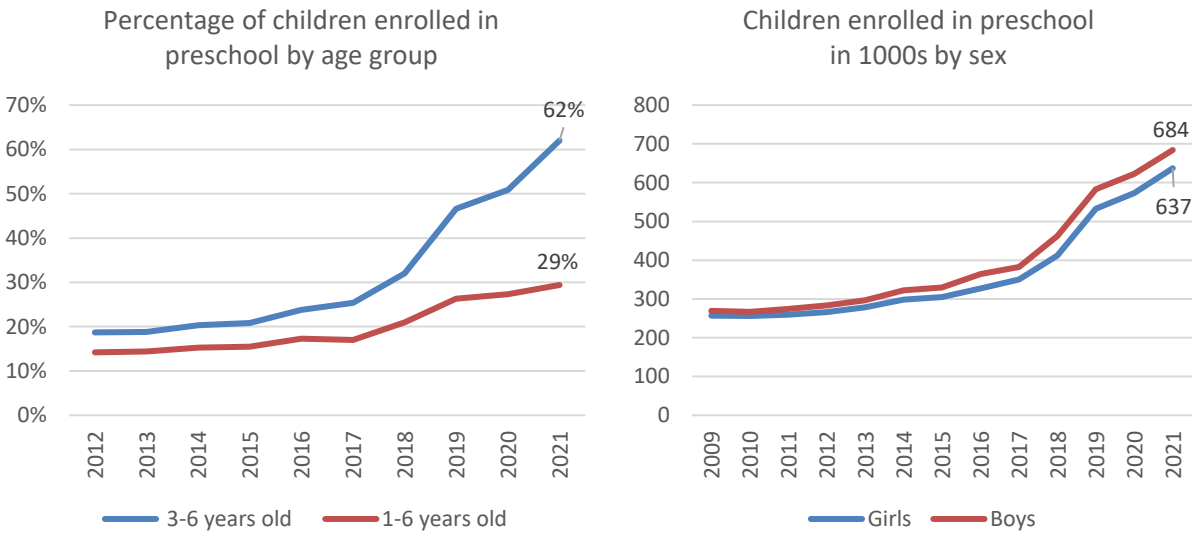
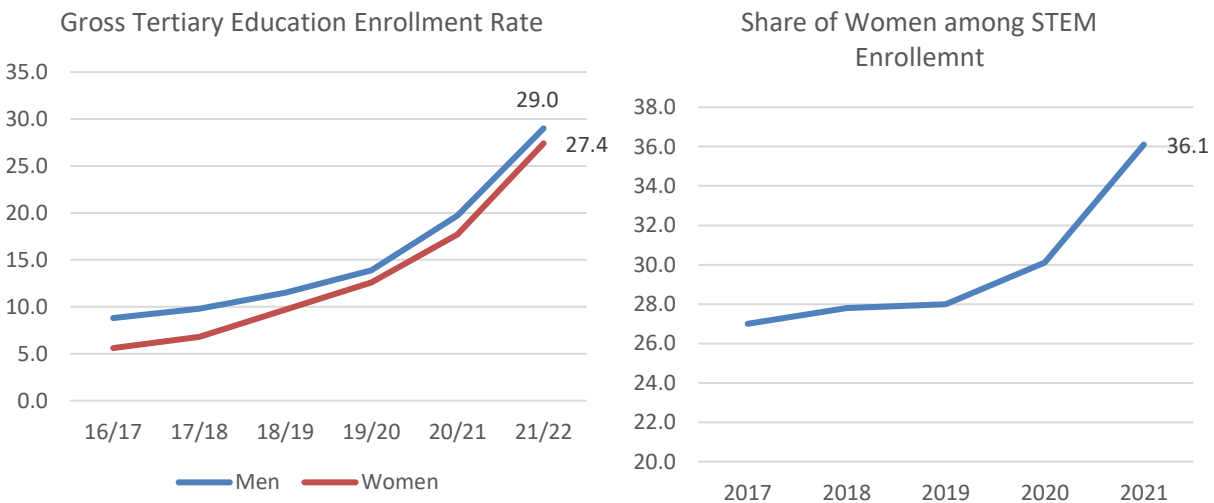


Figure 9: Tertiary enrollment by gender and STEM enrollment



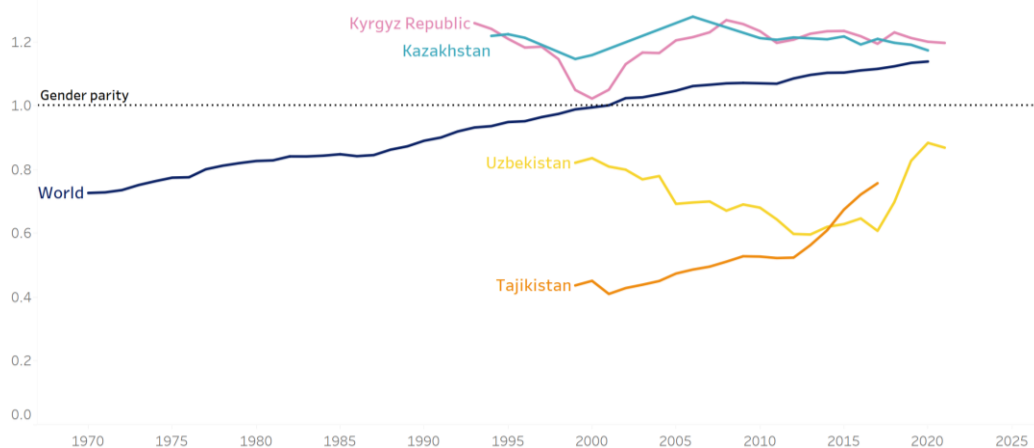
Source: Agency on Statistics, 2022

34. Access to tertiary education has more than tripled since 2017, especially benefiting women. Until recently, Uzbekistan enrolled an abnormally small number of students in tertiary institutions, and of those enrolled, for decades male graduates outpaced female graduates. But enrollment in tertiary education for both women (27.4 percent) and men (29.0 percent) has rapidly expanded in recent years. Compared to the 2016-2017 school year, enrollment had roughly tripled for men and quadrupled for women by the 2021-2022 school year. For those who obtain a degree, wages and employment rates are considerably higher than those with secondary or vocationally qualifications, with a wage premium over

secondary programs of about 55 percent. The recent expansion of tertiary enrollment has swiftly reversed a consistently deteriorating trend in the gender parity index for tertiary education that had prevailed before reform. In 1999, just 82 women were enrolled in tertiary institutions for every 100 men, falling to the lowest in the ECA region in 2016 at 62 per 100 men (Figure 10). But by 2018, the number of women enrolled spiked to 79 for every 100 men and reached 84 women for every 100 men by 2021. Over that period, female enrollment rose faster than male enrollment in every region other than Karakalpakstan. Thus, recent years have witnessed a remarkable turnaround in tertiary education access especially among women—contributing to shrinking the pre-existing gender gaps—but benefitting both women and men. According to the order issued for higher education and scientific institutions, a total of 1,627 quotas were allocated for doctoral studies to women and girls in the year 2022. Among them, a total of 965 quotas (59.3%) were allocated for admissions in the STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) field.¹³

35. Despite rapid progress, Uzbekistan’s female tertiary enrollment rate still has room to grow. According to globally comparable enrollment statistics compiled by the World Bank, whilst Uzbekistan has made rapid progress toward gender parity in tertiary education, a gap remains between women and men, and still ranks below its neighboring countries Kyrgyz Republic and Kazakhstan. If the pace of rapid expansion in tertiary education achieved from 2017 to 2022 continues, the Uzbekistan may reach gender parity in enrollment by 2025.

Figure 10: Gender parity index in tertiary enrollment



Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators, 2023

36. Nonetheless, men still are overrepresented in the most prestigious programs and receive training for the most lucrative occupations. Thematic and occupational segregation by gender are high in Uzbekistan’s education system and cause imbalances in the labor market. In 2022, only 63 women were enrolled in research positions for every 100 men. Tertiary programs that enroll mostly women predominantly track into the three sectors—education, health, and social services—which apart from agriculture are also the three lowest paid sectors among formal workers in Uzbekistan. Men are much more likely to study transport, communication, commerce, agriculture, industry, and construction. In

¹³ Updated statistics provided by government authorities indicate that in 2023, a total of 48,451 women (38% of the total) were studying in the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) field in state higher education institutions. Of them, 40,237 were studying in undergraduate programs, while 8,214 were enrolled in master’s programs or above.

2022, women accounted for about 36.1 percent of graduates from science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) programs. Female representation in such programs has rapidly expanded since 2019 with the introduction of incentive programs to enroll women in STEM programs.

Research insight: Does Affirmative Action Work? Caste, Gender, College Quality, and Academic Success in India

Public policy in modern India features affirmative action programs intended to reduce inequality that stems from a centuries-old caste structure and history of disparate treatment by gender. We study the effects of one such affirmative action program: an admissions policy that fixes percentage quotas, common across more than 200 engineering colleges, for disadvantaged castes and for women. We show that the program increases college attendance of targeted students, particularly at relatively higher-quality institutions. An important concern is that affirmative action might harm intended beneficiaries by placing them in academic programs for which they are ill-prepared. We find no evidence of such adverse impacts.

— Bagde, Surendrakumar, Dennis Epple, and Lowell Taylor. "Does affirmative action work? Caste, gender, college quality, and academic success in India." *American Economic Review* 106.6 (2016): 1495-1521.

37. Continued imbalanced enrollment is partially due to gender norms within families. Women in rural Uzbekistan face additional barriers to tertiary education because most higher education institutions are in Tashkent or oblast centers. This often requires women to live outside the home to attend tertiary institutions—which many families are reluctant to permit. In the World Bank’s Rural Infrastructure Development Project (RIDP) survey, a majority of both female (52 percent) and male (57 percent) respondents also stated that men have more right to a university education than women. This is, in part, because it can be perceived as a better financial investment.

38. Selection into educational programs is strongly linked to the availability of role models. Gender-selective enrollment into educational programs is a pervasive issue around the world. A large body of evidence suggests that the lack of gender-matched role models—individuals who are seen as successful and inspirational, and who serve as examples of what can be achieved—is one of the most influential factors preventing girls from enrolling in male-coded fields (often including STEM fields) and for boys enrolling in female-coded ones (often care-giving related occupations). In many cases, girls especially lack female role models in highly competitive fields, which can lead to a lack of interest in these subjects and a preference for other areas of study. Research has shown that exposure to role models can significantly increase interest and motivation in areas where a student’s gender is otherwise under-represented. For example, studies find that girls who were randomly assigned to female teachers in math and science courses were more likely to later take advanced courses in those subjects. Providing girls and boys with more interactions with role models who expose them to new educational and career options can have a positive impact on aspirations and help address imbalances in enrollment.

Research Insight: The Impacts of Same and Opposite Gender Alumni Speakers on Interest in Economics

What is the impact of male and female alumni speaker interventions in introductory microeconomics courses on student interest in economics? Using student-level transcript data, we estimate the effect of speakers on future course-taking in models which use untreated lectures as control groups, including professor and semester fixed effects and student-level covariates. Alumni speakers increase intermediate economics course take-up by 2.1 percentage points (11%). Students are more responsive to same-gender speakers, with male speakers increasing men's course take-up by 36% and female speakers increasing women's course take-up by 40%, implying that the effect of alumni speakers is strongly gendered.

— Patnaik, Arpita, et al. *The Impacts of Same and Opposite Gender Alumni Speakers on Interest in Economics*. No. w30983. National Bureau of Economic Research, 2023.

Health

39. Uzbekistan's economic transition requires better quality healthcare and improved health outcomes. Enhancing public health services can lead to lower mortality rates, particularly among infants and mothers, and increase the number of years people spend in the labor market. Additionally, improving healthcare services is crucial to eradicating child malnutrition and providing universal access to clean water and improved sanitation. Gender-based disparities are prevalent in healthcare utilization and health outcomes, especially with respect to maternal and child health, reproductive health, and non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Men's adherence to traditional concepts of masculinity often impedes them from seeking healthcare, whereas women's health concerns are usually taken more seriously only if they relate to sexual, reproductive, or maternal health. Gender disparities in lifestyle choices and habits also lead to a large gap in life expectancy between men and women, particularly in terms of NCD burdens.

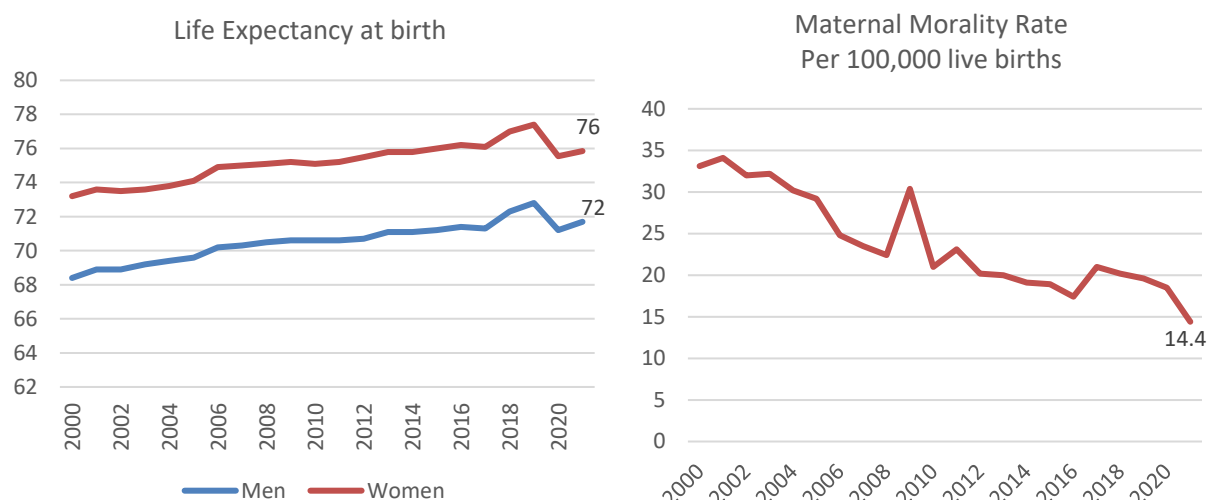
40. Although Uzbekistan has made progress in healthcare and some health outcomes, significant gaps remain. The Ministry of Health reports that all births are accompanied by skilled health professionals, and official statistics report that nearly all women receive antenatal care. There has been a notable decline in infant and maternal deaths in the last three decades. For instance, the infant mortality rate has declined remarkably from nearly 34.6 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 9.2 in 2021, which is a considerable improvement. However, the current rate is still nine times higher than the rate reported in Estonia, 3.5 times higher than Poland, and twice the rate of Türkiye. In 2021, 11 out of 100 children under the age of five in Uzbekistan were stunted due to inadequate nutrition (UNICEF nutrition survey, 2022). According to United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), maternal death audits show that 60 percent of mothers who died in district maternities could have been referred to and saved at better equipped hospitals. Furthermore, the adult survival rate in Uzbekistan lags that of its region, with men (83%) having a significantly lower survival rate than women (90%). Finally, despite relatively high coverage rates, the public healthcare system in Uzbekistan faces several challenges such as high out-of-pocket costs, which limits the quality of services, and significant spatial disparities, which disproportionately affect women.

Quote 2: Excerpt from the Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan 2022-2026

Goal 60: *Improve the system of high-tech medical care for women of reproductive age, pregnant women, and children. Establish 46 inter-district prenatal centers, providing them with personnel, necessary medical equipment, and supplies. Create an environment conducive to access to high-tech medical care.*

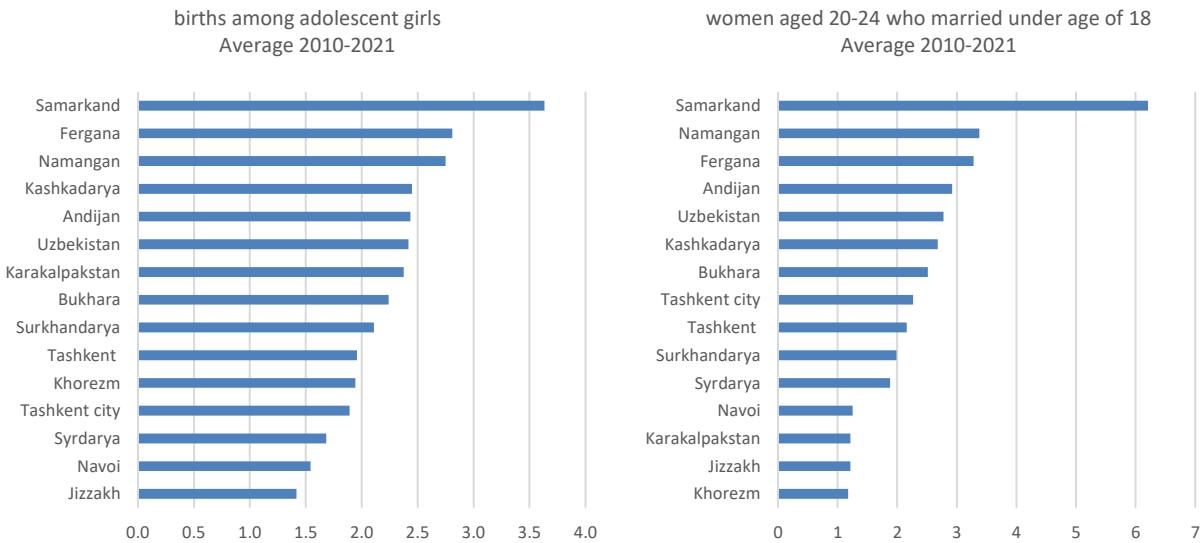
41. Although life expectancy has improved significantly in Uzbekistan over the past 30 years, it still lags behind other high-performing transition economies, and the gap is particularly large amongst men. In 2019, female life expectancy at birth was 77.4 years, which is higher than the male life expectancy of 72.8 years. Since 1990, life expectancy for both genders increased at similar rates, but there is a gender gap of 4 to 5 years, favoring women (see Figure 11). These figures are more than four years below the ECA (Europe and Central Asia) average.

Figure 11: Life expectancy at birth and maternal mortality rate



Source: The Agency on Statistics

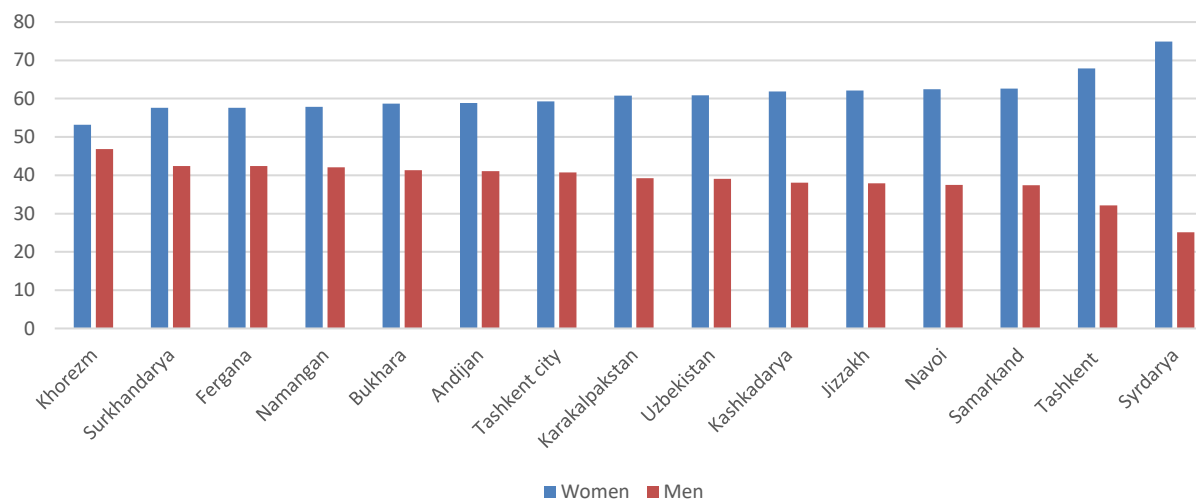
Figure 12: Adolescent fertility rate (births per thousand women, ages 15-19)



Source: The Agency on Statistics

42. Uzbekistan is influenced by the increasing burden of non-communicable diseases, especially due to lifestyle choices among men. The overall health of men and women in Uzbekistan is affected by the growing burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs). In fact, NCDs are responsible for 84 percent of premature deaths in the country. In 2019, mortality from cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes, or chronic respiratory disease between the ages of 30 and 70 was 21.2 percent for women and 29.8 percent for men, nearly twice the average for European and Central Asian countries. This underscores the urgent need for effective strategies to prevent and manage NCDs in Uzbekistan. Lifestyle choices among men including tobacco use (23.3 percent in 2018, compared to 1.3 percent among women), high alcohol consumption (4.8 liters of pure alcohol per capita per year in 2016), and high rates of injury-related mortality (19.4 percent of 15–59-year-olds died of injury in 2019) are the primary drivers of high NCD incidence. The number of men who are overweight (47.3 percent in 2016) or obese (13.8 percent in 2016) is also growing. The rate of overweight or obese women has also been steadily rising, with 49 percent of women considered overweight and 19 percent considered obese in 2016. Cervical cancer is particularly prevalent. Cervical cancer constitutes the second most frequent cancer among women and third in mortality. Awareness of cervical cancer is low, especially among rural women, but the World Health Organization, together with UNFPA and the Ministry of Health, is implementing a cervical cancer screening and HPV testing and care program across the country to address this issue.

Figure 13: Prevalence of obese adults by sex, 2021



Source: The Agency on Statistics, 2021

43. Contraceptive use is declining. Despite legislation aimed to improve the protections of individuals' reproductive health and access to contraceptives, their use is falling. The rate of contraceptive use declined from 56.4 percent of women in 2007 compared to only 43.2 percent of women in 2020 according to the Agency on Statistics. Hormonal contraceptive use is low and skewed towards intrauterine devices, which, according to official statistics in 2021 compose 94 percent of the method mix. Intrauterine devices are not appropriate for all women, especially in a context of relatively high prevalence of anemia among women, leading to a heightened risk of unintended pregnancies and unmet family planning needs, measured at 12.8 percent of pregnancies in 2020 according to UNFPA.

44. Regional disparities in both stunting and iron deficiency are cause for concern. Official statistics report that the under-five mortality rate decreased from 80.3 deaths per 1,000 live births for boys and 63.4 for girls in 1990 to 13 for boys and 10 for girls in 2020. In other words, both boys and girls have a 98 percent chance of surviving until their fifth birthday. Immunization campaigns eliminated wild polio (certified in 2002) as well as measles and rubella (in 2017). In 1996, 39.5 percent of children under five were stunted, but by 2017 that number fell to 8.7 percent. While these improvements are remarkable, rates of stunting are still higher than regional benchmarks, including Poland (2.3 percent in 2020). It also masks regional disparities. The prevalence of stunting varies from 2.7 percent in Tashkent city to 15.1 percent in the Sirdarya Region. Stunting is higher than the national average among young children under five in Andijan, Jizzakh, Kashqadarya, Namangan, Surkhandarya, Sirdarya, and Fergana. While overall stunting rates are somewhat higher for boys (9.2 percent) than for girls (8.2 percent), rural rates of stunting are slightly higher for girls (8.8 percent) than boys (8.5 percent).¹⁴ Iron deficiency and anemia are also challenges affecting children under five. While anemia is prevalent in 14.7 percent of children under five, with boys (16.1 percent) registering somewhat higher levels than girls (13.1 percent), about three-quarters of anemia is due to iron deficiency, which is alarmingly high among children under five. The overall rate of iron deficiency is 54.7 percent, where it is higher for boys (57 percent) than girls (51.7 percent). The prevalence is also higher in urban areas (57.6 percent) than rural areas (54.3 percent).

¹⁴ UNICEF survey on nutrition, 2019

45. Uzbekistan is also seeking to address access to public services, but spatial disparities are particularly challenging. While basic living conditions have steadily improved in Uzbekistan over the past two decades, urban-rural and regional disparities remain stark, particularly when accounting for their impact on women's time spent on household chores and physical health. In 98 percent of households surveyed in the Rural Infrastructure Development Project (RIDP) survey, women were responsible for obtaining water, cooking, washing dishes, and doing laundry.

IV — Economic Opportunities

46. Enhancing economic opportunities for women is vital in countries undergoing rapid transformation. Uzbekistan's national income would be about 29 percent higher if women were to participate economically in equal measure to men. If working women were simply to catch up to the wages earned by men, the increased income would pull more than 700,000 people out of poverty. Over the past decades, most successful transition and high-income countries have seen a dramatic increase in labor force participation among women. Whilst women once attained lower education levels than men, in many advanced economies tertiary completion rates are now much higher among women. Norms around gender identity and family responsibilities have shifted, with men increasing taking on care responsibilities and homemaking with women becoming increasingly active in paid labor. Changes in legislation and government programs in many cases have facilitated these changes. As a result, economies expanded, leading to higher income at individual, household, and national levels.

Research insight: Lessons from the rise of women's labor force participation in Japan

After lagging behind U.S. women for more than forty years, Japanese prime-age women have now caught up and exceeded the U.S. rate of labor force participation.... In 2000, Japan's prime-age female labor force participation rate was just 66.5 percent, below the OECD average and a full 10 percentage points below the U.S. level. Since that time, the U.S. rate trended down to 74.3 percent in 2016 while the Japanese rate has risen to 76.3 percent...

Holding constant the quality of women's jobs, the economic impact of changes in women's labor force participation is potentially very large. If U.S. prime-age women had gained as much ground from 2000 to 2016 as their Japanese counterparts, one simple calculation suggests that GDP in the United States would have been around \$800 billion (over 4%) higher in 2016 than it actually was, increasing GDP per person by nearly \$2,500.

— Shambaugh, Jay, Ryan Nunn, and Becca Portman. "Lessons from the rise of women's labor force participation in Japan." *The Hamilton Project* (2017).

47. The focus of recent economic reform in Uzbekistan has been to generate more inclusive growth. In the past, Uzbekistan's development model was dominated by heavy industry and investments in physical capital. These efforts achieved limited progress on job creation, and human capital development was neglected, especially with respect to pre-primary and tertiary education. This resulted in a scarcity of jobs, misallocation of resources, and a lack of preparedness for higher value-adding activities in the workforce. Recent reform priorities have aimed at addressing these challenges, focusing on generating more formal employment and entrepreneurship while encouraging private sector participation. But these

priorities alone will not suffice to ensure that growth is inclusive. The experiences of other transitioning economies have demonstrated that engaging all citizens, and especially women, is crucial for achieving a successful transition and promoting inclusive growth.

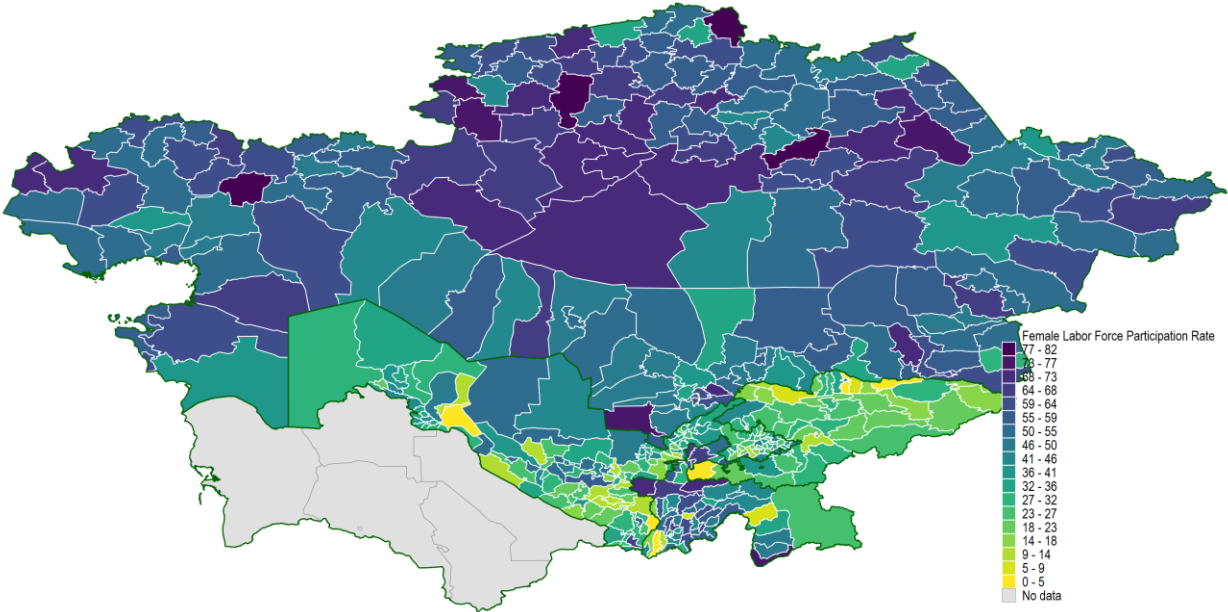
Quote 3: Excerpt from the Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan 2022-2026

Goal 85: *Create new jobs and increase incomes, thus reducing poverty by at least two-fold by the end of 2026. ... Halve the unemployment rate among women by training more than 700,000 unemployed women through state funds. Implement comprehensive measures for entrepreneurship and self-employment of unemployed women.*

Employment and Access to Economic Opportunities

48. Female labor force participation was 28 percentage points below that of men in 2021 – nearly twice the average gap in high-income countries (15 pp) and much higher than in comparator countries such as Russia (10 pp) and neighboring Kazakhstan (12 pp). In a broader context, Uzbekistan’s gender gap in labor force participation is higher than that of both Europe and Central Asia (ECA) (14 percent) and ECA states excluding high-income countries (19 percent), but comparable to the overall global gender gap in labor force participation (27.4 percent) and significantly lower than the gender gap in labor force participation in lower-middle-income countries (42 percent). Notably, Uzbekistan’s gender gap in labor force participation is significantly higher than other transition economies such as Estonia (6.2 percent) and Poland (14.6 percent).¹⁵ However, there is a wide range of labor force participation rates across Uzbekistan and Central Asia, ranging from nearly no women active in the labor market, to more than 80 percent (Figure 14). The variety in outcomes suggest an opportunity that lagging areas in Uzbekistan can look to neighbors with higher labor force participation to identify practices and approaches to increase female labor force participation.

Figure 14: District-level female labor force participation rate circa 2021

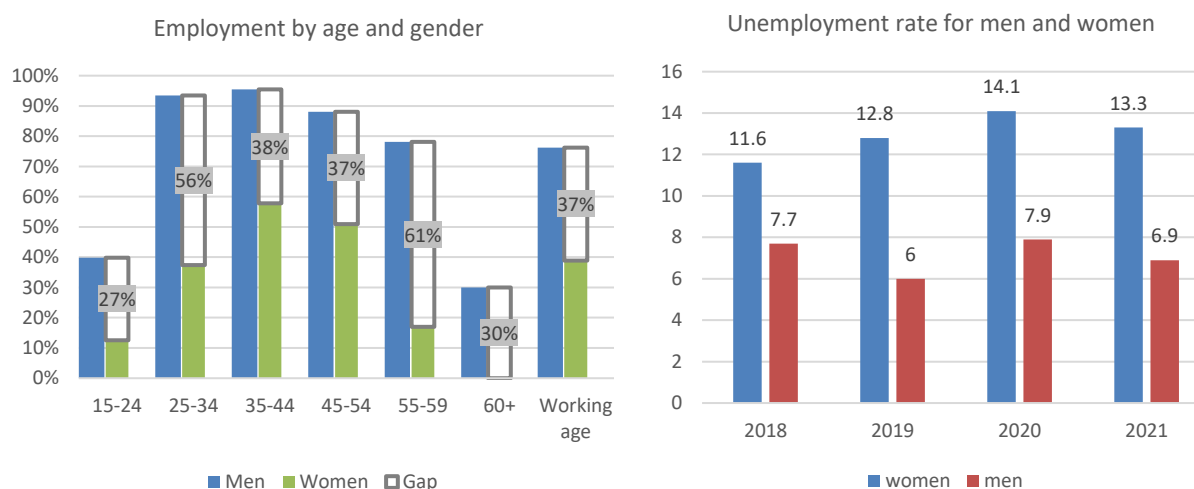


¹⁵ World Bank, 2022. Based on modeled ILO estimates for labor force participation for 15- to 65-year-olds in 2019.

Source: World Bank staff small area estimation estimates based on Household Budget Surveys of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Kazakhstan, circa 2021.

49. Young women struggle with alarmingly low employment rates. As one of the youngest countries in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region, Uzbekistan’s growing working-age population represents a major opportunity to reduce poverty and increase shared prosperity. But a high share of youth struggle to enter the labor force or obtain further education, especially young women. Unemployment rates are higher among youth and employment outcomes are worse in terms of job security, social insurance, protection, and pay. The share of young men who were not in employment and not in education or in training (NEET) was 8.8 percent between the ages of 15 and 25 years old, compared to 42 percent among women of that age group.¹⁶

Figure 15: Employment and unemployment rates



Source: World Bank staff estimates based on the Household Budget Survey of Uzbekistan, 2022 (left), Agency on Statistics, 2021 (right)

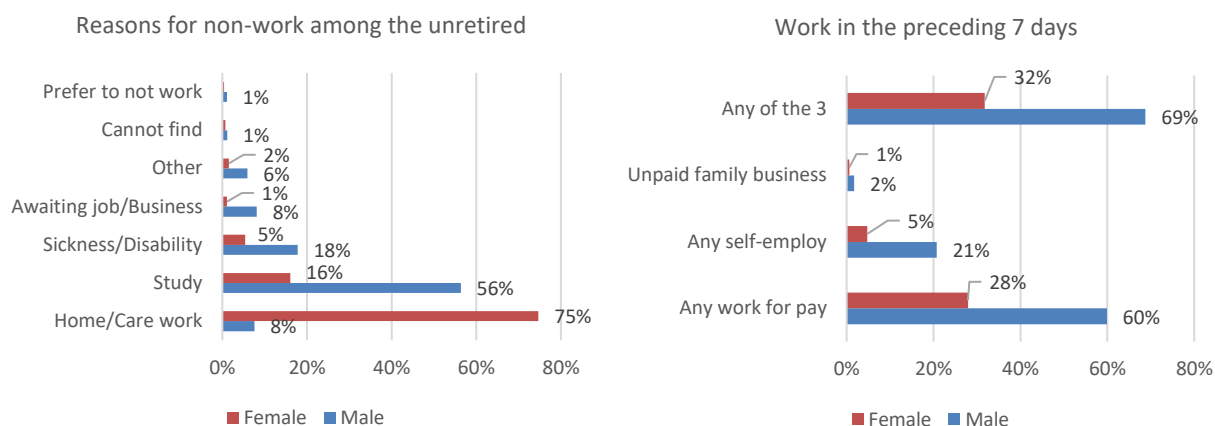
50. The gender gap in employment varies with age and is driven by care responsibilities. The gender gap in employment varies by age, with significant disparities between women and men. According to the household budget survey, in 2022, only 13 percent of women and 40 of men aged between 15 and 24 were employed, resulting in a gender gap of 27 percentage points (Figure 15). The gender gap was significantly larger between the age groups of 25-34, with women's employment at 37 percent compared to 93 percent among men. This is due to the societal expectation that women should prioritize household duties and childcare after marriage. About 75 percent of working aged women who were not working in 2022 said they did so due to homemaking and care responsibilities, and women were more than 30 times more likely to not work for these reasons than were men (Figure 16). Gender norms in Uzbekistan require women to assume responsibility for childcare and time-intensive household chores.¹⁷ A World Bank qualitative study on rural livelihoods in Uzbekistan found that women spend three to six hours per day on

¹⁶ World Bank staff estimates using the Household Budget Survey. Estimates include informal and unregistered forms of employment. Survey-based employment estimates address challenges of under-representation present in administrative data as they cover all households and individuals with equal probability of selection, while administrative data are limited by the effects of selection.

¹⁷ Nearly 100% of women and 90% of men in Uzbekistan believe that a woman should do household chores even if her husband is not working (Life in Transition survey, 2016).

domestic tasks such as fetching water, cooking, cleaning, working in the garden, and caring for dependents (Romanova et al. 2017).

Figure 16: Reasons for non-work among the unretired, any work in past 7 days 2022



Source: World Bank staff estimates using the Household Budget Survey of Uzbekistan, 2022

51. Men earned 34 percent more than women in Uzbekistan on average in 2022. Globally, women earn about 80% of what men earn on average. But the gap is larger in Uzbekistan: women earn about 66 percent of what men earn¹⁸. Where women are empowered, they can contribute their full potential—leading to a more diverse and dynamic workforce. But in Uzbekistan, a pattern of low pay and low employment rates among women directly reduces the size of the economy and increases the number of people living in poverty. As Figure 17 shows, women are both paid less on average, and are significantly less likely to reach the highest levels of income. If women across Uzbekistan were to participate in equal measure to men, national income would be 29 percent higher. Equalizing the average wage among women and men who are already working would alone pull more than 700,000 people out of poverty.

Figure 17: Distribution of monthly wage rates between men and women (2022)



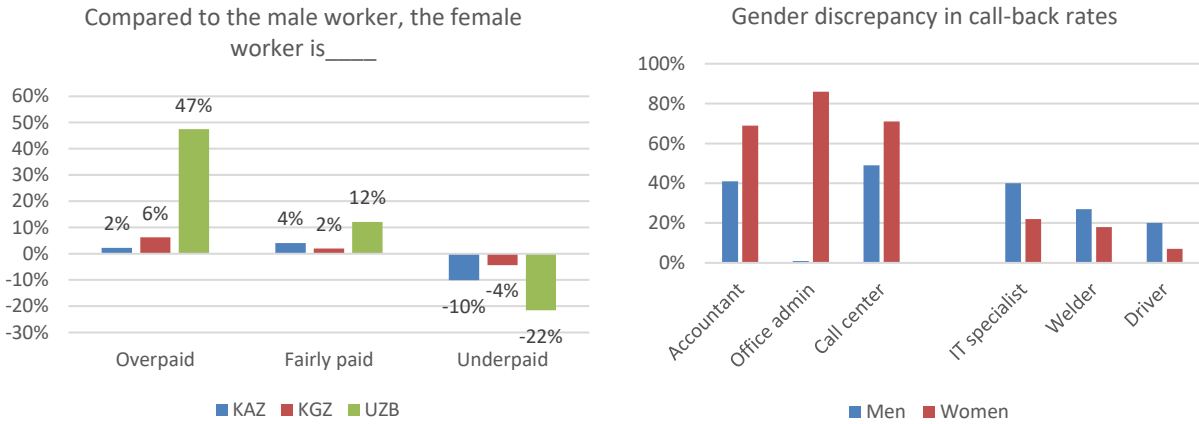
Source: World Bank staff estimates using the Household Budget Survey, 2022

Note: Included both full-time and part-time wage workers who received wage incomes in the last month

¹⁸ <https://gender.stat.uz/uz/qo-shimcha-ko-rsatkichlar/iqtisodiy-resurslar>

52. In World Bank surveys, respondents commonly support the notion for lower salaries for women than for men and occupational segregation. Men are commonly viewed as the primary breadwinners of the family. The reservation wage also differs among men and women, with women seeking work expecting significantly lower wages than men. Occupational segregation and gender norms and perceptions exacerbate the gender wage gap. Exacerbating the gender wage gap is the lower average compensation in female-dominated sectors such as education, human health, and social work activities when compared with male-dominated sectors such as construction and transportation and storage. While the country formally lifted the prohibition of certain jobs for women in 2019, this has not put an end to gender-based discrimination in hiring practices. In fact, a recent audit study conducted in 2020 found that women were 185 percent more likely to receive a callback in response to an application than men in female-dominated professions, while men were 79 percent more likely to receive a callback than women in male-dominated professions (Murodova & Seitz, 2021). These strong gender preferences contribute to the segmentation of the labor market based on gender. This discriminatory practice is a significant barrier to women's labor force participation, perpetuating gender inequality in Uzbekistan. The elimination of such practices is critical to achieving a more inclusive and equitable labor market. According to the Agency on Statistics, in 2022, the average nominal monthly salary (irrespective of gender) for education and health care and social services was about half of the wages prevalent in construction and transportation sectors.

Figure 18: Experiments establishing bias against women in hiring and wages



Source: World Bank staff estimates using the Listening to the Citizens of Uzbekistan, 2021-2023

53. Results from World Bank research revealed clear and systematic bias against women in wage setting in Uzbekistan. A survey experiment (Seitz, 2023) used randomized vignettes which described a worker engaged in a well-known occupation (such as a doctor or teacher) and at the end, each story stated the amount the worker was paid. The stories were fictional and standardized so that all workers were described the same way, except for one key difference: in half of the stories, the worker's name was female, and in the other half, the worker's name was male. Survey respondents were asked whether they thought the person described was underpaid, fairly paid, or overpaid. Over the course of two months, more than 70,000 evaluations the fairness of earnings were collected across Central Asia. Even though the prompts were identical in every other respect, respondents were 13% more likely to say wages were too high when the subject of the vignette was a woman, and 34% more likely to say they were too low when the subject was a man.

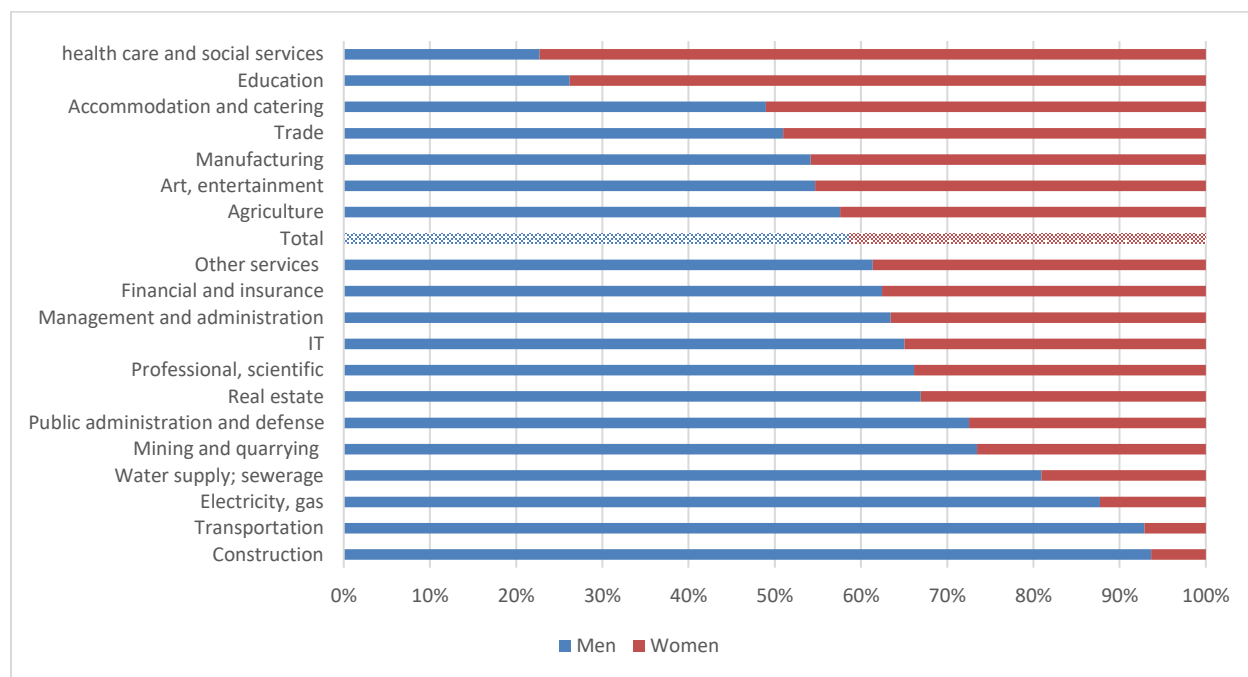
Research insight: The simple truth about the gender pay gap

Today [in the United States] 42 percent of mothers with children under the age of 18 are their families' primary or sole breadwinners. As families increasingly rely on women's wages to make ends meet, the gender pay gap directly affects more men and children as well. Closing the gender pay gap would have a large impact on women, their families, and the economy. Eliminating the gender pay gap by increasing women's pay to match that of men of the same age and education level would cut the poverty rate for all working women in half, regardless of their family structure. Closing the gender pay gap would also provide a boost to the economy. Providing equal pay to women would increase the wages paid into the economy by \$513 billion, which represents 3 percent of the 2016 gross domestic product.

— Miller, Kevin, and Deborah J. Vagins. *"The simple truth about the gender pay gap."* American Association of University Women (2018).

54. Women's employment is more highly concentrated in the services and agricultural sectors (Figure 19), a trend exacerbated by gender norms and perceptions. The public sector is the major source of formal jobs for women. It employed 69 percent of women employees and 48 percent of men employees in the country, largely due to the high concentration of women in the education and healthcare sectors. Women occupy at least 75 percent of education, human health, and social work positions, which pay lower wages than some male-dominated sectors such as construction (94 percent male) and transportation and services (93 percent male). In rural Uzbekistan, agricultural work is the primary income-earning option for women, who made up two-thirds of the country's cotton pickers in the 2021 harvest. For at least 49 percent of these cotton pickers, wages from the cotton harvest represented all their annual cash income (ILO 2022). This number was slightly higher in the 2021 cotton harvest during the pandemic, when 60 percent of cotton pickers said the harvest was their only income for the year (ILO 2021). Women's participation in both the cotton harvest and other agricultural work is often informal since women rarely manage their own farms or have access to land. Only 5 percent of farms in Uzbekistan are managed by women (ADB 2018). A World Bank qualitative study suggested that men are considered more desirable full-time employees because they have the skills to work with farm machinery and are available for an entire workday (World Bank 2016).

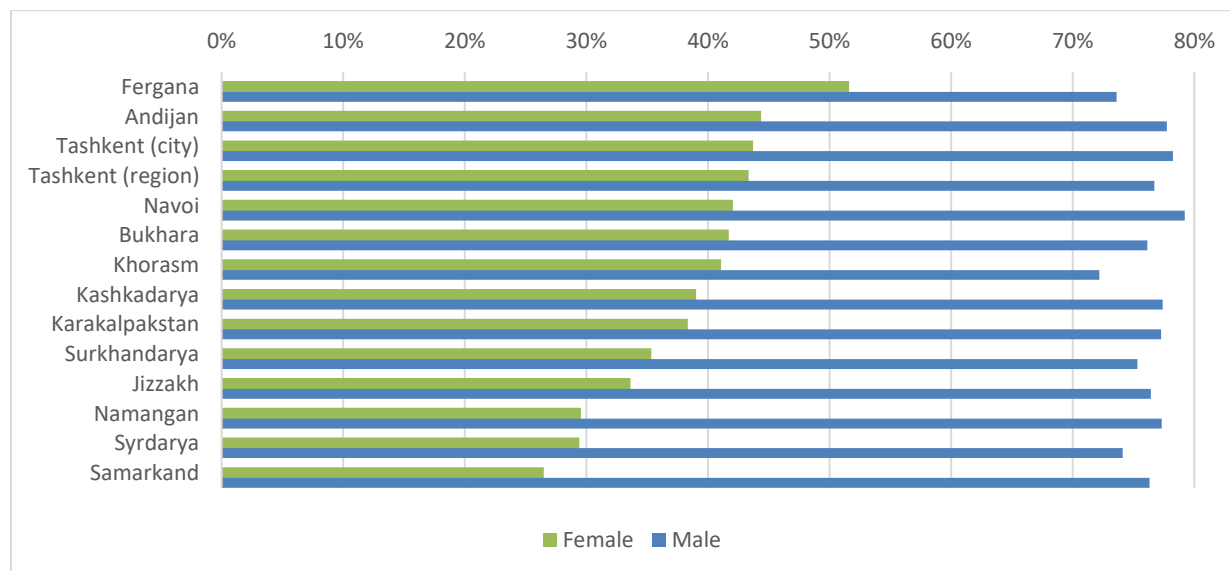
Figure 19: Share of total employment by sector and sex 2021



Source: Agency on Statistics, 2021

55. The disparity in employment opportunities between women and men in Uzbekistan is also influenced by region of residence. Although men have higher employment rates than women in every region of the country, the extent of the gender gap varies substantially. For instance, in Samarkand, the employment gender gap is as high as 50 percentage points, while in Fergana, the gender gap is significantly smaller at 22 percentage points.

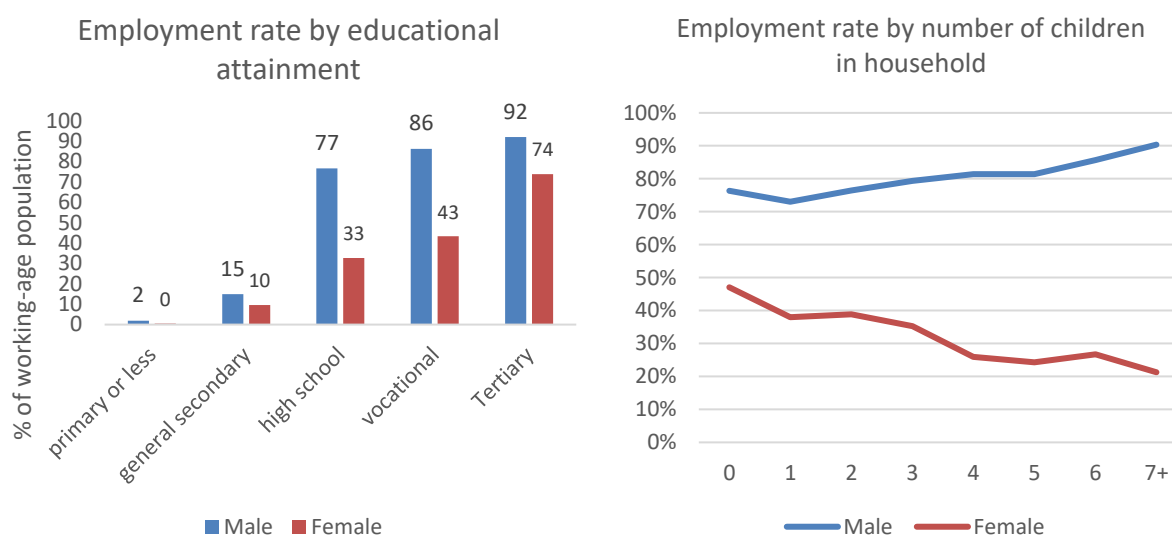
Figure 20: Employment by Region by Sex 2022



Source: World Bank staff estimates using the Household Budget Survey of Uzbekistan, 2022.

56. The gender gap in labor force participation and employment rate is linked to educational attainment and the number of children living in the household. Only 10 percent of women with general secondary education or below, and 33 percent of women with upper secondary education, are employed in the labor market compared to 15 percent and 77 percent of men, respectively. However, 74 percent of women with bachelor’s degrees or higher are employed in the labor market, which is more comparable to the 92 percent employment rate for men with bachelor’s degrees (Figure 21). Furthermore, women (ages 16+) in the bottom two wealth quintiles were more than 50 percent likely to be inactive or unemployed, whereas 39 percent of men in the lowest wealth quintile and 32 percent of men in the second lowest quintile were either inactive or unemployed.¹⁹ Having young children also affect female and male labor force participation differently. In the case of men, having more young children is associated with a higher likelihood of working, whereas women are much less likely to work outside of the home if more children are present (Figure 21).

Figure 21: Employment by educational attainment and household composition



Source: World Bank staff estimates using the Household Budget Survey of Uzbekistan, 2022

57. Women account for just 10 percent of migration abroad in Uzbekistan. This migration gender gap reduces economic opportunity among women, as they remain in low-paying, low-skilled jobs that offer fewer opportunities for advancement. This can make it difficult for women to achieve economic independence and support their families, which can perpetuate cycles of poverty and inequality. Social and cultural attitudes toward women contribute to the gender gap in migration in Uzbekistan. In many cases, women may face discrimination and limited opportunities in the labor market due to their gender, which can make it more difficult for them to secure employment or advance in their careers. This can also contribute to the gender gap in migration, as women may feel that they have fewer options for improving their economic prospects at home. Findings from cross-country analyses of migration access suggest that improving equal rights helps alleviate the financial and social cost of migration for women, which otherwise prevents women in poor countries from emigrating.

58. When faced with job loss, women and older workers are more vulnerable. According to both the Household Budget and the L2CU surveys, job search duration for those who leave formal employment

¹⁹ Listening to the Citizens of Uzbekistan, 2019. Staff calculations from baseline survey.

is about 10.6 months. However, the duration of non-employment following the loss of an SOE job is imbalanced by gender, with women experiencing an average of 12.1 months of unemployment compared to 8.9 months for men. Additionally, older workers experience longer unemployment spells, with those aged 55-64 taking an average of 12 months to find a new job, while those aged 25-34 typically find a new job within 9.6 months.

The Legislative Framework

59. Uzbekistan's previous labor codes restricted women's equal access to employment and equal pay, but recent changes to labor legislation are moving the country closer to equality and promoting economic opportunities for women. In 2023, the World Bank's Women, Gender and the Law Index gave Uzbekistan a score of 70.6 out of 100, a score lower than the regional score for Europe and Central Asia of 83.4. At the time, the absence of a labor law requiring equal remuneration for work of equal value as well as the prohibition of women in certain forms of employment were significant factors in lowering Uzbekistan's overall score. However, with extensive support from the World Bank and the ILO, changes to the labor code in December 2021 included the addition of equal work for equal pay, the prohibition of discrimination in hiring and firing, and the expansion of regular and parental leave provisions for both men and women.²⁰ These recent changes were preceded by reforms aimed at promoting equal access to economic opportunities even earlier. In September 2019, Uzbekistan passed the law on gender equality, guaranteeing equal opportunities for women and men, non-discrimination for employment, and equal access to public services and participation in state and public affairs. All limits on women's participation in selected occupations were removed in 2019 by presidential decree.²¹

60. Nonetheless, persistent gender norms and perceptions still hinder women's equal access to economic opportunities. While there are few explicit legal barriers preventing women from entering the labor market, challenges remain. A new law, signed by the President in April 2023, made sexual harassment an administrative offense. Labor laws designed to protect women's rights may disincentivize employers from hiring women as they reinforce perceptions that female employees are more costly (Romanova et al., 2017). For example, Uzbekistan's labor laws included limitations on overtime and work-related travel for women, and the provision of parental leave, now available from men and women, may still suffer from the perception that women may be more likely than men to take it. Additionally, despite policies to promote women's participation in the labor market and in state agencies, testimonials document that women are often asked about their marital and parental status during the application process and are rejected from jobs based on their response.

61. Parental leave policy created incentives to discriminate against women in the private sector, until recently. Due to discrimination concerns, only 26 percent of countries finance maternity leave benefits through mandated contributions from employers rather than through social insurance mechanisms. Uzbekistan was among this minority until recently. These employer-financed maternity leave requirements both created incentives to discriminate against women and provided advantages for public-sector employers over the private sector. While maternity leave benefits for SOEs and the public sector were financed by the state, formal private sector employers were required to cover these costs

²⁰ The law provides that a child's father, grandparents, or other relatives who take care of the child, as well as a guardian can use in full or in parts the right to childcare leave (Article 405 of the Labor Code)

²¹ In accordance to the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated March 7, 2019 "On measures to further strengthen guarantees of women's labor rights and support entrepreneurship" No. PQ-4235, starting from May 1, 2019, the bans on women's labor in certain fields or professions have been eliminated.

directly, creating strong financial incentives for private sector employees to discriminate against female candidates in hiring decisions, and making it more likely for women to work in informal roles. The reforms enacted in 2022 brought Uzbekistan closer to full compliance with the recommendations of the ILO Maternity Protection Convention, and with international practice.²²

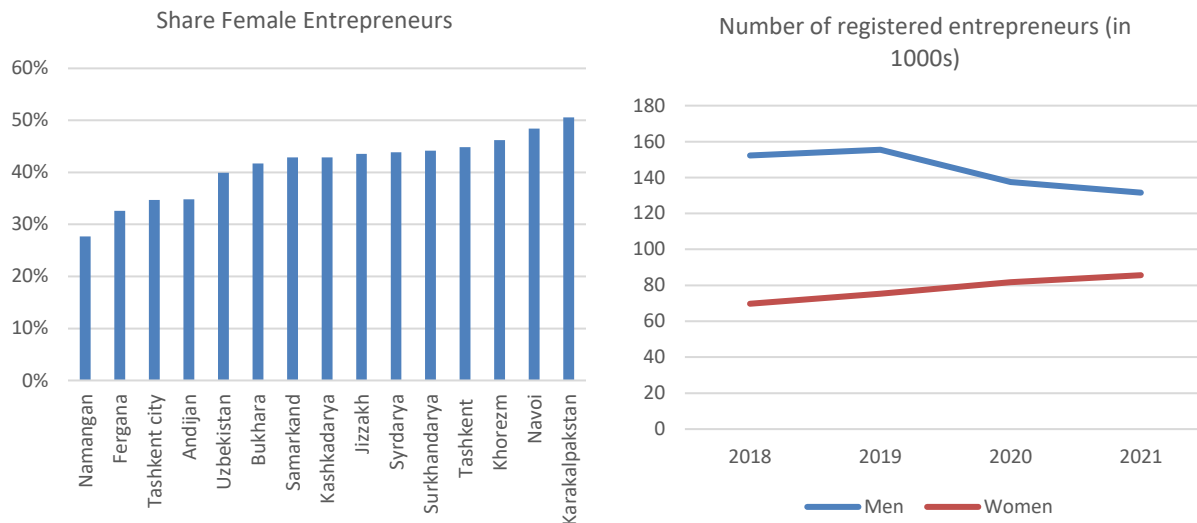
Women's Role in Firms and Entrepreneurship

62. The share of women among registered entrepreneurs rose by 9 percentage points between 2018 and 2022. In 2018, 31 percent of formal entrepreneurial small and micro-enterprises registered were women, but by 2022, this figure has risen to more than 40 percent. Karakalpakstan and the regions of Navoi and Khorezm had the highest shares of women in small and micro-enterprises, reaching 51, 48, and 46 percent of the regional totals respectively. However, between 2018 and 2022, many regions with the fastest-growing shares of women-led businesses were those with the largest gaps. In Samarkand, the share grew by 31 percent over that time, and in Fergana, the women-owned share grew by almost 39 percent. Namangan, the region with the lowest share of female entrepreneurship in 2018, saw its share rise by more than 59 percent by 2022. According to a representative sample of mahalla leaders interviewed across the country in the Listening to the Citizens of Uzbekistan survey, about 15 percent of mahalla local administrations actively promoted and facilitate subsidized lending for local women's entrepreneurial activities in the first quarter of 2023, and 58 percent actively implement re-skilling programs focused on women.

63. Nonetheless, women continue to face barriers to owning and operating a business. As the share of small-businesses owned by men and women converge, the lack of women-owned medium and large businesses becomes increasingly stark, as does the limited number of cases where women-owned businesses have grown to medium or large size. In the last World Bank enterprise survey conducted in 2019, just 29 percent of medium-sized firms had female participation in ownership (compared to 37 percent on average for lower middle-income countries like Uzbekistan), dropping to 27 percent for large firms (compared to percent among lower middle-income countries). Only 7 percent of medium-sized firms and 2.5 percent of large firms had a female top manager (compared to 18 and 20 percent on average in lower middle-income countries).

²² Starting from 2022, women in all legal entities, except public organizations, will be paid pregnancy and maternity benefits from the State budget based on the amount of minimum consumption expenses for each month (Presidential Decree No. PF-175 of July 25, 2022, CM's Resolution No:VMQ 515)

Figure 22: The number of women registered in the State Tax Service as individual entrepreneurs in 2022



Source: The Agency on Statistics, 2022

64. Digital connectivity and digital gender access gaps prevent the expansion in women’s entrepreneurship and employment. Uzbekistan substantially lags behind its peers in digital connectivity and has larger digital gender access gaps. Despite substantial investments in digital infrastructure over the last decade, fixed and mobile broadband penetration in Uzbekistan was 13.9 and 67 per 100 inhabitants—well below its peers. Among these peers, Uzbekistan ranks the lowest in 4G coverage. There are also significant gender disparities that are more acute in Uzbekistan relative to its peers—77 percent of men in Uzbekistan own a mobile phone compared to only 59 percent of women. By contrast, nearly the same shares of Kazakh men and women own mobile devices (88 percent of men vs. 88.6 percent of women). Uzbekistan’s external connectivity to neighbors and to global internet peers is weak. Deficiencies in internet speeds, bandwidth and user costs in Uzbekistan continue to negatively impact residential users and constrain economic growth across many sectors.

Research insight: Who Becomes an Inventor in America?

Tracking ...individuals from birth onward, we identify the key factors that determine who becomes an inventor, as measured by filing a patent. Our results shed light on what policies can be most effective in increasing innovation, showing in particular that increasing exposure to innovation among women, minorities, and children from low-income families may have greater potential to spark innovation and growth than traditional approaches such as reducing tax rates...

Children who grow up in areas with more inventors – and are thereby more exposed to innovation while growing up – are much more likely to become inventors themselves... Exposure matters in a gender-specific manner. Women are more likely to invent in a given technology class if they grew up in an area with many female inventors in that technology class. Growing up around male inventors has no impact on women’s propensity to innovate. Conversely, men’s innovation rates are influenced by male rather than female inventors in their area.

— Bell, Alex, et al. "Who becomes an inventor in America? The importance of exposure to innovation." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 134.2 (2019): 647-713.

65. The government has prioritized micro and small businesses as a key force for economic growth, particularly for women and youth. To address challenges to entrepreneurship and job creation, the government launched two programs in 2018: "Every family an entrepreneur" and "Youth is our future," aimed at supporting micro-entrepreneurship and self-employment. These programs provide concessional loans to target populations based on the identification of local economic needs and opportunities. Despite these efforts, the existing bank channels also have limited expertise in working with low-income populations. Moreover, micro, and small enterprise owners reported a lack of technical and business skills, hindering their ability to scale up their businesses and become eligible for larger loans. Women-owned SMEs face additional challenges, as they tend to be smaller in scale due to limited resources and capacity.

66. The government implements numerous entrepreneurship and self-employment programs that focus on rural women. In 2023, the Ministry of Employment and Poverty Reduction implemented 36 separate programs providing social assistance, entrepreneurship, and self-employment support at the mahalla-level. These include one-time financial transfers, scholarships for children and youth, subsidies for sewing machines, targeted benefits through community-organized needs registries (referred to as the Women’s Notebook, Iron Notebook, and the Youth Notebook). Women’s Entrepreneurship Centers (WECs), established in all districts and funded by Public Target Fund for Women and Family Support; Public Fund for Women and Family Support, began offering subsidized loans for women in 2022, alongside subsidies for women to establish agricultural cooperatives. Community-based development programs entitled “*Every Family is an Entrepreneur and Youth is Our Future*” have also provided subsidized credit to support new business ventures. Training in mono-centers (*Ishga Marhamat*) often includes programs specifically targeting professions and skills demanded by women seeking employment in vocational specialties. However, programs supporting entrepreneurship are in most cases not yet tailored to the differentiated needs of the target groups. An IFC report found that the prevalent microfinance-based solutions available attract a base of beneficiaries with a limited capacity to repay (Naheed, 2019).

67. While land ownership laws and policies are formally gender neutral in Uzbekistan, women’s access to land ownership is still limited, especially in rural areas where women disproportionately lack formal land titles. In Uzbekistan, any citizen, regardless of gender, has the right to participate and win

lands through "E-Auction" without any restrictions²³. Despite the gender-neutral regulation, land titles are often issued in the name of the household head, which typically is the eldest man. Joint titling and registration could enhance access to land for legally married women.

V — Voice and Agency

68. Agency is the ability to make decisions about one's own life, and act on those decisions to achieve a desired outcome—free of violence, retribution, or fear. Agency can be measured by the expressions of agency individuals claim they can exercise in different domains of their daily lives (Klugman et. al, 2014). One way to measure agency is to ask people in what domains of their lives they have control over, including in freedom from violence, control over sexual and reproductive health and rights, ability to control land and housing, and voice and collective action. An adequate legal framework which prohibits gender-based discrimination is an absolute prerequisite in enabling agency. Ongoing reforms in Uzbekistan seek to improve the legal framework to be more supportive of gender equality. But a strong legal framework alone is insufficient. Enabling agency requires implementation through everyday practices that enact the legal framework. Norms, perceptions, and practices require the support and engagement of society. Finding ways in Uzbekistan's economic transition to ensure that women and men have agency to fully and freely participate in economic and social life remains a challenge.

Research insight: The Causal Effect of Economic Freedom on Female Employment and Education

...Large, sustained jumps in economic freedom have a positive and significant effect on female labor participation, measured as the percent of the labor force that is female or as the percentage of females in the labor force. I find similar positive and significant effects when I examine the effect of jumps in economic freedom on the percentage of females that complete primary education (of the relevant age group). These results are also economically significant; jumps in EFW result in more than a 6-percentage point increase in female primary school completion in treated countries relative to the changes in their matched controls. These findings are consistent with the other literature on the topic but are the first to present evidence for a causal link between economic freedom and women's labor participation and schooling.

— *Grier, Robin. "The Causal Effect of Economic Freedom on Female Employment & Education." (2023).*

69. Recent reforms in Uzbekistan have taken aim at gaps that prevent women and men to exercise their voice and agency. Changes in legislation concerning gender equality, gender discrimination, and equal work for equal pay, are all examples of how Uzbekistan's reforms have sought to be gender inclusive. However, participation in public life remains limited, especially for women. Women's equal treatment in the justice system, and their freedom to speak and act without fear of harm remains a challenge, largely due to imbalanced gender norms. Although women are guaranteed equal access to

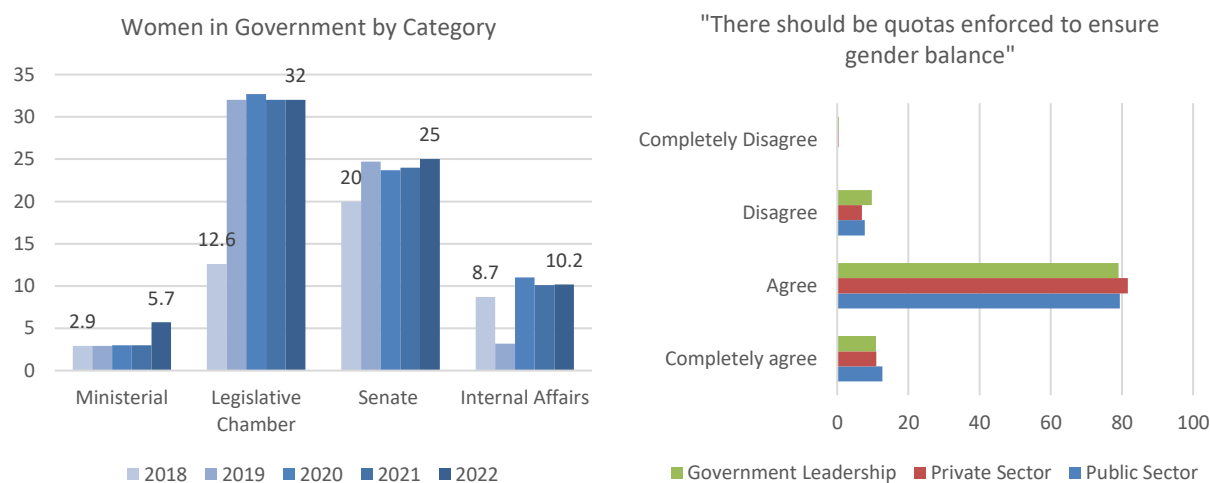
²³ For instance, out of a total of 643,000 winners of the competition-based allocation of land to citizens for farming for half a year in 2023, 302,000 or 47% were women. Particularly, 77,000 hectares of land were given to 50,343 women in Andijan, 46,575 in Namangan region, 38,235 in Fergana, 28,344 in Bukhara, 24,436 in Khorezm, and 19,756 in Surkhandarya.

public participation by the Constitution and are promised equal treatment under the law, these laws are often not enforced and male-dominated perceptions continue to hinder female agency. Women remain underrepresented at all levels of public life, and while violence against women in Uzbekistan is illegal, it remains prevalent.

Participation in Public Life at the National and Local Levels

70. The legislative framework gives women the right to participate in public life, but non-compliance and gender norms undermine its effectiveness. Women in Soviet Uzbekistan obtained the right to vote and run for office in 1938, and the constitution safeguards women’s rights to occupy all posts within all branches of government. Women have occupied prominent roles in politics (including chairwoman of the senate, speaker of the legislative chamber, and deputy prime minister). In 2004, Uzbekistan introduced candidate quotas at the national and sub-national levels, and electoral law states that at least 30 percent of candidates nominated by each political party for the Oliy Majlis as well as for Regional, District, and the City Council of Deputies must be female. Such quotas have enjoyed continued robust public support (Figure 23).²⁴ However, there are no legal sanctions for non-compliance with quotas, and overall female representation across executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government has remained low. While the committee for the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women cautioned in its 2015 annual report that Uzbekistan’s citizen registration system (which generates the voter list) might be inhibiting women who live in male-headed households without permanent or temporary registration from voting, recent reforms liberalizing the registration system likely reduced the severity of this concern.

Figure 23: Women in government by category 2018-2022



Source: The Agency on Statistics (2023) and Listening to the Citizens of Uzbekistan (2023).

²⁴ In Uzbekistan, the RIDP project has successfully pioneered the use of quotas, requiring 50 percent of Mahalla Development Unit (MDU) members be women. As of June 2023, the program had mobilized 3,550 women as MDU members, equipping them with leadership skills such as conducting meetings, communicating information, and facilitating group decision-making.

71. Women’s representation in public life has risen in recent years but is far from parity. After the elections in 2022, women occupied 25 percent of Senate seats in the Oliy Majlis (Supreme Assembly), 32 percent of seats in the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis, and 12.8 percent of judicial posts. This included a doubling of the number of women holding seats in the lower chamber of parliament, raising their total share to 32 percent. While the quotas introduced in 2004 resulted in an increase in female representation, and although female representation in the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis has recently increased, Uzbekistan has yet to approach gender parity. Women are especially underrepresented in decision-making bodies at the regional and local level. In 2023, all *hokims* in 14 regions and the city of Tashkent were male. In 2017, when figures were last reported, among a total 84 deputy *hokims*, only 14 (16.67 percent) were women. Women were somewhat better represented at the district level, accounting for 193 of 1,772 deputy district *hokims* (25 percent) in 2017.²⁵

72. There are notable gender disparities in local community decision-making process and meetings. According to the 2021 Rural Infrastructure Development Project (RIDP) survey data collected by the World Bank, 85 percent of men reported having attended a public village meeting in the last 12 months compared to just 62 percent of women. Among those in the 30 to 50 age range, a higher percentage of men feel that their preferences are better reflected in spending decisions compared to women (around an 8-percentage point difference). Women are more optimistic of local women’s influence than men are, where 69 percent of female respondents perceive women as influential, compared to 62 percent of male respondents. Nonetheless, with respect to preferences over community investment priorities, sentiments were generally indistinguishable between men and women, while both were equally likely to say that their preferences are well-reflected in decisions about local infrastructure and services.

Research insight: Gender Quotas and the Crisis of the Mediocre Man: Theory and Evidence from Sweden

...based on register data for the earnings of the whole population, to measure the competence of all politicians in 7 parties, 290 municipalities, and 10 elections (for the period 1982–2014). We ask how competence was affected by a zipper quota, requiring local parties to alternate men and women on the ballot, implemented by the Social Democratic Party in 1993. Far from being at odds with meritocracy, this quota raised the competence of male politicians where it raised female representation the most. We argue that resignation of mediocre male leaders was a key driver of this effect.

— Besley, Timothy, et al. "Gender quotas and the crisis of the mediocre man: Theory and evidence from Sweden." *American economic review* 107.8 (2017): 2204-2242.

Gender Based Violence

73. Gender Based Violence (GBV) is a global problem, affecting women across the globe and affecting their agency and well-being. Article 1 of the 1993 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination

²⁵ Quotas most commonly mandate a certain percentage of female representation among state employees – such as in Bangladesh and Pakistan, where 10% of all civil service positions are reserved for women – or within governing bodies – as in India, where women fill at least one third of all seats on local government councils. The establishment of quotas in India has resulted in over a million women serving in local government since 1993.

of Violence against Women defines violence against women as “any act of GBV that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.” Violence against women can take many forms including spousal or intimate partner violence (IPV) that is physical, sexual, and/or psychological, family violence, which is violence perpetrated by family members, non-partner sexual violence which is sexual violence by persons other than a spouse/partner, femicide, and trafficking of women. Violence by a husband or male intimate partner (or male family member) is the most common form of violence against women globally. In 2018, the WHO estimates that 27 percent of ever-partnered women ages 15 to 49 worldwide experienced at least one incidence of intimate partner violence.

74. The incidence of GBV is unknown in Uzbekistan due to a lack of administrative data and underreporting, but it is believed to be highly prevalent. The Agency of Statistics of the Republic of Uzbekistan publishes data on two GBV indicators: i) the number of ever-partnered women (ages 15 to 49) who have officially reported being physically and/or sexually abused by an intimate partner in the past 12 months (185 women in 2018 or <0.01%); and ii) the number of women (ages 15 to 49) who officially reported having been subject, since age 15, to sexual abuse by persons who were not close partners (108 women in 2018 or <0.01%). In 2022, almost 38 thousand protection orders were issued in relation to violence cases, up from 30 thousand in 2021. About 87 percent of protection orders were requested by family members against other family members, with husbands registered as perpetrators against their spouses in more than three-quarters of cases. Although anonymous channels for reporting cases of violence are available, most cases are thought to go unreported.

75. These figures understate the GBV challenges Uzbekistan faces, given global and regional comparisons and the nature of the statistics available. Nationally representative data on GBV incidence (rather than official reporting to authorities) are not collected in Uzbekistan, but such data for neighboring countries suggest high rates of domestic violence and other forms of GBV. Notably, the WHO’s 2018 Estimates of Violence Against Women highlights that while the official reporting of IPV in Central Asian countries appears minimal, the data should be considered carefully given the stigma attached to the topic and underreporting. Additionally, the 2015 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) annual report on Uzbekistan concluded that cases of domestic violence are underreported in Uzbekistan because victims believe it is a “private matter,” and UN Women note that while improvements have been made to collect administrative data since 2019, that data typically represents only a small share of the total, and is scattered, making it difficult to synthesize.

76. Recently, Uzbekistan has made progress at passing laws and signing conventions protecting women and children from violence. National laws protecting women and children from violence include recent amendments that strengthen the protection of women and children from violence (2023); the Law on Combating Trafficking in Humans (2008), the Law on Guarantees for the Rights of the Child (2007), and the Criminal Code (1995) which criminalizes rape (Article 118), human trafficking (Article 134), and forcing women into marriage (Article 137). In 1995, Uzbekistan signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Uzbekistan passed a partial legislation in 2019, known as the Law on Protection of Women from Harassment and Abuse, that addresses some forms of violence against women. In April 2023, the President signed additional amendments that: criminalize domestic violence, increase the punishments for sexualized crimes, make economic and psychological violence and sexual harassment an administrative offense; and extends protection orders for GBV survivors to up to one

year.²⁶ These amendments are important because to date, local law enforcement authorities have rarely prosecuted domestic violence as a criminal offense.

77. Despite progress made by the government of Uzbekistan (GoU) signing conventions and passing laws aimed at protecting women and children from sexual violence, legislative and implementation gaps remain. The April 2023 amendments do not remove an article (Article 66 of the Criminal Code) that regulates reconciliation efforts under a broad emphasis on preservation of the family.²⁷ This article may de facto limit the capacity to prosecute violent spouses and may even create a risk to women in abusive family environments. International legal standards strongly advise against reconciliation (often referred to as mediation) recommended as a means of resolving violence. The reason lies to the power disparity between the abuser and the survivor. According to the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), the use of mandatory mediation and conciliation in cases of gender-based violence against women should be prohibited. Article 48 (1) reads as follows: “Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to prohibit mandatory alternative dispute resolution processes, including mediation and conciliation, in relation to all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention.” Likewise, the UN Handbook for Legislation on Violence against Women recommends explicitly prohibiting mediation in all cases of violence against women, both before and during legal proceedings.

78. Most mahalla leaders do not believe GBV is a serious challenge. When asked the degree of seriousness the challenge of GBV posed in their community in the first quarter of 2023, 62 percent of mahalla leaders interviewed in the Listening to the Citizens of Uzbekistan survey²⁸ said they believe it was either a small problem or not a problem at all. About 60 percent of mahalla administrations see addressing ongoing family disputes (including difficulties with mothers-in-law) as one of the key responsibilities of the mahalla-level Women’s Public Councils (or the successor responsibilities for women’s activist), with about 31 percent noting providing support in cases of GBV.

79. Testimonials highlight the discrepancy between sexual violence policies and practices in Uzbekistan. These girls and women encounter challenges when attempting to report or pursue prosecution of rape or sexual violence (Equality Now, 2021). These challenges are influenced by persistent cultural norms and include but are not limited to; i) a definition of rape based predominately on force rather than willing content; ii) a failure to automatically and legally investigate allegations of rape; iii) the practice of blaming the victim, especially by law enforcement; and iv) the practice of charging lesser crimes than those of rape or not pressing charges at all (Equality Now, 2021).

²⁶ The law establishes an administrative liability (Article 592 of the Code of Administrative Liability), and a criminal liability (Article 1261 of the Criminal Code) regarding family (domestic) violence.

²⁷ Article 661, parts 1-4 of Article 1261 (Domestic Violence) of the Criminal Code allow reconciliation in cases where physical violence carried no risk to life. If actions under this article involve: a) more than one person; b) violence against a woman known to be pregnant; c) particular cruelty; d) malicious reasons; e) religious prejudices; f) implementation by a group of individuals; g) repeated implementation, or implementation by a person previously convicted of crimes specified in Articles 97, 104, and (or) 105; h) committed with the use of firearms or sharp objects, the perpetrator can be punished with imprisonment from three to five years, or restriction of liberty from three to five years, even if the perpetrator confesses its guilt, or if the victim voluntarily reconciles with the offender and compensates for the damage incurred.

²⁸ In the Listening to the Citizens of Uzbekistan survey, approximately 600 mahalla leaders per month and covered 7,200 mahallas were interviewed per year.

80. Access to support services for GBV survivors is limited. The government of Uzbekistan manages response services in cases of GBV, and official figures report that there were 197 shelters active in the country in 2023 for GBV survivors. Nonetheless, women’s rights organizations and human rights monitoring groups claim that many shelters are either not operational or poorly resourced. In Tashkent with a population of 2.5 million, only two shelters were reportedly operational in 2020—with one center providing just 4 spaces for children and 32 spaces for adult women (CEDAW, 2020). Rights groups report that at least 121 state centers do not operate for the full day including weekends. Most shelter premises are physically unable to provide a secure place for victims of abuse.

Marriage and Divorce

81. Although both men and women have the legal right to pursue divorce, obtaining a divorce is challenging in practice, even in cases of domestic violence. Mahalla reconciliation commissions, which have adjudication authority for individuals registered as residents in their mahalla,²⁹ require a petition to advance divorce proceedings. When evaluating an application for divorce, courts consider whether such a petition was filed as well as the mahalla committee’s letter endorsing (or rejecting) reasons for the divorce. Typically, courts allocate six months for a married couple to reconcile, often requiring evidence demonstrating efforts to do so. During this period, courts instruct mahalla committees to engage in reconciliation measures prescribed by the court. If both parties still desire a divorce at the end of the period, the reconciliation committee is expected to submit an official notice that reconciliation is not possible. The work of a reconciliation committee is evaluated with respect to the rate of reconciled families, creating administrative incentives to refuse divorce petitions to avoid higher divorce rates in their jurisdiction.

82. To reduce harmful consequences, government authorities can use selectivity and discretion in applying for reconciliation provisions. While allowed by legal provisions, the proactive use of reconciliation proceedings can be suspended at the discretion of courts and other authorities charged with implementing. Given the grave nature of domestic violence cases, suspending reconciliation through court decisions may substantially reduce the risks to victims, who are primarily women and children. Likewise, mahalla committees, police, and service providers (such as rehabilitation centers, centers of free legal assistance, and policlinics) may take advantage of legally permitted discretion and be able to avoid imposing harmful reconciliation proceedings in case of domestic violence.

²⁹ Cases in which family members are not officially registered in the mahalla where they live can be particularly complex, as complying with official requirements may not be feasible.

Research insight: Daughters-In-Law and Domestic Violence: Patrilocal Marriage in Tajikistan

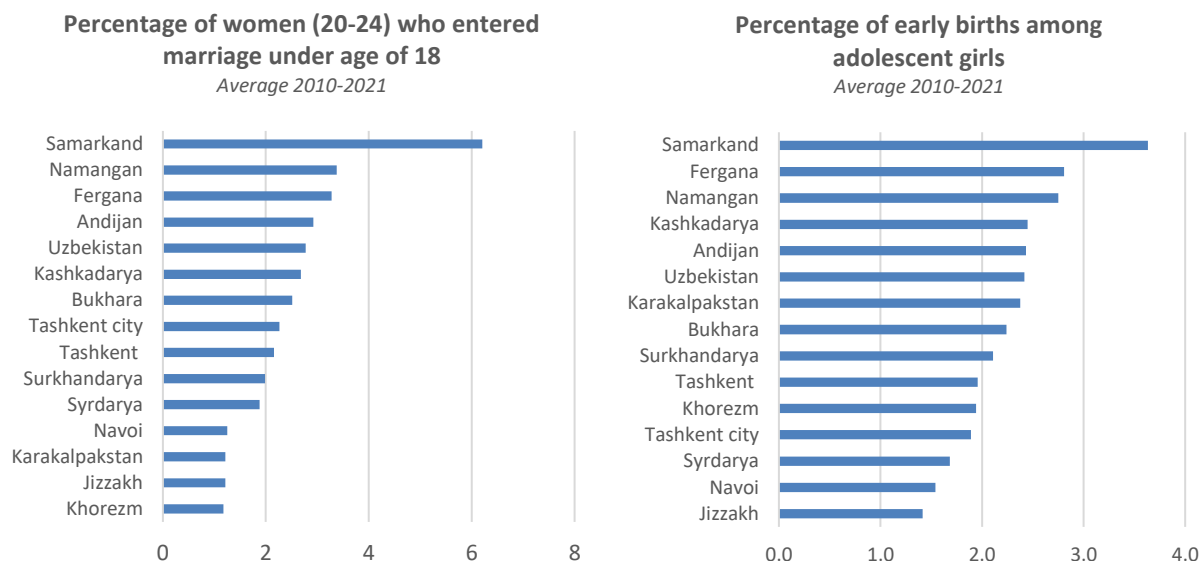
Patrilocal marriage – living in the husband’s natal household – affects Central Asian women and their choices in family planning, labor force participation, and human capital investment. While anthropological evidence suggests that elder household members play a key role in the lives of junior women, empirical studies are scarce. This study uses Tajikistan’s 2012 Demographic and Health Survey to explore the link between domestic violence and the living arrangements of daughters-in-law. Controlling on observables, propensity score matching generates a positive treatment effect: women living with in-laws are far more likely to experience emotional abuse by their husbands. Treatment effects do not emerge between physical violence and in-laws’ presence. Results show that these DILs are about 3.6 times more likely than those living in nuclear households to experience emotional abuse regardless of the presence of the father-in-law, leading to the conclusion that responsibility can be plausibly ascribed to the mother-in-law.

— Turaeva, Mavzuna R., and Charles M. Becker. "Daughters-in-law and domestic violence: patrilocal marriage in Tajikistan." *Feminist economics* 28.4 (2022): 60-88.

- 83. Early marriage was quite common in Uzbekistan until the family code was amended in 2019³⁰.** The Girls Not Brides, an international non-government organization, notes that early marriage in Uzbekistan primarily was driven by gender inequality exacerbated by: traditional expectations to become mothers and wives, power dynamics (including arranged marriages in which girls have limited decision-making power), perceptions of family honor (often in order to avoid loss of virginity before marriage), and religious practices (despite the Spiritual Administration of Muslims’ 2009 internal regulation stating that nikahs (religious weddings) can only be carried out by official imams and after official state registration of a marriage).

³⁰ From September 1, 2019, the minimum age for marriage for women in Uzbekistan has been increased from 17 to 18 years old ([Article 15 of the Family Code](#)). As a result, the number of marriages under the age of 18 decreased from 3,001 in 2019 to 93 in 2021 (Agency of Statistics, 2021).

Figure 24: Underaged marriage and early births



Source: The Agency on Statistics

VI — Recommendations

<i>Desired Outcome</i>	<i>Policy or investment area</i>
<i>Cross-cutting areas</i>	
Shifting norms and attitudes towards gender equality	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mahalla-level intervention: Support mobilization and social and behavioral change communication.³¹ 2. School-level intervention: Integrate age-appropriate education on healthy behaviors and relationships in school curricula. 3. National-level intervention: conduct public awareness-raising activities, edutainment programs, especially featuring professionally successful women and male gender equality champions, in national media.

³¹ The Start, Awareness, Support Action (SASA) methodology has been proven to be effective in fostering positive gender norms with a focus on GBV in Uganda and other countries. It is a whole of community approach that includes training activists that focus on building knowledge, changing attitudes, promoting dialogue and discussion, changing behavior. It is implemented in phases over several years thereby requiring a significant investment (see <https://raisingvoices.org/women/sasa-approach/>)

Availability and use of gender-disaggregated data	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Increase availability of gender data disaggregated by sex of household heads, rural and urban areas, and level of income. 5. Collect and publish statistical data from representative surveys and through administrative sources on domestic, sexual, and other forms of violence against women disaggregated by age and relationship between the survivors and the perpetrator.
<i>Improving human endowments</i>	
Closing gender gaps in education	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Judicious use of quotas and financial incentives for women and men in fields and post graduate education where they are underrepresented, including in STEM programs, education, and healthcare. 7. Gender-matching role model and mentoring programs designed to increase information and examples for non-traditional opportunities. 8. Increase the total number of places in tertiary education (to address the gender imbalanced rationing).
Improving sexual and reproductive health	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Improve the quality of pre- and post-natal and infant health services. 10. Integrate curricula on sexual and reproductive health and rights in school curricula. 11. Increase access and affordability of contraceptives and family planning alternatives. 12. Programs targeting areas of elevated early pregnancy levels through increasing sexual and reproductive health education and ensuring access to contraceptives.
Closing imbalances in life expectancy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 13. Increase taxes on tobacco products, alcohol, and sugary goods, which disproportionately contribute to life expectancy gaps.
<i>Increase Women's Economic Opportunities</i>	
Incentivizing gender balance in hiring	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 14. Provide tax incentives or wage subsidies to promote gender balance in professions that men or women are underrepresented
Reduce gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 15. Conduct a routine review of wages in sectors, and levels of seniority within firms with evidence of discrimination. 16. Conduct audits for discrimination in hiring practices. 17. Enforce new legislation on sexual harassment including in the workplace through criminal and civil penalties

Improving access to social protection	<p>18. Improve labor conditions and social protection for seasonal workers.</p> <p>19. Support long-term pension reform which ensures sufficient time to accumulate pensionable service.</p> <p>20. Reduce the exclusion error among social protection programs to ensure more vulnerable women and female-headed households receive assistance</p>
Strengthen entrepreneurship and support services	<p>21. Invest in local services that promote productive entrepreneurship.</p> <p>22. Improve access to essential services including water and childcare to reduce household care burdens.</p>
Strengthen unemployment support services	<p>23. Diversify specialties in technical and vocational education and training for girls and opportunities for women in nontraditional technical specialties.</p> <p>24. Increase coverage of labor support services including unemployment insurance and job-search assistance</p> <p>25. Close gender gaps in skills and preparation in the context of labor activation programs;</p>
<i>Enhancing Voice and Agency</i>	
Increase support services and protection for GBV survivors	<p>26. Prioritize the full implementation of the new GBV law.</p> <p>27. Invest in support services for GBV survivors at least at the UN recommended minimum standards. These services should include legal aid, crisis centers, temporary shelter, psychological and medical support, and job search assistance.</p> <p>28. Remove all provisions that require reconciliation with abusers (including spouses) and requirements in cases that include allegations of domestic violence and/or pending criminal proceedings.</p> <p>29. Provide mandatory training for judges, prosecutors, heads of mahallas, the police, and other law enforcement officials on the strict application of legislation criminalizing violence against women and on gender-sensitive procedures to support GBV survivors.</p>
Increase women’s representation in Government	<p>30. Phased introduction of gender-based quotas in senior level positions in government, political parties, and state-owned enterprises,</p>

	judicial positions, police, and prosecutors, as well as subnational and village-level positions.
Enforce prohibition of illegal early marriages	31. Strict enforcement of prohibition on illegal early marriages.
Increase women’s role in decision-making	32. Include women's voices in decision making around sub-national planning and investments including OpenBudget. 33. Ensure local decision-making institutions reflect women's priorities by design.

VII — Selected Summary Statistics

Distribution of employment by types of economic activity and gender

Industry by Gender Gap (2021)	Men ('000s)	Men (%)	Women ('000s)	Women (%)	Total ('000)	Ratio (w:m)
Health care and social services	147.9	23%	502.9	77%	650.8	3.40
Education	319.8	26%	900.7	74%	1220.5	2.82
Accommodation and catering services	167.1	49%	174.0	51%	341.1	1.04
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles	782.7	51%	752.9	49%	1535.6	0.96
Manufacturing industry	889.6	54%	752.8	46%	1642.4	0.85
Art, entertainment and recreation	38.4	55%	31.8	45%	70.2	0.83
Agriculture, forestry and fisheries	1966	58%	1449	42%	3414.6	0.74
Provision of other types of services	833.3	61%	524.9	39%	1358.2	0.63
Financial and insurance activities	44.0	62%	26.5	38%	70.4	0.60
Management and provision of ancillary services	63.6	63%	36.6	37%	100.2	0.58
Information and communication	45.8	65%	24.7	35%	70.5	0.54
Professional, scientific and technical activities	91.3	66%	46.7	34%	138.0	0.51
Real estate transactions	42.3	67%	20.9	33%	63.2	0.49
Public administration, defense; compulsory social security	462.3	73%	175.0	27%	637.3	0.38
Mining and quarrying	69.0	73%	24.9	27%	93.9	0.36
Water supply; sewerage, collection and disposal of waste	41.0	81%	9.7	19%	50.6	0.24
Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning	66.9	88%	9.4	12%	76.2	0.14
Transportation and storage	607.6	93%	46.6	7%	654.2	0.08
Construction	1265.4	94%	85.5	6%	1350.8	0.07
Total	7943.6	59%	5595.3	41%	13538.9	0.70

Indicator Name (2022)	Men	Men (%)	Women	Women (%)	Ratio (w:m)
Number of pensioners and beneficiaries	1,988,418	47%	2,252,375	53%	1.13
Permanent Population	18,128,578	50%	17,869,369	50%	0.99
Students in general education institutions	3,312,555	51%	3,149,186	49%	0.95
Children in preschool institutions	756,468	52%	699,322	48%	0.92
Number of travelers	2,707,729	52%	2,455,448	48%	0.91
Students in higher education	547,342	53%	494,758	47%	0.90
Economically occupied population (2021)	7,943,609	59%	5,595,267	41%	0.70
Number of sportspersons (2021)	1,560,599	63%	917,967	37%	0.59

Indicators	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Resident Population	31023	31575	32121	32657	33256	33905	34559	35271
women	15470	15736	16000	16259	16545	16860	17181	17527
men	15552	15839	16121	16398	16711	17045	17378	17744
Economically Active	13768	14022	14357	14642	14876	14797	14981	
women	6276	6391	6556	6246	6435	6384	6452	
men	7492	7631	7801	8396	8442	8414	8529	
Employed	13058	13298	13520	13273	13541	13236	13539	
women	5964	6074	6189	5524	5609	5485	5595	
men	7094	7225	7331	7749	7932	7752	7944	
Unemployed	709	724	837	1369	1335	1561	1442	
women	311	318	367	722	825	899	857	
men	398	407	470	646	510	662	585	
Unemployment Rate	5	5	6	9	9	11	10	
women	5	5	6	12	13	14	13	
men	5	5	6	8	6	8	7	
Enrolled in 1st Grade	623	641	631	615	617	649	588	703
girls	300	309	303	295	296	311	281	338
boys	322	332	327	320	320	338	307	365

		<u>Unemployment rate</u>					
		2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Republic of Uzbekistan	women	5.0	5.6	11.6	12.8	14.1	13.3
	men	5.3	6.0	7.7	6.0	7.9	6.9
Republic of Karakalpakstan	women	5.0	5.6	10.8	12.8	13.3	13.2
	men	5.7	6.4	8.6	6.1	8.2	7.6
Andijan	women	5.5	5.9	12.6	13.5	15.4	14.0
	men	5.8	6.2	7.4	6.0	7.8	7.0
Bukhara	women	5.0	5.0	11.7	11.9	14.0	13.2
	men	5.8	6.0	6.4	6.3	8.0	7.2
Jizzakh	women	5.1	4.7	12.2	13.7	15.4	14.5
	men	5.6	5.2	8.2	5.9	7.8	6.9
Kashkadarya	women	5.2	6.1	12.6	14.3	15.6	15.5
	men	5.4	6.1	7.9	6.0	8.3	6.8
Navoi	women	4.6	4.7	11.4	10.4	11.4	11.5
	men	5.4	5.7	6.3	6.8	7.8	6.7
Namangan	women	5.3	5.9	11.2	13.1	14.3	13.8
	men	5.4	5.8	8.4	5.9	7.5	6.6
Samarkand	women	5.5	6.4	12.1	14.2	15.4	14.4
	men	5.9	6.7	7.9	5.8	7.8	6.8
Surkhandarya	women	5.4	6.5	13.0	15.2	15.6	15.0
	men	5.7	6.8	7.4	5.7	8.0	7.0
Syrdarya	women	4.1	4.7	10.2	13.8	15.4	14.7
	men	4.6	5.4	8.7	6.0	7.8	6.9
Tashkent	women	3.7	4.7	10.6	12.6	14.0	12.5
	men	4.5	5.8	7.9	6.0	7.8	6.9
Fergana	women	5.4	6.2	12.0	12.9	14.5	13.9
	men	5.7	6.6	7.9	6.2	7.9	7.0
Khorezm	women	5.3	5.6	11.1	12.6	14.3	13.2
	men	5.6	5.8	8.1	6.3	8.3	7.3
Tashkent city	women	3.8	4.6	9.3	8.5	9.1	8.1
	men	3.5	4.4	6.8	6.3	7.2	6.0

Share of women among registered individual entrepreneurs

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Republic of Uzbekistan	31%	33%	37%	39%	40%
Republic of Karakalpakstan	46%	45%	51%	51%	51%
Andijan	4%	4%	32%	33%	35%
Bukhara	37%	38%	40%	43%	42%
Jizzakh	38%	40%	43%	45%	44%
Kashkadarya	35%	36%	39%	42%	43%
Navoi	43%	43%	46%	49%	48%
Namangan	17%	20%	24%	27%	28%
Samarkand	33%	34%	37%	41%	43%
Surkhandarya	37%	37%	42%	44%	44%
Syrdarya	40%	41%	43%	45%	44%
Tashkent	40%	43%	44%	44%	45%
Fergana	24%	25%	28%	31%	33%
Khorezm	38%	40%	44%	45%	46%
Tashkent city	32%	34%	33%	34%	35%

World Bank Lending Portfolio

Project Name	Fiscal Year	Gender tag	Project Status	Type
Fergana Valley WRM - Phase II	2017	Y	Active	IPF
Livestock Sector Development Project	2017	Y	Closed	IPF
Rehab of Transmission Substations	2017	Y	Active	IPF
DISTRICT HEATING ENERGY EFFICIENCY	2018	N	Active	IPF
Emergency Medical Services Project	2018	N	Active	IPF
AF-HDP	2018	Y	Active	IPF
UZEEF3	2018	N	Active	IPF
Uzbekistan Reforms for Transition DPO	2018	Y	Closed	DPF
MSCIUDP	2019	N	Active	IPF
UZ Promoting ECD Project (UPEP)	2019	N	Active	IPF
Ferghana Valley Enterprise Development	2019	Y	Active	IPF
Institutional Capacity Building Project	2019	N	Active	IPF
Sustaining Market Reforms in Uzbekistan	2019	Y	Closed	DPF
Agriculture Modernization Project	2020	Y	Active	IPF
Water Services and Institutional Support	2020	Y	Active	IPF
UZ-Strengthening Social Protection	2020	Y	Active	IPF
Rural Infrastructure Development Project	2020	Y	Active	IPF
Uzbekistan Emergency COVID-19 Project	2020	Y	Active	IPF
Supplementary: Uzbekistan DPO2	2020	Y	Closed	DPF
MUNIS Project	2021	N	Active	IPF
ESTART	2021	N	Active	IPF
Transparent and Inclusive DPO	2021	Y	Closed	DPF
TARP	2021	Y	Active	IPF
Medium-size Cities Additional Financing	2021	Y	Active	IPF
Statistics in Uzbekistan	2022	Y	Active	IPF
Financial Sector Reform Project	2022	Y	Active	IPF
Second Rural Enterprise Development	2022	Y	Active	IPF
Clean Energy for Buildings in Uzbekistan	2022	Y	Active	IPF
Accelerating Uzbekistan's Transition DPO	2022	Y	Active	DPF
LSDP	2023	Y	Active	IPF
Uzbekistan DPO 5	2023	Y	Active	DPF

The World Bank uses a “gender tag” to indicate Bank operations that close gender gaps in the four pillars of the WBG gender strategy through (i) analysis – identify gender gaps in outcomes between men and women in a given project or sector; (ii) design – devise interventions to address gaps between women and men; and (iii) indicators in the results framework that measure closure of a gender gap. There has been a dramatic rise in the share of operations that are gender-tagged, from 50% in 2017 to 92% in 2022. This increase in number is matched by increased ambition to take these operations to scale and to tackle the most impactful gender gaps.

Targets from the Gender Equality Strategy by 2030

No	Indicator	Year				
		Baseline	Midline			End line
		2021	2022	2025	2027	2030
1.	% of women in political parties	44	46	49	50	50
2.	% of women in leadership of political parties	30	35	41	46	50
3.	Number of women on ministerial (equal to minister) positions	5	7	10	13	15
4.	Number of women – Khokims	6	7	10	15	20
5.	% of women on managerial positions	26	27	28	29	30
6.	% of women among judges	12	15	20	24	30
7.	Programs to train women-leaders	0	1	1	2	3
8.	% of women graduates of State Governance Academy trained on women leadership	5	7	9	12	15
9.	Number of women Ambassadors of Uzbekistan in foreign countries	1	1	2	3	4
10.	% of girls with disabilities in cities covered by primary education (schools) among total number of women entitled to education	92,7	93	93,5	94,2	94,7
11.	% of boys with disabilities in cities covered by primary education (schools) among total number of women entitled to education	93,9	94,2	94,8	95,8	96,4
12.	% of girls with disabilities in villages covered by primary education (schools) among total number of women entitled to education	90,8	91,5	92,2	93,1	94
13.	% of boys with disabilities in villages covered by primary education (schools) among total number of women entitled to education	92,6	93,2	93,9	94,7	95,2
14.	% of women graduates in science, engineering, production, construction	6	7	8	9	10
15.	% of children familiar with reading and math in 1 – 4 classes	98	99	100	100	100
16.	% of children familiar with literature and math in 5 – 9 classes	96	97	98	99	100
17.	% of women – teachers in secondary education	70,3	70	69,7	69,5	69

18.	% of men – teachers in secondary education	29,7	30	30,3	30,5	31
19.	% of women – teachers in secondary specialized, vocational education	44,5	44,5	47,5	49	50
20.	% of men – teachers in secondary specialized, vocational education	50,5	50,4	50,3	50,2	50
21.	% of women – teachers in higher education	40	42	45	47	50
22.	% of men – teachers in higher education	60	58	56	53	50
23.	% of women – teachers in non-government educational institutions	30	32	33	34	35
24.	% of men – teachers in non-government educational institutions	70	68	67	66	65
25.	Number of women with PhD decree	1 411	1 750	2 250	2 850	3 700
26.	Number of men with PhD decree	4 154	5 100	6 400	8 100	10 150
27.	Number of women with Doctor of Science degree	271	450	650	950	1 400
28.	Number of men with Doctor of Science degree	1 052	1 350	1 600	2 100	2 750
29.	% of coverage of fertility age women with modern contraceptives	47,4	47,5	47,5	47,6	47,8
30.	Intensive indicator of women with HIV among 100 000 women	10,5	8,1	6,3	5,1	3,3
31.	Intensive indicator of men with HIV among 100 000 men	14,0	10,1	8,8	6,1	5,1
32.	% of women with HIV using retrovirus therapy	63.3	70	75	80	90
33.	% of men with HIV using retrovirus therapy	58.3	70	75	80	90
34.	Number of awareness raising campaigns on HIV/AIDS among citizens, youth	94	126	258	382	497
35.	Number of gender -based scientific research in the social sphere	0	1	2	3	5
36.	% of women established legal entity and managing it	12	15	17	20	25
37.	% of women employed in manufacture	7	9	11	13	15
38.	% of women employed in agriculture, services industry	23	25	27	30	35
39.	% of men employed in agriculture, services industry	77	75	73	70	65
40.	% of self-employed women among total % of employed	32	34	36	38	40
41.	% of self-employed men among total % of employed	68	66	64	62	60

42.	% of women employed in informal sector in agriculture	17	19	21	23	25
43.	% of men employed in informal sector in agriculture	83	81	79	77	75
44.	% of women having private land (house)	3	4	5	6	7
45.	% of men having private land (house)	97	96	95	94	93
46.	% of firms in cities where women are property owners	7	9	11	13	15
47.	% of firms in cities where men are property owners	93	91	89	87	85
48.	% of firms in villages where women are property owners	3	4	5	6	7
49.	% of firms in villages where men are property owners	97	96	95	94	93
50.	% of women entrepreneurs	35	36	37	38	40
51.	% of low-income women of any age	40	39	38	37	35
52.	% of low-income men of any age	37	36	35	34	33
53.	% of women having mobile phone	62	63	65	67	70
54.	% of men having mobile phone	78	79	81	83	85
55.	% of women using public transportation	87	88	89	90	91
56.	% of men using public transportation	87	88	89	90	91
57.	% of women formally considered as unemployed	12,8	12,5	12	11,5	11
58.	% of men formally considered as unemployed	6,1	5,9	5,6	5,3	5,0
59.	% in difference in payment for labor of men and women	30	29	28	27	25
60.	Number of articles in mass media on enhancing role of women and men in family affairs	1190	1340	1480	1650	1780
61.	Number of TV programs that have a positive impact on children's upbringing and help them increase their literacy	3450	3700	3900	4100	4300

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