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Negative Impact of Gender Stereotypes and Patriarchal Attitudes on Gender Equality in Uzbekistan

FINDINGS OF THE NATIONWIDE SOCIOLOGICAL
ASSESSMENT ON THE PREVALENCE
OF GENDER STEREOTYPES IN UZBEKISTAN

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Nationwide sociological assessment “Negative Impact of Gender Stereotypes and Patriarchal Attitudes on Gender Equality in Uzbekistan”

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents	3
Executive summary	4
Prevalence of gender stereotypes and their implications	4
Root causes of gender stereotypes	5
Key recommendations to overcome gender stereotypes	6
Monitoring and further development of gender-sensitive policies and practices	6
Gender-friendly infrastructure development	6
Addressing sector specific gender stereotypes	7
Introduction	8
Gender stereotypes in the context of Uzbekistan’ gender policies	8
Legal and regulatory advances in the field of gender equality	8
Overall progress in achieving gender equality	9
Existing challenges for gender equality	10
Gender stereotype - causes of gender inequality and violence	11
Prevalence of gender stereotypes and their impact on the socio-economic spheres	11
Education	12
Employment and entrepreneurship	12
Labor migration	13
Leadership and decision-making	14
Healthcare	14
Gender-based harassment and violence	15
Roots of gender stereotypes and patriarchal norms	16
Family and community influence	16
Infrastructure and access to finance	16
Legislation	17
Key recommendations to overcome gender stereotypes	18
Gender-sensitive policies and practices	18
Gender-friendly infrastructure	19
Addressing sector specific gender stereotypes	20
Education	20
Employment and entrepreneurship	20
Leadership and decision-making	21
Healthcare	21
Countering and preventing harassment and violence	21
Annex: The research description and methodology	22



Executive Summary

Uzbekistan has made significant progress in improving gender equality and women empowerment since 2016. However, many challenges still remain in achieving full equality and parity of genders in all areas of life. One of the core drivers of the persistent gender gaps and violence in Uzbekistan are gender related stereotypes, harmful social norms and biased attitudes prevalent in the society. These informal barriers have a negative impact on the government's efforts to achieve gender equality, reducing the effect of the adopted policies and laws, as they affect the status of women in society more than formal legislation.

In July-November 2022, UNDP conducted an assessment of the gender stereotypes in the regions of Uzbekistan to review the nature, scope and implications of the gender stereotypes and patriarchal attitudes in Uzbekistan, and propose measures to minimize their negative impact. The study is based on an online quantitative survey of 2,234 people in 14 regions of the country, six qualitative focus group discussions with 62 participants in 5 regions, as well as secondary data analysis. The research looks at gender stereotypes in such areas as: family, work and employment, education and STEM, leadership and decision-making, healthcare, and gender-based violence.

Prevalence of gender stereotypes and their implications

Despite some regional differences, the population in Uzbekistan overall has almost the same level of traditional attitudes on the roles of men and women in family and society.

Family stereotypes. The strongest gender stereotypes are related to viewing the role of men as the *head of the family* (74% of the respondents), as the *owner of property and land* (56%), and as the *household's primary breadwinner* (55%). Furthermore, 71% of the respondents support the attitude that *men should make the most important family decisions*.

On the other hand, 70% of respondents share the view that *women should spend more time with family, taking care of the household and children*, 62% think that *women should be responsible for the health of all family members and especially children*. Another prevailing stereotype is that *a woman must obtain permission from her husband and parents-in-law to continue her studies or go to work* (49%) or *to use the family budget for her personal needs* (43%).

Almost the same level of gender stereotypes has been identified in relation to **work and employment**. The most prevailing views are that *men should dedicate themselves to building a career and earning money for the family* (70%), *should work full-time* (62%), and *should not take parental leave* (56%). On the other hand, the respondents think that *women must take parental leave* (85%), *should not work full time due to family duties* (62%) and *should not engage in external labor migration* (60%).

Thus, the research shows that the existing gender stereotypes do not create total barriers to women's incomes, but it is not acceptable when only women provide family income. However, women are also expected to continue with family responsibilities, even if they work full-time. Furthermore, these social norms oblige women to reject potential income from labor migration and agree to lower-paid jobs in their own country, casual earnings, or remain dependent on remittances.

The pattern of gender stereotypes in **education and STEM** is mixed. On the one hand, many respondents believe that *women are better at teaching, medicine, culinary and sewing* (62%), whereas *men are better at programming, physics and mathematics* (58%). On the other hand, there is a strong disagreement with the statements that *sons must have a priority in getting a university degree* (50%), *women are not good at learning exact sciences and STEM professions* (49%), and that *women should not necessarily pursue higher education* (43%).

Notably, the respondents' place of residence (urban or rural) does not affect the results of the answer. But the level of education has some positive effects on the prevalence of the stereotypes. The higher the level of respondents' education the stronger is the support for educated women. The gender stereotypes about access to higher education in general and technical careers in particular, as well as about women working in "men's" careers restrict women's and girls' opportunities for getting education.

Leadership and decision-making. The research has found that the stereotypes about women in management positions are not as strict and that society accepts women leaders in different areas. For example, a majority of respondents think that *both men and women could join a political party, become a member of parliament, and work in government* (75%), *manage an educational institution* (75%), and *lead a local community* (69%). At the same time, there are still views that *only men can successfully run a business* (37%) and that *women should not necessarily dedicate much time to building a career* (34%).

While women's participation in the parliament of Uzbekistan has notably improved, reaching 32% of seats in the lower chamber and 25% in the Senate, they are still seriously underrepresented in the executive power (3.4%), as well as in management positions throughout the economy. The share of women in managerial positions is 27%, and in entrepreneurship it is 25%.

Healthcare: Gender stereotypes hinder women's access to qualified medical aid, particularly focus group respondents reported stigma around both young girls' visits to gynecologist and pregnant women's regular check-up and prenatal care. As a consequence, these stereotypes lead to serious health issues during and after pregnancy, or even death, which could be prevented with timely and adequate medical help.

Gender-based harassment and violence: In this research, the most frequently mentioned cases of violence were (a) coming from a mother-in-law; (b) physical abuse by husbands and, less frequently, by other family members; (c) economic violence, when a woman has no access or budget and even money she earned. Harassment and violence based on beliefs that a man makes all important family decisions; a man should be the owner of property or land plots; a woman cannot spend money without her husband's or mother-in-law's permission. As a result, women cannot find the resources to resist violence and are afraid of seeking help, especially in rural areas.

Root causes of gender stereotypes

Most of these and other gender stereotypes and patriarchal attitudes are rooted in the social and behavioral patterns cultivated within families and communities, gender-discriminatory practices, and gender-insensitive infrastructure.

Family and community play the most significant role in shaping gender stereotypes. Stereotypical behavior models for men and women are carefully preserved and passed on across generations in the process of upbringing and socialization. Traditional approaches to the roles of men and women in family and society have been supported lately by religious opinion-makers.

The stereotypes are aggravated by **gendersensitive legal gaps and discriminatory practices**. For example, the criminal code has no provision of specific criminal liability for various forms of gender-based violence besides sexual abuse and rape. There are some discriminatory norms in the family code, preschool education, healthcare, and other sectors. Despite recent progress in making the labor code more gender-neutral, the existing practices in the job market are still discriminatory against women. There are still obstacles for women and girls to access justice, including a lack of knowledge of their rights and resources available to defend them.

Limited access to infrastructure (uninterrupted energy, clean water, and public transport, especially in rural areas) and **financial resources** also remain as significant barriers for women to reduce time on housework and childcare and priorities personal and career development. The prevailing assumption is that unpaid childcare and household work is solely the responsibility of women, even if they have a full-time job, creating additional barriers for women to develop personally.

Key recommendations to address gender stereotypes

Based on these findings, the following measures to address gender stereotypes are proposed.

1. Monitoring and further development of gender-sensitive policies and practices. This includes:

- *improving existing legislation* to ensure that domestic violence is specifically criminalized, allow for ex-officio prosecution, and provide for appropriate punishment commensurate with the gravity of the act.
- *engaging civil society* in the monitoring and improving the national legislation, policies, and practices.
- *increasing the liability for cyber violence through developing an* online GBV policy and introducing legal norms and definitions about different forms of cyber violence.
- *improved gender data collection and analysis* with focus on sub-national and community levels.
- *training judiciary and law enforcement bodies* on women's rights and gender equality to eliminate patriarchal views, discriminating gender stereotypes and norms in the judicial system against women claiming their rights.

2. Developing gender-friendly infrastructure. This includes:

- *enhancing women's access to clean water, energy, transport infrastructure, especially in rural areas;*
- *developing daycare infrastructure through opening* daycare centers for children in the private sector.

- *enhancing women's access to finance through* creating gender -sensitive financial products, e.g., offering low-cost and easy-performed options for loan payments, allowing women to cover distances and decrease transport expenses.
- *provision of scholarships for women students (to cover their tuition and living)* and building new dormitories in cities to allow women students to stay at gender-segregated and secure places while studying away from home.
- *enhancing women's access to ICT infrastructure* through programs on improving their digital skills, especially for women aged over 30.

3. Addressing sector specific gender stereotypes in

- *Education includes* development of mentorship programs and promotion of role models, creating new additional educational programs for girls in STEM disciplines, and expanding access to distance learning programs for academic degrees and special training.
- *Employment and entrepreneurship: enhancing women's access to education and training in* finance, law, enterprise accounting, business planning, and digital skills; support to women entrepreneurs, and opening fatherhood schools.
- *Leadership and decision making: promoting and* supporting successful women in science, business, and politics; organizing leadership courses for women, developing special curriculums for training female leaders in the public sector, and running media campaigns to make society in general and women more aware of the initiative.
- *Healthcare: conducting* awareness programs on the importance of women's health through mass and social media, and updating curriculums of schools and universities. Promote medical culture in both women and men regarding family planning, with a special focus on explaining the inadequacy of the stereotypes connected to seeking medical help for reproductive health issues.
- *Countering and preventing harassment and violence* through information campaigns to curb one-sided stigmatization of women, training the operators of women call-center organized by the Committee on Women and Family.

Introduction

Uzbekistan is the most populous state in Central Asia, with a population of over 35 million and almost equal proportion of men and women. However, the level of representation of women in various social spheres is lower than that of men. The study “National survey on gender stereotypes and patriarchal norms” was conducted to assess the impact of gender stereotypes on key socioeconomic areas of life in Uzbekistan. The study was conducted from July to November 2022 across the country.

In July-November 2022, UNDP conducted an assessment of the gender stereotypes in the regions of Uzbekistan to review the nature, scope and implications of the gender stereotypes and patriarchal attitudes in Uzbekistan, and propose measures to minimize their negative impact. The study is based on an online quantitative survey of 2,234 people in 14 regions of the country, six qualitative focus group discussions with 62 participants in 5 regions, as well as secondary data analysis.

The following section sets the overall country context. The central part of the report is structured around six key socioeconomic areas: education and STEM, employment and entrepreneurship, labor migration, leadership and decision-making, healthcare, and gender-based violence. The recommendations in the final section are aimed at the Government of Uzbekistan, civil society, international development partners, academia, and the private sector.

Gender stereotypes in the context of Uzbekistan’s gender policies

Legal and regulatory advances in the field of gender equality

Over the past five years, Uzbekistan has adopted several laws to achieve gender equality in the republic. Among them, there is the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan, “On Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men,” defining the concepts of direct and indirect gender discrimination, introducing an analysis of gender-based legal expertise of legislative acts. The law acts as the basis for forming a comprehensive legal regulation system to guarantee equal rights.

The introduction of the Law “On Protection of Women from Harassment and Violence” was a significant milestone, regulating the protection of women against harassment and violence in daily life, at work, at schools, and otherwise. After the law was adopted, Uzbekistan started practicing issuing Protection Orders ensuring governmental support to the victims of harassment and violence. Uzbekistan took eight measures to address violence against women and girls during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was one of the highest numbers in Central Asia and Eastern Europe.¹

¹https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/Government-responses-to-COVID-19-Lessons-on-gender-equality-for-a-world-in-turmoil-en_0.pdf

On May 28th, 2021, the Senate of Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan adopted the National Strategy for Achieving Gender Equality in Uzbekistan by 2030. The strategy aims to increase the share of women in managing positions, eliminate gender imbalance in governmental bodies through consolidation of the temporary employment quota systems, prevent any cases of harassment and violence against women at work and in families, and much more.

Several regulations were also adopted intended to support women's business activity and provide additional educational opportunities. For example, in 2022, women could receive business and educational preferential loans.

Overall progress in achieving gender equality

Uzbekistan's current legislation in the field of gender is ranked 135th by the World Bank's 2022 Women, Business and the Law report². Given that the average score in the region of Europe and Central Asia was 84.1, Uzbekistan's score of 70.6 points can be called a high one.

In the ranking of countries in the world by the UNDP Gender Inequality Index 2022, Uzbekistan is in 56th place, Denmark is in the first place, and Yemen is in 170th place. It is a progressive position in the Central Asia region, where only Kazakhstan ranks hither at 41st, but Tajikistan is in 68th place and Kyrgyzstan is in 87th place³.

The Government of Uzbekistan has made significant efforts to support women during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Government's measures were rated 16: out of taken measures, 16 were found gender-sensitive. Compared to Kazakhstan, out of 12 measures, 11 were found gender-sensitive, and in neighboring Tajikistan, only 2 out of 2 measures⁴.

To provide help to adolescent girls and fertile-aged women in family clinics and rural medical centers, the government opened women's health consulting rooms.⁵ Improved sexual and reproductive health and protection of rights have contributed over time to decreasing maternal mortality. Thus, in 2021, the infant mortality rate in Uzbekistan was 5.9, and the maternal mortality was 14.4, while in 2017, it was 7.8 and 21.0, respectively⁶.

As a result of introducing a minimum quota of 30% for the women candidates nominated for national elections, in the 2019 elections, women constituted 41.3% of the candidates for the Legislative Chamber and women made up 32% of the representatives of the Oliy Majlis Legislative Chamber and 25% of the

² <https://wbl.worldbank.org/en/wbl>

³ <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/thematic-composite-indices/gender-inequality-index#/indicies/GII>

⁴ <https://data.undp.org/gendertracker/>

⁵ <https://gmp.com.uz/novosti/post/konferenciya-uluchshenie-ohrany-materinstva-i-detstva-reproduktivnogo-zdorovya-naseleniya-v-nashej-strane>

⁶ <https://nsdg.stat.uz/goal/6>

Senate⁷. On this indicator, Uzbekistan has become one of the top 50 countries and the first one in Central Asia to clear the 30% women representation barrier.

Existing challenges for gender equality

There is still significant gender inequality in Uzbekistan among property owners and gender asymmetry in managing positions in public and private organizations. Women tend to be employed in the social sector, part-time low-paid jobs in the formal and the informal sectors maintaining horizontal and vertical segregation in labor markets.

The percentage of women owning land and property is still low in Uzbekistan (23% and 36.6% respectively). Women business is mostly concentrated in low-margin sectors such as wholesale and retail trade, agriculture, and home businesses.

The lack of opportunities for women to reconcile professional and family life and the insufficient efforts to promote and ensure the equal sharing of domestic and child caring responsibilities between women and men impact women's employment and lead to disproportionate time spent by women on unpaid care work⁸. As a result, women spend about 5.27 hours daily on unpaid childcare and housework, while men only spend 2.15 hours.⁹

There are only 84 women for every 100 men in higher education institutions in Uzbekistan; women make up 11% of IT university students, and 28% of those employed in IT¹⁰. Women's participation in management of private enterprises is among the lowest in Central Asia, and women entrepreneurs are often not taken seriously¹¹. In this context, it is estimated that Uzbekistan lost about US\$8 billion in GDP in the last decade due to the digital gender gap, with US\$755 million in 2020.¹²

⁷ <https://parliament.gov.uz/ru/events/opinion/33984/>

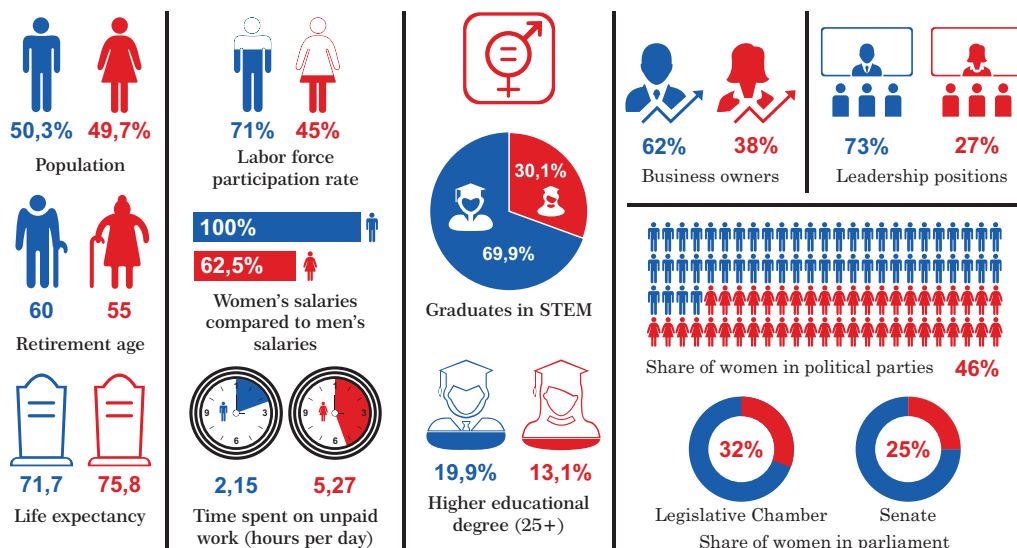
⁸ According to the International Development Research Centre, unpaid care and domestic work refer to non-market, unpaid work carried out in households. This work includes direct care (of persons) and indirect care (such as cooking, cleaning, fetching water and fuel, etc.) These activities are recognized as work but typically not included in the System of National Accounts, which is the set of measures used by countries worldwide to measure economic activity, including GDP.

⁹ <https://gender.stat.uz/ru/dopolnitel-nye-pokazateli/ekonomicheskije-resursam>

¹⁰ https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USAID_UzbekistanDECA.pdf

¹¹ World Bank, "Second Systematic Country Diagnostic for Uzbekistan", April 2022. P. 90; USAID, *ibid.*, pp. 25-26.

¹² A4AI report "Costs of Exclusion Report", October 2021. <https://a4ai.org/research/costs-of-exclusion-report/>



Graph 1. Gender equality in Uzbekistan

Gender stereotype - causes of gender inequality and violence

The research has confirmed that gender stereotypes and patriarchal norms are the causes behind continuing gender inequality and violence in Uzbekistan. The research revealed gender stereotypes and patriarchal norms that should not be changed, according to the respondents.

- Women should spend more time with family, taking care of the household and children
- Men should earn money and provide family incomes
- Men should not interrupt their careers to go on parental leave
- A man makes all important family decisions
- A man should be the owner of properties and land plots
- A woman should not go abroad to earn money (labor migrant)
- A woman cannot spend money without her husband's or mother-in-law's permission
- Professions in the field of pedagogy and medicine are more suitable for women, and programming and science for men

As research showed, the prevailing gender norms assign family responsibilities to women, even if they have a full-time job. That unpaid care and household work creates a double burden for women and limits their opportunities for personal development and career growth.

Prevalence of gender stereotypes and their impact on the socio - economic spheres

The research has shown that, despite specific differences between regions, the population generally has about the same traditional views on the roles of men and women. The existing gender norms affect women's meaningful participation in social and economic life.

Education

Key gender stereotypes: The gender stereotypes about access to higher education in general and technical careers in particular, as well as about women working in “men’s” careers restrict women’s and girls’ opportunities for getting education. This study showed that stereotypes in education are subject to change depending on gender, age, and level of education.

- **Women should not necessarily get higher education:** The research has shown that over a third of men (37.7%) and almost a half of women (46.2%) speak about the need to change this stereotype. Nevertheless, still 37.4% of men and 34.6% of women support this stereotype. Urban and rural divide wasn’t prominent here: respondents living in cities voted in favor of this stereotype almost exactly (35.9%) as did residents of rural areas (36.1%).
- **Women are no good at science and at jobs such as engineering:** This stereotype is supported by 35.8% of men and 22.9% of women. Though 64.2% of men and 77.1% of women have a neutral position or think that there is a need to change this perception. In this case, the respondents place of residence (urban or rural) does not affect the results of the answer. But the level of education has some positive effects. Thus, 47.8% of respondents with primary or no education support this stereotype and only 27.3% of respondents with higher degrees agree with this.
- **Women are better at jobs that have to do with pedagogy and medicine:** In this regard, 62% of the respondents agree that men are better at learning such things as programming, physics and mathematics, while women do better at teaching children and medicine. Like in the case above, only the level of education has some positive effect on the stereotype penetration, where 73.9% of respondents with primary or no education support this stereotype, but only 59.4% of respondents with higher degrees share this view.

Negative impact of the stereotypes: As a result, large gender imbalances persist in tertiary education, which drives inequality in the country. In 2021, 19.9% of the overall number of men aged over 25 had higher education in Uzbekistan. For women, this number was lower - 13.1%¹³. Women representation in STEM is low. The share of women studying pedagogy and liberal arts (philology, culture and arts) is 68%, while in engineering (IT, energy and mechanical engineer) and legal disciplines, their share is still as low as 24%.¹⁴

Employment and entrepreneurship

Key gender stereotypes: The research has shown that women’s participation in labor and entrepreneurship faces societal disapproval. However, some of the research participants believe that this situation requires change. The study has demonstrated that gender stereotypes in the field of employment and entrepreneurship are among the most complex ones and tightly intertwine with public

¹³ The Republic of Uzbekistan’s State Committee for Statistics/Gender Statistics/Education
<https://gender.stat.uz/ru/dopolnitel-nye-pokazateli/2021-05-06-12-04-25>

¹⁴ <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/933471650320792872/pdf/Toward-a-Prosperous-and-Inclusive-Future-The-Second-Systematic-Country-Diagnostic-for-Uzbekistan.pdf>

perception of “women’s” and “men’s” professions, women’s status in a family, ability to control finance and own property, perform a traditional family role of mother, wife and daughter -in-law.

- A man should always be a family’s primary breadwinner: The opinions about this stereotype became significantly divided depending on the respondents’ gender. Thus, 62.1% of men believed this role was mainly for men; however, 65.5% of women said it was for both men and women.
- Women should spend more time with family, taking care of the household and children: The research showed that this stereotype is shared by 70% of respondents.
- Only a man can work full-time: Most men (57.9%) supported this statement; however, most women (60.5%) preferred equality. Rural women were widely enthusiastic about work; for example, 100% of women aged below 20 responded that this role was mainly for women. At the same time, their peer's responded from the cities were drastically conservative the absolute majority (93.3%) believe that only men should work full time.
- Only a man can be successful entrepreneurial: The opinions on this matter were almost the opposite: most men (60.8%) spoke for this disposition to be kept, but 67% of women advocated for a change.

Early marriage, childbirth, and the burden of unpaid care work, including housework, looking after elderly put women in an unfavorable position for employers compared to men, suggesting that part-time work is the only option. At the same time, society is already formulating positive or neutral perceptions of men going on parental leave. It is shared by 44.3% of men and 47.3% of women respondents.

Thus, the research showed that the existing gender stereotypes do not create total barriers to women's earnings. It is more likely that society most often does not accept the situation when only women provide family income. Women are also expected to continue with family responsibilities such as childcare and household work, even if they work full-time.

Negative impact of the stereotypes: As a result, in 2021, the share of women in the overall workforce (ratio between the number of actual working women and women of working age) is much lower than the same for men: 45% versus 71%, respectively.¹⁵ Women have to select those activities and workplaces where they can combine paid employment with unpaid care work. The monthly average wage for women constitutes 62.5% of the monthly average wage for men. On average, in Uzbekistan, women own only 38% of all enterprises¹⁶.

Labor migration

Key gender stereotypes: The study revealed consistent gender stereotypes and negative attitudes toward women - labor migrants. As women are perceived in the society as primary caregivers, women’s mobility

¹⁵ Involvement ratio in workforce (% of women aged 15 and above) (simulated ILO assessment) Uzbekistan

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.MA.ZS?locations=UZ>

¹⁶ <https://gender.stat.uz/ru/dopolnitel-nye-pokazateli/2021-05-06-12-04-25>

for work outside of the country is perceived negatively. Although parental migration negatively impacts children, it is women who get the blame for abandoning children while migrating for work. In this field, gender stereotypes are quite deep-rooted in society now.

- Labor migrants are all men: Most respondents (69% of men and 60% of women), both urban and rural, considered labor migrants as men. In addition, 63% of men and 56% of women believed that “women should not go abroad to earn money, i.e., undergo labor migration.”

The respondents mentioned that the migration of either men and or women often leads to divorces. The respondents noted that it is harder to start a family for a girl who has worked abroad without due “supervision.”

Negative impact of the stereotypes: The norms and barriers caused by these stereotypes force women to reject potential income from labor migration and agree to lower-paid jobs in their own country or casual earnings. or remain dependent on remittances.

Leadership and decision - making

Key gender stereotypes: The research suggested that gender stereotypes about women in management positions are not as strict and that society accepts women leaders in communities.

- Women are doers, men are managers: 73.6% of respondents agreed that the role of family head mainly belongs to men in modern society. This opinion is basically due to the belief that a woman is subordinate to her husband and elderly family members.

At the same time, the results also imply that some respondents are ready for and willing to see changes in women’s situations. Thus, 67% of respondents believed that the role of a career-building professional is equally appropriate for both men and women. Moreover, 47% of men and 71% of women answered that managing a company is “a role that suits both genders.”

Negative impact of the stereotypes: Women still lack representation at the decision making and management levels in all sectors, meaning that the minimum of 30% necessary to influence decision-making efficiently has not been reached. The ratio between women and men in managing positions in Uzbekistan is 27% and 73%, respectively. At the same time, women constituted 32% of the Legislative Chamber of Oliy Majlis and 25% of the Senate in 2019 as a result of 30% quotas introduced in 2019 The share of women in various political parties reached 46%.¹⁷

Healthcare

Key gender stereotypes: Gender stereotypes hinder women’s access to qualified medical aid, particularly focus group respondents reported stigma around both young girls’ visits to gynecologist and pregnant women’s regular check-up and prenatal care.

¹⁷ Gender policies of the new Uzbekistan in the context of international parliamentarism tendencies.

<https://parliament.gov.uz/ru/events/opinion/33984/>

Negative impact of the stereotypes: Existing stereotypes among the elderly generation and the prevalent gender stereotypes in society can negatively impact and stop girls and women from getting medical assistance. Consequently, these stereotypes result (or cause) many health issues during and after pregnancy, or even death, which could be prevented with timely and adequate medical help. Though the infant and maternal mortality rates are decreasing, they stay high (in 2021, infant mortality was 5.9, and maternal mortality - was 14.4, while in 2017, it was 7.8 and 21.0, respectively).¹⁸

Gender - based harassment and violence

In this research, the most frequently mentioned cases of violence were (a) coming from a mother-in-law; (b) physical abuse by husbands and, less frequently, by other family members; (c) economic violence, when a woman has no access or budget and even money she earned.

According to the study, domestic violence is usually psychological violence against a daughter-in-law treated as a “free servant” for her husband and his family. Young wives face excessive requirements, while their needs are deliberately ignored, and any manifestations of independence are forbidden. Very young girls are often strongly abused psychologically by their mothers-in-law.

Economic violence is based on stereotypes defining a woman’s status and financial position in a family. These stereotypes include beliefs that a man makes all important family decisions; a man should be the owner of property or land plots; a woman cannot spend money without her husband’s or mother-in-law's permission.

Negative impact of the stereotypes: As a result, women cannot find the resources to resist violence and are afraid of seeking help, especially in rural areas. Scared of revenge and condemnation from husbands, husbands' relatives, neighbors, and their own families, desperate to get any support from the police, rural women suffer in silence and do not complain. Urban women are more actively protecting themselves and other women from domestic violence, seeking help from the police, various community organizations, and rehabilitation centers.

Gender stereotypes also effectively increase financial dependence of women on men and the impact on social security and the poverty level of children, especially in the case of divorce. Although equal rights are provided to women and men on marital property by law, the current practice leaves women and their children at a disadvantage upon divorce since de facto ownership of marital property vests in the husband’s family members.

¹⁸ <https://nsdg.stat.uz/goal/6>

Roots of gender stereotypes and patriarchal norms

Family and community influence

Family and community role in stereotypes formation: Stereotypes appear from the life experiences of an individual or a group and depend on the existing values. Stereotypes are formed during gender socialization, education, communication as well as by media and social media. Based on the research, the causes and sources of gender stereotypes are the following:

- Stereotypical behavior models for men and women are carefully preserved and passed on by older generations in the process of upbringing and socialization to the next generations.
- The mahallas' informal leaders with great authority in their communities also have significant influence. They can be both male and female. They can exercise their power on those community members who try to break the existing norms of behavior.
- Traditional approaches to men's and women's roles in society and in a family have been supported lately by various religious leaders who have significant authority to form public opinion.

Lack of role models: Another problem is the lack of role models for young girls, positive examples of women leaders who have achieved high results in their work, which would serve as motivation for their further development.

Unpaid care work: The prevailing assumption is that unpaid childcare and household work is solely the responsibility of women, even if they have a full time job, creating additional barriers for women for personal and career development. Women spend about 5.27 hours daily on unpaid childcare and housework, while men only spend 2.15 hours¹⁹. However, these numbers presented by the national statistics in Uzbekistan require specific information about the household activities included in the measurement and urban and rural split. The lack of developed infrastructure (uninterrupted energy, clean water, and public transport, especially in rural areas) and financial resources remain significant barriers for women to reduce time on housework and childcare and priorities personal and career development.

Infrastructure and access to finance

Access to clean water: In households with scarce water resources, adult women are usually (in 61% of cases) in charge of providing water for the entire family²⁰. In some regions, this is an exhausting process, and women often have to fetch water twice or thrice a day, walking many kilometers with a heavy load. It takes them about two or three hours a day to bring water home.

¹⁹ <https://gender.stat.uz/ru/dopolnitel-nye-pokazateli/ekonomicheskie-resursam>

²⁰ <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/30346/gender-water-uzbekistan-ru.pdf>

Access to electricity: Women are the primary consumers of household energy supply. Frequent and lengthy power outages affect them more than men, increasing the time spent on housework.

Access to transport infrastructure: Women make short trips with frequent stops much more than men because they have to run household errands. Because of that, long waiting times and poor transport service quality further aggravate the burden on women. For children from remote regions, especially girls, it is difficult to go to school because of the long travel distance. It is typical for universities, which are mostly located in regional centers or Tashkent.

Access to care services: A significant challenge for workers with family responsibilities is the lack of accessible, affordable, quality care services. Women traditionally spend a lot of time caring for their families and children. Access to preschool daycare centers and after-school programs can free up women significantly, giving them a chance to prioritize their development and work. Although the government extended public preschool infrastructure, which resulted in the increase of the enrolment rates in preschools (age 3-7 years old) from 28% in 2017 to 65% by the end of 2021, this infrastructure is still extremely lacking, and the enrollment rate doesn't meet the EU target of 95%.²¹

Access to finance: The existing official lending and credit systems are too expensive and risky because of collaterals. Access to financial resources is still the main obstacle for most enterprises (68%) run by women²².

Legislation

The country does not have a comprehensive strategy for overcoming discriminating gender stereotypes. Certain legislative norms, such as the 2018 Law “On Mediation,” define the procedure of family mediation as an alternative method of managing family conflicts, which can further aggravate the existing patriarchal norms and discriminating stereotypes.

There are still obstacles for women and girls to access justice, including a lack of knowledge of their rights and resources available to defend them, the ever-persisting gender stereotypes, and reconciliation procedures carried out in the mahallas in case of gender-based violence. It is aggravated by the limited capacity of the judiciary and law enforcement officials as well as judicial gender bias and persistent gender stereotypes. The Office of the Ombudsman has no specific mandate to protect and promote women's rights.

The Law “On Protection of Women from Harassment and Violence” has no legal definition or provision that domestic violence is specifically criminalized. Criminal legislation has no provision of specific criminal liability for various forms of gender-based violence besides sexual abuse and rape.

²¹

[https://www.unicef.org/media/119781/file/Lessons%20learned%20from%20designing%20social%20impact%20bonds%20to%20expand%20pre-school%20education%20\(Uzbekistan\).pdf](https://www.unicef.org/media/119781/file/Lessons%20learned%20from%20designing%20social%20impact%20bonds%20to%20expand%20pre-school%20education%20(Uzbekistan).pdf)

²² IFC Survey to assess the needs of women entrepreneurs in financial and non-financial services

Key recommendations to overcome gender stereotypes

Gender - sensitive policies and practices

Civil society engagement: Efficient performance of gender -based legal expertise requires civil society's active participation in the monitoring. It is necessary to regularly initiate large-scale public consultations of new laws to comply with gender-sensitive norms and standards.

Multiple bureaucratic barriers in the non-profit NGOs registration process prevent NGOs from developing and taking an active part in public life. Very few NGOs in the country specialize in gender studies and women's rights. We suggest putting forward a proposal disallowing Ministry of Justice authorities to return documents more than once and requiring them to set forth the complete list of corrections needed in the constituent documents.

Improve existing legislation including the Criminal Code, the Administrative Code and the Law "On Protection of Women from Harassment and Violence," to ensure that domestic violence is specifically criminalized, allow for ex officio prosecution, and provide for appropriate punishment commensurate with the gravity of the act. Amend legislation to ensure that the definition of rape is based on lack of consent rather than on the use or threat of use of force.

Ensure the timely and efficient issuance, execution, and enforcement of Protection Orders, and introduce appropriate penalties for failure to comply with such orders. Ensure women and girls have access to justice and encourage them to seek help from the police in cases of gender-based violence, particularly through providing affordable and, where necessary, free legal support services.

Liability for cyber violence: We recommend preparing a GBV online policy, which provides legal framework adoption for modern needs, such as introducing legal norms and definitions about different forms of cyber violence. We also recommend developing and running training for judges and enforcement agencies to ensure their ability to enforce GBV crimes on the Internet. The best practices from Sweden and South Africa can be considered. The government could also collaborate with UNICEF to develop policies ensuring children's safety online.

Data collection and analysis: We recommend paying special attention to the collection and processing of gender-disaggregated data with the focus on sub-national and community levels. This will allow organizations and individuals making strategic decisions to see a fair picture of the situation and develop adequate measures based on factual evidence. Such data should be collected and analyzed during the development of the corresponding strategies, ideally for several years, so that possible changes can be traced, and the required corrective action can be taken.

Training employees of judiciary and law enforcement authorities: We recommend holding training sessions on women's rights and gender equality for judicial authorities, police and other law enforcement

agencies in order to eliminate patriarchal views, discriminating gender stereotypes and norms in the judicial system against women claiming their rights.

Gender - friendly infrastructure

Access to clean water, especially in rural areas: Access to clean water can alleviate the burden of women having to transport water, spare their time and effort, and improve the families' living conditions and, therefore, health. Therefore, it is necessary to organize discussions at the community level (mahallas) at the planning stage of construction and reconstruction of water supply and sewerage projects of women with representatives of departments of the Ministry of Housing and Communal Services of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Affordable water filter financing also can be one way to handle this issue.

Access to energy: Improved access to a power supply will allow women to use household appliances, freeing up time for personal needs and development, and preserving health and energy. Proper lighting in entrance hallways, public spaces, streets and bus stops will make them safer for girls and women. Special attention should be paid to street lighting in rural areas. It is suggested to keep supporting access to alternative energy sources, subsidizing the installation of solar panels and solar generators.

Access to transport infrastructure: An important aspect of transport infrastructure development is state-of-the-art technology advances. The creation and provision of smart panels on bus stops and smartphone applications could make women's lives easier in terms of planning/time management (gaining them time) and safety (since women would spend less time on bus stops).

Development of daycare infrastructure: We suggest providing tax support to organizations for opening daycare centers for their employees' children. An alternative way can be providing financial support to elder family members (grandmothers and grandfathers) taking care of working parents' children.

Access to finance: Government should support financial organizations in developing concepts of fair customer care with due consideration to gender aspects, as well as improve knowledge about the specific problems and needs of women for financial and non-financial services, developing financial literacy programs. Create gender-sensitive financial products, e.g., offering low-cost and easy-performed options for loan payments, allowing women to cover distances and decrease transport expenses.

Provision of scholarships for students: Given that there is already a program for student loans, we also suggest giving loans to cover living expenses. This would decrease the time and financial burden on female students and their families, allowing them to focus on their studies and get a better education. It can also eliminate the need to choose which child will get a higher education if a family does not have enough resources to support each family member's education.

Development and access to ICT infrastructure: According to a Gender Digital Divide Assessment, 87% of women use the Internet at least once a day. However, the quality of use and their digital skills are extremely low. Due to that, we recommend supporting programs for women to obtain and improve their digital skills, especially for women aged over 30. It is also important to develop programs for subsidized purchasing of computers and tablets, creating opportunities to use free Internet access in public spaces (libraries, cafeterias, and shops).

Dormitory construction: Considering the current situation with immigrants fleeing to Uzbekistan and the existing social norms, it is advised to pay attention to building new dormitories in cities. First, this will allow female students who don't have enough money to rent an apartment to study away from home. Second, this would give their parents peace of mind since the dormitories would be gender-segregated and under security surveillance. It is expected that parents, knowing their daughters are safe, will quickly let them leave their houses to study in another city.

Addressing sector specific gender stereotypes

Education

Development of mentorship programs and promotion of role models: It is suggested to follow the example of Tunisia's National Agency for Scientific Research Promotion and implement a program for more experienced specialists to mentor younger female researchers. This will, on one side, promote technology transfer and therefore boost technology progress, and on the other one, form role models that are a very powerful motivation tool. It is also recommended to support the concept of role models in education, but not in the sectors where women have enough representation. .

Additional educational programs for girls in STEM disciplines: We also suggest supporting the initiatives like TechnovationGirls, purporting to help girls aged below 16-18 study STEM and ICT. This would be a chance to address the new generation directly, showing that there is “another way” and engage their parents. To create additional motivation for the parents, this can be positioned as an after-school program and backed by an extensive media campaign. We also suggest revising STEM schools' curricula, allowing students to choose STEM subjects such as robotics, engineering, etc. This can be further supported by supporting and developing additional activities, such as Makers Leagues.²³

Distance learning: Suppose a girl cannot study close to her home (or cannot leave home for long, for any reason). In that case, it is also recommended to expand the distance learning programs for bachelor, higher academic degrees, and special training. Since the country has the IT Park University, there allegedly is also a legislative base for further development in this field.

Employment and entrepreneurship

Educational programs: It is necessary to develop educational programs giving the necessary basic knowledge of finance, law, enterprise accounting, making business plans, and promoting digital skills, in all cases intended for women. Special focus should be made on rural women. The Gender Digital Divide Assessment has shown that both men and women tend to lose interest in education after getting married. Considering this, it is important to encourage women and men to study throughout their lives.

23

<https://www.google.com/url?q=http://www.futurite.in/&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1669166819710064&usg=AOvVaw27KnI0jbva2VvYAXCFeWxJ>

Support to women entrepreneurs: We advise expanding female entrepreneurship support programs through tax benefits to female entrepreneurs. It is also suggested to develop a quoting system for governmental procurement from small and medium businesses organized and run by women.

“Schools for Dads” We also suggest opening fatherhood schools based on the experience of the EU4Gender Equality project.²⁴ These schools would teach men to participate more in family life and build better rapport with children. The schools would also focus on gender equality, helping men become more responsible and thoughtful parents. They would learn how to share the responsibilities of bringing up children and keeping their houses together on par with their wives. Therefore, Schools for Dads would help men become better fathers and good partners supporting their spouses.

Leadership and decision - making

Promotion of female leadership: Supporting women who have achieved success in their respective fields, from science and business to politics, is necessary to promote female leadership and involve men in such campaigns. This can be done through a media campaign addressing various audiences and at various venues.

Leadership courses: Given the existence of mahalla committees, it is suggested to organize an array of training courses based on population surveys. It is also recommended to cooperate extensively with the Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Considering that it has three main academic curricula (master's programs, continuing professional training, and retraining), we advise to 1) introduce additional quotas for women only; 2) open a special curriculum for training female leaders in the public services field and 3) adopt an action plan to create a promotional media campaign, to make society in general and women more aware of the initiative.

Healthcare

Awareness programs: The existing reproductive health care system should be complemented with specific measures for detecting and eliminating stereotypes in families, involving interactive events, handing out information materials, and initiating discussions on social media. These programs should be included in education programs at schools and universities.

Family programs: We advise to promote medical culture in both women and men regarding family planning, with a special focus on explaining the inadequacy of the stereotypes connected to seeking medical help for reproductive health issues. Educational programs should also be for mothers of daughters explaining the importance of regular gynecological examinations. These campaigns can also involve family physicians and pediatricians.

Countering and preventing harassment and violence

Information campaigns: It is necessary to promote programs against the one sided stigmatization of women, which creates a favorable environment for concealed crimes, including abuse at work. It is also

²⁴ <https://euneighbourseast.eu/ru/news/stories/shkola-dlya-pap-kak-nauchit-muzhchinu-byt-aktivnym-otzom-i-zabotlivym-suprugom/>

essential to have a possibility for the related materials to be published in media, perhaps including the official websites of the Ministry of Interior.

We suggest performing an information campaign involving influencers and using digital platforms (e.g. Telegram) for women and promoting their online safety.

Training and monitoring: It is crucial to increase the capacity of specialists working with women on hotlines organized by the Committee on Women and Family. It should not be limited to supporting victims of violence. It is necessary to record women's calls, collect and analyze the existing data, and use it for further policymaking and awareness.

In accordance with the Law "On Mediation", training courses for mediators are organized at the Center for Advanced Training of Lawyers. Since then, according to data for 2021, more than 700 specialists have been trained in them, including 471 notaries.²⁵ The register of professional mediators is posted on the official website of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Mediators can be involved in resolving family conflicts in conjunction with social work in mahallas, which prevents gender-based violence and unburdens the work of litigation.

Preventing workplace violence: We suggest sharing the results of this study with the labor protection officials and discussing the possible measures to implement zero tolerance to any form of violence in the workplace. It is important to develop Ethical Codes, inform employees about different kinds of violence, and let everyone know that nothing will be tolerated at work.

Annex: The research description and methodology

The Republic of Uzbekistan is the most densely populated Central Asian state, with a population of over thirty-five million persons, with approximately equal shares of men and women. However, the visibility of women in various social spheres is far lower than that of men. The objective of this research was to identify the main gender stereotypes that exist in society and the patriarchal norms that contribute to their emergence and spread. Assess the degree of influence of the main barriers to achieving gender equality and develop recommendations for activities to expand the practical application of equal rights for men and women in Uzbekistan.

The research employs a combined methodology, including focused group discussions, secondary data analysis, and a quantitative online survey. The qualitative stage included six focus groups (62 persons). The quantitative stage (online survey) involved 2,234 persons.

Focus group discussions were held in five cities (Tashkent city, Fergana, Samarkand, Qarshi, and Nukus) and had from 9 to 11 people in each group. The discussions in those groups were structured based on a list of pre-prepared stereotypes. This way, respondents had a chance to react to those stereotypes, discuss them, share those personal experiences and provide the best solutions based on previously mentioned points.

²⁵ <https://www.minjust.uz/ru/press-center/news/102589/>

The online survey had a block of socio-demographic questions (although no questions were asked about the marital status and income level of a respondent), followed by three subsequent opinion blocks. The second block presented traditionally gendered roles (e.g., “be a housekeeper”) and required a participant to choose which gender is more probable to uphold this role. The third block asked the respondents to state their opinion (from “I support this” to “that has to change”) on a variety of topics related to gender stereotypes. Finally, the last question required the participant to choose the most important recommendations for the government to achieve gender equality.

The study defined the prevailing gender stereotypes and patriarchal norms in the key socioeconomic areas, including education (STEM), employment and entrepreneurship, labor migration, leadership and decision-making, healthcare, and gender-based violence.