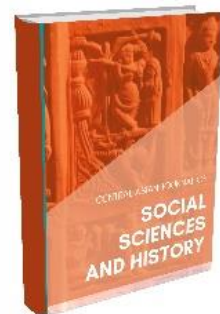




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## The Spatiality of Gender Relations: Women's Leadership Positions in New Uzbekistan

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### Abstract:

This study is to contribute to the number of scientific works in social (human) geography. Under the term “New Uzbekistan”, we will examine the impact of reforms on gender equality based on spatial analysis. Since this is the first time our study has been conducted, so, we first covered the theoretical background in more detail. We have made the field of feminism and gender studies scientifically linked to our research. We analyzed the impact of Gender equality and feministic approaches on the issues of women's leadership positions. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the work that needs to be done in the context of gender studies and to identify the research that needs to be done in the future. In addition, there are limited sources on feminist geography and gender study works in Central Asia, particularly in Uzbekistan. We then examined the proportion of women in the workplace in the new Uzbekistan and the spatiality of leadership positions for women. In the concluding section, we have provided our comments and suggestions.

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received 27-Apr-22

Received in revised form 28-Apr-22

Accepted 17-May-22

Available online 23-Jun-2022

**Keywords:** gender studies, human geography, women leadership positions, spatiality, feminist geography, gender equality.

### INTRODUCTION

There are many criteria in the world that reflect the prestige and cultural level of the state and society. But there is a criterion that clearly reflects the spiritual maturity of any nation and people, which is determined by the attitude of society to women. In the “New Uzbekistan”<sup>1</sup>, the implementation of essential reforms, the protection of human rights and interests in the process

of building a strong civil society, and the rule of law; ensuring equal rights and opportunities for men and women have become relevant issues. However, despite the progress made in recent years, there are still old stereotypes about women. It still “contributes” to the ceiling of women's rights in society. Fair gender interpretation is one of the professional and ethical values such as clarity, impartiality, and fairness. In fact, respect for women is an ancient value of the Uzbek nation. In the distant and recent past, some famous women introduced the voice of the Uzbek Nation to the World. Although the issue of women in Uzbekistan has risen to the level of public policy, various social or cultural stereotypes and/or barriers still hinder women from achieving equality in the workplace and society, especially in leadership positions. Because the equal participation of men and women in the system of governance is one of the bright signs of the modernization of society. As an independent subject of international relations, Uzbekistan is still practically covering in fulfilling its obligations under major international human rights treaties. You can see it in our analysis. In this article, we examine the spatial dimensions of gender relations and gender equality in Uzbekistan. Under the term “New Uzbekistan”, we will examine the impact of reforms on gender equality based on spatial analysis. Our purpose is to analyze the work that needs to be done in the context of gender studies through this research, to identify the research that needs to be done in the future and the research that will be effective. In addition, there are lacking of sources on feminist geography and gender studies in Central Asia, particularly in Uzbekistan. This study is to contribute to the number of scientific works in this field. Since this is the first time our study has been conducted, so, we first covered the theoretical background in more detail. We have made the field of feminism and gender studies scientifically linked to our research. We analyzed the impact of Gender equality and feministic approaches on the issues of women's leadership positions. We also mentioned the historical process to get to the topic. We then examined the proportion of women in the workplace in the new Uzbekistan and the spatiality of leadership positions for women. In the concluding section, we have provided our comments and suggestions.

## METHODOLOGY

In this study, the spatiality of women's status at workplaces, especially their advancement in leadership positions was examined. Statistical data analysis was provided. In particular, the extent to which gender equality was ensured in the sectors was examined. The data were taken from the website of the National Statistics Committee of Uzbekistan, the information texts of the Ministry of Labor and Employment, and the press service of regional governments. Data analysis showed that the position of women in the workplace (sectoral) is still lower in quantity than that of men.

**Data limitation:** In some statistics, although the numbers are given clearly, which areas are not clearly stated. In some cases, the field (sector) is clearly stated, and the percentages are given in general terms instead of clear figures. Such shortcomings have made it difficult to accurately examine the spatiality of women's occupations.

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<sup>1</sup>Note: The term “New Uzbekistan” was introduced by the current President. The reason for this is the policy of reviving the work of scientists-scholars from Uzbekistan, who founded the First and Second Renaissance periods in Uzbek national history.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### Feminism and gender studies

For much of the last century, the liberal, materialist, and radical approaches inherent in feminism have been almost completely replaced by a new cross-cutting approach. Many axes of marginalized identity exist under the noses of former feminists, all new to read through a lens that shows potential oppression, bigotry, injustice, and grievances - a partnership in a system of power and privilege became a theory of need. It does this by calling on different oppressed tribes to support each other: first under the banner of “allyship” and then “solidarity” - both of which are perceived as problematic theories in “centralizing” the needs of privileged “allies” at the expense of oppressed minority groups of ever-increasing specificity (Stevi Jackson 2001)<sup>2</sup>. These changes redirected many feminist scholarships and activism, as surprisingly, activists adopted a new, “increasingly complex” approach called “intersection,” which combined many forms of identity theory<sup>3</sup>. This change was so rapid and profound that by the early 2000s, many scientific articles had emerged emphasizing the need for materialist and radical approaches to feminist theory (Helen Pluckrose et al., 2020). Among the main texts of feminism are Simone de Beauvoir’s book “The Second Sex” (1949)<sup>4</sup>, an ‘innovative book’ that emphasized that women were created based on cultural notions of inferiority to men, and Betty Friedan’s “The Feminine Mystique” (1963)<sup>5</sup> stated that women were done with housework and motherhood. Kate Millet’s “Sexual Politics” (1978) cited familiar issues. All these texts correspond to radical feminism, where femininity is culturally constructed and loaded by men (in top-down power dynamics) and advocates the revolutionary overthrow of patriarchy (James Lindsay et al., 2020). Besides that, Judith Lorber’s essay “Shifting Paradigms and Challenging Categories” (2006) portrays how Marxist feminism saw women as a class<sup>6</sup>. Looking at this issue, in the early 1970s and 1980s, against the backdrop of eliminating workplace inequality, Marxist feminists “worked hard” to show that the exploitation of housewives is an integral part of the capitalist economy. The ‘reform’ of the Soviet Union in Central Asia, especially Uzbekistan, can prove this (Marxism-Leninism)<sup>7</sup>. According to Lorber’s essay, this feminist perspective presents ‘metanarratives’ about men, women, and society based on a simple oppressive male/female duality (Gallas, 2010)<sup>8</sup>. Perhaps, from a postmodern point of view, “these changes are important” because the individual positions and “women’s” positions that connect them differ greatly in time and space. Therefore, in the early 2000s, the predominant view of feminism was that talking about “women” and “men” was quite inconsistent (Helen Pluckrose et al., 2020). Overall, you have several perspectives that emphasize the traces of a conceptual shift from feminism to gender studies. Throughout the period of postmodernism applied, the unification of

<sup>2</sup> Stevi Jackson, 2001, “Why a Materialist Feminism Is (Still) Possible—and Necessary,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 24, no.3–4.

<sup>3</sup> Helen Pluckrose et al., 2020, *Cynical Theories*, Book, pp. 139-147., USA, <https://lcn.loc.gov/2019054122>

<sup>4</sup> *The Second Sex* - Wikipedia

<sup>5</sup> *The Feminine Mystique* | Betty Friedan, Kirsten Fermaglich, Lisa Fine | W. W. Norton & Company ([www.norton.com](http://www.norton.com))

<sup>6</sup> Judith Lorber, 2006, ‘Shifting Paradigms and Challenging Categories’ *Shifting Paradigms and Challenging Categories* on JSTOR volume 53, No.4, p.462.

<sup>7</sup> *Marxism-Leninism* - Wikipedia

<sup>8</sup> Alexander Gallas, 2010, *Dichotomy, Dualism, Duality: An investigation into Marxist conceptualizations of structure and agency*, Academia.edu p.86.

various minority status groups under the single flag of oppression was regarded as the only "right" way to practice feminism. Feminism, on the other hand, has been superseded by gender studies under queer theory and has embraced cross-reactivity as a kind of grand unified theory of social power and social injustice (Cynical Theories, 2020). When it comes to Central Asia, after the post-colonial, democracies of the region's countries, the notion of civil society, along with human rights rhetoric, is much more ambiguous. That is, feminist approaches in the region have done little work. However, gender equality was preserved in the constitutions with the independence of the Central Asian Republics. But they accepted the consent of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Declaration, and the Platform for Action (1990-2000). Thus, feminism is not openly prevalent in the region. Gender studies, on the other hand, have become more visible in recent years (UNDP, UN Women, USAID, Human rights watch, etc.).

### Theories and Gender equality

Feminism raised terms called "men and masculinity" while fighting to eliminate oppression. Almost all feminist theorists highlighted this term to examine patriarchy matters in society. While analyzing the role of women in leadership positions and their spatiality in this article, we believe that some scientific support is needed for views on the term "men and masculinity". Feminists and gender study theorists and researchers claim that there are "need-to-solve" problems with this terminology when women are unable to take leadership positions. So, the study of men and masculinity often relies comprehensively on the concept of hegemonic masculinity<sup>9</sup>. Because hegemonic masculinity is aggressive and competitive masculinity that maintains a man's dominance over women and is different from the hegemonic (dominant and powerful) discourse about what it means to be "genuine" (Cynical Theories, 2020). "Men and masculinity scholars" are primarily male, but they study masculinity within the framework of feminists (James Lindsay, 2020). The subject of women's leadership positions in Central Asia is no different from the challenges the world community faced. We had female leaders in history, and we have them in our time, but the scale of gender matters has become more apparent – prompting speculation about the need to study and find solutions to the problem. It was at a time when feminists denounced patriarchy that the issue also showed its grandeur. In one study of women in Central Asia, *Aculai et al.*, (2009) stated the high proportion of women owning property in the CIS (including Uzbekistan)<sup>10</sup>. *Mujahed and Atan* (2017) raised the issue of how women face limits in getting administrative positions in Palestine. The authors stressed the barriers to women's gaining administrative positions. Cultural attitudes, gender stereotypes, work, family conflicts, and national traditions formed by Islamic teachings are highlighted as barriers. Also, in Central Asia, specifically in Uzbekistan, those mentioned barriers sound familiar as some of the limitations to women's advancement. But in Uzbekistan, social stereotypes can stand out greater than cultural and/or religious prejudice. A related study belongs to *Alice H. Eagly, et al.*, (2003); *the author* emphasized that "while

<sup>9</sup> Note: It has been developed by Australian gender theorist Raywin Connell. See at [http://www.raewynconnell.net/p/masculinities\\_20.html](http://www.raewynconnell.net/p/masculinities_20.html)

<sup>10</sup> *Aculai, E., A. Bulgac, V. Gryga, O. Krasovksa, and O. Linchevskaya* (2009) "Researching the Gender Aspect in Business Development (the Case of Moldova, Ukraine, and Belarus)." *Lex ET Scientia International Journal* 16(1).

women have some advantages in a typical leadership style, they suffer some shortcomings from a prejudiced assessment of leadership abilities, especially in the context of male organizations". Nevertheless, more and more women are being promoted to leadership positions at all levels, including elite leadership positions. So, we can see that women are more likely than men to demonstrate leadership in an effective style in today's situation<sup>11</sup>. So, categories will be needed in the spatial study of the topic of women's leadership. These include the categories of family, work, society, and regional tradition, as well as religious views. However, the fact that women also have child-raising responsibilities (Guarcello et al. 2005)<sup>12</sup> may not allow them to fully function as leaders. Although some feminists have argued that fathers and mothers are equally responsible for the upbringing of children (McCarthy, 2006)<sup>13</sup>, in terms of national customs and values, the work of raising children is more important than the leadership of women. However, this high status has been considered a work (Hamza Yusuf et al., 2003)<sup>14</sup>.

### Review of a Research

Although Uzbekistan, as a young state, has boarded on extensive reforms to build a free civil society (after 1992), significant results in gender equality have been great during the "New" Uzbekistan (since 2017). The number of women leaders is growing in politics, education, economics, and business fields. However, access to credit is one of the factors that may hinder the establishment and growth of women's businesses (Welter and Smallbone 2010)<sup>15</sup>, which is a problem in Uzbekistan too. This is because women are more prone to risk than men and may contribute to gender disparities in business-related borrowing (Sattar 2012)<sup>16</sup>. A spatial analysis of "the prevalence of gender norms in education and economic growth" in the new Uzbekistan "at the national level" (Rani and Bonu, 2009)<sup>17</sup> is included in this topic. This is because gender studies and geography research in an integrated way are not enough (or do not exist). The spatiality of gender relations in the Central Asian region was explored by Stefan Shutte (2014) under the theme of how the women's agencies contribute to household life (women in Afghan urban areas)<sup>18</sup>. But it also did not mention the position of women in leadership. Jiekuan Zhang et al. (2020) examined the relationship between tourism and gender equality

<sup>11</sup> Alice H.Eagly, and Linda L.Carli, 2003, "The female leadership advantage: An evaluation of the evidence" Elsevier, *Leadership Quarterly*, volume 14, issue 6, pp., 807-834., <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2003.09.004>

<sup>12</sup> Lorenzo Guarcello, Fabrizia Mealli, and Furio Camillo Rosati, (2010), "Household Vulnerability and Child Labor: The Effect of Shocks, Credit Rationing and Insurance" January edition, *Journal of Population Economics* 23(1): pp. 169-198 DOI:10.2139/ssrn.453900 Source-Re-Pec.

<sup>13</sup> McCarthy, Cormac (2006), *The Road*, New York: Vintage. [Google Scholar]

<sup>14</sup> Hamza Yusuf Hanson, John Taylor Gatto, Nabila Hanson and Dorothy Sayers (2003) *Educating Your Child in Modern Times: How to Raise an Intelligent, Sovereign & Ethical Human Being* Paperback.

<sup>15</sup> Friederike Welter, David Smallbone (2010) *Institutional Perspectives on Entrepreneurial Behavior in Challenging Environments.*, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-627X.2010.00317>

<sup>16</sup> Sattar, Sarosh (2012) *Addressing the Gender Gap in Europe and Central Asia*. Europe and Central Asia knowledge brief; issue no. 54. World Bank, Washington, DC. © World Bank., <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/17102> License: CC BY 3.0 IGO."

<sup>17</sup> Manju Rani, Sekhar Bonu (2008) *Attitudes Toward Wife Beating: A Cross-Country Study in Asia.*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260508322182>

<sup>18</sup> Stefan Schutte (2014) "Living with patriarchy and poverty: women's agency and the spatialities of gender relations in Afghanistan" October 2014 *Gender Place and Culture A Journal of Feminist Geography* 21(9) DOI:10.1080/0966369X.2013.832661

in CIS countries (including Uzbekistan)<sup>19</sup>. In our study on the spatiality of women's leadership, certainly, we rely on this source in terms of the importance of these categories. This is because gender equality in the economy, education, and employment sectors can vary significantly. The examination of spatiality also includes medicine. On this topic, *Kotsenas Amy (2017)* studied gender inequality in leadership positions in this field of medicine by comparing the number of women entering the medical field with the number of women working in leading roles there<sup>20</sup>. However, in the case of New Uzbekistan, there is no analysis regarding the spatiality of women's leadership positions in the medical sector. *Derks, Ellemers, et al., (2012)* focused on research on women in leadership positions. According to the authors, as a group, women may adopt different leadership styles than men. Women are also more likely to develop skills such as competitiveness and toughness<sup>21</sup>. In addition, (according to the authors) there are issues in this regard that can affect the career opportunities of women as individuals and/or groups. *Buvinić et al. (2013)* focused on the fact that women face more restrictions than those who move to leadership positions. Therefore, models and scientific development are needed to provide a clear starting point for developing strategies to enhance the effectiveness of women in leadership positions. We believe that the spatiality of the position of women in the leadership position of our topic will also help resolve this problem.

## HISTORICAL APPROACH

### “Female leadership is in our blood”

Respect for women has long been respected in Uzbekistan. Even female leaders have stood out in history. One of them is a brave woman army general named Tamaris. She later ruled the country after her husband's death (Herodotus, *The Histories*, Massagets)<sup>22</sup>. Timur and the Timurid princes ruled Central Asia, Northern Afghanistan, partly Iran, and Iraq from the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century to the first quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Like princes, princesses of the Timurid dynasty also produced talented politicians, motivational speakers, mature scholars, and sensitive poets<sup>23</sup>. For instance, the wife of the great emperor Amir Temur (1336-1405) – Sarai Mulk (1341-1408), King Hussain Baykaro's (1438-1506) wife – Khadija (1451-1511), wife of Shah Jahan (1592— 1666) - Mumtaz Mahal (1594— 1631), daughter of Aurangzeb Alamgir (1618 1707) - Zebunnisa (1639-1702), etc.<sup>24</sup> In Soviet Uzbekistan (1980-1990) there were women leaders. For example, women have been appointed district governors in Andijan and Samarkand provinces. But one woman has been appointed as Khorezm

<sup>19</sup> Jiekuan Zhang et al., (2020) *Tourism and gender equality: An Asian perspective* <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2020.103067> *Annals of Tourism Research* Volume 85, November 2020, 103067

<sup>20</sup> Amy L. Kotsenas 2017, “Women in Leadership: Why So Few and What to Do About It” *Journal of the American College of Radiology*, Volume 14, Issue 4, April 2017, Pages 450.

<sup>21</sup> Naomi Ellemers, Floor Rink, Belle Derks, Michelle K. Ryan (2012) *Women in high places: When and why promoting women into top positions can harm them individually or as a group (and how to prevent this)* *Journal name: Research in Organizational Behavior*, Elsevier, Volume 32, Pages 163-187. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.riob.2012.10.003>

<sup>22</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Histories\\_\(Herodotus\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Histories_(Herodotus))

<sup>23</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timurid\\_Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timurid_Empire)

<sup>24</sup> Bartold, Vasily (2020). *Turks. 12 Lectures on the History of the Turks of Central Asia*. Moscow: Yurayt Publishing house. p. 181.

Province's mayor. She was the only woman in the USSR to rule the province at the time (1988)<sup>25</sup>. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, it immediately came into conflict with the elements of Soviet heritage that ensured women's equality. The post-independence government of Uzbekistan under the first President continued to promote women's equality. Uzbekistan has enshrined gender equality in its constitution and other laws and has taken administrative measures to enhance the status of women. According to the decree, the chairwoman of the Republican Women's Committee is the Deputy Prime Minister<sup>26</sup>, and the regional representatives of the committee at the regional, district and city levels serve as deputy governors. In turn, the activities of women leaders in the religious domain are officially legalized in Uzbekistan. Such women are called "otin" because this position has existed since Islam came to the region<sup>27</sup>. In the selection of such women, attention is drawn to the fact that they have a reputation among their community and are advanced in both secular and religious sciences.

## NEW UZBEKISTAN AND GENDER EQUALITY

### The spatiality of gender (equality)

The population of Uzbekistan is over 35 million people. According to the State Statistics Committee, 17,5 million of them are men and 17,4 million are women<sup>28</sup>. The territory of Uzbekistan includes 12 regions, the Republic of Karakalpakstan and the city of Tashkent (figure 2), and they are divided into districts and cities subordinate to the region (figure 1).

Figure 1. Administrative division

Province▲	ISO 3166-2	Capital	Area (km <sup>2</sup> )	Population	Density (pers/km <sup>2</sup> )
Andijon	UZ-AN	Andijon	4 200	3 127 683	744,7
Buxoro	UZ-BU	Buxoro	39 400	1 923 934	48,8
Farg'ona	UZ-FA	Farg'ona	6 800	3 752 034	551,8
Jizzakh	UZ-JI	Jizzax	20 500	1 382 060	67,4
Namangan	UZ-NG	Namangan	7 900	2 810 843	355,8
Navoiy	UZ-NW	Navoiy	110 800	997 100	9,0
Qaraqalpaqstan Respublikasi	UZ-QR	Nukus	160 000	1 898 351	11,9
Qashqadaryo	UZ-QA	Qarshi	28 400	3 280 418	115,5
Samarqand	UZ-SA	Samarqand	16 400	3 877 355	236,4
Sirdaryo	UZ-SI	Guliston	5 100	846 260	165,9
Surxondaryo	UZ-SU	Termiz	20 800	2 629 135	126,4
Toshkent	UZ-TO	Toshkent	15 300	2 941 908	192,3
Toshkent City	-	-	327	2 571 668	7 864,4
Xorazm	UZ-XO	Urganch	6 300	1 866 493	296,3
<b>Total</b>			<b>442 227</b>	<b>33 905 242</b>	<b>76,7</b>

Source: Geo-ref-net, 2022 (photo credit)

Uzbekistan is one of the world's "youngest" countries in terms of aging. In Uzbekistan, the proportion of men and women of basic marriageable age is almost equal. This equality continues in the reproductive age groups of women.

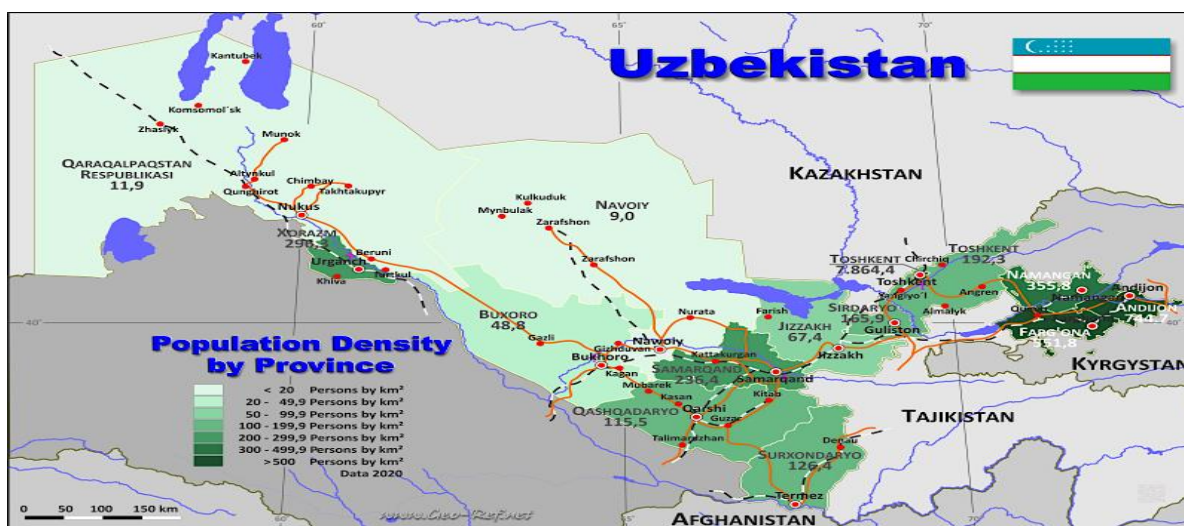
<sup>25</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uzbek\\_Soviet\\_Socialist\\_Republic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uzbek_Soviet_Socialist_Republic)

<sup>26</sup> <https://lex.uz/ru/docs/-5884143>

<sup>27</sup> <http://old.muslim.uz/index.php/rukn/maktub>

<sup>28</sup> <https://stat.uz/uz/59-foydali-ma-lumotlar/5859-o-zbekiston-aholisi-3>

Figure 2. Map of Uzbekistan: Population density by Province - 2020



Source: Geo-ref-net, 2020 (photo credit)

Table 1. Statistical Data - Population density according to the administrative structure, 2022

Thus, Uzbekistan has been pursuing a policy of gender equality since its independence. However, until 2017, this policy did not show some practical high results, but it shows significant changes in the period of "New" Uzbekistan. Although feminist views are not allowed into the region, there are reforms around women's rights. As for the direct promotion of women to leadership positions, the positivity is high during this period. According to the Women's Power Index 2020, women are currently running governments in 21 of the 193 UN Member Countries. The rating also reflects the level of women's ministerial positions in Uzbekistan. In 2020, the figure was 8 percent. (158<sup>th</sup> place). The level of women's representation in the Uzbek parliament is 29% (61<sup>st</sup> place). The United Nations estimates that the "required mass" of women in decision-making should be 30%<sup>29</sup>. The representation of women at this level was also established by the 1995 Beijing Action Platform (UNDP). The level of women's involvement in the country's social and political life can also be assessed by the number of registered female candidates in the elections to the lower and upper chambers of parliament. In Uzbekistan, the figure is 41% (14<sup>th</sup> rank)<sup>30</sup>.

Table 1. Fields where a woman is a leader (2022)

Fields where woman is leader (first person)	
Sector name	Exactly name of the field
	Chairwoman of the Board of the "Oliy Majlis" – parliament of Uzbekistan
	Counsellor to the President of the Republic

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/ga/about/background.shtml>

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.cfr.org/article/womens-power-index#chapter-title-0-2>

Political-governmental	Chairwoman of the Women's Committee of Uzbekistan
	Minister of Preschool Education
Social and sports sector	Director of "Family Research" Center
	Head of Board of Directors of the "Healthy Generation" Foundation
Finance and business	Chief Executive Officer of "Aloka" Bank
	Director of the Tashkent International Arbitration Center
	Chairwoman of the Association of Entrepreneur Women of Uzbekistan
Art and culture	Director of the State Museum of Art of Uzbekistan
	Director of the State Museum of History of Uzbekistan
Education and science	Director of the Institute of Polymer Chemistry and Physics of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan.
	Chairwoman of "Pharmaceutics" JSC
	Rector of the Tashkent State Institute of Oriental Studies

Source: "Yuksalish" Nationwide Center – 2022

Table made by the researcher of the article

According to official Uzbek sources, from 2014 to 2018, the share of women in leadership positions in Uzbekistan was less than 1%. After 2020, the share of women in leadership positions will increase to 7% (Single portal of interactive services, 2021)<sup>31</sup>. However, there is no clear data in which fields this 7% exact figure is given (Table 1). We consider the distribution of working women in the sectors below. However, the lack of statistical analysis of the data is one of the points that need to be addressed within the topic.

Under current law (Lex-uz online, 2022)<sup>32</sup>, women and men are treated equally in Uzbekistan. Currently, there is one woman deputy prime minister, one minister, and three deputy ministers in Uzbekistan (Media analytic report news-2021). But in practice, women are more likely to hold leadership positions in the social sphere. Today, there are 1,405 women leaders in the country (Governmental analytical reports, 2021)<sup>33</sup>. 9,309 neighborhood chairpersons and women deputy chairpersons have been promoted to "local women's activists" (local governments 'press service, 2021). There are also women leaders in the business and entrepreneurship sectors who are taking the initiative (Open data portal, 2021)<sup>34</sup>. For instance, "there are 36,295 small businesses and micro-firms under the leadership of women leaders" (Davr web press)<sup>35</sup>. In the political sphere, in 2020-2022, out of 170 districts and 25 mayors in Uzbekistan, only 6 women will hold a leadership position (Official report, media release)<sup>36</sup>. During current policy (since 2017), female district governors appeared. The first female governor was appointed in Boyovut district of Syrdarya province (figure 3, red mark). Later, a woman was appointed governor of Alat district in Bukhara province, Bostan district in Andijan province, Karshi district in Kashkadarya province, Turakurgan district in Namangan province, and Kattakurgan district in the Samarkand province (figure 3). However, in the history of independent

<sup>31</sup> <http://old.my.gov.uz/uz/authority/143> Note: Former chairwoman reported to the media.

<sup>32</sup> <https://lex.uz/uz/docs/-5884084>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.kun.uz>

<sup>34</sup> <https://data.egov.uz/eng>

<sup>35</sup> <https://davr24.uz/archives/7926>

<sup>36</sup> <https://kun.uz/uz/news/2022>

Uzbekistan, no women governor, ambassador, or head of law enforcement has been appointed. The number of women leaders in NGOs is high, but overall, they are low. (Family and Women's Committee, Official Written Information, 2022)<sup>37</sup>.

## POLITICS AND REFORMS ON GENDER EQUALITY

Until 2017, gender equality was one of the "prohibited topics" in Uzbekistan (Telegraph web press), the subject has been blacklisted for many years. Recently it has been released. On the eve of International Women's Day (March 8), a special commission on gender equality was established (2019). Two important laws have entered into force, the Guarantee of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men and the Protection of Women from Oppression and Violence (Lex-uz). Structural and institutional changes are underway, and legislation is improving ("Yuksalish" Nationwide action Press service, 2021). For the first time in the history of Uzbekistan, a woman leader has been appointed Chairman of the Senate "Oliy Majlis". This is the second most senior leader in the country. To increase women's representation in parliament, a 30 percent quota has been set for female candidates for the Legislative Chamber. However, in Uzbekistan, quotas for women were legalized at 30% of the total number of candidates nominated by political parties (1995). Also, for the first time in the history of Uzbekistan, a woman was able to run for the presidency of the Republic of Uzbekistan (2021). The "Women's Notebook" system was introduced (2020). The Women's Register system registers 900,000 women in need of socio-economic, medical, legal, and psychological assistance. There are currently more than 630,000 registered women in the Women's Book, 200,000 of whom are unemployed. Despite these measures, there are still cases of crime among women or domestic violence and harassment that women face. Besides, the State Award for Gender Equality was announced in the fields (2021). Several organizations have already won the first award (Media Press releases).

## THE SPATIALITY OF WOMEN'S POSITIONS AT WORK

*Figure 3. Female governors appointed locations*



*Made by the author of the article, through Google map*

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.gazeta.uz/news/2022>

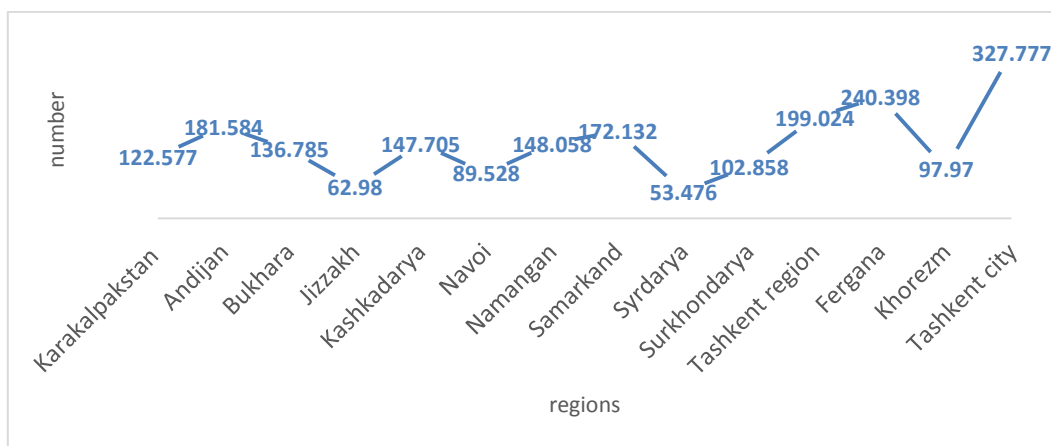
In general, according to official sources and officials, the number of women leaders in Uzbekistan is 26.6%. The highest percentage of women leaders is in Karakalpakstan (33.8%) and the lowest in Jizzakh (17%). Female members of parliament: deputies and senators exist at 29% (the norm is at least 30%). In other words, 48 women in the Legislative Chamber - 33%; In the Senate, 23 women are working 23.7% (Family and Women's Committee, Official Written Information, 2022)<sup>38</sup>.

Figure 4. Map of Uzbekistan



Source: Google.

Figure 5: Number of women working in the formal sectors in the regions (2021)



Source: Unified National Labor System of Uzbekistan (2022)

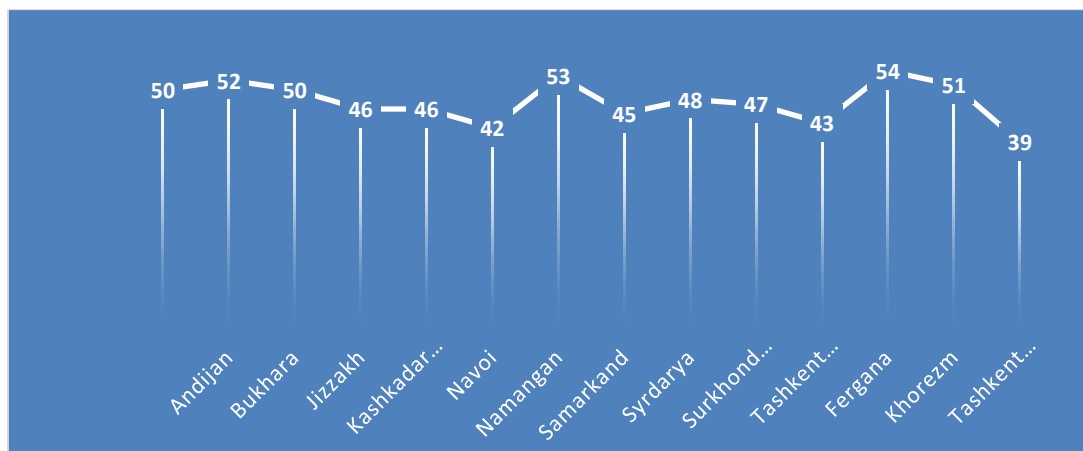
Made by the researcher of the article according to the official report text

Figure 5 shows that Tashkent (the capital city) has the highest number of women on the official state list. The lowest rates are in Syrdarya and Jizzakh provinces. The rest of the provinces show almost no significant differences. (See map for a clear view of the province, Figure 4). In terms of percentages, the opposite is true (see figure 6). In other words, Fergana, Namangan, and Khorezm provinces have

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.gazeta.uz/news/2022>

the highest percentages, but Tashkent (capital city) has the lowest, and others have almost similar percentages. For a more accurate analysis of the distribution of women's work (or gender equality in workplaces), a comparison of the figures (figure 1) shows that in Fergana and Andijan provinces, gender equality in the workplace is (well) balanced. However, a somewhat negative distribution can be seen in the capital city. But this does not mean a clear conclusion. Factors and data need to be analyzed in more depth and close.

Figure 6. Formal sectors in the regions, share of women by percent (2021)



Source: Unified National Labor System of Uzbekistan (2022)

Made by the researcher of the article according to the official report text

According to officials, the work on "decent employment of women" is under constant control. Gender equality is considered (Media press release). As evidenced by Table 2, the proportion of working women in both the formal and retirement age is high. Men have a slight advantage in working while studying. However, in a statement, the President of the Republic stressed that "the most difficult issues" reached with women and/or gender equality (Institute for strategic and regional studies under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan)<sup>39</sup>. Hence, there is an incompatibility in the execution of reforms with such official data.

Table 2: Total formal workers in Uzbekistan 2021

Formal workers		
Categories	Number	Percentage
<b>Total workers until retire age</b>	<b>4473763</b>	<b>100</b>
Men	2390911	44
Women	2082852	46
<b>Total workers with retired status</b>	<b>327781</b>	<b>100</b>

<sup>39</sup> <http://isrs.uz/en/ozbekiston>

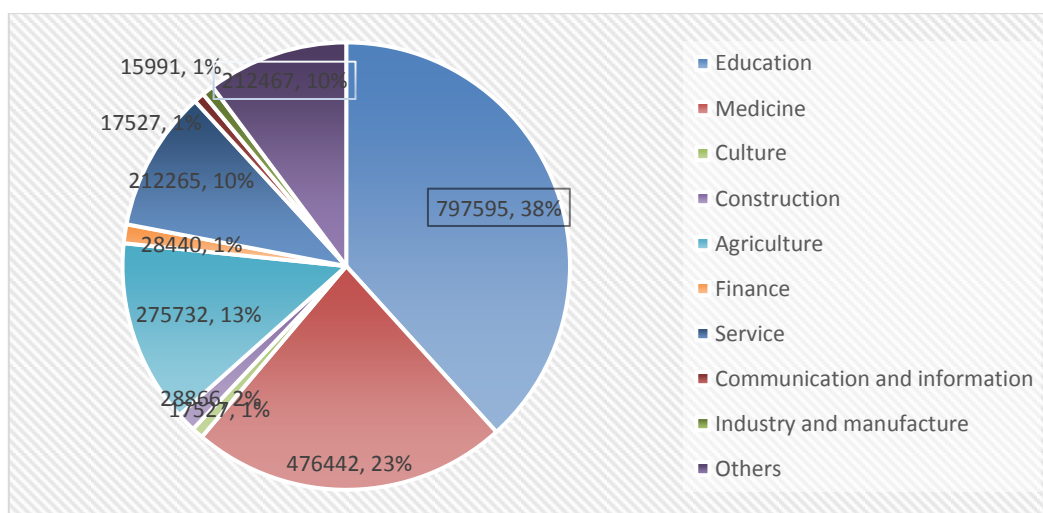
Men	123887	37.8
Women	203894	62.2
<b>Total part-time workers while study</b>	<b>103347</b>	<b>100</b>
Men	57958	56.1
Women	45389	43.9

*Source: Unified National Labor System of Uzbekistan, 2021*

*Made by the researcher of the article according to the official report text*

According to the National Statistics Committee of Uzbekistan, the share of women in the sectors is high in education (38%). The share of women in preschool education, secondary schools, and higher and secondary special education is also high worldwide. The figure shows that the lowest share of women is in the finance (1%) and information and communication (1%) sectors. It was not possible to find accurate data on the number of female leaders in the sectors. National statistical analysis does not provide spatial data for certain categories (figure 7).

Figure 7: Sectors where women work

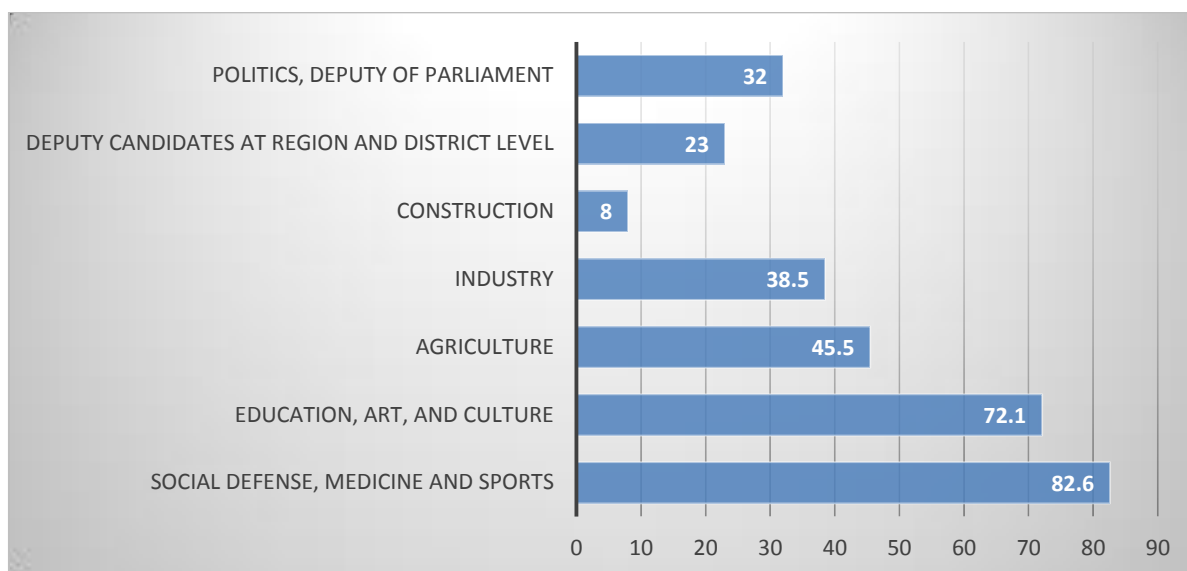


*Source: National Statistics Committee website*

*Made by the researcher of the article according to the official report text*

According to official reports, 82.6% in Uzbekistan in the field of health, social protection, and sports, 72.1% in science, education, arts and culture, agriculture 45.5 percent, 38.5 percent in industry, and 8 percent in construction are women (figure 8). There are a total of 17 million women in the country, and even if the number of women with children and disabled persons is deducted, only 1,405 out of those 1 million women hold leadership positions. Besides, the share of women among the representative bodies and members of parliament is 32%. Thus, the analysis of the data on gender equality, in particular the data on the adequacy of women's leadership positions in the sectors, is not satisfactory. According to the analysis, in order to increase the participation of women in society, it is necessary to establish cooperation with various organizations, and political parties, train women socially active, improve their skills, and systematically recommend them for various leadership positions.

Figure 8. Sectors where women work in percentage (2021)



*Source: Media release, official report during the interview. [www.kun.uz](http://www.kun.uz)*

*Made by the researcher of the article according to the official report text*

However, according to some official data, each region of the country has been studied, and a reserve of personnel (6,000 positions) for management positions has been formed (Academy of State and Social Construction under the President of Uzbekistan, 2022)<sup>40</sup>.

## SURVEY AND HYPOTHESES

### Survey

Survey question: “What prevents Uzbek women from advancing in their careers?”

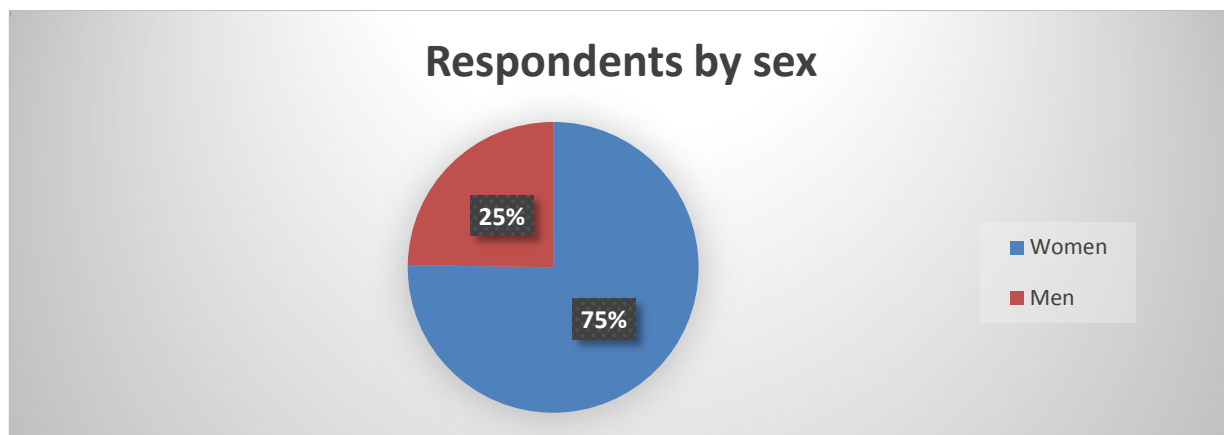
Uzbek women face certain difficulties in finding employment, mainly because of their household chores and low role in society. I found this in an online survey<sup>41</sup> conducted by the Civil Service Development Agency<sup>42</sup> to study gender equality issues and their spatiality. It was attended by 808 respondents. 74.5% of the participants are women and 25.5% are men (figure 9), of which 84.7% work in the public sector and 15.3% in the private sector (figure 10).

<sup>40</sup> [https://dba.uz/admission?lang\\_is=set&lang\\_data=English](https://dba.uz/admission?lang_is=set&lang_data=English)

<sup>41</sup> It should be noted that the survey was presented in the form of written analytical information in the general context online. As the author, numbers, and data were selected from this informational text. The source of the survey is placed in the footnote as a link.

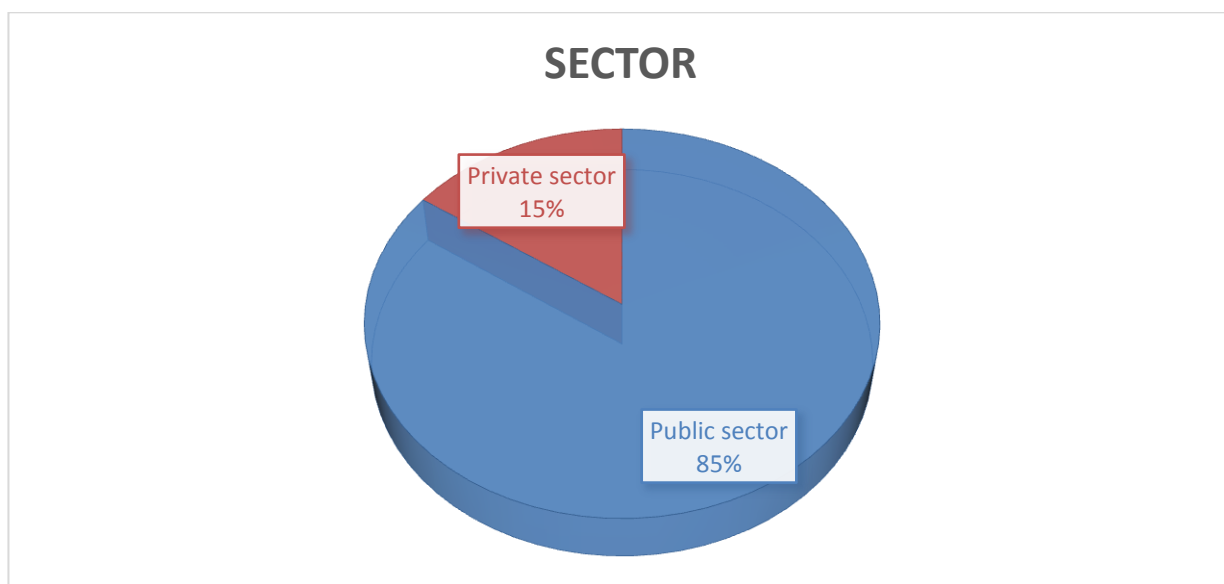
<sup>42</sup> <https://argos.uz/en/services>

Figure 9. Survey participants by gender



*Made by the author of this study by the data*

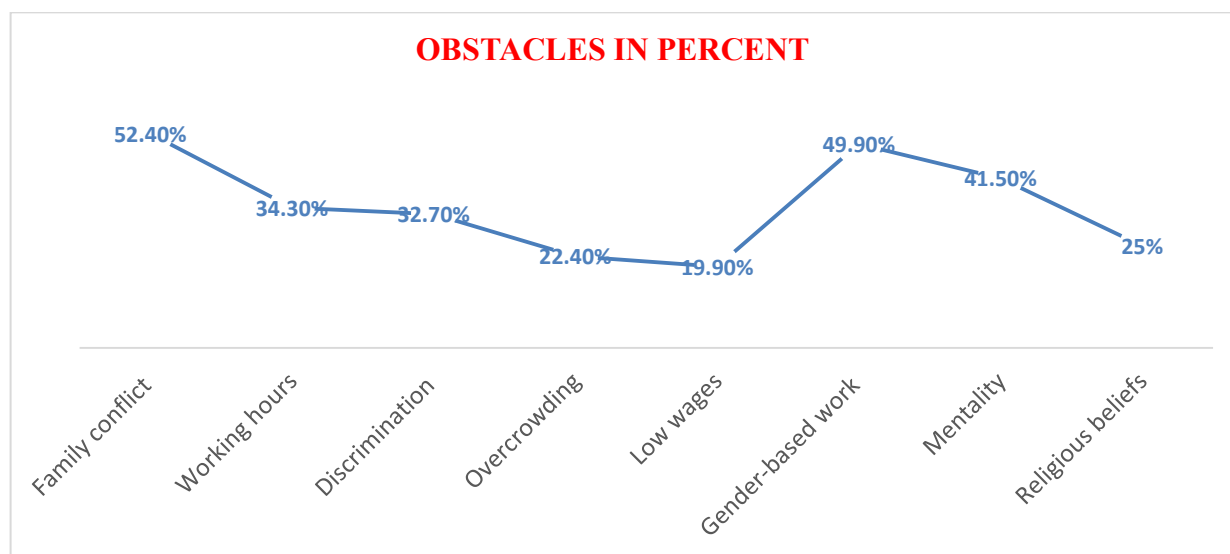
Figure 10. Respondents' working sector type



*Made by the author of this study by the data*

According to the survey, several obstacles were cited (figure 11). 52.4 percent of respondents replied that marital status was the reason why women did not enter the civil service. For example, stuck with child-caring, or spouses did not allow to work. In other word, they have family conflict. 34.3 percent of participants said they were not satisfied with their working hours, while 32.7 percent said they had experienced gender discrimination in advancement toward a leadership position. At the same time, the options cited as overcrowding and low wages were 22.4 percent and 19.9 percent, respectively. Also, 49.9 percent of respondents among the problems of ensuring gender equality in the civil service divided occupations and positions into positions where it is considered appropriate to work for "men" and "women". 41.5 percent of respondents cited "national mentality" and 25 percent cited "religious beliefs".

Figure 11. Obstacles to women's activeness



*Made by the author of this study by the data*

### Hypotheses from research

Based on the above survey analysis and our data analysis, our research hypotheses are as follows. While the proportion of women in the workplace is almost equal, there are concepts that reflect a negative attitude towards women in administration. In other words, while Uzbekistan supports women's (political) leadership, this is expected to be slow in practice.

**The first hypothesis** is that “there is a negative attitude toward women in leadership positions”. Assumptions from the survey analysis suggest that national culture and/or mentality can be assumed to be one of the main factors preventing women from advancing to the top of the career hierarchy. It can be said that women do not have support in organizational work. Because there is still a perception that women play a key role in the household instead of in higher positions.

**The second hypothesis** is that women are being prevented from becoming active in society under the pretext of religious beliefs.

**The third hypothesis** is that there is a negative and significant link between national culture and the attitude of people towards women in leading administrative positions.

**The last hypothesis** is that there are gender stereotypes about women. Such stereotypes increase the negative attitude of women towards leading positions.

### CONCLUSION

#### Study findings

The protection of women's rights and gender equality policy is being actively pursued in New Uzbekistan. But the practicality of the reforms is not yet complete.

The numbers are not transparent for data analysis.

Due to the change in the country's policy, a special database of government organizations working with women has not yet been formed.

Although gender equality reflects a positive attitude towards employment in the sectors, the election of women to leadership positions still faces certain obstacles.

### Suggestions

It is clear that in New Uzbekistan, the laws on equal rights and opportunities for men and women need to be fully implemented on the ground. We believe that it is important to continue the policy of expanding the recommendation of women for elected and appointed positions in all spheres and levels of social and public life. Because discrimination against women is caused by gender stereotypes in society. We believe that women's participation in decision-making processes at all levels is important. Our study and analysis show that while there have been government reforms in the nomination of women for leadership positions, the inclusion of women in leadership positions at all levels has not been enough yet. So, we believe that public control, along with law enforcement agencies, is important in guaranteeing that the law works in this regard. Topics such as the analysis of differences in women's wages and the analysis of the situation of women in the informal labor market are also worthy of further study in the future.

### Acknowledgment

*I thank my dear Professor Dr. Ahn Young-Jin (South Korea, Chonnam National University, Graduate School of Social Sciences) as my supervisor and for providing insight that greatly assisted the study. Professor Dr. Ahn was never tired of sharing his pearls of wisdom with me. And his comment and feedback greatly improved the manuscript. Any errors in the study are my own and I wish those shortcomings should not tarnish the reputation of my professor.*

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