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THE CURRENT STATE AND DYNAMICS OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE STATE CIVIL SERVICE

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Abstract. This article analyses the current state of women's participation in the state civil service in Uzbekistan, recent trends in their representation, the regulatory and legal framework, institutional mechanisms, and organisational factors influencing managerial career development. The study employs content analysis, comparative analysis, institutional analysis, and dynamic analysis based on official regulatory and legal documents, publicly available information from government bodies, reports of international organisations, and relevant scholarly literature.

The findings indicate that gender equality policy in Uzbekistan is developing in parallel with the modernisation of the state civil service. In particular, Uzbekistan rose by 92 positions to 36th place in the Inter-Parliamentary Union's "Women in Parliament" ranking, advanced from 103rd to 52nd place in the "Gender Equality and Governance" index, and improved by 43 positions to rank 48th in the World Bank's Women, Business and the Law report. The share of women in leadership positions was 27% in 2017 and reached 33% by 2023. According to information from the Senate of the Oliy Majlis, women's participation in public administration reached 35% in 2024, while their share in entrepreneurship was 37% and in political parties 49%. Women currently account for 38% of the deputies of the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis, corresponding to 57 members; 27% of the members of the Senate, corresponding to 16 members; and 25% of deputies in local Councils¹².

Women also constitute 25% of the deputies of the Jokargi Kenes of the Republic of Karakalpakstan and of the regional and Tashkent City Councils of People's Deputies. Whereas women accounted for 2.9% of ministerial and minister-equivalent positions in 2018, this proportion has increased to 5.7%, reflecting a notable expansion in women's representation at senior levels of public administration³.

Keywords: state civil service, women's participation, gender equality, women leaders, National Talent Pool, managerial career, meritocracy, gender audit, inclusive civil service.

Аннотация. В статье анализируются современное состояние участия женщин в государственной гражданской службе Узбекистана, динамика их представительства в последние годы, нормативно-правовая база, институциональные механизмы, а также организационные факторы, влияющие на развитие управленческой карьеры. В исследовании применены методы контент-анализа, сравнительного, институционального и динамического анализа на основе официальных нормативно-правовых документов, общедоступной информации государственных органов, отчётов международных организаций и соответствующей научной литературы.

Результаты исследования показывают, что политика обеспечения гендерного равенства в Узбекистане развивается параллельно с модернизацией государственной гражданской службы. В частности, Узбекистан поднялся на 92 позиции и занял 36-е место в рейтинге Межпарламентского союза «Женщины в парламенте», переместился со 103-го на 52-е место в индексе «Гендерное равенство и государственное управление», а также улучшил свою позицию на 43 пункта, заняв 48-е место в докладе Всемирного банка Women, Business and the Law. Доля женщин на руководящих должностях

1 Address by President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev at the ceremony dedicated to International Women's Day, 6 March 2026. Official website of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan. <https://president.uz/oz/lists/view/9002>

2 Winners of the national stage of the "Woman of the Year" competition honoured, 27 December 2024. Official website of the Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan. <https://senat.uz/post/post-3069>

3 Increasing women's socio-political activity in the state civil service is an important task, 23 October 2023. Uzbekistan National News Agency. https://uza.uz/en/posts/davlat-fuqarolik-xizmatida-xotin-qizlarning-ijtimoiy-siyosiy-faolligini-oshirish-muhim-vazifa_531248

составляла 27% в 2017 году и достигла 33% к 2023 году. Согласно информации Сената Олий Мажлиса, в 2024 году доля женщин в государственном управлении достигла 35%, в предпринимательстве — 37%, а в политических партиях — 49%. В настоящее время женщины составляют 38% депутатов Законодательной палаты Олий Мажлиса, что соответствует 57 депутатам; 27% членов Сената, или 16 сенаторам; а также 25% депутатов местных Кенгашей⁴⁵.

Женщины также составляют 25% депутатов Жокаргы Кенеса Республики Каракалпакстан, областных и Ташкентского городского Кенгашей народных депутатов. Если в 2018 году доля женщин, занимавших должности министров и приравненные к ним должности, составляла 2,9%, то в настоящее время данный показатель увеличился до 5,7%, что отражает заметное расширение представительства женщин на высших уровнях государственного управления⁶.

Ключевые слова: государственная гражданская служба, участие женщин, гендерное равенство, женщины-руководители, Национальный кадровый резерв, управленческая карьера, меритократия, гендерный аудит, инклюзивная государственная служба.

INTRODUCTION

Within a relatively short period, Uzbekistan has established a national legislative framework aligned with international standards for supporting women and expanding their opportunities. More than 110 regulatory and legal acts have been adopted over the past eight years. In particular, three Laws of the Republic of Uzbekistan, two Presidential Decrees, two Presidential Resolutions, and seven Resolutions of the Cabinet of Ministers were adopted in 2023. Regulatory and legal activity continued to expand in 2024, when three Laws, one Presidential Decree, four Presidential Resolutions, and twelve Resolutions of the Cabinet of Ministers were adopted. In 2025, one Law, two Presidential Decrees, two Presidential Resolutions, and eight Resolutions of the Cabinet of Ministers were adopted⁷.

The relevance of the topic is determined by three principal factors. First, Uzbekistan is demonstrating positive quantitative dynamics in women's participation in public administration. The share of women in leadership positions was reported at 27% in 2017 and reached 33% by 2023, while, according to information from the Senate of the Oliy Majlis, women's share in public administration reached 35% in 2024. Second, the 2025 Comprehensive Programme of Measures states that, following the 2024 elections, women's representation reached 38% in the Legislative Chamber, nearly 27% in the Senate, and 32.5% in local Councils. Third, Presidential Decree No. PF-95 of 19 June 2025 established objectives to increase women's share in the state civil service to 40% by 2030, raise their share in the National Talent Pool to 40%, and provide targeted preparation and professional development opportunities for women aspiring to senior positions⁸⁹¹⁰¹¹.

The purpose of this article is to analyse the current state and dynamics of women's participation in the state civil service in Uzbekistan, assess the existing institutional and legal foundations and practical mechanisms, and develop research-based practical proposals aimed at further supporting women's managerial career development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The statement by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, at the 75th session of the United Nations General Assembly — “For us, gender equality policy has become a priority. The role of women in public administration is steadily increasing” — demonstrates that increasing women's socio-

4 Address by President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev at the ceremony dedicated to International Women's Day, 6 March 2026. Official website of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan. <https://president.uz/oz/lists/view/9002>

5 Winners of the national stage of the “Woman of the Year” competition honoured, 27 December 2024. Official website of the Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan. <https://senat.uz/post/post-3069>

6 Increasing women's socio-political activity in the state civil service is an important task, 23 October 2023. Uzbekistan National News Agency. https://uza.uz/en/posts/davlat-fuqarolik-xizmatida-xotin-qizlarning-ijtimoiy-siyosiy-faolligini-oshirish-muhim-vazifa_531248

7 Rights and Opportunities of Women in Uzbekistan: official handout prepared for Asia Women's Forum 2026 (Bukhara, 13–15 May 2026) / Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan; Committee for Family and Women of the Republic of Uzbekistan; Commission on Women, Family and Gender. Bukhara, 2026, pp. 5 and 8.

8 UZA, “Increasing women's socio-political activity in the state civil service is an important task,” 23 October 2023.

9 Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan, “Winners of the national stage of the ‘Woman of the Year’ competition honoured,” 27 December 2024.

10 Resolution No. SQ-102-V of the Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated 18 March 2025, Comprehensive Programme of Measures for Implementing the Strategy for Achieving Gender Equality by 2030 during 2025.

11 Decree No. PF-95 of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated 19 June 2025, “On Measures to Organise the State Civil Service Based on a New Model.”

political activity, expanding their participation in public administration, and promoting their advancement to leadership positions have acquired strategic importance in the country. The substance of this statement indicates that gender equality in Uzbekistan is viewed not only as an issue of social protection and the safeguarding of women's rights, but also as an important component of institutional reforms aimed at improving the effectiveness of public administration, strengthening inclusive decision-making, and ensuring equal opportunities in personnel policy¹².

Likewise, in her address at the Global Women's Forum in Dubai, Head of the Administration of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Saida Mirziyoyeva described women's rights as an integral part of the broader human rights system and stated that "human rights cannot be fully realised without ensuring women's rights." This approach makes it possible to assess women's participation in public administration, the state civil service, and decision-making processes not merely as a social support measure, but also as an important condition for the full realisation of human rights¹³.

The views of Tanzila Norboyeva, Chairperson of the Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan, on gender equality, women's rights, and women's participation in public administration provide an important practical and policy-oriented basis for analysing the current state and dynamics of women's representation in the state civil service. She notes that, in recent years, gender equality in Uzbekistan has been elevated to the level of state policy, while increasing women's participation in governance, ensuring a more balanced gender representation, and expanding educational opportunities have been identified as strategic objectives¹⁴.

Among international scholars, Rosabeth Moss Kanter's views on women's participation in organisational systems constitute an important theoretical foundation for analysing this topic. In *Men and Women of the Corporation*, Kanter argues that when women represent only a small minority within organisations, they may be perceived less as individual professional actors and more as representatives of a particular group, or "tokens." According to her theory of tokenism, when representatives of a group are few in number within an organisation, their performance may receive greater attention, individual mistakes may be more readily generalised, and stereotypical expectations may become more pronounced. From the perspective of the state civil service, this theory suggests that the appointment of women to individual leadership positions alone does not fully reflect systemic gender equality. A more important objective is to ensure women's stable, natural, and institutionally supported participation at all levels of the organisational hierarchy¹⁵.

Alice Eagly and Linda Carli explain women's leadership advancement through a broader framework than the traditional "glass ceiling" concept. In their article *Women and the Labyrinth of Leadership*, they argue that women may encounter not a single invisible barrier on the path to leadership, but rather a complex "labyrinth" consisting of multiple organisational and career-related stages. This approach is particularly relevant for analysing women's career trajectories in the state civil service, as it allows attention to be focused on the full sequence of professional development, promotion, and leadership opportunities¹⁶.

An analysis of regulatory and legal sources shows that Uzbekistan has established an important legal foundation for increasing women's participation in the state civil service. Law No. O'RQ-562 established guarantees of gender equality in public service, while Law No. O'RQ-788 further strengthened the state civil service system based on the principles of open competition, meritocracy, and professional competence.

Furthermore, the Strategy for Achieving Gender Equality by 2030, Decree No. PF-87, and Decree No. PF-95 define specific objectives related to preparing women for leadership positions, developing the School for Women Leaders, and increasing women's share in the National Talent Pool to 40%.

At the same time, the further development of transparent gender-disaggregated statistics on women's participation in competitive selection processes, their appointment from the talent pool to leadership positions, and their subsequent career progression would contribute to a more comprehensive assessment of achieved results. Therefore, an important task for the next stage is to further strengthen the practical implementation of the existing legal framework through improved monitoring mechanisms, measurable key performance indicators, and effective talent-pool management.

12 Address by President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev at the 75th session of the United Nations General Assembly, 23 September 2020. Official website of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan. <https://president.uz/oz/lists/view/3851>

13 Saida Mirziyoyeva: "Human rights cannot be fully realised without ensuring women's rights." Kun.uz, 17 February 2020.

14 Tanzila Norboyeva: "Gender equality has become an integral part of the priorities of New Uzbekistan." Yangi O'zbekiston, 2021.

15 Kanter, R. M. *Men and Women of the Corporation*. New York: Basic Books, 1977; Harvard Business School. *Celebrating The Men and Women of the Corporation 40 Years Later*. URL: <https://www.library.hbs.edu/working-knowledge/celebrating-the-men-and-women-of-the-corporation-40-years-later>

16 Eagly, A. H., and Carli, L. L. *Women and the Labyrinth of Leadership*. Harvard Business Review, 2007. URL: <https://hbr.org/2007/09/women-and-the-labyrinth-of-leadership>

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed an integrated research approach combining qualitative and quantitative data. The methodological framework was based on desk research, content analysis, regulatory and legal analysis, comparative analysis, and dynamic analysis. The empirical and analytical base of the research included regulatory and legal documents, publicly available information from government bodies, reports of international organisations, and relevant scholarly literature.

The study was conducted primarily on the basis of open and officially available data. At the same time, the further expansion of regularly published gender-disaggregated statistics on women's participation in the state civil service by position category, region, age group, length of service, and actual appointment would provide additional opportunities for more detailed empirical assessment. Accordingly, the conclusions of the study were formulated on the basis of the available official and publicly accessible sources.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The findings indicate that gender equality policy in Uzbekistan is developing in parallel with the modernisation of the state civil service. In particular, Uzbekistan rose by 92 positions to 36th place in the Inter-Parliamentary Union's "Women in Parliament" ranking, advanced from 103rd to 52nd place in the "Gender Equality and Governance" index, and improved by 43 positions to rank 48th in the World Bank's Women, Business and the Law report.

The share of women in leadership positions was 27% in 2017 and reached 33% by 2023, while women's participation in public administration increased to 35% in 2024. Women's share in political parties also reached 49%. At present, women account for 38% of the deputies of the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis, corresponding to 57 members; 27% of the members of the Senate, corresponding to 16 members; and 32.5% of deputies in local Councils. These indicators reflect the consistent expansion of women's representation in public administration and political decision-making processes in Uzbekistan¹⁷¹⁸ (Figure 1).

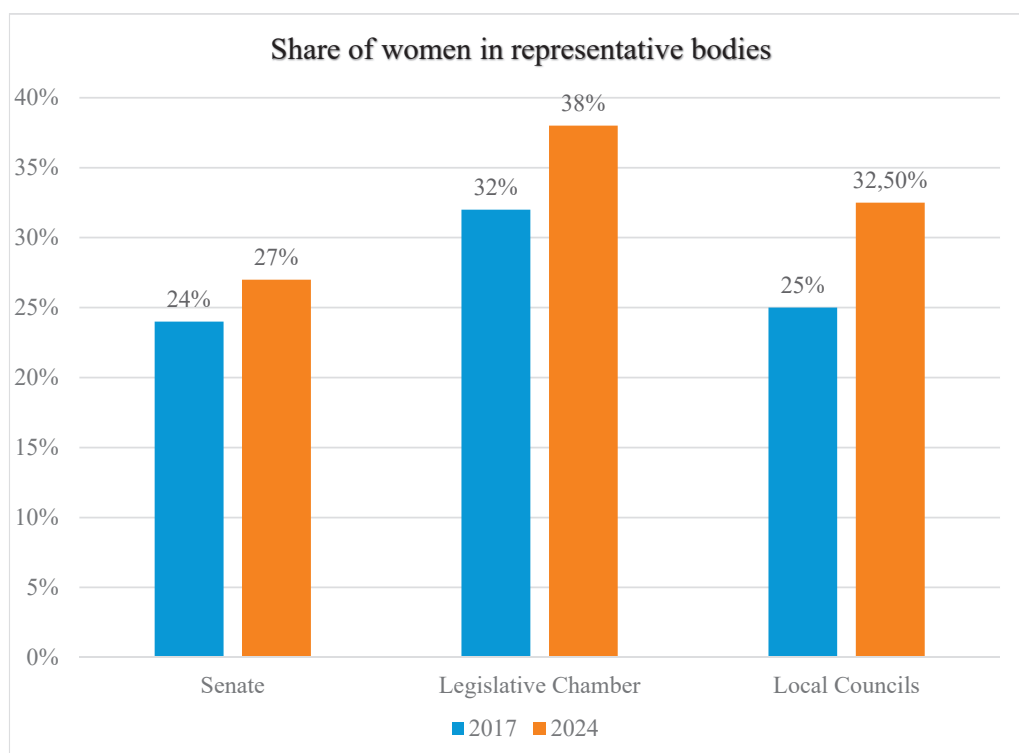


Figure 1. Share of women in representative bodies¹⁹

17 Address by President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev at the ceremony dedicated to International Women's Day, 6 March 2026. Official website of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan. <https://president.uz/oz/lists/view/9002>

18 Winners of the national stage of the "Woman of the Year" competition honoured, 27 December 2024. Official website of the Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan. <https://senat.uz/post/post-3069>

19 author's development

Women constitute 25% of the deputies of the Jokargi Kenes of the Republic of Karakalpakstan and of the regional and Tashkent City Councils of People's Deputies. While women accounted for 2.9% of ministerial and minister-equivalent positions in 2018, this proportion has almost doubled, reaching 5.7%²⁰.

The significance of these dynamics can be assessed through three principal factors. First, Uzbekistan is demonstrating positive quantitative progress in women's participation in public administration. Between 2017 and 2024, women's share in public administration increased from 27% to 35%. This represents an absolute increase of 8 percentage points and a relative increase of approximately 29.6%; in other words, the 2024 figure is almost one-third higher than the level recorded in 2017. Over this period, the average annual increase amounted to approximately 1.14 percentage points.

To achieve the target of increasing women's share in the state civil service to 40% by 2030, a further increase of 5 percentage points from the 2024 level of 35% will be required. This corresponds to an average annual increase of approximately 0.83 percentage points between 2024 and 2030. Accordingly, if the previous positive dynamics are maintained, achievement of the target is quantitatively feasible. At the same time, further attention to balanced representation across different levels of the organisational hierarchy and across regions would contribute to making this progress more systematic, inclusive, and sustainable (Figure 2).

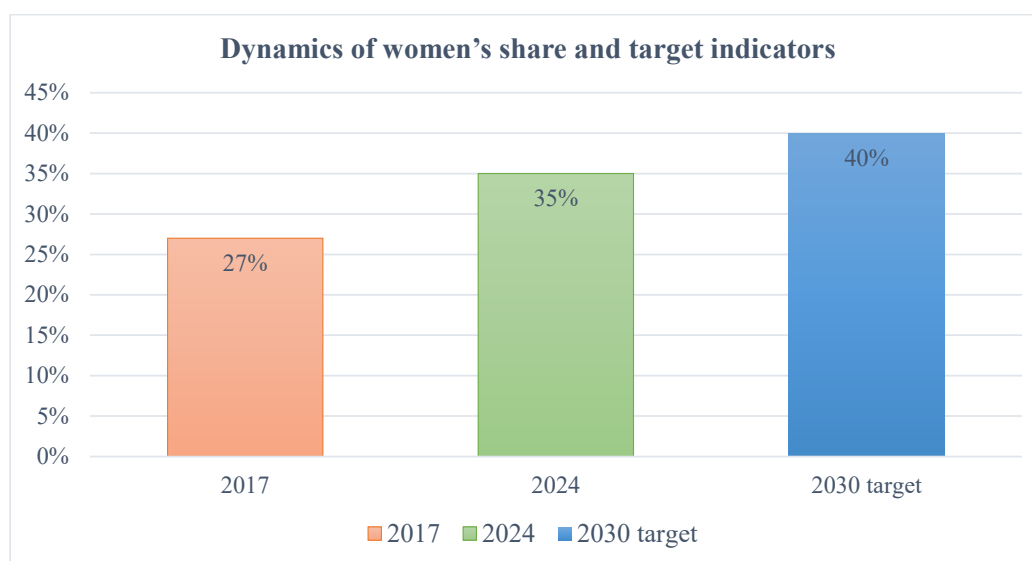


Figure 2. Dynamics of women's share in public administration in Uzbekistan and the 2030 targets²¹

Particular attention is also being paid to expanding women's participation in political life. The Electoral Code stipulates that women must constitute at least 40% of the candidates nominated by political parties for deputy positions — that is, at least two out of every five candidates²².

Women's participation in the political and socio-economic life of the country is steadily increasing. In particular, women account for 35% of those engaged in public administration, 37% of entrepreneurs, and 49% of political party members. In addition, women represented 52.2% of students enrolled in the country's higher education institutions in the 2024/2025 academic year. A number of women in Uzbekistan hold senior positions in public administration, including Chairperson of the Senate (T. Norboyeva), Head of the Presidential Administration (S. Mirziyoyeva), Deputy Prime Minister (D. Kattaxanova), Ombudsperson (F. Eshmetova), Minister (E. Karimova), as well as leadership positions in agencies and committees. This reflects the growing recognition of the professional potential, competencies, and managerial capabilities of women in contemporary Uzbekistan²³.

Whereas women accounted for 2.9% of ministerial and minister-equivalent positions in 2018, this figure reached 7.7% by 2025, demonstrating positive dynamics in women's representation at senior levels of public administration²⁴.

20 Increasing women's socio-political activity in the state civil service is an important task, 23 October 2023. Uzbekistan National News Agency. https://uza.uz/en/posts/davlat-fuqarolik-xizmatida-xotin-qizlarning-ijtimoiy-siyosiy-faolligini-oshirish-muhim-vazifa_531248

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22 Electoral Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Article 70, "Nomination of Candidates for Deputy by Political Parties." Official website of the Central Election Commission.

23 Government portal: <https://gov.uz/oz/wcu/news/view/30506>

24 Government portal: <https://gov.uz/oz/wcu/news/view/30506>

Preparing women for leadership positions at various levels is a comprehensive and systematic process that requires targeted professional development. To this end, 244 women have so far completed training under the newly established School for Women Leaders programme, and nearly 60 of them have subsequently been appointed to various leadership positions.

In particular, 15 women who achieved the highest KPI results at the School for Preparation for Hokim Positions were selected and enrolled in specialised training programmes. This initiative demonstrates the potential for further expanding women's representation in leadership positions at the regional, district, and city levels²⁵.

In 2020, a system was introduced to facilitate the admission of women from low-income families to higher education institutions through state grants. Initially, 1,000 places were allocated for this purpose. In 2021, the number of grant places doubled to 2,000, and subsequently doubled again to 4,000. As a result, over the past five years, nearly 13,000 women have been admitted to higher education institutions through state grants under this preferential arrangement.

The number of quota places allocated to women with five years of work experience but without higher education was increased fivefold to 2,500. Between 2022 and 2025, more than 2,000 women were admitted to higher education institutions under this arrangement.

Since 2022, the tuition fees of all women studying at the master's level in state higher education institutions have been covered by the state budget. Between 2022 and 2025, UZS 333.8 billion was allocated from the state budget for this purpose.

A system has also been established to provide interest-free education loans for periods of up to seven years to women studying at higher education institutions, technical colleges, and vocational colleges. Between 2022 and 2025, education loans amounting to UZS 4.6 trillion were allocated to nearly 415,000 female students.

As a result of these opportunities and support mechanisms, women's share among students in higher education institutions reached 53.2%, while their share at the master's level reached 65.8%. Girls also account for 51% of the young people trained through the One Million Uzbek Coders project, which is aimed at developing modern knowledge and professional skills²⁶.

Decree No. PF-95 establishes targets for increasing women's share in the state civil service to 40% and their share in the National Talent Pool to 40%. The annex to the Decree specifies a baseline indicator of 28%, an interim indicator of 30%, and a final target of 40% for women's share in the state civil service. For the National Talent Pool, the corresponding indicators are 20%, 25%, and 40%, respectively. These targets provide a measurable institutional framework for systematically expanding women's participation in the state civil service and strengthening their representation within the leadership talent pipeline²⁷ (Figure 3).

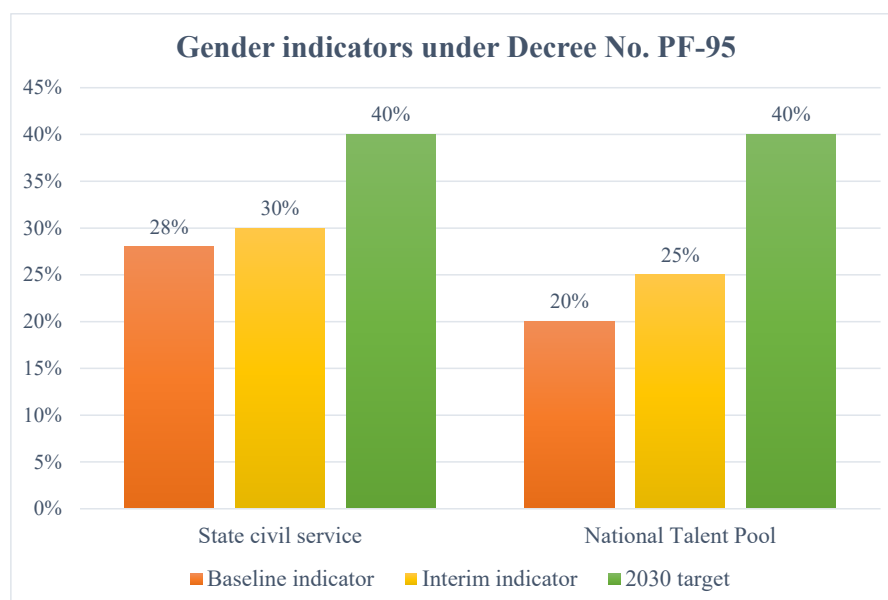


Figure 3. Indicators under PF-95 for women's share in the state civil service and the National Talent Pool²⁸

25 <https://islamabadpost.com.pk/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/Islamabad-Post-13-06-2026.pdf>

26 Mahinora Mirkhamidova. Ensuring Women's Rights Is an Integral Part of the State Gender Policy in Uzbekistan. <https://www.uzembassy.uk/news/1030>

27 Annex to Decree No. PF-95: indicators for increasing women's share in the state civil service to 40 per cent and their share in the National Talent Pool to 40 per cent.

28 author's development

The analysis identifies several areas that would benefit from further institutional development in order to strengthen women's participation in the state civil service.

First, the further expansion of open and disaggregated statistical data would improve the evidence base for both scholarly analysis and management decision-making. Although overall percentages are available, more detailed data by position group, government body, region, age, length of service, and appointment status would enable a more comprehensive assessment of women's participation and career progression.

Second, greater transparency in the indicators used to assess the effectiveness of the National Talent Pool would support a more complete evaluation of its outcomes. In addition to increasing women's share in the pool, it is important to track how many candidates are subsequently appointed, how many receive professional development, and how many are assigned mentors.

Third, further development of mentoring and sponsorship mechanisms would contribute to women's managerial career advancement. Access to professional networks plays an important role in leadership development; therefore, formal mentoring programmes, individual development plans, and specialised modules designed to prepare women for senior positions would provide more systematic career-development opportunities.

Fourth, the broader integration of gender audits and gender-related indicators into institutional management would further strengthen organisational effectiveness. Although a legal basis for gender audits has been established, the regular publication of gender-analysis findings on recruitment, career advancement, incentives, professional development, business travel, and working conditions could be further expanded across government bodies. This would contribute to more consistent monitoring and support the effective implementation of gender-equality objectives in the state civil service.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The principal scholarly conclusion of the study is that the next stage in advancing women's participation in the state civil service in Uzbekistan should focus on complementing quantitative growth with effective and sustainable governance mechanisms. Increasing women's numerical representation remains important; however, equal attention should also be given to preparing women for senior management positions, strengthening their substantive participation in decision-making, facilitating their transition from the talent pool into actual appointments, and supporting sustainable managerial career development.

On this basis, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Introduce a unified system of open gender indicators for the state civil service. Each year, data on the composition of the state civil service should be published by sex, age, region, government body, position group, length of service, qualification level, and appointment status. Such open and disaggregated data would provide a stronger basis for assessing policy effectiveness and identifying areas requiring further improvement.

2. Strengthen performance monitoring for women included in the National Talent Pool. In addition to monitoring the number of women included in the pool, specific KPIs should be developed to indicate how many participants have received professional development, how many have been assigned mentors, how many have been recommended for senior positions, and how many have subsequently been appointed. In this way, the National Talent Pool can function not merely as a list of candidates, but as an effective career-development mechanism.

3. Further develop the practice of gender audits and internal gender action plans in government bodies. Each ministry and agency should conduct an annual gender audit covering recruitment, career advancement, incentives, professional development, business travel, working time, and working conditions. Based on the findings, institutional action plans should be developed to support the consistent implementation of gender-equality objectives.

4. Expand flexible working arrangements and remote-work elements as supportive instruments of gender equality. Based on the results of the pilot measures envisaged in Decree No. PF-95, flexible working arrangements may be gradually expanded across other government bodies. Such mechanisms can be particularly valuable for employees with young children, women working in the regions, and the retention of qualified personnel in the state civil service.

5. Introduce the principle of "gender-sensitive meritocracy" in appointments to leadership positions. This approach does not imply reducing qualification or competency requirements. Rather, it is aimed at ensuring equal competitive opportunities, identifying capable women, providing them with targeted professional development, and creating effective mechanisms for their transition from the talent pool to actual leadership appointments.

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