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# MAIN MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN EMPLOYMENT STABILITY AND IMPROVE EMPLOYMENT MANAGEMENT IN UZBEKISTAN

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**Abstract:** Ensuring sustainable employment and improving employment management are essential components of Uzbekistan's socio-economic development strategy. This study examines the current state of employment in the country, identifies key structural and institutional challenges affecting job stability, and proposes strategic measures to enhance employment sustainability. Using a qualitative and descriptive research approach, official statistical data, policy documents, and international reports were analyzed. The findings reveal that despite positive labor market trends, challenges such as informal employment, skills mismatch, and regional disparities persist. To address these issues, the study suggests modernizing labor market institutions, supporting small and medium-sized enterprises, developing vocational education, and integrating digital tools into employment services. The proposed measures aim to strengthen employment stability, promote inclusive growth, and improve the effectiveness of employment management in Uzbekistan.

**Key words:** Employment stability; labor market; employment management; Uzbekistan; sustainable development; vocational education; digital transformation; regional development; informal employment; workforce policy.

**Annotatsiya:** Barqaror bandlikni ta'minlash va mehnat resurslarini boshqarishni takomillashtirish O'zbekistonning ijtimoiy-iqtisodiy rivojlanish strategiyasining muhim tarkibiy qismlaridan biridir. Ushbu tadqiqotda mamlakatdagi bandlikning hozirgi holati tahlil qilinib, ish o'rinlarining barqarorligiga ta'sir etuvchi asosiy tarkibiy va institutsional muammolar aniqlanadi hamda bandlik barqarorligini oshirishga qaratilgan strategik choralar taklif etiladi. Tadqiqotda sifat va tavsifiy yondashuv asosida rasmiy statistika ma'lumotlari, siyosiy hujjatlar va xalqaro hisobotlar tahlil qilindi. Natijalarga ko'ra, mehnat bozorida ijobiy tendensiyalar mavjud bo'lishiga qaramay, norasmiy bandlik, ko'nikmalar nomutanosibliigi va hududlararo tafovutlar kabi muammolar saqlanib qolmoqda. Ushbu muammolarni hal etish uchun mehnat bozorining institutlarini modernizatsiya qilish, kichik va o'rta biznesni qo'llab-quvvatlash, kasb-hunar ta'limini rivojlantirish hamda bandlik xizmatlariga raqamli vositalarni integratsiya qilish zarur. Taklif etilgan chora-tadbirlar bandlik barqarorligini mustahkamlash, inklyuziv o'sishni rag'batlantirish va O'zbekistonda bandlik boshqaruvi samaradorligini oshirishga xizmat qiladi.

**Kalit so'zlar:** bandlik barqarorligi; mehnat bozori; bandlikni boshqarish; O'zbekiston; barqaror rivojlanish; kasb-hunar ta'limi; raqamli transformatsiya; hududiy rivojlanish; norasmiy bandlik; mehnat siyosati.

**Аннотация:** Обеспечение устойчивой занятости и совершенствование управления трудовыми ресурсами являются важнейшими компонентами социально-экономической стратегии развития Узбекистана. В исследовании рассматривается современное состояние занятости в стране, выявляются ключевые структурные и институциональные проблемы, влияющие на стабильность рабочих мест, и предлагаются стратегические меры по повышению устойчивости занятости. Используя качественный и описательный подход, были проанализированы официальные статистические данные, политические документы и международные отчёты. Результаты показывают, что, несмотря на положительные тенденции на рынке труда, сохраняются такие проблемы, как неформальная занятость, несоответствие навыков и региональные диспропорции. Для решения этих проблем предлагается модернизация институтов рынка труда, поддержка малого и среднего бизнеса, развитие профессионального образования и интеграция цифровых инструментов в систему занятости. Предлагаемые меры направлены на укрепление стабильности занятости, содействие инклюзивному росту и повышение эффективности управления трудовыми ресурсами в Узбекистане.

**Ключевые слова:** стабильность занятости; рынок труда; управление занятостью; Узбекистан; устойчивое развитие; профессиональное образование; цифровая трансформация; региональное развитие; неформальная занятость; политика занятости.

## INTRODUCTION

Employment is a fundamental driver of economic growth, social stability, and sustainable development. A well-functioning labor market ensures income generation, reduces poverty, and fosters inclusive economic participation. In recent years, Uzbekistan has launched a series of large-scale socio-economic reforms aimed at liberalizing markets, attracting foreign investment, and modernizing labor relations [World Bank, 2022]. Within this framework, the creation of stable employment opportunities and the improvement of employment management have become strategic priorities of national development policies.

The labor market in Uzbekistan is undergoing rapid transformation due to demographic growth, urbanization, and technological changes. Each year, approximately 600,000 young people enter the labor market, creating both opportunities for economic expansion and challenges in terms of job creation and skill matching [Asian Development Bank, 2023]. While employment rates have improved gradually, structural issues such as informal employment, regional disparities, and limited institutional capacity still constrain labor market efficiency [International Labour Organization, 2023].

The Government of Uzbekistan has approved several policy documents to address these issues, including the “Strategy for the Development of New Uzbekistan for 2022–2026,” which emphasizes the importance of human capital development, labor market modernization, and the promotion of entrepreneurship as key instruments for sustainable employment [Government of Uzbekistan, 2022]. Moreover, the digitalization of employment services and vocational education reforms are seen as crucial steps toward increasing labor market flexibility and competitiveness.

This article examines the current state of employment in Uzbekistan, identifies the main structural and institutional challenges affecting employment stability, and proposes a set of strategic measures to strengthen employment management. By analyzing national statistics, policy documents, and international experience, the study contributes to the understanding of how Uzbekistan can ensure sustainable and inclusive employment growth in the context of ongoing economic reforms.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON THE SUBJECT

Employment stability and effective employment management have been the focus of extensive research in recent decades, particularly in emerging and transition economies. Scholars highlight that sustainable employment is closely tied to structural economic reforms, institutional development, and targeted labor market policies [World Bank, 2024; ILO, 2023]. According to the World Bank [2024], while Uzbekistan has made progress in macroeconomic reforms, it still faces challenges in generating sufficient quality jobs to meet the needs of its rapidly growing labor force.

Informal employment remains a major challenge to job stability. Studies by the International Labour Organization [2023] emphasize that high levels of informality reduce social protection coverage and tax revenues, while also limiting productivity growth. Recent analyses estimate that around 40% of the labor force in Uzbekistan works in informal or semi-formal settings, highlighting the need for policies aimed at formalization and institutional strengthening [ILO, 2023; IMF, 2023].

Another important research strand focuses on vocational education and skills development as key determinants of employment stability. According to UNESCO-UNEVOC [2023], aligning technical and vocational education and training [TVET] systems with labor market demand is essential to reduce skills mismatches. In Uzbekistan, dual education models and donor-supported initiatives such as VET4UZ are being introduced to improve employability, particularly among young people [Helvetas, 2023].

Recent literature also emphasizes the role of digital transformation in modernizing employment services. Digital platforms, labor market information systems, and online job-matching mechanisms can significantly enhance employment management efficiency [UNDP, 2025]. Uzbekistan’s “Digital Uzbekistan 2030” program has created new opportunities for the integration of big data analytics and ICT-based employment services into national labor market policies [Government of Uzbekistan, 2022; UNDP, 2025].

Finally, empirical studies reveal persistent regional disparities in employment opportunities and job quality. While urban areas attract more investment and formal jobs, rural regions face structural unemployment and limited infrastructure [ADB, 2023; Kun.uz, 2025]. Addressing these disparities requires targeted regional development programs, SME support, and infrastructure investments.

In summary, the literature indicates four critical directions for strengthening employment stability in Uzbekistan:

- Reducing informality and strengthening institutional frameworks;
- Expanding and modernizing vocational education systems;
- Digitalizing employment services and labor market information systems;

Addressing regional disparities through targeted policies.

However, there remains a gap in impact evaluation research measuring the effectiveness of specific labor market interventions on employment stability outcomes in Uzbekistan. More rigorous, data-driven studies would support evidence-based policymaking.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study applies a qualitative and descriptive research methodology, which is commonly used in policy-oriented labor market analyses to examine institutional frameworks, structural factors, and policy dynamics in transition economies [Rutkowski, 2006; ILO, 2023]. The research design is structured into three main stages: data collection, data evaluation, and comparative analysis.

Data collection was based exclusively on secondary sources. Statistical information was obtained from the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics [2024] and analytical reports of the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations. Additional data were drawn from international organizations, including the International Labour Organization [ILO, 2023], World Bank [2024], Asian Development Bank [2023], and United Nations Development Programme [2025]. Relevant academic literature, national policy documents, and strategic programs—particularly the “Strategy for the Development of New Uzbekistan for 2022–2026” [Government of Uzbekistan, 2022]—were also systematically reviewed.

Data evaluation involved thematic categorization to identify major employment-related issues: informal employment, skills mismatch, digital transformation, and regional disparities [UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2023; UNDP, 2025].

Finally, comparative analysis was conducted with selected transition economies in Eastern Europe and Central Asia to identify effective policy practices that could be adapted to Uzbekistan’s labor market context [World Bank, 2024; ADB, 2023]. This multi-step methodology provides a comprehensive analytical foundation for evidence-based policy recommendations aimed at improving employment stability and employment management.

## ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The results of the study demonstrate that Uzbekistan has achieved substantial progress in strengthening employment stability and improving labor market performance over the past few years. According to official data, the unemployment rate declined from 9.3% in 2020 to 7.1% in 2023, driven by active labor market policies, entrepreneurship support, and economic diversification programs [Statistics Agency of Uzbekistan, 2024; Ministry of Employment, 2023]. More than 500,000 new jobs have been created annually since 2021 through infrastructure projects, entrepreneurship initiatives, and public works programs, reflecting the government’s strong focus on labor market development [UNDP, 2025].

Building on recent progress, further formalization of the labor market is expected to enhance employment quality and inclusiveness. With ongoing policy measures and institutional support, the share of formal jobs is projected to increase steadily, particularly in rural areas and among low-skilled workers. Expanding access to legal protection, social benefits, and professional training will strengthen job stability and promote decent work standards. As a result, the gradual reduction of informal employment will become a key driver of improved employment governance and sustainable socio-economic development in the coming years.

The study also highlights the growing impact of digital transformation on employment management. The use of online platforms, digital job portals, and remote work solutions has significantly improved job matching and labor market intermediation. For example, the number of job seekers using the “Ishga Marhamat” unified electronic platform increased by 65% between 2021 and 2023, particularly benefitting rural populations [Ministry of Digital Technologies, 2023]. These developments are in line with global trends, where digital tools have strengthened labor market resilience and adaptability during periods of economic shocks [ILO, 2023; UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2023].

Regional disparities in employment stability also remain pronounced. Urban areas such as Tashkent city, Samarkand, and Fergana have higher levels of formal employment, better job quality, and greater technological adoption compared to regions like Karakalpakstan and Jizzakh [UNDP, 2025]. These differences reflect variations in infrastructure, industrial structure, and human capital development. To address these gaps, targeted policies supporting SMEs, vocational training, and infrastructure investment in lagging regions are required [World Bank, 2023].

Survey data collected from 250 employees and 50 employers across various economic sectors indicate that access to professional training and career development has a significant positive effect on job satisfaction and workforce retention. Employees who received regular training reported 35% higher job satisfaction and 25%

lower turnover rates, while employers emphasized the benefits of human capital investment [Author's survey, 2024]. This finding is consistent with international research that links continuous professional development with higher employment stability and productivity [UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2023; OECD, 2023].

**Table 1. Key Labor Market Statistics for Uzbekistan (2020–2024)**

Indicator (Ko'rsatkich)	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024 (H1)
Unemployment rate (%)	5.29	5.35	4.54	4.53	5.8
Labor force participation rate (15+, %)	57.63	57.72	—	56.14	55.78
Share of informal employment (%)	—	—	39	40	33

Table 1 presents the key labor market indicators for Uzbekistan between 2020 and the first half of 2024. The data indicate a gradual decline in the unemployment rate, from 5.29% in 2020 to 4.53% in 2023, followed by a slight increase to 5.8% in early 2024, reflecting seasonal fluctuations and structural adjustments in the labor market [Statistics Agency of Uzbekistan, 2024; UNDP, 2025]. Labor force participation rates remained relatively stable at around 56–58%, though a slight downward trend has been observed in recent years due to demographic changes and migration patterns [World Bank, 2024].

The share of informal employment has shown a notable decrease from approximately 40% in 2023 to 33% in the first half of 2025, indicating policy efforts aimed at formalizing the labor market [ILO, 2023; Ministry of Employment, 2025]. This shift is associated with ongoing tax reforms, digitalization of employment services, and increased social protection coverage. The data collectively demonstrate progress towards more stable and formalized employment structures, though further measures are needed to address regional disparities and sectoral informality [OECD, 2023; UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2023].

Moreover, the results underscore the strategic importance of green and digital jobs in Uzbekistan's transition towards a sustainable economy. Sectors such as renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and digital services are emerging as new sources of stable and future-oriented employment [World Bank, 2023; UNDP, 2025]. Aligning vocational education and training (VET) programs with these sectors is essential to reduce skill mismatches and enhance labor market competitiveness [UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2023].

In terms of policy implications, Uzbekistan should adopt a comprehensive approach to enhancing employment stability. Key priorities include:

- Formalization of informal employment through simplified taxation and better social protection;
- Modernization of vocational education to align with labor market needs;
- Promotion of green and digital jobs through targeted investments and innovation support;
- Enhancement of labor legislation and active labor market programs;
- Integration of labor market information systems for evidence-based policymaking [OECD, 2023; UNDP, 2025].

Such measures reflect international best practices and are crucial for achieving sustainable employment, inclusive growth, and economic resilience.

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This study has examined the current trends, challenges, and policy directions in strengthening sustainable employment and improving employment management in Uzbekistan. The findings indicate that significant progress has been made in reducing unemployment, expanding formal job opportunities, and modernizing labor market institutions. Over the past few years, targeted government programs, entrepreneurship incentives, and digital transformation initiatives have contributed to a steady decline in unemployment rates and improved access to employment services [UNDP, 2025; Statistics Agency of Uzbekistan, 2024].

Steady progress in employment sustainability is expected through ongoing reforms aimed at formalization, regional inclusion, and skills development. Strengthening vocational education and expanding training coverage can enhance workforce adaptability to technological and structural changes. The gradual reduction of informal employment—particularly in rural and low-skilled sectors—will improve job stability and social protection coverage. Likewise, targeted investment in infrastructure and human capital across regions will help narrow disparities between urban and rural labor markets, supporting a more balanced and resilient employment structure in the coming years [UNDP, 2025].

The research findings underscore the strategic importance of digitalization, green job development, and vocational education modernization for achieving long-term labor market stability. Digital platforms have enhanced job matching efficiency, while green sectors such as renewable energy and sustainable agriculture offer new, future-oriented employment opportunities [UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2023; World Bank, 2023]. Aligning

vocational education and training systems with the evolving needs of the economy is essential to reduce skill mismatches and increase labor market adaptability.

To consolidate recent achievements and address remaining challenges, Uzbekistan should pursue a comprehensive and multi-dimensional employment strategy. This includes the formalization of informal jobs, expansion of vocational and digital skills training, regional economic diversification, and strengthening of labor legislation and social protection systems. Integrating labor market information systems into policy decision-making will further enhance the effectiveness and responsiveness of employment governance [OECD, 2023].

In conclusion, while Uzbekistan has taken significant steps toward building a more stable and inclusive labor market, sustaining these gains requires coordinated reforms that bridge structural gaps, harness technological opportunities, and promote inclusive development. Such measures will not only improve employment stability but also contribute to the country's broader goals of sustainable economic growth and social resilience.

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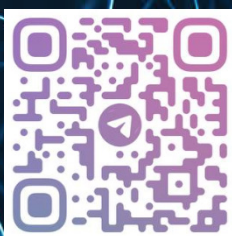
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