FORMALIZING DOMESTIC AND CARE WORK IN UZBEKISTAN: PATHWAYS FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND DECENT JOBS

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FORMALIZING DOMESTIC AND CARE WORK IN UZBEKISTAN: **PATHWAYS FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND DECENT JOBS**

EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA REGION

UN WOMEN

FOR ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Domestic and care work remains a critical yet weakly protected segment of Uzbekistan's labour market, situated at the intersection of informality, gender inequality, and care provision. Household-based domestic and care workers—predominantly women—play a key role in enabling labour-market participation of other household members and in compensating for gaps in public childcare, eldercare, and disability services. Despite recent reforms, this form of work continues to be characterised by informality, unstable employment relations, and limited access to social protection.

The objective of this study is to assess the current status of domestic and care work in private households in Uzbekistan and to identify feasible policy entry points for improving formalisation, working conditions, and access to social protection. The analysis adopts an implementation-oriented approach, combining review of legal and institutional frameworks with original qualitative evidence from stakeholder discussions, including domestic workers themselves. This allows the study to explain not only where gaps persist, but why they do so in practice.

Recent reforms have significantly increased the legal visibility of domestic and care work but have not ensured effective protection. The 2022 Labour Code formally recognised domestic work, while the self-employment regime has expanded registration of household-based services. Administrative data indicate growing participation, particularly among women. However, employment relationships in private households remain largely informal, with written contracts rare, wages unstable, and working hours weakly regulated.

Evidence from domestic workers highlights that informality is sustained by structural factors rather than lack of awareness or willingness to formalise. Workers value stability and security, yet face limited bargaining power, fear of replacement, and income volatility that discourage them from requesting contracts or contributing to social insurance. Informality thus reflects misaligned incentives and asymmetric power relations within households, rather than individual choice.

The self-employment regime functions primarily as a registration mechanism and provides limited protection against key risks. While registration offers legal status and access to pension contributions, it does not substantially reduce exposure to sickness, maternity-related income loss, or sudden job termination. Voluntary contributions, deferred benefits, and the absence of employer participation limit the regime's effectiveness in improving workers' lived security.

Gendered care responsibilities and gaps in care provision reinforce dependence on informal domestic work. Women's overrepresentation in domestic and care work reflects broader constraints related to unpaid care burdens, limited family-friendly employment options, and restricted access to formal jobs. Domestic work often appears flexible, yet in practice entails long and unpredictable hours that constrain mobility and reinforce vulnerability.

The study identifies clear policy entry points that can strengthen protection while remaining aligned with ongoing reforms. These include clarifying the dual formalisation pathways for domestic work; enhancing the protective content of self-employment through graduated and subsidised social insurance options; explicitly integrating domestic and care workers into new social insurance schemes; developing non-intrusive, incentive-based monitoring mechanisms suited to private households; and improving data visibility and institutional coordination.

Overall, the findings suggest that formalisation of domestic and care work in Uzbekistan is underway but incomplete. Progress has been made in recognition and registration, yet effective protection against labour-market and life-cycle risks remains limited. Advancing reform will require moving beyond registration-centred approaches toward graduated protection and shared responsibility, building on existing policy instruments to improve security and working conditions for domestic and care workers.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION 7

2. CONTEXTUAL OVERVIEW 9

2.1. SOCIOECONOMIC AND LABOR MARKET CONTEXT IN UZBEKISTAN 9

2.2. OVERVIEW OF DOMESTIC AND CARE WORK IN THE COUNTRY 12

2.3. LINKS WITH WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND EMPLOYMENT VULNERABILITY 14

2.4. REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES 16

3. LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK 17

3.1. REVIEW OF NATIONAL LEGISLATION AND POLICIES RELATED TO LABOR RIGHTS, INFORMALITY, AND CARE WORK 17

3.2. SOCIAL PROTECTION POLICIES RELEVANT FOR DOMESTIC AND CARE WORKERS 18

3.3. OTHER RELATED INITIATIVES 19

3.4. POLICY GAPS AND ALIGNMENT WITH INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS 20

4. FINDINGS FROM STAKEHOLDER DISCUSSIONS ON DOMESTIC AND CARE WORKERS IN UZBEKISTAN 22

4.1. METHODOLOGICAL NOTE 22

4.2. INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON DOMESTIC AND CARE WORK: IMPLEMENTATION LOGIC, CONSTRAINTS, AND REFORM TRAJECTORIES 23

4.3. PERSONAL PERSPECTIVES ON DOMESTIC AND CARE WORK: LIVED EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS, VULNERABILITY, AND ADAPTIVE STRATEGIES 25

4.4. INTEGRATED FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION 27

5. POLICY PROPOSAL 30

6. CONCLUSION 33

REFERENCES 35

ANNEX 36

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1 - REGISTERED SELF-EMPLOYED BY SECTOR IN UZBEKISTAN (AS OF JULY 2025) 13

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1 – GDP GROWTH AND EMPLOYMENT ELASTICITY, 2000–2024 9

FIGURE 2 – UNEMPLOYMENT RATE, BY GENDER 10

FIGURE 3 – LABOR-FORCE PARTICIPATION, BY GENDER 11

FIGURE 4 - SELF-EMPLOYMENT AND DOMESTIC WORK (2024, BY GENDER) 13

FIGURE 5 - SELF-EMPLOYMENT IN TOTAL EMPLOYMENT, BY GENDER 15

1. INTRODUCTION

Uzbekistan stands at a critical juncture in addressing the persistent challenges of informality, gender inequality, and care provision in its labour market. Despite strong economic growth and wide-ranging policy reforms in recent years, domestic and care work remains largely informal, undervalued, and insufficiently protected, with women disproportionately affected. The Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions, in which Uzbekistan is a participating country, positions the care economy as a strategic entry point for creating decent work, expanding social protection, and fostering gender equality. Within this framework, care and domestic work are no longer viewed solely as private household responsibilities, but as essential components of national economic development and social resilience. This study builds on these perspectives to analyse household-level domestic and care work in Uzbekistan, identify policy gaps, and propose practical measures for advancing formalisation and improving working conditions in line with international standards.

The objective of this study is to assess the current status of domestic and care work in private households in Uzbekistan and to identify feasible policy entry points for improving formalisation, working conditions, and access to social protection, in support of ongoing government reforms.

Domestic and care work forms an essential yet often invisible foundation of Uzbekistan's labour market and social fabric. Internationally, the concept of domestic work is defined by the ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), which characterises a domestic worker as any person engaged in work performed in or for a household or households within an employment relationship. This definition encompasses a wide range of arrangements, including live-in and live-out workers, part-time and full-time employment, and work conducted for one or multiple households, while excluding unpaid family labour and work performed only occasionally or on a non-occupational basis. The ILO framework underscores that domestic workers are entitled to fundamental labour rights, social protection, and decent working conditions, notwithstanding the private nature of their workplace.

In Uzbekistan, domestic work was formally recognised with the adoption of the 2022 Labour Code. The Code defines domestic workers as employees engaged in providing household services—such as childcare, cleaning, gardening, driving, or caregiving—to private individuals in order to meet their personal needs not related to entrepreneurial activities. While this recognition marked an important step forward, the national definition is narrower than the ILO standard and applies primarily to workers engaged under direct employment relationships. In parallel, Presidential Decree PP-4742 (2020) introduced a simplified self-employment regime that explicitly included a range of domestic and care activities, such as childcare, eldercare, housekeeping, tutoring, and care for persons with disabilities. This regime offers an accessible pathway to legal registration outside standard labour-law arrangements and has significantly increased the administrative visibility of household-based services.

These legal frameworks imply that, in practice, domestic and care workers in Uzbekistan may fall into several overlapping categories:

- **Paid domestic workers in private households** (such as nannies, cleaners, cooks, gardeners, and drivers), usually engaged without written contracts;
- **Home-based care providers** (including childcare providers, elder carers, and caregivers for persons with disabilities), often operating under informal or semi-formal arrangements;
- **Self-employed service providers within households** (such as tutors or home-based care aides), who are formally registered but typically have limited access to labour rights and comprehensive social protection.

Despite recent reforms, most ***domestic and care workers*** remain outside the reach of enforceable rights and effective social security coverage. This reflects not only regulatory gaps, but also the structural challenges associated with regulating work performed in private households, where conventional labour inspection is constrained and employment relations are shaped by informal norms and asymmetric power relations.

For the purpose of this study, ***domestic and care workers*** are defined as individuals engaged in paid domestic or care activities within private households who fall within at least one of the above categories. The analytical focus is deliberately placed on **household-based paid domestic and care work,** where informality, regulatory ambiguity, and vulnerability are most pronounced. Institutional care work in preschools, health facilities, and social care institutions, as well as unpaid domestic and care work performed by household members, lies outside the scope of this analysis.

Situated within Uzbekistan's evolving reform landscape, this study seeks to support ongoing policy efforts by examining how existing legal and institutional frameworks operate in practice and how they are experienced by key stakeholders. By combining analysis of labour-market trends, legal provisions, and institutional arrangements with original qualitative evidence from stakeholder discussions, including domestic workers themselves, the report provides new insights into why vulnerability and insecurity persist despite formalisation initiatives. This integrated approach allows the analysis to move beyond binary distinctions between formality and informality and to identify feasible entry points for strengthening protection and improving working conditions within current policy frameworks.

Recent analytical work, including an assessment by the International Labor Organization (ILO; Amanova, 2025), has examined domestic work in Uzbekistan primarily from the perspective of international labor standards and legal alignment. Published almost concurrently with this study, such work provides an important normative and diagnostic reference point. The present report complements these analyses by focusing on the practical operation of existing reforms and their interaction with labor-market structures, institutional practices, and worker experiences. Rather than reassessing compliance with international standards, the study adopts an implementation-oriented perspective, examining how current policy instruments function in practice and identifying feasible entry points for strengthening protection within Uzbekistan's evolving reform framework.

The remainder of the report is structured as follows. Section 2 provides a contextual overview of the socioeconomic and labour-market environment relevant to domestic and care work in Uzbekistan. Section 3 reviews the legal and policy framework governing domestic work, self-employment, and social protection. Section 4 presents findings from stakeholder discussions and offers an integrated analytical assessment linking worker experiences with institutional practices and policy design. Section 5 outlines policy directions aimed at improving formalisation and protection in domestic and care work. Section 6 concludes.

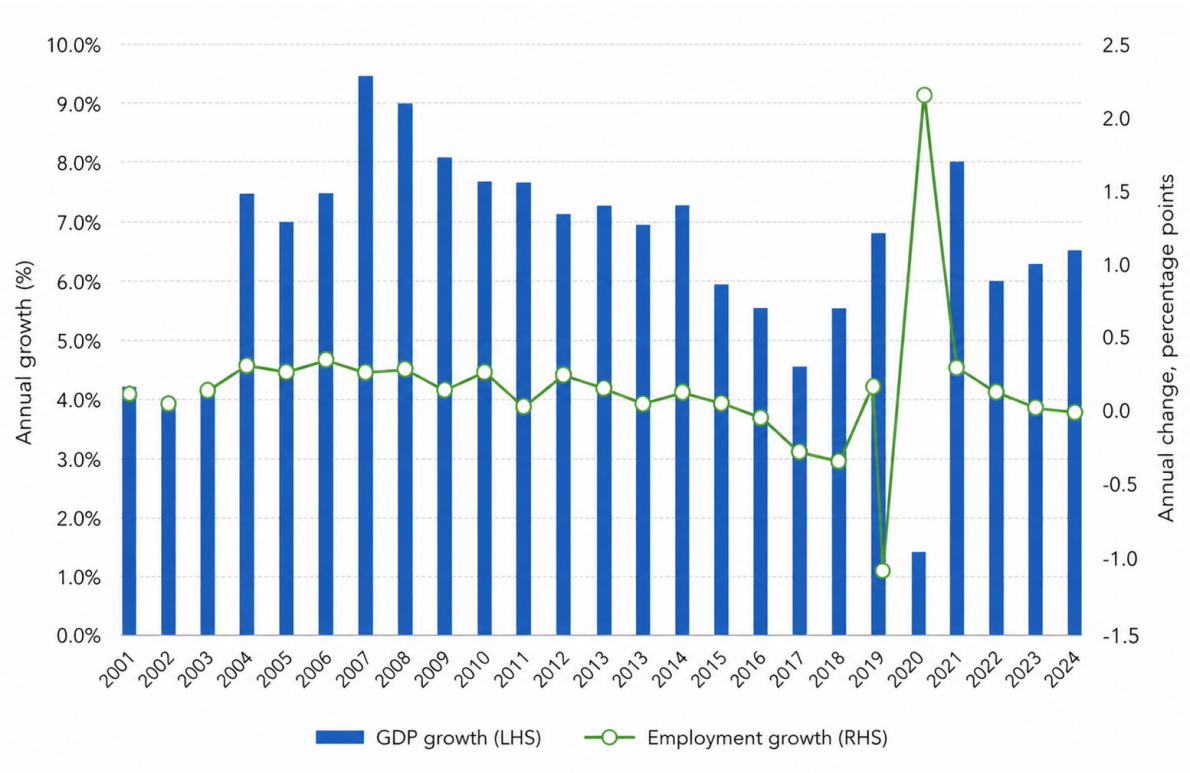
2. CONTEXTUAL OVERVIEW

2.1. Socioeconomic and labor market context in Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan's labor market has been shaped by deep structural transformations since independence in the early 1990s. The collapse of state-owned industries and collective farms dismantled the near-universal formal employment of the Soviet era and forced many into informal survival activities, ranging from bazaar trading to subsistence farming. While gradual reforms preserved a sizable state sector, they also constrained the rise of a dynamic private economy, reinforcing reliance on informal livelihoods. By the 2000s, analysts described a polarized economy in which capital-intensive industries such as mining and car manufacturing coexisted with a vast, low-productivity informal sector functioning as a social safety net (ETF, 2005).

Economic growth over the past two decades has not translated proportionally into formal job creation. Despite sustained GDP expansion, employment growth remained weak and volatile, indicating low employment elasticity of growth, as periods of robust economic growth were not matched by commensurate increases in employment **(Figure 1).** This pattern reflects the dominance of capital-intensive production, state-owned enterprises, and limited competition in key sectors. Although services expanded as a share of value added, much of this growth occurred in low-productivity activities with limited formal employment potential. As a result, labor absorption increasingly took place outside standard employment relationships, embedding informality as a structural feature of Uzbekistan's growth model.

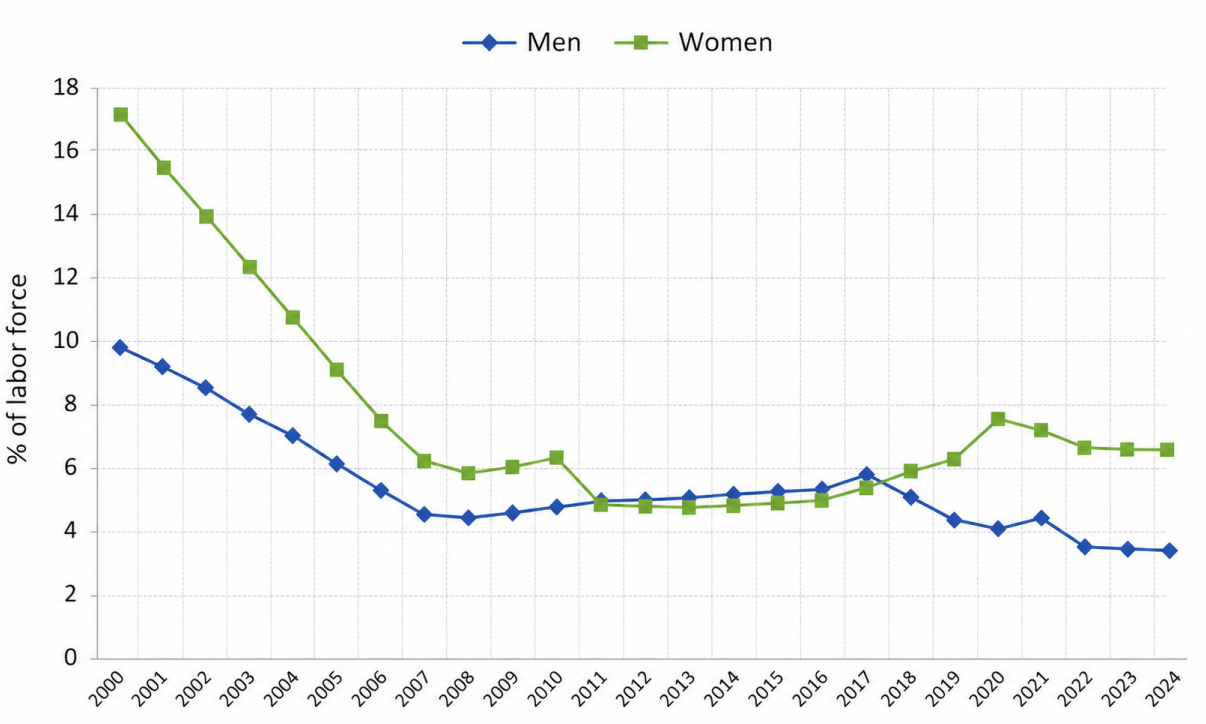
Figure 1 – GDP growth and employment elasticity, 2000–2024



Source: World Development Indicators of the World Bank.

Overall unemployment in Uzbekistan declined sharply from the early 2000s through the late 2000s, before stabilizing at relatively low levels from the early 2010s onward, reflecting labor absorption driven largely by informal employment rather than sustained expansion of formal jobs **(Figure 2).** This aggregate trend masked pronounced gender differences. Unemployment among women started from substantially higher levels and fell more steeply during the 2000s, converging with male unemployment by around 2011, a pattern consistent with women's disproportionate entry into informal, household-based, and care-related work as an alternative to open unemployment. From the mid-2010s onward, gender trajectories diverged: male unemployment continued to decline gradually, while female unemployment stabilized and then increased modestly after 2018, coinciding with improved labor-market measurement and tighter definitions of economic activity. This divergence suggests that women's labor-market attachment remains more vulnerable to structural constraints and care responsibilities, reinforcing the role of domestic and care work as a key adjustment mechanism for women excluded from stable formal employment.

Figure 2 – Unemployment rate, by gender



Source: World Development Indicators of the World Bank.

Informality became entrenched by the 2010s, with estimates placing the shadow economy at between 45 and 52 percent of GDP, peaking in the late 2010s—among the highest levels in Central Asia. Around 58–60 percent of the labor force was engaged in informal employment, encompassing domestic informal workers, seasonal and casual laborers, and large numbers of international labor migrants (World Bank, ILO, UNICEF, 2020; Spot, 2023). Informality thus functioned not merely as a residual outcome of labor-market dysfunction, but as the primary mechanism through which employment absorption and income generation were maintained in the absence of sufficient formal job creation.

This reliance on informality masked underlying labor underutilization and complicated labor-market measurement and policy design. Official unemployment rates captured only a fraction of exclusion from standard employment relationships, while informal employment absorbed displaced, surplus, and marginal workers. Informality therefore substituted for unemployment, particularly among women, youth, and rural populations, reinforcing segmented labor-market outcomes and limiting access to labor rights and social protection.

From the late 2010s onward, improvements in labor-market measurement and policy reform began to alter the official picture of employment and informality. Following improvements in labor-market

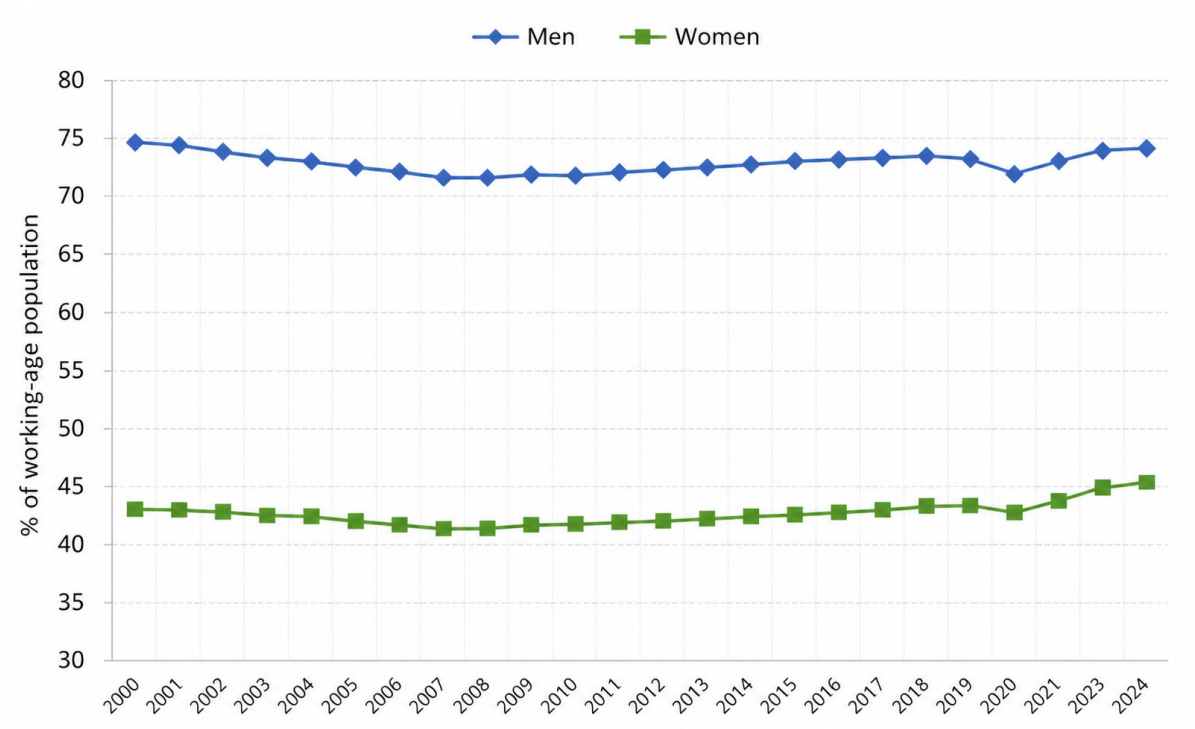
measurement, the official unemployment rate reached 9.3% in 2019 (5.2% based on ILO modelled estimation), while informality continued to function as the main fallback for those excluded from formal jobs (World Bank, ILO, UNICEF, 2020). Economic liberalization measures introduced in 2017—including currency convertibility, tax code reform, and streamlined business procedures—contributed to a modest decline in the shadow economy to around 45–46% by 2019.[1]

By 2022, the Ministry of Employment and Poverty Reduction reported that informality had dropped to about 41% of the workforce, or 6 million people (CABAR.asia, 2023), while by 2025 to 39.6% (UNDP, 2025b). While this marked significant progress, much of the decline reflected statistical reclassification of informal workers into the self-employed category, hence underscoring the persistence of informality as a structural feature of Uzbekistan's labor market.

Moreover, informality in agriculture is still very high at 61.7%, and more prevalent among women (47.4%) than among men (34%) (UNDP, 2025b).

Gendered patterns further compound these challenges. Women's labor-force participation remains lower than that of men **(Figure 3),** while female employment is concentrated in low-productivity, informal, and household-based activities, while also carrying disproportionate responsibility for unpaid household labor. ILO estimates show that women earned on average only 64–68% of men's wages between 2018 and 2022, with pay gaps particularly wide (up to 40%) among prime-age workers, reflecting motherhood penalties and care-related career interruptions (ILO, 2025). Demographic pressures—including large family sizes and a rising dependency ratio—exacerbate this situation, as women are more likely to be outside formal employment due to unpaid caregiving (ILO, 2023b).

Figure 3 – Labor-force participation, by gender



Source: World Development Indicators of the World Bank.

Taken together, Uzbekistan's labor market is characterized by enduring informality, limited employment elasticity of growth, and pronounced gender inequality. These structural conditions directly shape the organization of domestic and care work, much of which remains undervalued, underprotected, and located outside standard labor regulation. Domestic and care work thus emerges not as a marginal segment, but as an integral component of the country's labor-market adjustment mechanism in the face of economic transformation, demographic pressure, and insufficient formal care provision.

1 https://kun.uz/en/12286882

2.2. Overview of domestic and care work in the country

Domestic and care work in Uzbekistan must be understood as a structural component of the labor market rather than a marginal or residual activity. As outlined in Section 2.1, persistent informality, limited employment elasticity of growth, and pronounced gender inequalities have shaped labor-market adjustment mechanisms over time. Within this context, household-based domestic and care work has emerged as a key channel through which labor supply—particularly female labor—is absorbed in the absence of sufficient formal employment opportunities and comprehensive public care provision.

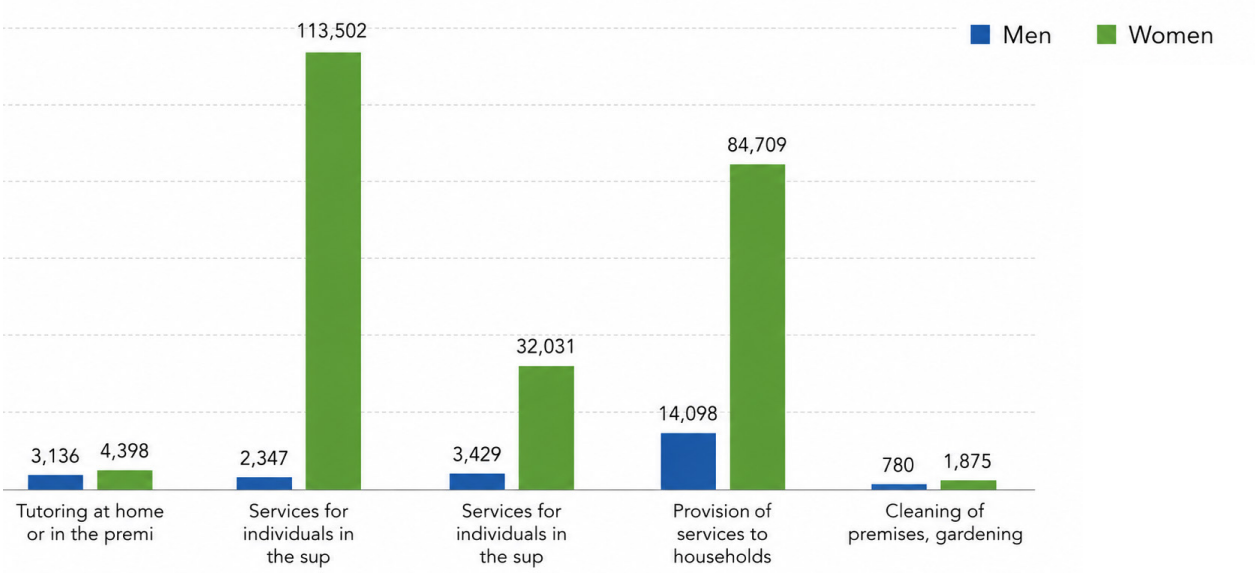
Domestic and care work is deeply embedded in wider patterns of informality that characterize the Uzbek labor market. Household-based activities such as childcare, eldercare, housekeeping, and home-based services often overlap with women's unpaid care responsibilities, blurring the boundary between productive and reproductive work. Much of this labor takes place outside formal contractual arrangements, leaving domestic and care workers without enforceable labor rights or access to social protection mechanisms (UNDP, 2025a). As a result, domestic and care work occupies a continuum between informality and partial formalization, rather than a clearly regulated employment category.

For those engaged in paid domestic and care work, employment conditions are typically precarious. Written contracts are rare, oral agreements dominate, and wages tend to fall below national averages. For example, UNDP (2025b) reports that the monthly wage of paid carers (nannies) is approximately 4.4 million UZS—around 30 percent lower than the average monthly wage in Tashkent in 2022 (≈ 6.31 million UZS), where paid domestic services are most prevalent. Working hours are often long and irregular, while occupational safety and health standards are weakly enforced in private households. Access to social protection depends largely on voluntary tax payments, but compliance remains limited, leaving many workers unprotected in cases of sickness, maternity, disability, or old age (Amanova, 2025). The absence of comprehensive family-friendly policies—including adequate maternity and parental leave and employer-supported childcare—further reinforces these vulnerabilities, pushing many women out of formal employment and into domestic and care work as a fallback option (Toulemonde, 2025).

Gender disparities strongly reinforce the informalization of domestic and care work. Women remain concentrated in feminized sectors such as health, education, and social services, which paradoxically exhibit some of the highest wage gaps despite high female participation. ILO estimates indicate that women earned on average only 64–68 percent of men's wages between 2018 and 2022, with particularly wide gaps among prime-age workers, reflecting motherhood penalties and care-related career interruptions (ILO, 2025). Time-use surveys further underscore this imbalance: women devote an average of 5.3 hours per day to unpaid domestic and care work, compared to 2.1 hours for men, and over 90 percent of unpaid household and care tasks are performed by women (ILO, 2023b). This unequal distribution of unpaid care constrains women's access to stable, full-time formal employment and reinforces reliance on informal or poorly protected domestic and care work.

Official statistics on domestic and care workers in Uzbekistan remain limited, reflecting the sector's high degree of informality. However, recent administrative data provide partial insights through the self-employment regime. According to the State Statistics Committee of Uzbekistan, as of 2024, 260,265 individuals were registered as self-employed in domestic services, of whom approximately 91 percent were women **(Figure 4).** Disaggregated data reveal rapid growth in women's participation: the number of women individual entrepreneurs in the "domestic service sector" increased from just 6,736 in 2021 to over 46,000 by 2024 (State Statistics Committee of Uzbekistan, 2024). Most registered workers are concentrated in household-based activities, including childcare, eldercare, and housekeeping—more than 113,000 in childcare services, 84,000 in housekeeping and cooking, and 32,000 in eldercare.

Figure 4 - Self-Employment and Domestic Work (2024, by gender)



Source: State Statistics Committee of Uzbekistan, 2024.

The introduction and expansion of the self-employment regime marked an important step in improving the visibility of domestic and care work. Presidential Resolution PP-4742 (2020) enabled individuals providing household and care-related services—such as tutors, caregivers, and home-based medical workers—to register formally without establishing a legal entity. By July 2025, a total of 6.3 million individuals had registered as self-employed, representing a sixteen-fold increase since the reform's launch. Of these, 581,800 were registered in social services, up from 74,000 in 2020, while household and personal services accounted for 2.2 million registrants **(Table 1).** These figures suggest that the scale of domestic and care work is substantially larger than earlier estimates and that many domestic workers may be classified under broader service categories rather than explicitly identified as care workers.

Table 1 - Registered Self-Employed by Sector in Uzbekistan (as of July 2025)

Sector	Registered Self-Employed (Sep 2020 launch)	Registered Self-Employed (July 2025)
Household/Personal Services *(e.g. beauty salons, home repair)*	~113,000	**2,217,200**
Agricultural Activities *(e.g. small farming, livestock)*	~87,200	**1,524,600**
Social Services *(e.g. tutoring, childcare)*	~74,000	**581,800**
Passenger Transport *(taxis, ride-hailing)*	n/a (not in 2020 list)	**771,100**
Industrial Crafts/Services *(e.g. carpentry, plumbing)*	~66,900	**503,600**
Home-Based Manufacturing & Trade *(e.g. food prep, market sales)*	~54,400	**544,200**
Information & Communication Tech *(IT freelancing, digital content)*	~7,500	**168,200**
TOTAL	~403,000	**6,310,700**

Sources: State Tax Committee data as reported by Kun.uz (Number of self-employed citizens exceeds 400 thousand in Uzbekistan; https://kun.uz/en/news/2025/07/22/self-employment-continues-to-rise-in-uzbekistan-reaching-55-million).

While these developments reflect progress in administrative formalization, they do not necessarily translate into improved labor protection or income security. Registration as self-employed primarily facilitates tax compliance and statistical visibility but offers limited access to social insurance, labor protections, or collective representation. Moreover, the available data do not capture the still substantial share of domestic and care workers who remain unregistered, nor do they fully reflect the overlapping and fluid nature of care work across formal and informal arrangements. As such, self-employment has functioned more as a mechanism of reclassification than as a transformative pathway toward decent work in the sector.

On the other hand, the demand for paid home-based care in Uzbekistan is increasing as demographic and social pressures converge. Population growth, rising life expectancy and persistent gaps in institutional care expand the pool of care-dependent people, while higher labour market participation—especially among women—increases demand for paid childcare and home-based elder care. UNDP (2025b) highlights the importance of expanding affordable, quality home- and community-based services to meet these converging pressures and to reduce care-related barriers to labour force participation. However, the surging demand also implies that, unless accompanied by measures to formalize and regulate the sector, the expansion of paid home-based care risks producing a larger pool of low-paid, precariously employed carers—mostly women—without social protection, decent hours or career pathways.

Recent system-level assessments of Uzbekistan's care economy highlight that care provision remains predominantly home- and family-based, with paid domestic care workers playing a critical role in filling gaps in public childcare, eldercare, and disability services (UNDP, 2024; UNDP, 2026). Drawing on household-level evidence, these assessments show that limited availability of institutional and community-based care services has led to a growing reliance on both unpaid family labor—primarily provided by women—and paid domestic carers employed directly by households. The evidence points to a persistent policy blind spot: while recent reforms have strengthened institutional coordination and expanded access to social services, household-based domestic care workers remain weakly covered by labor regulation, quality standards, and social protection mechanisms. This reinforces the relevance of focusing on domestic workers employed in private homes, as their informality reflects not only regulatory gaps but also broader structural features of the care system.

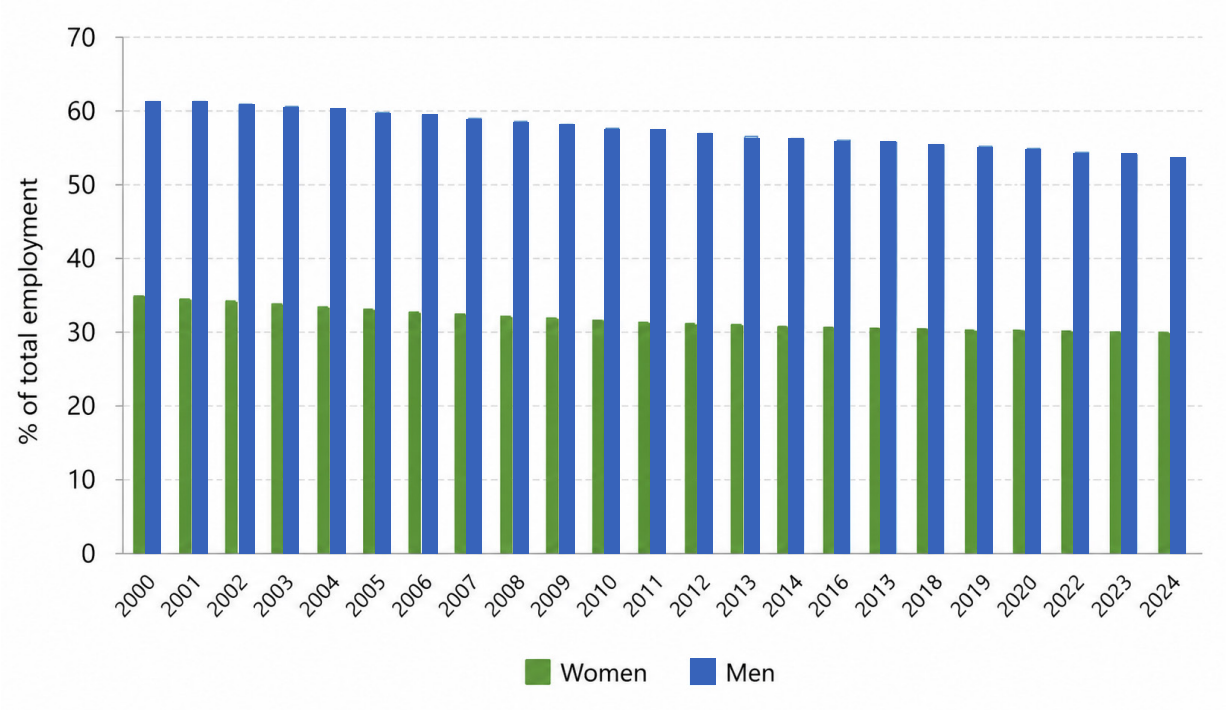
Overall, domestic and care work in Uzbekistan emerges as a critical yet under-protected component of the labor market. It reflects the interaction of structural informality, gendered labor-market inequalities, and gaps in public care provision. Rather than constituting a temporary or marginal form of employment, domestic and care work plays a central role in sustaining household incomes and absorbing labor supply, particularly among women. These characteristics underscore the need for policy approaches that move beyond registration and visibility toward strengthening labor rights, social protection, and recognition of domestic and care work as an integral part of inclusive economic development.

2.3. Links with women's entrepreneurship and employment vulnerability

Women's entrepreneurship in Uzbekistan is deeply intertwined with persistent informality and care responsibilities. A large share of women operate in low-productivity self-employment or micro-businesses that are home-based or linked to household and care services. These activities provide flexibility and income-generating opportunities, but they also mirror traditional gender roles, reinforcing women's dual burden of unpaid care and paid work. Limited access to finance, professional networks, and formal markets further constrains women's entrepreneurial opportunities, while overlapping domestic responsibilities restrict their capacity to expand and formalize their activities (UNDP, 2025a; ILO, 2023).

Labor-market data underscore the gendered nature of these dynamics. As shown in **Figure 5,** women's participation in self-employment constitutes a substantial share of total employment, reflecting both constrained access to formal jobs and the relative accessibility of self-employment as an adjustment strategy. However, this pattern does not necessarily signal economic empowerment. Instead, women's self-employment is concentrated in sectors characterized by low entry barriers, limited productivity, and weak income security, reinforcing exposure to informality and vulnerability. These forms of entrepreneurship are often home-based or compatible with flexible working hours, enabling women to combine paid work with domestic and caregiving duties.

Figure 5 - Self-Employment in total employment, by gender



Source: World Development Indicators of the World Bank.

The overlap between women's entrepreneurship and employment vulnerability is particularly evident in care-related activities. Domestic and care work is frequently classified administratively as self-employment or individual entrepreneurship, even when it involves long-term, regular service provision to a single household. This blurring of boundaries between dependent employment and independent activity shifts risks from employers to workers, reinforcing precarity while inflating formalization statistics. As a result, registration as an entrepreneur may increase legal visibility without improving job quality or access to social insurance.

Employment vulnerability among women is further reinforced by structural factors highlighted in previous sections. Gender wage gaps, occupational segregation, and the unequal distribution of unpaid care work limit women's ability to compete for stable, full-time formal jobs. In this context, entrepreneurship and self-employment function less as pathways to upward mobility and more as coping strategies within a constrained opportunity set. For women with caregiving responsibilities, especially those with young children or dependent elderly family members, domestic and care-related self-employment often represents the only viable option to generate income.

In summary, the expansion of women's entrepreneurship in Uzbekistan reflects both agency and constraint. While self-employment provides a degree of flexibility and income-generating opportunity, it is deeply intertwined with employment vulnerability and care burdens. Without targeted measures to strengthen protection, improve access to social insurance, and expand affordable care services, women's entrepreneurship risks reproducing existing inequalities rather than serving as a pathway to economic security. These dynamics underscore the importance of examining domestic and care work not only through the lens of entrepreneurship, but also as a key site of gendered labor-market vulnerability.

2.4. Regional and international comparative perspectives

International experience demonstrates a wide variety of approaches to improving the recognition, protection, and formalization of domestic and care workers. While contexts differ, several models of reform provide useful lessons for Uzbekistan:

- **Cooperatives and collective organization.** In Latin America, particularly in Uruguay and Brazil, domestic worker cooperatives have enabled workers to pool resources, improve bargaining power, and access social protection schemes that are difficult to obtain individually. Collective structures also help professionalize domestic work and raise its visibility in the labor market.
- **State-supported boards and tripartite mechanisms**. Kerala, India, provides an example of domestic work boards that register workers, set minimum wages, and extend access to welfare benefits. These boards are jointly governed by workers, employers, and the state, ensuring accountability and gradual formalization of employment relationships in households. Presently, more than 800,000 domestic workers are enrolled in welfare boards in Kerala, receiving subsidized housing, education support for children, and healthcare benefits alongside wage protections.
- **Digital registries and platforms.** The Indian e-Shram system and municipal-level worker registries in Latin America show how digital tools can make domestic workers "visible" to the state, link registration to social insurance schemes, and facilitate access to training and support. For workers operating in self-employment or highly informal arrangements, registries provide a practical entry point into the formal system. Launched in 2021, e-Shram has registered over 300 million informal workers, including domestic workers. Registered individuals receive a unique ID linked to pensions, insurance, and training programs. Municipal registries in Argentina and Colombia similarly connect household workers to formal contracts and local benefits.
- **Public investment in care services.** Countries such as Chile and Costa Rica have demonstrated that expanding childcare and eldercare infrastructure creates large numbers of formal jobs for domestic and care workers while simultaneously reducing women's unpaid household burden. These measures help reposition care work as an essential public service rather than a private family responsibility.
- **Legal reforms and ILO standards.** South Africa and the Philippines stand out for incorporating ILO Convention No. 189 on Domestic Workers into national law, granting domestic workers entitlements to written contracts, minimum wage coverage, regulated working hours, and access to social security. Aligning national legislation with international standards has proven to be a powerful tool in reducing informality and strengthening workers' rights.

Beyond specific reforms, global megatrends highlight why strengthening the status of domestic workers is urgent. By 2030, an estimated 2.3 billion people worldwide will require care, driven by population ageing. Technological change is creating new digital intermediaries for domestic services, while climate change increases both paid and unpaid care demands. At the policy level, frameworks such as the UN's Our Common Agenda, the Global Alliance for Care, and the EU's Care Strategy now position care and domestic work as central to inclusive and sustainable development. Most recently, the ILO's 2024 Resolution on Decent Work in the Care Economy marked the first tripartite global agreement setting policy directions to promote formalization and improve working conditions in the sector.

These experiences point to several pathways for Uzbekistan: promoting collective organization of domestic workers, piloting digital registries linked to social protection, investing in care infrastructure to create quality jobs, and aligning legislation with ILO Convention No. 189. These options provide concrete directions for transforming domestic work from invisibility and vulnerability into a recognized and valued component of the labor market.

3. LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

3.1. Review of national legislation and policies related to labor rights, informality, and care work

Uzbekistan has ratified several core ILO conventions, including Convention No. 100 on Equal Remuneration and Convention No. 111 on Discrimination (Employment and Occupation), but has not yet ratified two instruments of particular relevance to domestic workers: Convention No. 189 on Domestic Workers and Convention No. 156 on Workers with Family Responsibilities. The absence of these commitments leaves important gaps in aligning national law with international standards on gender equality and decent work.

At the national level, Uzbekistan has undertaken important steps in reforming its labor legislation and regulatory environment in recent years, including revisions to the Labour Code, simplification of tax regimes, and the introduction of streamlined procedures for registering entrepreneurs. These reforms reflect a gradual policy shift toward formalization of work and gender equality. Yet the framework remains insufficient for protecting workers in domestic and care activities, who continue to occupy a grey area between formal and informal labor. Many are excluded from labor rights guarantees, minimum wage coverage, collective bargaining mechanisms, and adequate social protection. This lack of explicit recognition contributes to the invisibility of domestic and care workers in public policy and perpetuates weak enforcement of decent work standards (UNDP, 2025a; UNDP, 2026).

Although the Labour Code has long provided general protections for all employees, it did not specifically recognize domestic work until the adoption of the 2022 Code. As a result, large groups of women engaged in household services, childcare, or eldercare were historically left without enforceable rights to contracts, wages, or dispute resolution. Legal reforms since 2019 have nonetheless marked progress in embedding gender equality principles into legislation, including the Law on Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men (2019), the Law on Protection Against Harassment and Violence (2019), and the introduction of gender legal expertise in legislative drafting. Nevertheless, structural gaps remain. The ILO's gender pay gap study emphasizes that wage-setting institutions in Uzbekistan, such as collective bargaining and minimum wage mechanisms, do not adequately address systemic discrimination. Workers in female-dominated and informalized sectors, including domestic and care services, remain particularly vulnerable to inequities in pay and exclusion from wage protections (ILO, 2025).

A significant step forward came with the adoption of the 2022 Labour Code, where Articles 514–520 formally recognized domestic work for the first time. Article 514 defines domestic workers broadly as employees providing household services such as gardening, childcare, cleaning, or driving to satisfy the personal needs of private individuals, and allows employment from age sixteen. Article 515 stipulates that labor relations must be based on a written employment contract, which can be indefinite or fixed-term, and requires that contracts be prepared in three copies—one lodged with the state tax authority, one held by the employer, and one provided to the worker. While these provisions created a formal legal framework for domestic work, their practical impact remains constrained. The law frames domestic work primarily as meeting "personal needs," and registration of contracts is not mandatory. This omission weakens enforceability, leaving most employment arrangements dependent on oral agreements. Furthermore, the legislation does not stipulate minimum working hours, overtime rules, or adequate rest periods. Nor does it require the maintenance of workbooks for domestic workers or provide robust dispute resolution mechanisms. These shortcomings restrict the capacity of the law to effectively extend decent work standards to the sector (Amanova, 2025).

In parallel, Uzbekistan has increasingly relied on the self-employment regime as a vehicle for bringing informal workers into the formal system. Presidential Decree PP-4742 (2020) and PP-50 (2025) explicitly listed domestic services as permissible forms of self-employment, including:

1. **Tutoring at home – conducting individual and group lessons in educational disciplines with children and adults.**
2. **Services for individuals for the supervision and care of children.**
3. **Services for individuals for the supervision and care of sick and elderly persons in need of constant care.**
4. **Providing services to households for housekeeping and household work, including cleaning and cooking.**
5. **Cleaning of premises, gardening and landscaping of an individual's property.**
6. **Providing butler and concierge services to private individuals.**

This framework gave a degree of legal recognition to household and care activities, enabling individuals to register through simplified digital platforms. Registration is free of charge, requires minimal paperwork, and provides a QR code as proof of status. Self-employed persons are exempt from personal income tax on earnings up to UZS 100 million (~USD 9,000 annually) but must pay a flat-rate social tax. These contributions are credited as pensionable service years, thus granting previously excluded informal workers at least partial access to social protection, particularly pensions (Presidential Resolution PP-4742, 2020).

While this simplified regime has facilitated the registration of hundreds of thousands of workers in social services—including tutors, caregivers, and home-based medical assistants—it remains voluntary, and compliance is uneven. Many workers register but do not pay the social tax regularly, which undermines effective coverage. Moreover, the scheme currently provides only a narrow entry point into the social security system, excluding benefits such as unemployment protection, sick leave, or maternity coverage, which are critical for care workers. Without employer co-contributions, domestic and care workers remain in a second tier of formality—legally visible, but still vulnerable to income insecurity and exclusion from full social protection (Amanova, 2025; ILO/WIEGO, 2024).

In sum, Uzbekistan's legal and policy framework has made incremental progress in recognizing domestic and care work, particularly through the 2022 Labour Code and the self-employment regime. However, significant challenges remain. Domestic workers are still excluded from comprehensive labor rights, collective bargaining, and full social protection. For reforms to deliver lasting change, the government will need to strengthen enforcement, expand coverage beyond pensions, and align national legislation with international standards such as the ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), which Uzbekistan has yet to ratify.

3.2. Social protection policies relevant for domestic and care workers

Access to social protection in Uzbekistan remains highly uneven, and domestic and care workers are among the most affected groups. These workers, largely concentrated in informal or semi-formal arrangements, are frequently excluded from contributory schemes such as pensions, health insurance, and unemployment benefits. Weak incentives for registration, combined with low awareness and administrative hurdles, mean that many fall through the cracks of existing programs. This exclusion reinforces their vulnerability, leaving them without protection in case of illness, maternity, or old age (UNDP, 2025a).

Evidence shows that social protection coverage gaps intersect with broader gender pay inequalities. According to the ILO, the gender pay gap is nearly identical in formal (29.9 percent) and informal (28.7 percent) employment, underscoring that formal status alone does not address structural wage disparities. For domestic and care workers, this represents a dual challenge: exclusion from contributory schemes on the one hand, and systematically lower earnings for women on the other, which reduces the adequacy of any benefits they may eventually receive (ILO, 2025).

Although Uzbekistan has expanded contributory schemes such as pensions and health insurance, access remains limited for women in informal or irregular jobs. Domestic workers, in particular, struggle to accumulate sufficient contribution histories, leaving them without adequate pensions or health protection (ILO, 2023). More than 60 percent of women in the private sector are estimated to lack social security coverage, with domestic and care workers disproportionately represented in this group (ILO, 2023b). This exclusion is exacerbated by the absence of family-supportive measures such as affordable childcare, comprehensive maternity protection, and parental leave. Without these, many women are forced into informal domestic and care roles, compounding their vulnerability (Toulemonde, 2025).

A major step toward inclusion has been Uzbekistan's self-employment reform; see Section 3.1. This scheme extends basic social protection to informal workers through a flat social tax paid into the Pension Fund, with each year of contributions counting toward pensionable service, hence creating an initial—albeit limited—pathway into the social protection system.[2] Registrations have surged—over 6.3 million self-employed individuals were registered by mid-2025—but compliance remains low, with only about 11 percent of self-employed consistently paying the tax as of 2022.[3] Incentives such as early-payment discounts and automatic deductions via digital platforms for high-earning drivers and couriers have been introduced, but enforcement mechanisms remain weak.

The system is now entering a new stage with reforms due to take effect in January 2026. Under the amended Tax Code, self-employed workers and small entrepreneurs with annual turnover of up to 1 billion soums (about USD 79,400) will pay only a 1% turnover tax while remaining exempt from income tax.[4] A new integrated digital platform will facilitate registration, tax compliance, and pension contributions, while also offering e-wallets and QR-based payments to strengthen financial inclusion. For domestic workers, these changes may lower barriers to formalization and improve opportunities to build contribution histories. These measures, set to remain in force until 2030, aim to consolidate the role of self-employment in Uzbekistan's economy, simplify compliance, and encourage more citizens to formalize their work while extending at least partial social protection through voluntary pension contributions.

Beyond pensions, self-employed workers—including domestic and care providers—still lack access to unemployment protection, maternity benefits, paid sick leave, and health insurance. This creates a risk of "second-tier formality," where workers are legally visible but remain vulnerable to shocks and income insecurity. Nevertheless, formal registration provides indirect benefits: it enables access to loans, grants, and state relief measures during crises, offering some recognition and pathways into more secure livelihoods. For domestic and care workers, the scheme represents progress but requires both expanded benefit coverage and stronger compliance mechanisms to deliver meaningful protection.

3.3. Other related initiatives

Beyond national reforms, Uzbekistan has piloted several targeted initiatives to formalize and professionalize segments of the care economy, which have indirect but important implications for domestic workers. Since 2018, the Ministry of Preschool and School Education, in cooperation with local hokimiyats, has promoted family-based kindergartens in districts such as Taylak (Samarkand) and Kasansay (Namangan).

These micro-preschools enable trained caregivers to operate legally from their homes, providing both income opportunities and expanded early childhood education in underserved communities.[5] While primarily focused on childcare, the model shows how household-based care work can transition from informal arrangements into formally recognized and regulated services — a pathway that could equally be applied to domestic workers providing in-home childcare or related household services.

2 https://www.imv.uz/en/news/category/yangiliklar/zini-ozi-band-qilgan-fuqarolar-uchun-pensiyaga-chiqishda-yaratilgan-imkoniyatlar

3 https://kun.uz/en/news/2023/01/14/tax-code-on-self-employed-citizens-may-be-amended

4 https://uz.kursiv.media/en/2025-08-12/uzbekistan-to-cut-turnover-tax-to-1-for-small-entrepreneurs-and-self-employed/

5 https://yuz.uz/en/news/nalogovy-komitet-aktivno-prodoljaet-legalizatsiyu-sfer-uslug-po-perevozke-passajirov-v-uzbekistane

Similarly, in 2024 the National Agency for Social Protection (NASP), with World Bank support, launched the INSON project to establish 50 Territorial Social Service Centers across the country. These centers are expected to serve 50,000 vulnerable individuals and create 1,200 formal jobs for caregivers, including persons with disabilities.[6] While these posts differ from traditional domestic work in private households, they represent one of the first large-scale efforts to professionalize care roles that were once unpaid or informal. By demonstrating the state's capacity to generate formal employment in caregiving, the initiative indirectly highlights the need to extend similar protections and recognition to household-based domestic workers, who remain outside these institutional structures.

In summary, these initiatives illustrate a growing recognition of the care economy as a critical area for labor market and social policy. However, they remain limited in scope and largely bypass the majority of domestic workers who continue to operate in private households. The lessons from these pilots — legal recognition, formal contracts, and integration into social protection systems — provide a foundation for designing policies that would more directly benefit domestic workers by ensuring their inclusion in future reforms.

3.4. Policy gaps and alignment with international standards

Despite recent progress, Uzbekistan's legal and policy framework for domestic and care work continues to fall short of international standards. The country has ratified several ILO conventions on equality and non-discrimination, but not Convention No. 156 on Workers with Family Responsibilities or Convention No. 189 on Domestic Workers. The absence of these instruments leaves major gaps in aligning national law with the global recognition of domestic work as a form of employment entitled to full labor rights and protections.

While the 2022 Labour Code formally acknowledged domestic work, the provisions remain limited in scope and weak in enforcement, as discussed in Section 3.1. Employment contracts are optional, not mandatory; inspections rarely reach private households; and mechanisms such as hotlines and dispute resolution systems are not accessible in practice to most domestic workers. Registration under the self-employment regime provides only partial visibility, with benefits restricted to pensions. Other core elements of social protection—including health insurance, paid sick leave, unemployment support, and maternity benefits—remain unavailable. This creates a "second tier" of formality in which domestic workers are legally recognized but still vulnerable to income insecurity and shocks.

Worker voice and representation also remain absent. International standards stress the right of domestic workers to organize, bargain collectively, and participate in social dialogue, yet Uzbekistan has no associations or unions representing household-based workers. Without collective bargaining, wage-setting institutions continue to neglect feminized and informalized sectors, leaving domestic workers particularly exposed to pay inequities.

Another structural gap lies in data and statistical recognition. Domestic workers are often hidden in broad self-employment categories, making it difficult to monitor working conditions, measure compliance, or design targeted programs. This invisibility undermines policy enforcement and prevents the extension of protections in line with ILO guidance.

Family and care policies also remain weakly developed. While Uzbekistan has introduced laws on equal opportunities and protection against harassment, maternity leave coverage is limited, there is no provision for paternity leave, and long-term care services are underdeveloped. This compounds the care burden on women and perpetuates informality in the sector.

In light of these gaps, several priority reforms emerge: legislative amendments to strengthen protections under the Labour Code and align with ILO Convention

6 https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2024/10/01/uzbekistan-and-the-world-bank-discuss-opportunities-for-expanding-their-partnership

No. 189; mandatory registration and employer co-contributions to extend full social protection coverage; stronger enforcement mechanisms adapted to the household context; recognition of the right to organize and bargain collectively; and investment in statistical systems to capture the real scale and conditions of domestic work. Without these measures, domestic workers will remain on the margins of Uzbekistan's labor market, excluded from the promise of decent work and just transitions.

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While the preceding section has outlined the legal framework and institutional arrangements governing domestic and care work in Uzbekistan, formal rules alone do not fully determine employment practices in private households. The highly individualized nature of domestic work, its location within the private sphere, and the limited reach of labor inspection mean that the effectiveness of regulation depends critically on how rules are interpreted, implemented, and enforced in practice. To examine these dynamics, the following section draws on qualitative evidence from stakeholder interviews, focusing on the mechanisms that shape informality, contractual arrangements, and access to social protection in household-based domestic and care work.

4. FINDINGS FROM STAKEHOLDER DISCUSSIONS ON DOMESTIC AND CARE WORKERS IN UZBEKISTAN

4.1. Methodological note

Section 4 of the study is based on **qualitative evidence derived from semi-structured stakeholder interviews,** which constitute the main empirical input for analysing informality, employment relations, and institutional practices in domestic and care work in Uzbekistan. This section builds on the descriptive and legal context presented in Sections 2 and 3 and focuses on how existing regulations and policy instruments operate in practice.

Interviews were conducted with two complementary groups of stakeholders, selected to capture **policy intent, implementation dynamics, and lived experience** across the domestic and care work ecosystem. First, interviews with representatives of relevant public institutions (Ministry of Employment and Poverty Reduction) focused on policy objectives, regulatory effectiveness, enforcement constraints, and future reform space. Second, interviews with domestic workers themselves documented employment histories, working conditions, income stability, access to social protection, and gender-specific constraints associated with care responsibilities.

Interview guides were designed to elicit information on:

(i) prevailing employment arrangements in household-based domestic and care work;

(ii) drivers of informality and under-registration;

(iii) the functioning of the self-employment regime as a formalization pathway;

(iv) gaps in social protection coverage beyond pensions; and

(v) enforcement challenges arising from the private and individualized nature of domestic work. Particular attention was paid to differences between legal provisions and their implementation in practice, as well as to incentives and constraints faced by both workers and employing households.

Detailed structure of the interview framework is provided in the Annex.

Interview material was analysed thematically, with emphasis on **recurring patterns, points of convergence across stakeholder groups, and systematic institutional bottlenecks.** Qualitative findings are triangulated with administrative statistics and legal provisions discussed earlier in the report, which serve as contextual reference points rather than as new sources of empirical evidence in this section.

The qualitative approach reflects both the analytical objectives of the study and d**ata availability constraints.** In the absence of publicly accessible labour-force microdata suitable for analysing domestic workers' employment conditions in Uzbekistan, stakeholder interviews provide the most reliable means of examining informality mechanisms, enforcement practices, and the lived realities of household-based domestic and care work. While the findings do not permit statistical inference, they offer critical insight into processes and constraints that cannot be captured through aggregate or administrative data alone.

4.2. Institutional perspectives on domestic and care work: implementation logic, constraints, and reform trajectories

This section draws on interviews with representatives of the Ministry of Employment and Poverty Reduction and related institutions to examine how domestic and care work is currently conceptualised, regulated, and addressed within Uzbekistan's labor market and social protection framework. The analysis proceeds by first outlining the Ministry's stated positions and policy rationales, and then reflecting analytically on what these positions imply for the governance of domestic and care work. In doing so, the section seeks to balance faithful representation of institutional views with a critical examination of their practical and structural consequences.

Conceptualisation of domestic and care work within labor market policy. Ministry representatives emphasised that domestic and care work is recognised as a legitimate form of economic activity and is incorporated into national strategies aimed at reducing informality and expanding employment. Rather than being treated as a distinct or exceptional sector, domestic work is situated within broader policy efforts targeting informal and non-standard forms of work, particularly those involving women.

In practice, this conceptualisation translates into the coexistence of two legal and administrative pathways. Domestic workers are formally recognised in the Labor Code as employees, with specific categories and basic conditions defined. At the same time, domestic and care activities are included among eligible forms of self-employment for registration purposes, allowing individuals to formalise their status through simplified administrative procedures.

Analytically, this dual framing reflects a pragmatic policy choice. By not insisting on a single legal form, the state retains flexibility in addressing a heterogeneous sector characterised by diverse working arrangements and limited enforceability. However, this flexibility also implies that domestic and care work is governed through differentiated regimes that entail varying degrees of protection, oversight, and obligation. As a result, formal recognition does not necessarily imply uniform treatment or outcomes across workers performing similar tasks.

Legal framework and its operational reach. The Ministry views the 2022 Labor Code provisions on domestic work as an important step in establishing legal recognition and clarifying the status of domestic workers. These provisions are seen as aligning domestic work with formal labor law and providing a reference framework for rights and obligations.

At the same time, Ministry representatives openly acknowledged the constraints on enforcement. Domestic work takes place in private households, which significantly limits the feasibility of conventional labor inspection. As a result, the Labor Code is not expected to function as a primary enforcement tool in this sector, but rather as a normative and legal foundation that can support other policy instruments.

From an analytical perspective, this positioning underscores the distinction between l**egal recognition** and **effective regulation.** While the Labor Code establishes the formal legitimacy of domestic work, its capacity to shape everyday employment practices is constrained by the nature of the workplace and by social norms surrounding household autonomy. This suggests that, in the absence of complementary mechanisms, labor law alone is unlikely to substantially alter informality patterns in domestic and care work.

Self-employment regime as a formalization pathway. Ministry representatives described the self-employment regime as a central instrument for formalising domestic and care work. Registration is facilitated through a digital tax platform and supported by local-level actors, particularly assistants to local government officials, who play a role in outreach and guidance. The regime is designed to be accessible and to minimise administrative burdens, thereby encouraging participation among workers who might otherwise remain informal.

According to the Ministry, self-employment registration provides several concrete benefits. It grants individuals a formal legal status, creates administrative visibility, and enables access to certain state-supported opportunities, including credit and loan programmes. In this sense, formalisation is framed not only as compliance with regulation, but also as a gateway to economic inclusion.

However, the Ministry also acknowledged that participation in voluntary social insurance, particularly pension contributions, remains low among the self-employed. This outcome highlights an important

limitation of the current model. While registration expands the state's visibility over informal activities, it does not automatically translate into sustained engagement with contributory social protection.

Analytically, this points to a structural characteristic of the regime rather than a temporary shortcoming. Voluntary contributions, combined with limited short-term returns and low and unstable incomes, reduce incentives for consistent participation. The result is a form of formalisation that prioritises legal status and administrative inclusion, while leaving protection against key social risks largely unaddressed for many domestic and care workers.

Social protection beyond pensions: reform direction and design challenges. The Ministry outlined ongoing efforts to reform and expand the social insurance system, with particular emphasis on introducing or strengthening maternity, sickness, and unemployment benefits. These reforms are presented as part of a broader modernization agenda and are not specific to domestic or care work. Nonetheless, their relevance for this sector is evident, given the predominance of women and the exposure to income and life-cycle risks.

Ministry representatives indicated that these reforms are being approached incrementally, with pilots, actuarial assessments, and phased implementation. While there is clear intent to broaden coverage, questions regarding the inclusion of self-employed workers remain unresolved. In particular, it is not yet clear how contributions would be structured, whether additional payments would be required from the self-employed, or what role state subsidies might play.

From an analytical standpoint, this uncertainty highlights a key tension in the current policy architecture. The dominant formalization pathway for domestic and care work relies on self-employment, yet the social insurance system continues to be designed primarily around standard employment relationships. Without deliberate integration between these two strands, there is a risk that social protection reforms advance in parallel to, rather than in conjunction with, the main mechanisms through which domestic workers are formalised.

Monitoring and enforcement in private households. The Ministry acknowledged that enforcing labor standards in private households presents significant practical and social challenges. Traditional inspection-based approaches are widely seen as infeasible in this context. As a result, policymakers are exploring alternative mechanisms that rely more heavily on incentives, transparency, and voluntary participation.

Among the ideas discussed are platform-based tools that could facilitate disclosure of working arrangements, establish minimum standards, and allow both workers and households to provide feedback. These mechanisms are envisaged as being linked to positive incentives, such as subsidies or compensatory measures, rather than punitive enforcement.

Analytically, this approach reflects an attempt to reconcile worker protection with respect for household privacy. It also signals a broader shift toward "soft" regulatory instruments in contexts where direct state intervention is constrained. While such mechanisms may enhance visibility and encourage compliance among participating households, their effectiveness will depend on design features, safeguards against abuse, and the broader institutional environment in which they operate.

International standards and policy sequencing. Regarding international alignment, the Ministry described ongoing discussions related to ILO Convention No. 189 on domestic workers, as well as prior analytical work assessing gaps between national legislation and international standards. Ratification is framed as conditional on further domestic reforms and institutional preparedness.

This position suggests that international standards are viewed as a reference point and longer-term objective rather than an immediate trigger for reform. Analytically, this sequencing reflects a preference for internal consolidation before external commitment. At the same time, it raises questions about how momentum for reform is sustained in the absence of binding international obligations.

Concluding analytical reflections. Taken together, the Ministry's account presents a policy approach characterised by pragmatism and gradualism. Domestic and care work is governed through a combination of legal recognition, administrative inclusion via self-employment, and emerging regulatory experimentation. This approach prioritises feasibility and participation, but it also produces uneven protection outcomes and leaves key design questions unresolved. Rather than indicating a lack of commitment, the Ministry's responses point to a governance strategy that seeks to manage informality incrementally while deferring more demanding regulatory and redistributive choices. Understanding these dynamics is essential for assessing both the scope and the limits of current reform trajectories in domestic and care work.

4.3. Personal perspectives on domestic and care work: lived employment relations, vulnerability, and adaptive strategies

This section presents worker-level perspectives on domestic and care work, drawing on qualitative interviews conducted as part of the study. Rather than documenting individual trajectories, the analysis focuses on recurring patterns in employment relations, income security, social protection, and gendered constraints as experienced by domestic and care workers operating in private households. These perspectives provide insight into how informality is produced and sustained in everyday practice, complementing the institutional analysis presented in Section 4.2 and informing the integrated discussion that follows.

Work history and tasks. Domestic and care work, as experienced by workers, encompasses a wide and fluid set of tasks. Interview evidence indicates that domestic workers routinely perform cleaning, laundry, childcare, and general household maintenance, with limited distinction between domestic chores and care responsibilities. In practice, domestic work is not organised around a fixed job description, but rather around responsiveness to household needs.

Two dominant patterns of work organisation emerge. In one, workers combine part-time engagements across multiple households, visiting different employers on different days of the week. This arrangement offers some flexibility and reduces reliance on a single employer, but it also fragments working time, creates income volatility, and increases uncertainty regarding future demand. In the other pattern, workers are tied to a single household, often under full-time or live-in arrangements. These arrangements typically involve a broader scope of duties and extended working hours, including periods of on-call availability.

Across both patterns, workers described domestic work as inherently open-ended. Tasks expand over time as trust develops or as household needs evolve, often without explicit renegotiation. As one respondent summarised her role, **"I did everything in the household."** This elasticity of tasks is a defining feature of domestic work and a key mechanism through which informality persists, as it blurs the boundary between paid labour, unpaid care, and personal obligation.

Employment arrangements and contractual relations. A central finding across interviews is the complete absence of written employment contracts. All employment relationships described are governed by oral agreements, with no formal documentation of duties, working hours, wages, or termination conditions. This arrangement is widely perceived as normal and appropriate within private households.

Importantly, workers do not view contracts as irrelevant or unnecessary. On the contrary, they recognise that written agreements could enhance clarity and security. As one worker stated, **"It would be better if there was a written contract."** However, this acknowledgement coexists with a strong reluctance to request formalisation. Raising the issue of a contract is widely perceived as risky, potentially signalling distrust or creating tension with employers.

The decision not to seek contracts reflects asymmetric power relations rather than preference for informality. Workers consistently expressed concern that formalisation could lead to job loss, particularly in a context where replacement is easy and enforcement is weak. One respondent articulated this constraint directly: **"I was afraid. They could easily replace me."** In this sense, informality is sustained not by mutual agreement, but by workers' limited bargaining power and the high costs associated with challenging established norms.

These findings underscore the limits of legal recognition alone. Even where labour law formally allows for contracts in domestic work, the private-household setting and the absence of credible enforcement mechanisms mean that contractual relations remain largely theoretical.

Income determination and working conditions. Income-setting practices in domestic work are predominantly employer-driven. Interview evidence suggests that wages are typically proposed by households and accepted by workers, often without negotiation. Where negotiation does occur, it is closely linked to workers' outside options. Those with multiple employers or alternative income sources may feel marginally more able to request adjustments, while those dependent on a single household face substantial constraints.

Working hours are similarly weakly regulated. Even where an initial daily schedule is informally agreed, workers frequently report staying beyond agreed hours. Overtime is common and often unpaid, driven either by explicit employer requests or by implicit expectations related to task completion. One respondent described this dynamic clearly: **"I cannot leave without finishing the work."**

In more dependent arrangements, long working hours are not always disclosed at the outset. Instead, expectations expand gradually after employment begins, making resistance increasingly difficult. As one worker noted, **"They did not tell me in the beginning,"** explaining how extended hours became normalised over time. This gradual intensification reflects a broader pattern in domestic work, where conditions evolve informally and unilaterally.

Overall, income instability and excessive working hours are not incidental but structural features of domestic employment. The absence of contracts, combined with moral expectations and household hierarchies, leaves workers with limited ability to assert boundaries.

Awareness of and participation in social protection schemes. Interviewed workers demonstrated general awareness of the possibility of registering as self-employed and contributing to pension schemes. However, none were actively participating in social protection through registration or regular contributions. Decisions not to register were shaped by a combination of economic, institutional, and behavioural factors.

Workers frequently cited expectations of short-term engagement in domestic work, low and unstable incomes, and uncertainty about the value of future benefits. One respondent explained her reasoning as follows: **"I thought I would not be doing this work for many years."** In this context, social protection contributions are perceived as deferred benefits that compete with immediate income needs.

The absence of employer co-contributions further weakens incentives. Without shared responsibility, the cost of formalisation falls entirely on workers, many of whom already operate at the margin of subsistence. Administrative barriers, including limited interaction with employment services and previous experiences of exclusion from formal job channels, reinforce disengagement.

These findings suggest that low participation in voluntary schemes reflects a rational response to misaligned incentives rather than lack of information.

Exposure to risk and absence of income security. A particularly salient finding is the near-total absence of protection against labour-market risks. Workers do not have access to paid sick leave, employment-based health insurance, or income replacement in the event of job loss. Minor illnesses may be tolerated informally, but serious health problems are widely understood to threaten continued employment.

One respondent summarised this vulnerability succinctly: **"If I become seriously ill, they will replace me."** This perception reflects both the lack of contractual protection and the ease with which employers can substitute domestic workers in an informal labour market.

In the absence of formal mechanisms, workers rely on individual coping strategies, including self-treatment, family support, and continued work despite illness. While basic public health services may provide minimal care, they do not mitigate income loss or job insecurity. As a result, domestic workers face a constant trade-off between health and income, reinforcing long-term vulnerability.

Gendered care responsibilities and constraints on mobility. Gendered care responsibilities play a central role in shaping domestic workers' labour-market positions. Domestic work is often chosen because it appears compatible with family obligations, particularly in the absence of affordable childcare or family-friendly employment options. However, interview evidence suggests that domestic employment frequently imposes new constraints on time, mobility, and personal autonomy.

In intensive arrangements, long and unpredictable working hours leave little room for rest, social interaction, or family life. Time off is limited and subject to employer discretion. Even where workers are nominally "free" outside working hours, fatigue and availability expectations restrict meaningful recovery and participation in social life.

These dynamics highlight the paradox of flexibility in domestic work. While the sector is commonly described as flexible, flexibility operates primarily in favour of employers. For workers, domestic employment often reinforces gendered patterns of dependence and limits opportunities to pursue more secure or upwardly mobile forms of work.

Aspirations and perceived avenues for change. When asked about potential improvements, workers consistently prioritised stability and security over higher pay. The most frequently mentioned needs were written contracts, predictable working hours, and access to pension entitlements. As one respondent noted, **"A written contract would be good, especially for pension."**

Notably, such aspirations were articulated cautiously and often emerged only through reflection. This suggests limited exposure to collective representation or rights-based discourse, rather than lack of concern. Workers' responses indicate a latent demand for formalisation mechanisms that enhance security without requiring individual confrontation with employers.

These personal perspectives underscore that informality in domestic and care work is sustained by structural dependency, asymmetric power relations, and weak institutional incentives, rather than by lack of awareness alone. These findings provide a critical empirical foundation for the integrated analysis in the following section, which links worker experiences to institutional practices, labour-market structures, and policy design choices.

4.4. Integrated findings and discussion

This section integrates evidence from worker-level perspectives and institutional interviews with the broader labor-market and policy context discussed earlier in the report. The objective is not to restate findings, but to explain how informality in domestic and care work is reproduced through the interaction of household-level employment relations, institutional design choices, and structural features of Uzbekistan's labor market. The analysis highlights key mechanisms that sustain vulnerability despite recent reforms, and clarifies the policy trade-offs that shape current outcomes.

Informality as an outcome of institutional design, not only enforcement gaps. A central insight emerging from the triangulation of findings is that informality in domestic and care work cannot be explained primarily by weak enforcement or lack of awareness. Rather, it is the predictable outcome of a policy architecture that relies on v**oluntary compliance, individualized responsibility, and differentiated legal pathways,** in a sector where workers have limited bargaining power.

At the institutional level, domestic and care work is formally recognised both as employment under the Labour Code and as eligible activity under the self-employment regime. This dual recognition reflects a pragmatic response to heterogeneity in working arrangements and the practical limits of inspection in private households. However, worker-level evidence shows that this flexibility translates into uneven protection, not effective choice. Workers rarely exercise agency in selecting the legal form of their employment; instead, the form is implicitly determined by employer preferences, income needs, and fear of job loss.

As a result, informality persists not because domestic workers reject formalisation, but because **formalisation pathways are weakly enforced, individually costly, and insufficiently rewarding in the short term.** This finding challenges narratives that attribute low registration to informational deficits and points instead to structural misalignment between policy instruments and employment realities.

The private household as a structurally weak regulatory space. Both institutional and worker perspectives converge on the private household as a central constraint on regulation. Unlike conventional workplaces, private households are shielded by norms of privacy, social hierarchy, and moral obligation. Institutional actors openly acknowledge that labor inspection is neither feasible nor socially acceptable at scale in this context, and that enforcement of contractual obligations relies largely on voluntary compliance.

Worker experiences illustrate how this regulatory vacuum is filled by informal norms rather than legal standards. Tasks expand gradually, working hours lengthen without renegotiation, and availability expectations become normalised. These dynamics are not aberrations but structural features of household-based employment, where relational dependency substitutes for contractual clarity.

The implication is that **standard labor-law instruments** are necessary but insufficient for governing domestic and care work. Without complementary mechanisms—such as incentives, standardised tools, or collective arrangements—the Labour Code remains largely symbolic in this sector. This helps explain why formal recognition in 2022 has not translated into widespread contractualisation in practice.

Self-employment as a visibility tool, not a protection mechanism. The self-employment regime has emerged as the dominant formalisation pathway for domestic and care work in Uzbekistan. Institutional actors view it as a realistic and scalable instrument for bringing informal activities into the administrative system, and registration figures confirm its reach. From a governance perspective, the regime has succeeded in **making domestic work statistically and administratively visible.**

However, worker-level evidence highlights a critical limitation: visibility does not equal protection. While workers are generally aware of the possibility of registration, they do not perceive it as materially improving their security. Contributions are voluntary, benefits are largely deferred to old age, and there is no protection against immediate risks such as illness, income loss, or termination. In addition, the absence of employer co-contributions reinforces the perception that formalisation is a unilateral burden on workers.

This creates a form of **"second-tier formality":** workers may be legally recognised, but remain exposed to the same risks that characterise informality. From a policy-design perspective, this is not a failure of implementation, but a consequence of a regime designed primarily for administrative inclusion rather than social risk management. Without expanding the protective content of self-employment, further increases in registration are unlikely to substantially improve working conditions.

Power asymmetries and the limits of individualised formalisation. Worker experiences reveal pronounced power asymmetries in household employment relations. Fear of replacement, income dependency, and lack of alternative employment options constrain workers' ability to negotiate wages, hours, or contracts. These asymmetries are particularly strong in single-household or live-in arrangements, where workers' livelihoods depend on maintaining employer goodwill.

Institutional frameworks implicitly assume that workers can initiate formalisation—by requesting contracts, registering as self-employed, or contributing to social insurance. However, the qualitative evidence shows that **individualised formalisation strategies are structurally misaligned with workers' bargaining position.** Even when workers recognise the benefits of contracts or social protection, they refrain from action due to perceived risks.

This finding has important implications for policy design. Measures that rely primarily on worker initiative—such as voluntary registration or optional contracts—are unlikely to reach the most vulnerable segments of the sector. Without shifting some responsibility onto employers or the state, formalisation will remain partial and uneven.

Gendered labour-market structures and the reproduction of vulnerability. The integrated findings also underscore the deeply gendered nature of domestic and care work informality. Women's overrepresentation in the sector reflects broader labor-market structures characterised by care deficits, limited family-friendly policies, and persistent gender pay gaps. Domestic work functions as both a response to and a reinforcement of these constraints.

At the worker level, domestic employment is often chosen because it appears compatible with care responsibilities. Yet in practice, long and unpredictable working hours restrict mobility, limit opportunities for skill accumulation, and entrench dependence on informal arrangements. This dynamic aligns with institutional evidence showing weak maternity protection, limited childcare provision, and inadequate support for workers with family responsibilities.

From a structural perspective, domestic and care work thus operates as a buffer sector, absorbing women who are excluded from formal employment due to care obligations, while simultaneously reproducing the conditions that limit their exit from informality. This reinforces the case for addressing domestic work not only as a labor-market issue, but as part of a broader care-economy and gender-equality agenda.

Policy coherence and sequencing: incrementalism with trade-offs. Institutional interviews indicate a clear preference for incremental reform, driven by feasibility concerns and institutional capacity. This approach has yielded tangible progress in legal recognition and administrative inclusion, but it also entails trade-offs. By prioritising accessibility and participation, current policies defer more demanding questions related to enforcement, redistribution, and employer responsibility.

The integrated evidence suggests that incrementalism is not inherently flawed, but its effectiveness depends on **policy sequencing and coherence.** If formalisation continues to focus on registration without parallel expansion of protection, the gap between legal status and lived experience may widen. Conversely, integrating

domestic and care workers into ongoing social insurance reforms—particularly maternity, sickness, and unemployment schemes—could significantly enhance the credibility and attractiveness of formalisation pathways.

Implications for policy design. Taken together, the findings point to several cross-cutting implications that inform the policy proposals in the next section:

- Informality in domestic and care work is structurally embedded and cannot be addressed through enforcement alone.
- Voluntary, individualised formalisation mechanisms reach visibility but not security.
- Power asymmetries in household employment limit workers' capacity to claim rights.
- Gendered care deficits in the broader economy reinforce reliance on informal domestic work.
- Incremental reform is viable, but only if it progressively deepens protection and redistributes responsibility.

These insights suggest that effective policy responses must move beyond binary distinctions between formal and informal work, and instead focus on **graduated protection, shared responsibility, and institutional adaptation to the household context.** The following section translates these analytical conclusions into concrete policy directions aligned with Uzbekistan's reform trajectory and institutional capacities.

5. POLICY PROPOSAL

Building on the institutional analysis and empirical evidence presented in this report, this section outlines a set of policy directions aimed at improving the formalization, protection, and governance of domestic and care work in Uzbekistan. The proposals are framed as **policy trajectories rather than prescriptive solutions,** reflecting both the heterogeneity of domestic work arrangements and the practical constraints associated with regulating work conducted in private households. The emphasis is on **deepening protection, reducing vulnerability, and improving policy coherence,** while remaining aligned with Uzbekistan's gradual reform approach and existing institutional capacities.

1. Clarifying and operationalising the dual formalization pathways

Policy direction: Maintain the coexistence of employment-based and self-employment-based formalization pathways, while clarifying their intended scope and strengthening their operational differentiation.

Rationale: Domestic and care work in Uzbekistan is governed through a dual framework that allows formalization either as dependent employment under the Labour Code or through registration as self-employment. While this flexibility lowers entry barriers and accommodates diverse work arrangements, it also generates ambiguity regarding rights, obligations, and protection levels. In practice, long-term and regular household work is often treated as informal or quasi-independent activity, despite displaying characteristics of dependent employment. Clarifying the scope and logic of each pathway is therefore essential to reduce legal uncertainty and prevent systematic under-protection of workers in stable arrangements.

Proposed actions (indicative):

- Develop clear, non-binding guidance to distinguish employment-based domestic work from genuinely independent service provision, using criteria such as duration, exclusivity, and degree of control over working time.
- Promote the use of simple, standardised written agreements for household employment that focus on core elements such as tasks, working hours, remuneration, and notice periods.
- Ensure that both pathways are explicitly recognised in policy documents and monitoring frameworks, preventing domestic work from being subsumed invisibly under broad informality categories.

Why this is feasible: These measures build on existing legal provisions and administrative practices and can be implemented through clarification and guidance rather than expanded enforcement.

2. Deepening the protective content of self-employment formalization

Policy direction: Shift the self-employment regime from a registration-focused instrument toward a graduated protection model, while preserving its accessibility.

Rationale: Self-employment registration has expanded legal visibility of domestic and care work, but its protective content remains limited. For many workers, formal status does not translate into meaningful security against income loss, health shocks, or life-cycle risks. As a result, registration alone has limited impact on vulnerability and does not significantly alter coping strategies in the face of illness, pregnancy, or sudden loss of work. Enhancing the protective value of registration is therefore critical to increasing its credibility and uptake.

Proposed actions (indicative):

- Introduce tiered contribution options for self-employed domestic and care workers, linked to income levels or work intensity.
- Pilot partially subsidised contribution schemes for low-income workers, particularly women with substantial care responsibilities.
- Strengthen the link between registration and tangible benefits, such as access to sickness cash benefits, maternity-related income support, or targeted social assistance top-ups.

Why this is feasible: Digital registration systems are already in place, and ongoing reforms to social insurance provide scope for incremental adjustments without redesigning the entire regime.

3. Integrating domestic and care workers into social insurance expansion

Policy direction: Explicitly incorporate domestic and care workers into the design of new social insurance instruments, rather than addressing them retrospectively.

Rationale: Current and planned reforms to maternity, sickness, and unemployment insurance represent a critical opportunity to address long-standing gaps in protection for domestic and care workers. If these schemes are designed primarily around standard employment relationships, existing exclusion patterns are likely to persist. Early and explicit inclusion of self-employed and household-based workers is essential to ensure that social insurance expansion contributes to reducing vulnerability rather than reinforcing dualism.

Proposed actions (indicative):

- Define eligibility rules for self-employed domestic and care workers at the design stage of new insurance schemes.
- Explore mixed financing models that combine modest individual contributions with public support for priority groups.
- Pilot simplified contribution collection mechanisms aligned with existing self-employment payment channels.

Why this is feasible: Reforms are still under development, allowing design choices to be adjusted before systems become fully institutionalised.

4. Developing non-intrusive monitoring and compliance mechanisms for household-based work

Policy direction: Develop monitoring and compliance mechanisms that enhance transparency and protection while respecting household privacy.

Rationale: Traditional labour inspection is poorly suited to domestic work conducted in private homes and is constrained by both practical and social considerations. At the same time, reliance on individual complaints or enforcement places disproportionate responsibility on workers, who often face asymmetric power relations and risks of retaliation. Alternative approaches that rely on incentives, transparency, and voluntary participation may offer a more effective means of improving compliance in this context.

Proposed actions (indicative):

- Pilot voluntary digital platforms that enable registration of domestic work arrangements and provide access to incentives and support services.
- Link participation to positive incentives, such as subsidies, service vouchers, or preferential access to public programmes, rather than penalties.
- Establish minimum safeguards to protect worker data and prevent misuse of information by employers.

Why this is feasible: Policy discourse already acknowledges enforcement constraints and demonstrates openness to digital and incentive-based solutions.

5. Strengthening institutional coordination and data visibility

Policy direction: Improve coordination across labour, tax, and social protection institutions to ensure that domestic and care work is visible and treated as a distinct policy-relevant category.

Rationale: Domestic and care workers are often hidden within broad self-employment or informality classifications, limiting the ability to monitor conditions, assess policy impacts, or design targeted interventions. Improved visibility is a prerequisite for effective governance and evidence-based policymaking in this sector.

Proposed actions (indicative):

- Introduce explicit domestic and care work identifiers within administrative datasets.
- Ensure that domestic work is reflected in formalization targets, reporting frameworks, and evaluation exercises.
- Align administrative data collection with forthcoming survey instruments to improve analytical coherence.

Why this is feasible: Administrative systems already exist; the focus is on classification, coordination, and use of data rather than new data collection.

6. Gradual alignment with international standards

Policy direction: Adopt a phased roadmap toward alignment with international standards on domestic work, including ILO Convention No. 189.

Rationale: International standards provide a coherent framework for addressing the specific vulnerabilities associated with domestic work, including contracts, working time, remuneration, and social protection. Gradual alignment allows national institutions to build capacity and test reforms incrementally, while using international norms as a reference point for long-term policy direction.

Proposed actions (indicative):

- Update and periodically revisit gap analyses between national legislation and international standards.
- Use pilot programmes and incremental reforms as confidence-building steps toward broader alignment.
- Engage social partners and civil society actors in preparatory dialogue and consultation.

Why this is feasible: Analytical groundwork and policy discussions are already underway, enabling a sequenced and deliberate approach.

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These policy directions recognise that informality in domestic and care work is structurally embedded and cannot be addressed through enforcement alone. Effective reform requires a shift from registration-centered approaches toward **graduated protection, shared responsibility, and institutional adaptation to household-based employment.** By integrating domestic and care workers into broader labour-market and social protection reforms, Uzbekistan can advance a model of formalization that enhances both economic inclusion and social security, while remaining consistent with its incremental reform trajectory.

6. CONCLUSION

This study has examined the status of domestic and care work in Uzbekistan through an integrated analysis of labour-market conditions, legal and policy frameworks, institutional perspectives, and primary qualitative evidence from stakeholders, including domestic workers themselves. The findings highlight both the **significant progress achieved in recent years** and **the structural challenges that continue to limit the realization of decent work and social protection for domestic and care workers,** particularly women.

Summary of main findings. Uzbekistan has made notable advances in recognising domestic and care work as a legitimate form of economic activity. The inclusion of domestic work in the 2022 Labour Code and the rapid expansion of the self-employment regime represent important milestones in addressing informality and improving the visibility of household-based work. Administrative data demonstrate a substantial increase in registration, especially among women engaged in care-related services, underscoring the relevance of recent reforms for a sector that has long remained invisible.

At the same time, the analysis reveals a persistent gap between **formal recognition and effective protection.** Domestic and care work continues to be characterised by informal employment relations, weak contractualisation, income instability, and limited access to social protection beyond pensions. The private household remains a structurally weak regulatory space, where conventional enforcement mechanisms are constrained and employment practices are shaped by informal norms and asymmetric power relations.

Qualitative evidence from domestic workers underscores that informality is not primarily driven by lack of awareness or resistance to formalisation, but by **misaligned incentives, limited bargaining power, and exposure to risk.** Workers value stability and security, yet face significant barriers to claiming contracts, contributing to social insurance, or negotiating working conditions. These constraints are particularly acute for women, whose labour-market participation is closely intertwined with unpaid care responsibilities and the absence of comprehensive family-friendly policies.

Implications for Uzbekistan's labour market and gender equality. The findings confirm that domestic and care work occupies a pivotal position at the intersection of informality, gender inequality, and care deficits in Uzbekistan's labour market. As demand for paid home-based care continues to grow—driven by demographic change, labour-market participation, and gaps in institutional care provision—the sector is likely to expand further. Without targeted policy responses, this expansion risks reproducing a larger pool of low-paid, insecure, and weakly protected jobs, predominantly filled by women.

At the same time, the analysis shows that domestic and care work also represents an opportunity. When appropriately regulated and supported, the sector can contribute to employment creation, income generation, and the reduction of gender gaps in labour-market participation. Strengthening protection for domestic workers can therefore yield broader gains in social inclusion, productivity, and economic resilience.

Importantly, the study finds that Uzbekistan's current policy trajectory—characterised by incremental reform, administrative inclusion, and experimentation with new instruments—provides a viable foundation for further progress. The challenge is not to replace this approach, but to **deepen its protective content and improve coherence across labour, tax, and social protection systems,** ensuring that formalisation translates into meaningful improvements in workers' lives.

Contribution to the Global Accelerator's objectives. The conclusions of this study are closely aligned with the objectives of the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions. By focusing on domestic and care work, the report highlights a sector with high potential for advancing **decent work, gender equality, and social protection expansion** simultaneously.

The findings underscore that progress under the Global Accelerator requires moving beyond binary distinctions between formal and informal work, and toward models of **graduated protection and shared responsibility** that reflect the realities of non-standard and household-based employment. Uzbekistan's

experience demonstrates how legal recognition, digital registration, and incremental social insurance reform can serve as entry points for inclusion, while also illustrating the importance of addressing remaining gaps in protection, enforcement, and worker voice.

In this sense, the study contributes not only country-specific insights, but also broader lessons for other countries participating in the Global Accelerator. It shows that domestic and care work can be integrated into national reform agendas in a pragmatic and politically feasible manner, provided that policies are grounded in institutional realities and informed by the lived experiences of workers.

Concluding reflections. Overall, the study suggests that the formalisation of domestic and care work in Uzbekistan is **underway but incomplete.** The direction of reform is broadly supportive of inclusion and gender equality, yet its impact will depend on continued efforts to align legal recognition with effective protection. Strengthening social insurance coverage, clarifying employment pathways, improving data visibility, and developing non-intrusive regulatory tools adapted to private households are central to this task.

By building on existing reforms and deepening their reach, Uzbekistan has the opportunity to transform domestic and care work from a sphere of vulnerability into a recognised component of decent employment and social protection. Doing so would not only improve the lives of domestic workers—most of whom are women—but also reinforce the country's broader commitment to inclusive growth, social cohesion, and just transitions.

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ANNEX

The following is a list of non-exhaustive questions used during the qualitative data collection.

A. MINISTRY OF SOCIAL POLICY / MINISTRY OF EMPLOYMENT AND POVERTY REDUCTION

OBJECTIVE: Understand policy intent, implementation constraints, and future reform space regarding formalization and social protection of domestic workers.

1. Recognition and scope

How does the Ministry currently conceptualize domestic work within Uzbekistan's labor market strategy, particularly in relation to informality and women's employment?

2. Legal framework effectiveness

From the Ministry's perspective, what have been the main achievements and limitations of the 2022 Labour Code provisions on domestic work in practice?

3. Self-employment regime

How does the Ministry assess the self-employment regime (PP-4742, PP-50) as a pathway to formalization for domestic and care workers, especially regarding compliance and adequacy of social protection?

4. Social protection gaps

What are the key barriers to extending social protection beyond pensions (e.g. maternity, sickness, health insurance) to domestic and care workers?

5. Enforcement and monitoring

Given that domestic work takes place in private households, what enforcement or monitoring mechanisms are considered feasible and socially acceptable?

6. International alignment

What are the main institutional or political considerations influencing Uzbekistan's position on ratifying ILO Convention No. 189 on Domestic Workers?

7. Future reforms

Looking ahead, which policy reforms or pilots does the Ministry see as most realistic for improving working conditions and reducing informality in domestic and care work?

B. ASSOCIATION / AGENT OF DOMESTIC WORKERS (OR INTERMEDIARY PLATFORMS)

OBJECTIVE: Capture meso-level perspectives on recruitment, mediation, working conditions, and barriers to formalization.

1. Nature of work arrangements

How are domestic workers typically recruited and matched with households, and what types of contracts or agreements are most common?

2. Demand-side behavior

What are employers' main concerns or reservations regarding formal contracts, registration, or social contributions for domestic workers?

3. Worker vulnerabilities

From your experience, what are the most frequent problems faced by domestic workers (e.g. wages, hours, job security, treatment, safety)?

4. Formalization incentives

What incentives or support mechanisms would make both workers and households more willing to formalize employment relationships?

5. Self-employment vs employment contracts

How do you assess the self-employment model compared to direct employment contracts in terms of protection, flexibility, and sustainability?

6. Collective organization

Is there interest among domestic workers in collective organization, associations, or cooperatives, and what barriers exist to forming them?

7. Policy recommendations

Based on your experience, what one or two policy changes would most immediately improve conditions for domestic workers?

C. DOMESTIC WORKER (LIKELY WOMAN)

OBJECTIVE: Document lived experiences, informality drivers, gendered constraints, and perceptions of rights and protection.

1. Work history and tasks

Can you describe the type of domestic or care work you do, how long you have been doing it, and whether you work for one or multiple households?

2. Employment arrangement

Do you have any written agreement or contract with your employer(s)? If not, why do you think this is the case?

3. Income and working conditions

How are your wages set, and how stable are your working hours and income from month to month?

4. Social protection awareness

Are you registered as self-employed or otherwise contributing to social protection (pension, health)? What influenced your decision to register or not?

5. Risks and insecurity

What happens if you become sick, pregnant, or lose your job? How do you cope with such situations?

6. Gender and care burden

How do your own family and care responsibilities affect your ability to work, earn income, or seek more secure employment?

7. Aspirations and change

If the government could change one thing to improve your work and life situation, what would that be?

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