



# **GENDER EQUALITY**

in Workplaces in Uzbekistan

## DISCLAIMER

The study 'Gender Equality in Workplaces in Uzbekistan' was conducted at the request of and with the financial support of UNFPA (the United Nations Population Fund), and implemented by the Center for Policy Research & Outreach (CPRO) at the Westminster International University in Tashkent (WIUT).

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# **Gender Equality in Workplaces in Uzbekistan**

Survey Report

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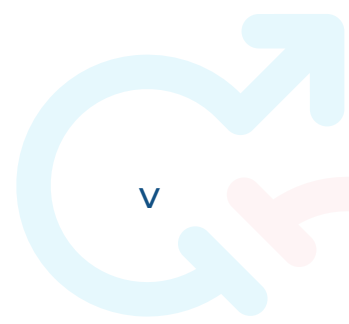
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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ADB</b>	Asian Development Bank
<b>CPRO</b>	Center for Policy Research & Outreach
<b>EECA</b>	Eastern Europe and Central Asia
<b>EIGE</b>	European Institute for Gender Equality
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-based Violence
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>Goskomstat</b>	State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics
<b>HBR</b>	Harvard Business Review
<b>HR</b>	Human Resources
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communications Technology
<b>IFC</b>	International Finance Corporation
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organisation
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UN Women</b>	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNGC</b>	United Nations Global Compact
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund

# KEY DEFINITIONS

<b>Gender equality</b>	The concept that women and men, girls and boys have equal conditions, treatment and opportunities for realizing their full potential, human rights and dignity, and for contributing to (and benefitting from) economic, social, cultural and political development. (UNICEF, 2017)
<b>Gender-based violence</b>	Harmful acts directed at an individual or a group of individuals based on their gender. It is rooted in gender inequality, the abuse of power and harmful norms. The term is primarily used to underscore the fact that structural, gender-based power differentials place women and girls at risk for multiple forms of violence. (UN Women, 2022a)
<b>Gender norms</b>	Social and behavioural norms that, within a specific culture, are widely considered to be socially appropriate for individuals of a specific sex. (UNICEF, 2017)
<b>Gender stereotypes</b>	Ascribing certain attributes, characteristics and roles to people based on their gender. (UNICEF, 2017)
<b>Discrimination</b>	Any unfair treatment or arbitrary distinction based on a person's race, sex, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability, age, language, social origin or other status. (UNFPA, 2018)
<b>Non-sexual harassment (harassment)</b>	Any improper and unwelcome conduct that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offence or humiliation to another person. Harassment may take the form of words, gestures, actions or omissions which tend to annoy, alarm, abuse, demean, intimidate, belittle, humiliate or embarrass another, or which create an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment. It includes harassment based on any grounds, such as race, religion or gender. (UNFPA, 2018)
<b>Sexual harassment</b>	Non-consensual physical contact, like grabbing, pinching, slapping, or rubbing against another person in a sexual way. It also includes non-physical forms, such as catcalls, sexual comments about a person's body or appearance, demands for sexual favours, sexually-suggestive staring, stalking, and exposing one's sex organs. (UN Women, 2022a)
<b>Physical violence</b>	Hurting or trying to hurt a person by hitting, kicking, burning, grabbing, pinching, shoving, slapping, hair-pulling, biting, denying medical care or forcing alcohol and/or drug use, or using other physical force. (UN Women, 2022a)
<b>Sexual violence</b>	Any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, or other act directed against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting. It includes rape, defined as the physically forced or otherwise coerced penetration of the vulva or anus with a penis, other body part or object. (WHO, 2022)

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Gender inequality is one of the key development challenges facing the world today. When women and girls are empowered, everyone benefits – women and men, businesses and governments, individuals and communities.

From the business perspective, advancing gender equality is not only the right thing to do, but also the smart thing to do. International research shows that companies with greater levels of gender equality have higher profitability and productivity, greater operational efficiency, and improved customer satisfaction. Companies that invest in women's empowerment often find that it benefits their bottom line by improving staff retention, innovation, and access to talent and new markets.

Uzbekistan has achieved substantial progress in expanding opportunities for women and girls in recent years, including through legislative and policy reforms. However, additional measures are needed to further advance and protect their rights and interests, especially in the area of creating an enabling environment for women at workplaces.

The authors of this report are not aware of any study on promoting gender equality and addressing gender-based violence at workplaces conducted in Uzbekistan. To address this gap, the present research was conducted to understand and generate data on perceptions, prevalence and impact of inequality and discrimination in the workplace, and the extent to which corporate policies and mechanisms support women experiencing violence, harassment and discrimination. The research was conducted through mixed methods, with qualitative data collected through interviews with HR managers of 23 companies that agreed to participate in the survey, and quantitative data gathered from 1,303 employees of these companies through a questionnaire.

## KEY FINDINGS

Overall, the research found evidence of positive developments in the area of gender equality in the workplace. These developments have occurred both at the national and company level. Several companies who participated in the study already have policies and measures put in place to address discrimination, harassment and violence against women in the workplace. HR managers from other companies expressed interest in learning about policies and tools for promoting gender equality, painting favourable corporate attitudes with respect to the adoption of fair and inclusive gender practices.

One notable gap discovered by the research was that most of the surveyed companies have not yet adopted a coherent, explicit gender-inclusive strategy that would enable them to create a culture of equality and zero-tolerance of discrimination and violence at their workplaces. Many firms have relied on stand-alone initiatives developed on an ad-hoc basis. Some firms have documented such initiatives in their corporate documents, but many rely on informal practices.

Another gap discovered by the research is the absence of data on gender inequalities. No companies have kept or analysed data in areas such as pay, occupational segregation, recruitment or promotion. Consequently, HR managers were only able to talk about inequalities based on their perceptions, without having solid evidence.

There is evidence that social and gender norms continue to have a significant impact on the employment of women in Uzbekistan. While social and gender norms are beyond companies' control, to promote gender



equality in the workplace it is necessary to take account of how factors from outside the workplace affect employment. Most surveyed companies offer tools for employees to combine work and family duties, such as flexible and remote working. However, the attitudes of managers and employees towards such requests may be improved - some employees reported negative reactions from both line managers and colleagues when they asked for time off for family matters.

While paternity leave is non-existent in practice, almost all companies provide maternity leave as required by the Labour Code of Uzbekistan. Most offer only the minimum maternity leave in line with legislation, but a few firms offer benefits beyond what is required by the law, including extra leave days and payments for new parents.

With regard to hiring, promotion and professional development, most employees believe that such opportunities are equal for men and women. However, those who do not consider such opportunities to be equal mostly indicate that men are more likely to benefit from career advancement opportunities. Differences are striking at the top management level, with some companies reporting none or a very small number of women holding senior management roles. There is evidence of the prevalence of stereotypes at the hiring stages. For example, there are cultural attitudes in Uzbekistan which have established stereotypes about 'male' and 'female' jobs. However, many companies indicate positive improvements made in recent years.

The report found evidence that issues of harassment and violence are hidden. While HR managers did not note any cases of violence and harassment in their companies during interviews, employees indicated that such incidents had taken place over the last 12 months. Female employees in younger age groups and those without formal partners tended to experience cases of physical violence and sexual harassment more frequently according to the quantitative survey results. Only a few companies had established practices for reporting such cases. Absence of reporting methods and mechanisms, or a lack of awareness of how to use them together with the sensitive nature of the subject, may be a possible cause of under-reporting.

The impact of negative work experiences, harassment and violence on victims was often indicated to be substantial, with a significant proportion reporting feeling stressful, fearful, or having lowered self-confidence. Some had taken time off ill due to incidents, and some were thinking of quitting their jobs. It is worrying that victims who have experienced such incidents at work and who had made their workplaces aware of what had happened, mostly say that no positive changes had subsequently been made, and some indicated that there had been negative consequences. This indicates a lack of effective response mechanisms.

# 1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

## 1.1. GLOBAL OVERVIEW OF GENDER EQUALITY AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gender inequality is one of the key development challenges facing the world today. The economic empowerment of women is key not only for achieving gender equality (SDG 5) but also for promoting inclusive economic growth and decent work for all (SDG 8) and reducing income inequality (SDG 10).

When women and girls are empowered, everyone benefits – women and men, businesses and governments, individuals and communities. Despite the global commitment to achieve equal rights and opportunities for women and men, no country has fully achieved gender equality. At the current rate of progress, it may take another 286 years to close the gender gap and ensure that women and girls have the same rights and protections as men (UN Women, 2022b). The obstacles restraining women from realizing their full economic potential are diverse and cross-cutting. Gender stereotypes, attitudes towards women's employment, high levels of unpaid work burden, and other factors limit opportunities for women to enter the labour market. Estimates show that globally females spend 3.2 times more time undertaking unpaid duties (ILO, 2019). Those who manage to become employed face further challenges – women are repeatedly being subjected to discrimination, lower pay rates, physical and emotional violence, harassment and discrimination.

Gender-based violence (GBV) has been widely acknowledged as one of the most prevalent human rights violations globally. It is estimated that one in three women will experience physical or sexual abuse in their lifetime (UNFPA, 2022). However, less than 40 per cent of GBV victims seek help (WB, 2020). International studies<sup>1</sup> indicate that gender-based violence is grounded on social and cultural factors that may be present in countries, despite alignment of national legislation with international standards. GBV is exceptionally pervasive. Not only does it undermine the physical and mental health, dignity, security and autonomy of its victims, but it also harms families, societies and businesses. Furthermore, one of the most critical aspects of GBV is that such cases frequently remain hidden due to fear and shame. UNFPA (2019) estimated that ending GBV in Europe and Central Asia by 2030 requires an investment of US\$ 3 billion in addition to the development assistance funding.

GBV in the workplace may take different forms, including but not limited to discrimination, non-sexual harassment, sexual harassment, and both physical and sexual violence. Estimates of GBV in the workplace vary dramatically depending on how the concept is defined and measured, and is subject to inaccuracies caused by under-reporting. While reported levels of physical violence in the workplace as determined by available studies tend to be in the range of 1 to 5 per cent of the workforce, this may go up to 56 per cent for specific occupations (ILO 2016). Incidents of sexual harassment appear to be more prevalent, with rates of around 50 per cent of the workforce having been recorded in the EU, 77 per cent in South Africa, and 85 per cent in Ethiopia (ILO 2016).

For businesses, advancing gender equality is not just the right thing but also the smart thing to do. A McKinsey Global Institute (2015) report indicated that advancing women's equality could add \$12 trillion to the global GDP by 2025, and could improve company profitability by 21 per cent. Global evidence shows that women's empowerment leads to tangible benefits for companies by increasing workers' productivity, improving operational efficiency and innovation, and raising customer satisfaction (UNGC, 2022; IFC, 2013). Furthermore, investors are increasingly paying attention to company reputation, social responsibility and

<sup>1</sup> For example, Bayazit et al (2019).

ethical investment, making companies that support the empowerment of women and who have policies promoting gender equality more attractive propositions (McKinsey, 2015).

Incidents of GBV are not only devastating for victims, but they also entail significant economic costs for companies. Direct financial costs of GBV in the workplace include victims' and witnesses' absenteeism, illness, turnover and, in some cases, legal cases and compensation payments. Indirect costs can be caused by lowered productivity, motivation, quality of work, employer loyalty and reduced public image. Taken together, a report by Deloitte (2019) into sexual harassment and violence calculated that the cost to businesses is over \$2.5bn per year in the US, or \$1,423 per person per year.

Overcoming gender gaps requires joint efforts of the public and private sector and civil society. In workplaces, the private sector plays a central and important role in achieving gender equality by promoting economic empowerment of women and creating inclusive work environments free of discrimination, harassment and violence against women.

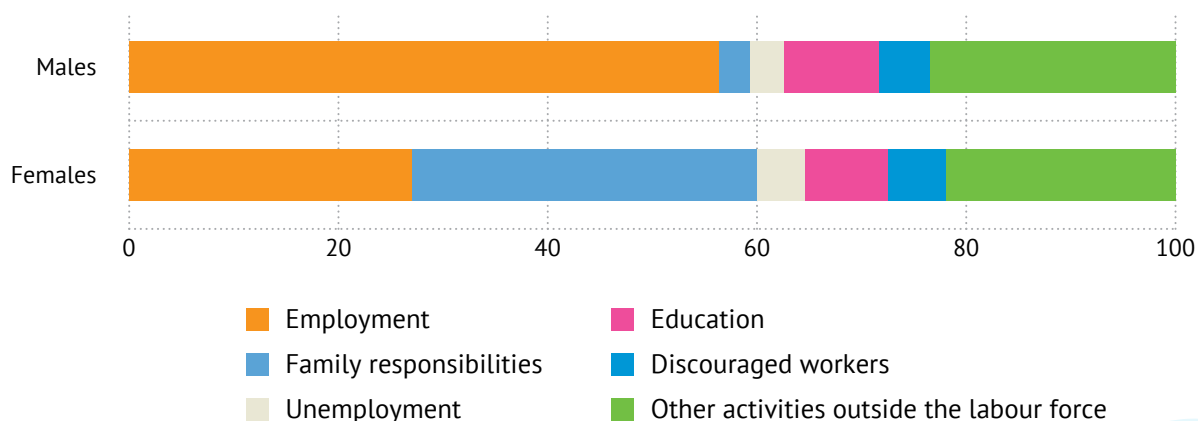
## 1.2. STATE OF GENDER EQUALITY IN UZBEKISTAN

Uzbekistan has achieved substantial progress in expanding opportunities for women and girls over recent years, but additional measures are needed to further advance and protect their rights and interests.

One of the challenges faced in promoting gender equality is the prevalence of discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes that prescribe social roles and power relations between men and women that are still predominant in society. Conservative gender stereotypes and patriarchal norms prevent full involvement of girls in education, and limit women's employment. They reinforce unequal power relations, specifically male dominance over women. They perpetuate high levels of unpaid work burden, impunity of perpetrators, structural inequalities and systematic oppressions.

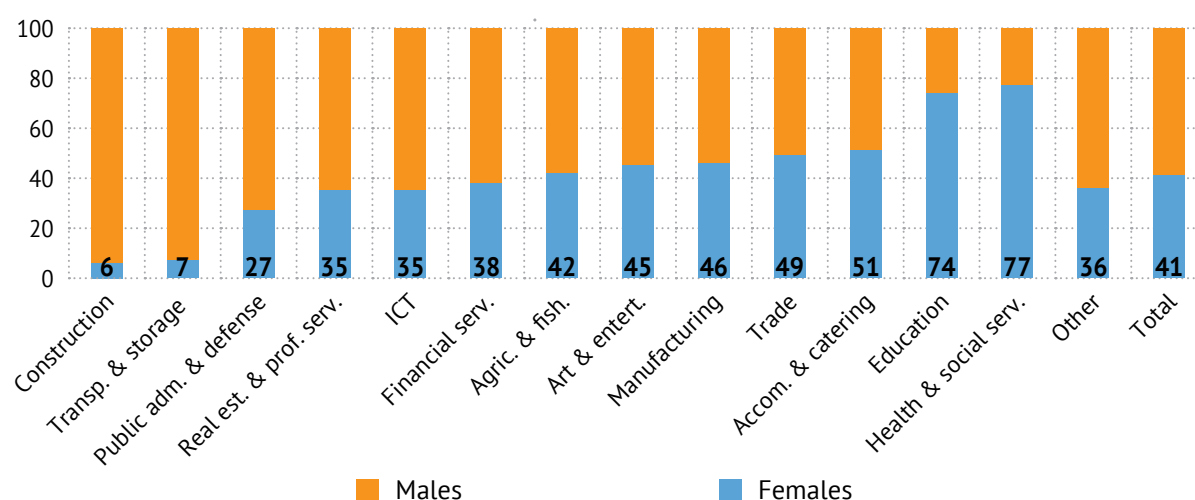
Evidence shows that a smaller share of women are in employment in Uzbekistan, compared to men. The data in Figure 1.1 shows that 57 per cent of men were employed in 2018, compared to only 28 per cent of women. One-third or 33 per cent of working age women were engaged in unpaid care work as their main activity, compared to 3 per cent of men. There is notable gender segregation by sector (Figure 1.2). Women are highly represented in traditionally 'female' sectors, including education, health care and social services, which typically offer lower wages. Men dominate in the construction, transportation and storage industries, as well as in real estate and professional services, ICT and financial services, which generally offer higher salaries.

**Figure 1.1. Distribution of working-age women and men by main activity, 2018**



Source: ILO (2020)

**Figure 1.2. Share of women in employment by sector, 2021**



Source: Goskomstat (2021)

Although social and gender norms are not a part of formal laws or policies, they have a significant impact on the attitudes and behaviours of Uzbekistan's citizens. They imply that men should take on the role of being breadwinners, while women are responsible for families and households. Data collected through the Listening to the Citizens of Uzbekistan 2018 survey showed that about one-third of men and one-quarter of women believed that it was unacceptable for any woman in their family to have a job outside their home (ILO, 2020). However, even if a woman's family tolerates her employment, she is still expected to balance work and family life. Because women spend about the same amount of time on unpaid domestic tasks that go with their social roles, as men do in productive paid work, women have fewer options to work at formal jobs or at start-up businesses (ADB, 2018).

Furthermore, social and gender norms limit opportunities for women to attain education and skills, making them less competitive in the labour market. The share of women among students in higher educational institutions has increased significantly over the past ten years, from 36 per cent in 2012/2013 to 46 per cent in 2021/2022 (Goskomstat 2022). However, women continue to face challenges, especially in rural areas where families have more conservative views. Specifically, parents may give preference to educating boys rather than girls, especially at the tertiary level, because of the lack of income opportunities for women, unwillingness to send daughters far from home, or because they believe girls do not require education as they should get married and start a family as soon as possible (ADB, 2018). In addition, girls often choose a field of study based on a desire to obtain a qualification that will be useful in family life (such as those needed to become a health worker, teacher or seamstress), instead of being guided by opportunities for employment and earnings (ADB, 2018). Lack of access to tertiary education, and limited selection of study areas, therefore make girls and women disadvantaged in labour market competition, especially in high-paying sectors.

There is no survey-based data on GBV prevalence in Uzbekistan. However, media and NGOs frequently report that women and girls in the country are repeatedly subject to physical and emotional violence, harassment and discrimination.<sup>1</sup> Recent data from the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Uzbekistan shows issuance of almost 38 thousand protection orders in relation to violence cases between January and September 2022,

<sup>1</sup> For example, see Nemolchi.uz (2022).

including almost 500 protection orders responding to violence occurring in the workplace.<sup>2</sup> Although anonymous and confidential channels for reporting cases of violence are available,<sup>3</sup> in many cases women who experience these incidents fear to talk about them, or to ask for help. A lack of skilled and properly-supported service providers prevents the availability of quality, accessible, coordinated and multi-sectoral services for survivors and for those at risk; correctional programs for perpetrators are inexistent. Discrimination and violence are socially accepted with widespread impunity. In regard to sexual harassment, there is anecdotal evidence that sexual jokes and remarks directed to women are considered appropriate, even in the workplace. GBV and discrimination against women and girls has economic costs for Uzbekistan. It has a strong impact on human security and human rights, including survivor's health, access to education, employment and other basic human rights of women and girls.

### 1.3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Uzbekistan has taken significant steps to introduce and revise policy and legislative frameworks and mechanisms to ensure equal rights and opportunities for all its citizens. In 2021, the Government of Uzbekistan adopted its first National Strategy of Achieving Gender Equality until 2030. The document was developed on the basis of relevant provisions of the Constitution and the Law 'On Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men' (September 2019). The strategy aims to improve the socio-political activity of women, and strengthen women's representation, training, employment, and entrepreneurship. Specifically, it seeks to increase the employment of women, including at leadership positions, provide economically-disadvantaged women and girls with opportunities to obtain higher education through state scholarships, and provide financial support to poor and vulnerable women, especially in terms of attaining skills necessary for improving their employment opportunities.

Abuse of women and gender-based discrimination has been criminalised by Articles 18, 119 and 121 of the Criminal Code of Uzbekistan. The Law 'On Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men' (September 2019) also has provisions to eliminate gender-based discrimination. Notably, the document covers gender equality in housework, as well as the right of both parents - mothers and fathers - to parental leave. It also stipulates that housework cannot be a basis for direct or indirect gender discrimination, and is to be performed equally by women and men. The draft Labour Code operates in accordance with ILO Convention No. 156, and offers protection for both men and women workers with family responsibilities. The new version of the Uzbek Constitution proposed that there will be a ban on refusing to hire women, dismissing them or reducing their wages based on their pregnancy or childcare responsibilities.

The government made a strong commitment to achieve zero violence against women by 2030 at the Nairobi Summit in 2019, which commemorated the 25th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development. A historical moment to embrace human rights, ensure gender equality and eliminate violence against women in Uzbekistan occurred in September 2019, when the Law 'On the Protection of Women from Violence and Harassment' was adopted, outlining measures to prevent, detect and combat harassment and violence against women. Another important document in this field is the Presidential Decree No. 3827 of 2 July 2018 'On Measures to Improve the System of Social Rehabilitation and Adaptation as well as to Prevent Family and Domestic Violence'. As part of the implementation of the National Strategy of Achieving Gender Equality, efforts to introduce and implement a multi-sectoral response to GBV based on internationally-recognized models of Standard Operational Procedures for key service providers are being made.

<sup>2</sup> No to Violence Channel (2022).

<sup>3</sup> For example, the 1146 helpline of the Republican Centre for the Rehabilitation and Adaptation of victims of violence.

## 2. STUDY METHODOLOGY

### 2.1. OBJECTIVES

To date, the number of studies of gender equality in Uzbekistan's workplaces has been limited, and to the knowledge of this report's authors, there has been no research in this direction targeted at the private sector. This study was thus initiated by UNFPA Uzbekistan as a response to the data gap.

The objective of this study is to gather reliable data on the perceptions, prevalence, and impact of gender-based inequalities, harassment, violence and discrimination in the workplace in Uzbekistan's private sector, and understand the extent to which corporate policies and mechanisms support the establishment of gender-equal and inclusive work environments.

### 2.2. DATA COLLECTION

A detailed outline of the research methodology is presented in Annex 1. The data collection was performed through qualitative and quantitative methods. The quantitative method entailed collecting primary data from the employees of private sector companies through a questionnaire to (i) identify their perceptions of the prevalence and impact of harassment, discrimination and violence at the workplace, and (ii) determine what actions are taken by employees facing such incidents. The qualitative method involved conducting interviews with Human Resources (HR) managers of companies to (i) gather information on whether companies mainstream gender equality in their work environments, and (ii) identify policies, procedures, good practices and support structures developed and used by companies to promote family-friendly work environments, as well as to prevent and address cases of gender-based harassment, discrimination and violence at the workplace.

Companies were recruited to take part in the research on a voluntary basis. The selection criteria included that companies are based in Tashkent city and the Tashkent region, and have at least 30 employees. The research team aimed to ensure the representation of different companies in terms of their economic sector and size of workforce, and approached both local and international companies. Participating companies nominated HR managers to participate in qualitative data collection.

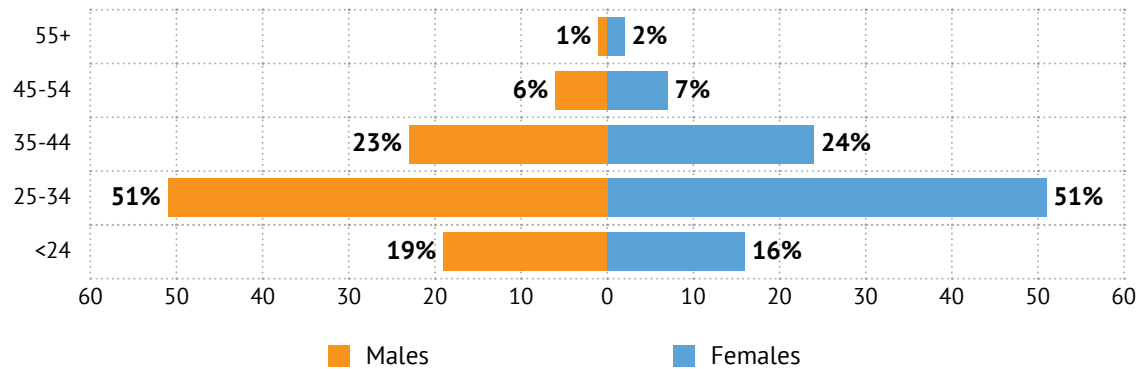
### 2.3. PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

A total of 23 companies took part in the study. The sectors of the businesses engaged included (in no particular order) construction, ICT, trade, manufacturing, accommodation and food services, education and financial services. The research team conducted 23 interviews with HR managers to meet the research objectives.

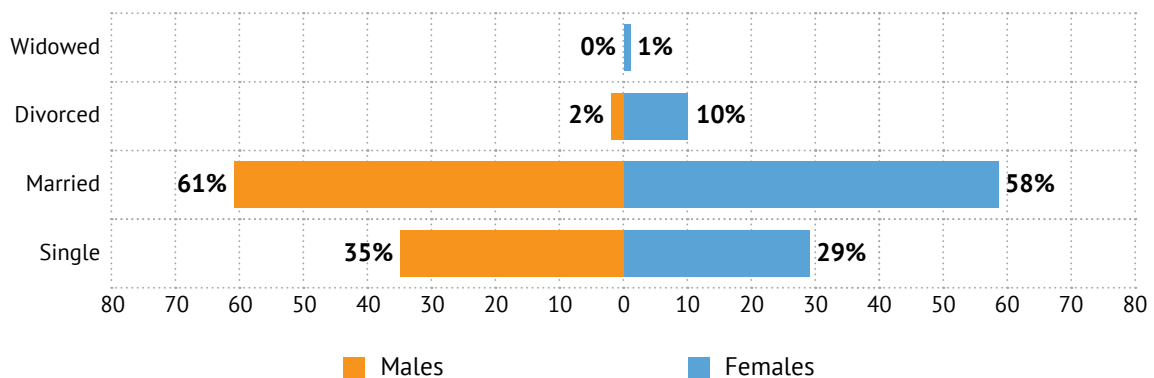
The recruitment of respondents for the quantitative questionnaire was conducted through participating companies. HR managers disseminated information about the survey and the questionnaire among their employees, and respondents self-selected to take part in the study. A total of 1,303 individual responses were collected through the quantitative survey. The profile of respondents is presented in Figure 2.1.

**Figure 2.1. Profile of respondents**

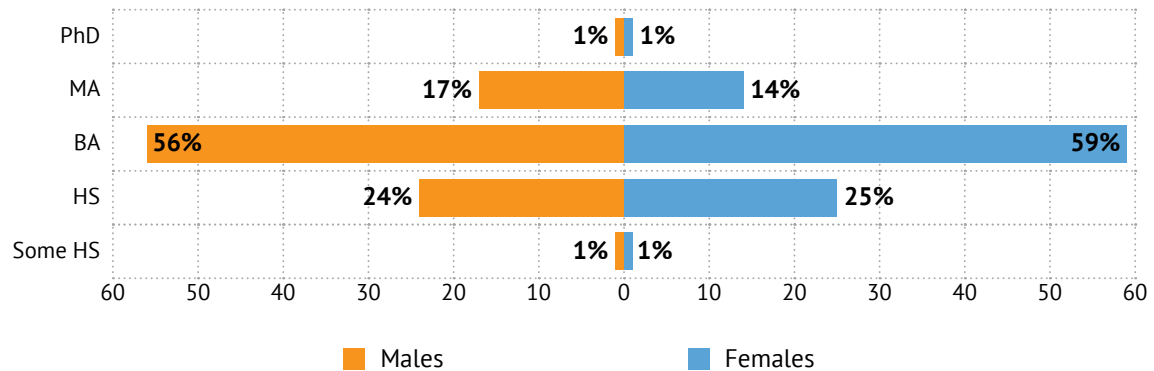
**A. Age distribution**



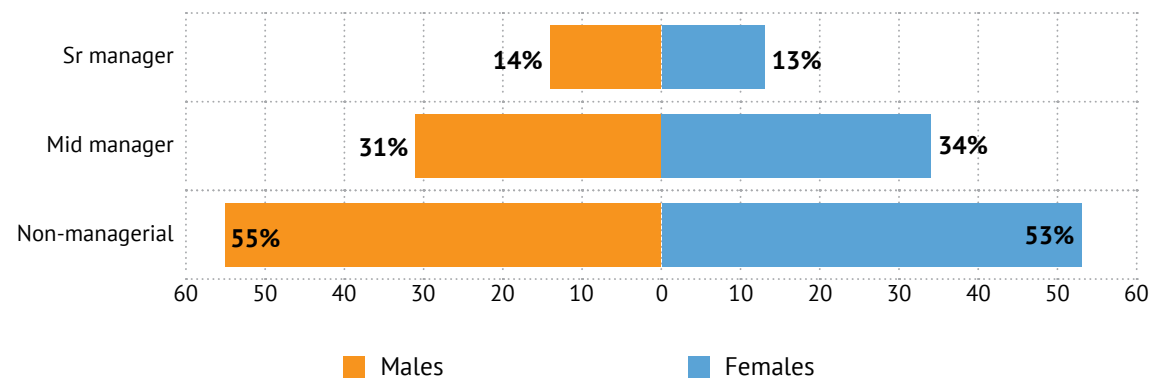
**B. Marital status distribution**



**C. Education distribution**



**D. Position level distribution**



Notes: (A, B, C, D) N (Males) = 563; N (Females) = 740

## 2.4. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Given the sensitivity of the study topic, the research team carefully considered the issues of harm, confidentiality, anonymity and beneficence through the development, implementation and reporting on the findings of the survey. The wording and structuring of the study interviews and the questionnaire questions showed particular attention paid to personal and cultural sensitivities around gender relations. Confidentiality of responses to the quantitative survey was ensured by data security, and reassurance that personal data would not be shared with employers. Anonymity was ensured by the anonymisation of company and individual data in the quantitative survey, while data analysis was conducted by thematic areas and did not involve disaggregated analysis by company.

This report does not disclose any information on specific companies or individuals that took part in the survey.

## 2.5. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present study has a number of limitations that should be considered when looking at the findings and results.

One limitation is the self-selecting nature of the study participants, the latter including both companies and employees. The decision of a company or employee to take part in the study may reflect some inherent bias in the characteristics or traits of the companies or individuals. The sample of companies will not necessarily be representative of regional (Tashkent city or Tashkent region) or national (Uzbekistan) distribution of companies in terms of location, size, industrial sector, or private/public sector split. Nor may the policies and practices of these companies towards discrimination, harassment and violence be truly representative. Similarly, the employees may not be representative of the entire populations of employees in terms of characteristics such as their age or occupation, as well as their experiences of work-place discrimination, harassment and violence. The reader should therefore not extrapolate the results to the national or regional populations of companies and employees. Rather, the findings from this study are meant to outline a range of experiences, practices and policies around work-place discrimination, harassment and violence. The report provides insight into where problems may exist, as well as examples of good practice which may help address such problems.

The quantitative questionnaires were completed by employees without the presence or supervision of research team members. This meant it was not possible to answer questions or provide clarifications of any questions that were unclear to respondents. To minimize the impact of this limitation, the study ran a pilot before launching the survey for the entire sample, and subsequently adjusted the questions based on feedback received.

Another limitation has been the sensitive nature of the study topic, especially in regards to the matters of harassment and violence. The team had to find a balance between the depth of the study, and the willingness of respondents to provide honest and accurate answers. However, it is possible that the sensitivity of the questions contributed to non-response and self-censoring response biases in some cases.

Finally, the interviews and questionnaires were conducted in three languages and, despite careful translation, there is a possibility that in translating between languages, some of the meaning and/or nuance may have been lost.



## 3. STUDY FINDINGS

### 3.1. GENDER AND SOCIAL NORMS

#### 3.1.1. Evidence and possible causes

The survey findings provide evidence that gender norms have a substantial impact on women's employment opportunities and experiences in Uzbekistan. Through qualitative interviews, we obtained evidence that persistent cultural beliefs and traditional gender roles still create barriers for women seeking to enter the workplace:

*HR#4: We still have a traditional mentality. It is sometimes very difficult for young girls who are married. The daughter-in-law has to do everything including taking care of your parents, and her husband, and do all the cleaning. This, of course, I am not approving of. Our customs and traditions oppress our youth. Even in the capital, the situation is like this.*

These constraints affect women's lives from a young age, in the form of reduced educational opportunities for girls as compared to boys, as explained here:

*HR#3: In general women are not getting enough education to be equal to men. It starts with education, when parents choose to invest in boys' education rather than in girls'. That's why women often lose in the career competition.*

Some HR managers that were interviewed perceived the situation as being positive, when compared to previous stages of Uzbekistan's development:

*HR#11: However, without any doubt, I can say that this tendency is changing for the better. The country and the whole of society are going through such a development. I think we are on the right track and direction. As the government has some active specific quotas for women's development, we can see that women have been promoted to higher positions, and hence these positive changes are taking place.*

#### 3.1.2. Policies

Many challenges arise from stereotypes about women, largely driven by social norms demanding them to be caregivers. The survey demonstrated that many companies recognise the need to support employees with combined work and family responsibilities, including by offering flexible and remote working, family leave and additional benefits to employees who become parents, and other types of assistance.

The questionnaire responses showed that remote and flexible working hours are the most frequently-used benefits (Figure 3.1). Women take advantage of such benefits comparatively more than men – 44 per cent vs 30 per cent for remote working, and 37 per cent vs 27 per cent for flexible working hours. Parental leave benefits beyond what is required by law were used by 27 per cent of women and 19 per cent of men. 9 per cent of women and 23 per cent of men indicated that none of the described benefits were offered by their employer.

Some HR managers pointed out that flexible and remote working arrangements are targeted towards women, aiming to help them combine work and family duties:

*HR#4: When mums send their children to kindergarten, children start to get sick. In such cases women can work from home. It is not written specifically in the policies. This is more of a management culture, so that they trust the teams and then the loyalty and levels of responsibility grow.*

*HR#16: We have some additional leave days for our women employees, less working hours and flexible working schedules.*

When it came to maternity leave, the key finding that emerged was that companies, for the most part, referred to the Labour Code of Uzbekistan and its provision of three months maternity leave. However, some firms offer greater flexibility and benefits in addition to what is required by legislation:

*HR#13: Our girls have the right to choose how long they will take care of their child - 3 years or a month. (...) If her salary has increased during her maternity leave, or something has changed in her compensation package, we make sure to reflect that in her earnings as soon as she comes out of maternity leave. We don't need a manager's approval to do that, because that's our internal policy.*

With regards to the possibility of paternity leave as an additional form of supporting women in the workplace, although this is legally permitted it has been described by HR managers as being basically non-existent in practice:

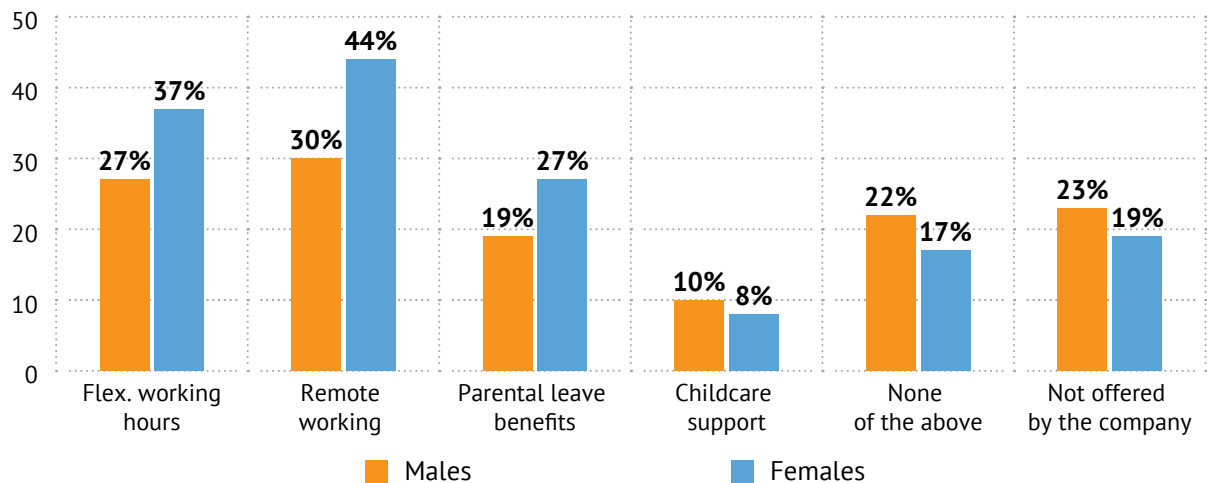
*HR#8: To be honest our 90 per cent male staff did not know about paternity leave until last week. And we have informed them about this right of fathers.*

*HR#11: No one has ever applied for paternity leave.*

Employees take advantage of these policies, making it seem like they are in demand. However, the research data shows that the effectiveness of implementing family-friendly initiatives and other policies intended to achieve gender equality can be improved.

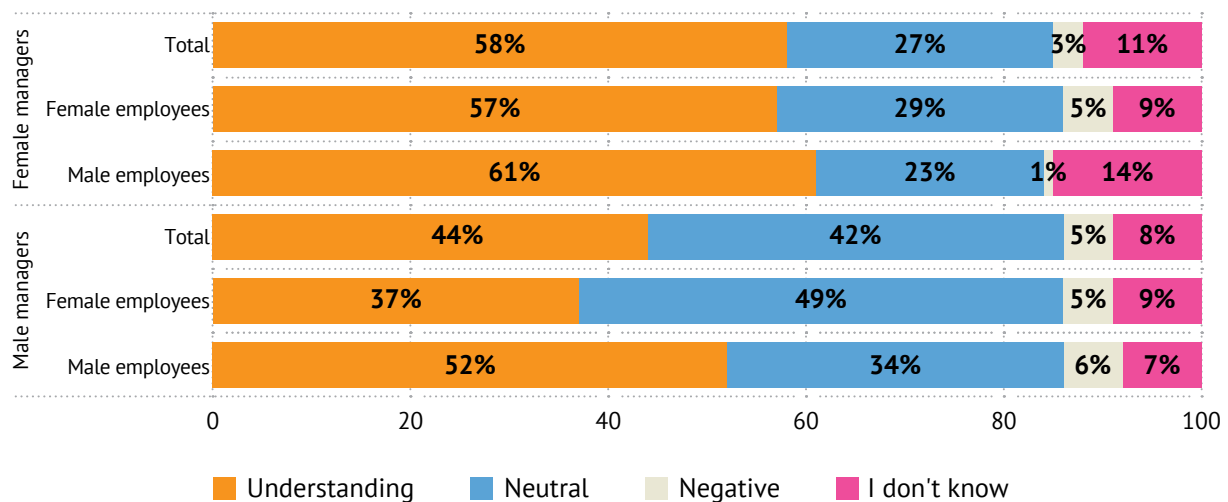
The data on managers' attitudes towards employees' requests for flexible working schedules provides interesting insights (Figure 3.2). Male line managers tend to be less understanding of such requests (44 per cent) compared to female managers (58 per cent), especially of requests made by female employees. Both male and female managers tend to be more understanding towards requests from male employees, which may potentially be explained by the fact that female employees make such requests more often due to their responsibilities outside of the workplace. Similar findings were discovered for requests by employees to be absent from work due to a child's or close family member's illness, and to work remotely. This paints a picture that there is room for improving the work environment, and the attitudes of managers towards such requests.

**Figure 3.1. Benefits used by company's employees**



Note: All benefits refer to those beyond what is required by law; N (Males) = 563; N (Females) = 740.

**Figure 3.2. Attitudes of managers toward requests for flexible work schedules to meet family obligations**



Note: All benefits refer to those beyond what is required by law; N (Males reporting to male managers) = 422; N (Males reporting to female managers) = 111; N (Females reporting to male managers) = 492; N (Females reporting to female managers) = 212.

## 3.2. HIRING, PROMOTION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### 3.2.1. Evidence and possible causes

Within the workplace environment, gender equality starts with the commitment to provide equal opportunities for men and women to be hired. While hiring decisions depend on objective factors, such as education, work experience and skills, stereotypes and attitudes towards women may put them in a disadvantaged position. Furthermore, training employees and helping them grow professionally leads to positive impacts for businesses, as it raises productivity and innovation. It also helps develop a pool of qualified candidates for senior positions.

## Hiring

The survey findings identified three sets of obstacles that may limit opportunities for women to be hired. Firstly, HR managers noted that some companies may be reluctant to hire women because of their roles as caregivers:

*HR#15: Often there are some stereotypes that once a woman gets married, she will get pregnant and later she will be entitled to maternity leave. Hence, the company will not benefit from hiring a woman who just got married or just had her first baby, and later she will have her second child and the company will have to start looking for her replacement.*

However, there are also positive signs of improvement:

*HR#5: Yes, I think that the previous view of the employees in the company was that they thought that women are not effective at all ... That's why they can see more men in these positions rather than women because women have families, children, and so on and so on. I think now we are still looking for more men than women, even in our hiring process. But the management's view changed at about the time when we started to hire some women who also started to give results.*

Secondly, women may be disadvantaged in the hiring process due to occupation-based stereotypes. Some interviewed HR managers highlighted that there are perceptions on what should be men's and women's jobs. There are perceptions that technical occupations are more appropriate for men, while jobs in HR, marketing and advertising are for women:

*HR#8: Unfortunately, stereotypes do exist. For instance, they say that an office manager should be a woman.*

However, there were positive cases of combating such stereotypes. For example, one male HR manager mentioned:

*HR#8: When I saw a woman in one of our construction sites leading the crane (at more than 100 meters), to be honest I was extremely impressed and inspired because myself, I am afraid of the height and I would never imagine seeing a woman so easily managing this huge machine.*

*HR#8: As another stereotype, when I started my job [as HR manager], people expected to see a woman in office-type jobs, especially if it's related to Human Resources. I believe that people in Central Asia are used to seeing more women working in office-type jobs rather than men. So, every time I meet with a new candidate, they get shocked seeing a man as HR manager.*

The third set of reasons refers to the specific nature of jobs that may require physical strength or working during late hours. In such cases, even though a company might want more female employees, it nonetheless may struggle to attract them:

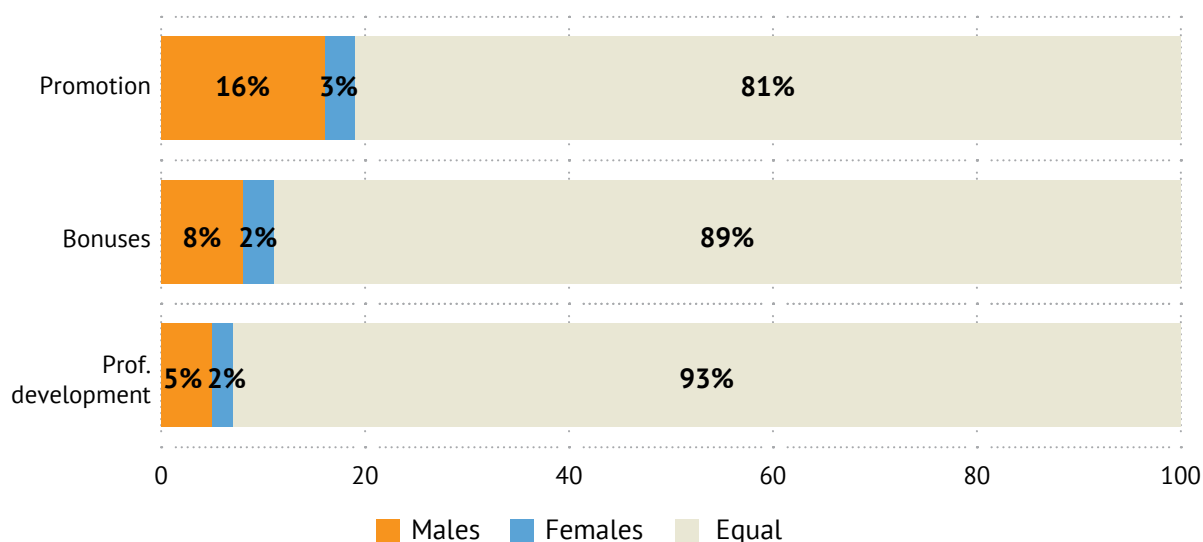
*HR#19: To be honest this [increasing the share of female employees] is one of the hardest questions for us. (...) Despite all our efforts in attracting and increasing the number of women, our maximum record has been only 14 per cent. Why? Because we are a manufacturing-based production company and most of the roles require intense physical activity.*

*HR#7: There are fewer women than men in coffee shops and restaurants because they need to work until 10 pm. There are young girls who are married or have just finished school, and sometimes they refuse to work such long hours.*

### Promotion and professional development

Data on employees' perceptions of professional development and career growth shows generally positive results. The majority of respondents believe that such opportunities in their companies are equal for men and women (Figure 3.3). The greatest level of perceived gender equality is in professional development opportunities (93 per cent), followed by bonuses (89 per cent) and promotions (81 per cent). However, when employees do not think that such opportunities are equal, most indicate that males are in a more privileged position. Thus, the perception that men are more likely to receive access to professional development opportunities is supported by 5 per cent of responses, to bonuses – 8 per cent, and to promotion – 16 per cent.

**Figure 3.3. Employees' perceptions on who is more likely to receive professional development opportunities, bonuses and promotion**



*Notes: Bonuses and professional development opportunities were not applicable for some employees; N = 1,303.*

Some HR managers highlighted that women's roles outside of work – the inability of some women to work long hours due to childbearing and family responsibilities – could be a barrier to career growth, professional development and promotion at work:

*HR#3: Although there are equal chances for professional development and advancement for both genders, it is obvious that in order to succeed an employee should often stay after 6 (when the working day is over) and women can't due to family reasons. That's why it is easier for men to succeed and be promoted.*

*HR#12: In everyday life, we even see it in the media, women are harassed. This is partly our mentality. And in most cases, it is just a lack of culture, closed-mindedness. It is more difficult for a woman to build a career, because she has family duties. She has more responsibilities in this regard than a man.*

## Women in management

There is evidence that women are under-represented in management. Although the profile of respondents (Figure 2.1) shows a somewhat similar distribution of male and female respondents in senior and middle management positions, the data on the sex of line managers shows that a larger number of employees report to males (74 per cent) than to females (26 per cent). Some HR managers also noted zero or limited representation of women in senior management:

*HR#6: Regarding women executives: there are none at top management in the organization.*

*HR#19: If we are talking about top positions (senior-level) we do not have that many females. I would say around 10 per cent only.*

One company shared that the predominance of men in managerial-level positions is because the majority of senior managers prefer working with men rather than with women:

*HR#7: When I conduct interviews with top managers, I always ask them with whom it would be more comfortable for them to work with. Usually, they answer that they are more comfortable with men because it is easier to communicate with men. With women, there might be some misunderstanding. For example, [one of our chiefs] is a woman and she often has misunderstandings with almost all employees.*

However, some HR managers felt that women's family duties do not impede their career growth, including at senior positions:

*HR#19: We have a senior-level manager female employee who has been working for the company for almost 8 years and we have promoted her to top-level management despite her new-born baby (less than a year old), and she did very well. As long as they manage and balance their work and life, why not?!*

### 3.2.2. Policies

During the interviews, most HR managers claimed that their companies are objective and neutral, and hire and promote employees solely based on their experience and skills, without regard to their gender:

*HR#1: Everyone in our company has an equal chance for career growth and professional development, regardless of gender. As I have mentioned, our women have a history of great achievements throughout their employment with the company.*

*HR#8: We do not even differentiate between so-called male and female jobs. Also, if you check our website, we never mention gender in our posted job descriptions. Unfortunately, stereotypes do exist. For instance, they say that an office manager should be a woman.*

However, only five firms made an explicit reference to documenting gender-equality practices in their policies. Other companies did not have or were unable to point to an explicit gender-equality policy or procedures, such as gender diversity targets, gender-neutral panels for hiring/promotion, etc.

### 3.3. ENVIRONMENT FREE FROM HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE

Harassment and violence are some of the most harmful practices in the workplace. Aggressive behaviour of a psychological or a physical nature decreases the productivity of employees, and may lead to absences or even resignation of victims or witnesses. At the same time, harassment and violence are some of the most challenging areas to address in surveys, due to the sensitive nature of such cases, which makes victims hesitant to report them.

The quantitative survey attempted to collect data on the prevalence of such incidents in workplaces, their impact on victim's work abilities, and actions taken in response to such incidents. Generally both male and female respondents reported cases of negative work experiences, violence and sexual harassment. Although workplace incidents are often thought to predominantly affect women, the survey found that both male and female respondents reported cases of negative work experiences, violence and sexual harassment. There are several possible explanations for men reporting some of such incidents more frequently than women. One possible explanation is the under-reporting of cases by female respondents due to the greater degree of shame and embarrassment it may cause (Raganathan et al., 2021). Furthermore, the survey questions referred to generic incidents, not necessarily from a person of opposite sex, and therefore the results include male-to-male, male-to-female, female-to-male and female-to-female interactions. Male-to-male incidents are likely to be associated with social and gender norms, as these norms demand men exercise stereotypically masculine traits like being dominant, tough, aggressive, taking risks and breaking rules. As a result, workplaces, especially those dominated by male employees, may have the culture of "masculinity contests" where it is acceptable for men to behave aggressively, work extreme hours, engage in tough competition, and bully or harass co-workers (HBR, 2018). This section of the report will focus on analysing cases of negative work experiences, violence and sexual harassment responses faced by female employees.

#### 3.3.1. Evidence and possible causes

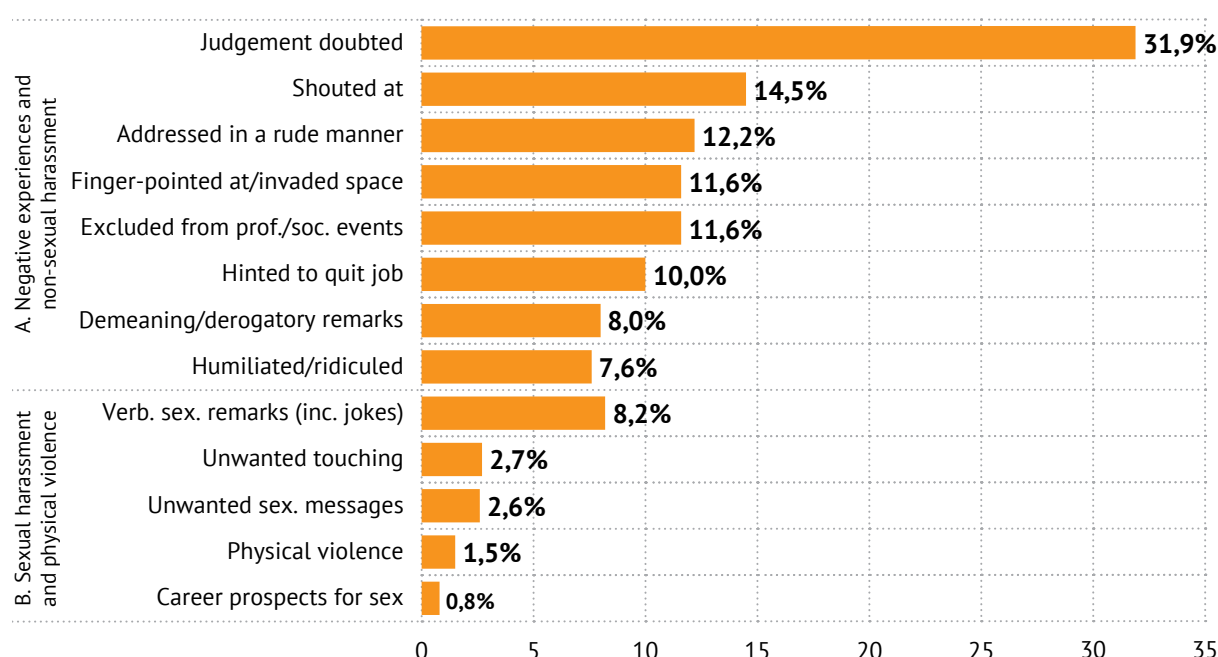
During interviews, none of the companies' HR managers identified any incidents of harassment and violence having occurred or being reported in their company:

*HR#8: So far, we have never observed or heard of such cases during my time working within our company.*

*HR#12: Frankly speaking, I never thought that there could be such problems in the bank [attempts at harassment], because the bank employs highly intelligent people, sometimes even with two higher educations. I won't say that we will fight it that hard. But we will take measures and assert our legal rights according to the law, nothing more.*

Quantitative survey findings contradict the insights from HR managers, as they show that such cases have indeed occurred in the workplace. Negative work experience and non-sexual harassment cases were most frequent and were reported on by 46 per cent of female respondents, followed by sexual harassment (9 per cent) and physical violence (1 per cent). Among the observed types of negative work experience and non-sexual harassment (Figure 3.4, A), the most frequent incident was when a respondent's judgment and competencies on a matter over which she has responsibility is doubted (31.9 per cent), followed by being shouted at (14.5 per cent), and addressed in a rude manner (12.2 per cent). Sexual harassment and physical violence cases were less frequent (Figure 3.4, B), with the prevailing number of incidents being verbal remarks or gestures of a sexual nature (including jokes) directed towards the respondent or made in their presence (8.2 per cent).

**Figure 3.4. Incidents of negative work experiences, violence and sexual harassment experienced by females**



Notes: N = 740; Physical violence includes incidents of being hit, shoved or being blocked while walking, being threatened with physical abuse, and incidents of things been thrown at persons.

### 3.3.2. Groups at risk

Further analysis of quantitative data attempted to identify whether some individual or company factors impact the incidents of negative work experiences, violence and sexual harassment.

A notable pattern appears when we analyse results according to whether a company is a national or international enterprise.<sup>4</sup> Respondents from national companies reported incidents more frequently, compared to those of international companies (Figure 3.5).

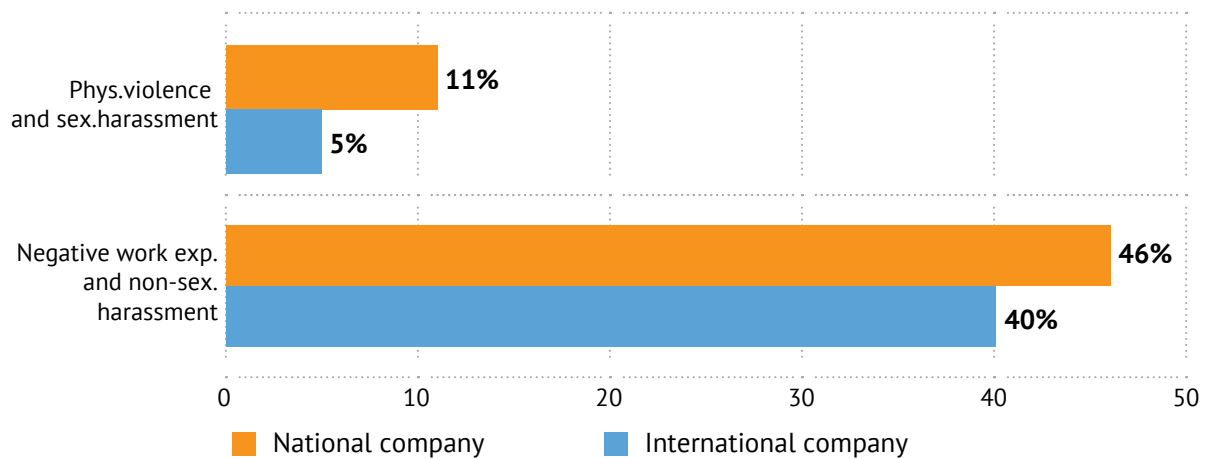
Looking at individual factors, the study found a notable pattern in which incidents of physical violence and sexual harassment were reported more frequently by younger women with no formal partner (Figure 3.6). Specifically, 13 per cent of women aged 24 and younger, 11 per cent aged 25-34, and 10 per cent aged 35-44, experienced violence or sexual harassment over the past 12 months. Only 2 per cent of females aged 45-54 and none of respondents aged 55+ reported on these incidents. Women without a formal partner are more at risk as such cases were reported by 16 per cent of single women and 17 per cent of divorced women, compared to 6 per cent of married women.<sup>5</sup> Analysis by position level shows that 12 per cent of senior managers experienced violence or sexual harassment, 9 per cent of mid-level managers, and 11 per cent of non-managerial employees.

<sup>4</sup> We define national companies as entities that originated in Uzbekistan. International companies are foreign-established entities which operate in Uzbekistan.

<sup>5</sup> The analysis excludes widowed women due to the very low number of respondents (4) with such status, and women who preferred not to disclose their marital status (19).

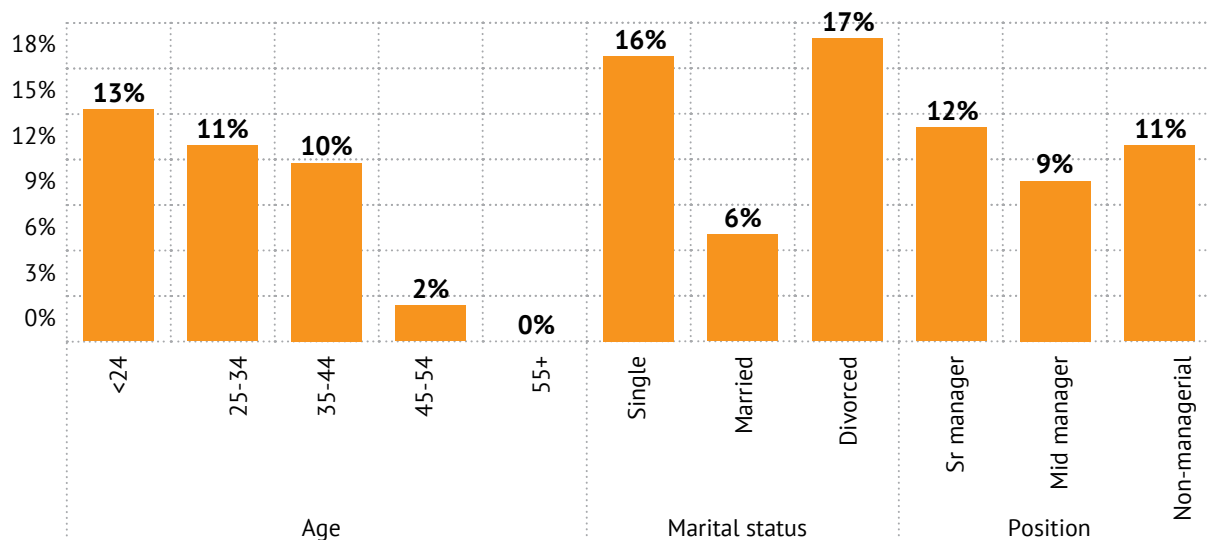


**Figure 3.5. Incidents reported by women by company's origin**



Notes: N (International company) = 62; N (National company) = 678;

**Figure 3.6. Profile of women victims of violence or sexual harassment by age, marital status and position**



Notes: N (<24) = 120; N (25-34) = 379; N (35-44) = 175; N (45-54) = 49; N (55+) = 13; N (Single) = 215; N (Married) = 431; N (Divorced) = 71; N (Sr manager) = 95; N (Mid manager) = 254; N (Non-managerial) = 391

### 3.3.3. Impact

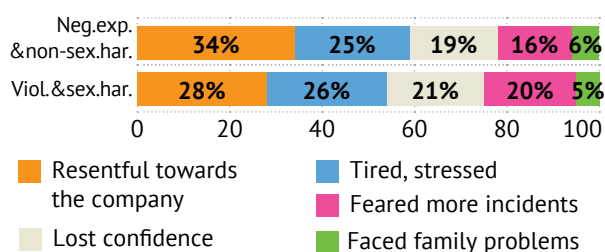
The survey included questions analysing the impact of cases of negative work experiences, violence and sexual and non-sexual harassment on victims. It should be noted that these questions were optional, and some respondents preferred not to answer. However, the data still allows us to make a comparative analysis.

The level of impact of incidents of negative work experiences and non-sexual harassment on female victims, is similar to that of physical violence or sexual harassment (Figure 3.7, A). Females reported that they were mostly feeling resentful towards the company, as well as being tired, stressed, losing sleep or unwell. Notably, victims of physical violence or sexual harassment reported feeling fearful of there being more frequent incidents. Two quarters reported that such incidents affected their work all or most of the time, or on an occasional basis (Figure 3.7, B). Some had taken time off ill due to incidents, and some were

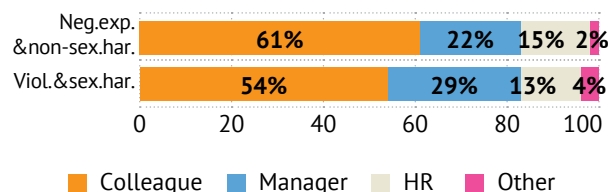
thinking of quitting work. In terms of actions taken, 58 per cent of women experiencing negative work experiences and non-sexual harassment talked about the cases with someone at work, most discussing it with colleagues (61 per cent), and only 22 per cent referring to managers and 15 per cent to HR (Figure 3.7, B). Victims of physical violence and sexual harassment engaged in discussions at work less frequently (53 per cent), and mostly with colleagues (54 per cent) but in latter cases more women referred to a manager (29 per cent) (Figure 3.7, C, D). Such discussions at work mostly did not lead to any positive results (80 per cent), and victims of physical violence and sexual harassment reported negative change twice as much as females facing negative work experiences and non-sexual harassment (Figure 3.7, E). As for the reasons for not discussing such cases at work, 36 per cent and 39 per cent of women reported that they spoke to friends or family members instead, respectively. The second most frequent reason for not discussing cases at work, was that the women impacted considered the situation to be their responsibility, and that they needed to take care of it themselves (Figure 3.7, F).

**Figure 3.7. Impact of incidents on female victims and actions taken**

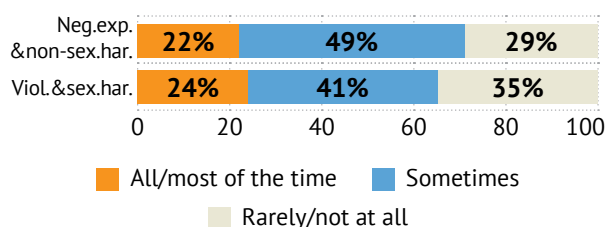
**A. How did you feel?**



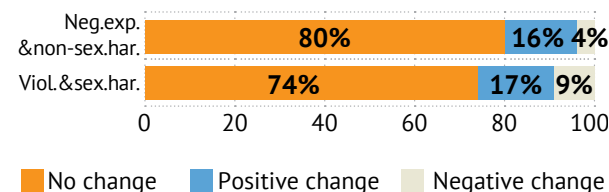
**D. With whom did you talk to?**



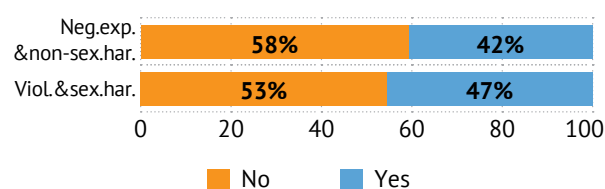
**B. Impact on work**



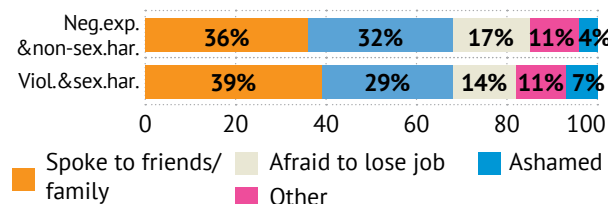
**E. Outcomes of talking at work**



**C. Talked to someone at work?**



**F. Reasons for not talking to anyone at work?**



Notes: (A) N (Viol.&sex.har.) = 61; N (Neg.exp.&non-sex.har.) = 113; (B) N (Viol.&sex.har.) = 34; N (Neg.exp.&non-sex.har.) = 72; (C) N (Viol.&sex.har.) = 32; N (Neg.exp.&non-sex.har.) = 84; (D) N (Viol.&sex.har.) = 24; N (Neg.exp.&non-sex.har.) = 54; (E) N (Viol.&sex.har.) = 35; N (Neg.exp.&non-sex.har.) = 93; (F) N (Viol.&sex.har.) = 28; N (Neg.exp.&non-sex.har.) = 47.

### 3.3.4. Policies

Regarding formal policies and procedures related to preventing cases of discrimination, harassment or violence from happening, or how to address cases if they do happen, most companies did not have any formalized policies or procedures on these matters. Most companies have some form of informal practice they will resort to in such instances.

*HR#6: No [no policies related to GBV], because no cases of that took place. In case there will be a need (cases), definitely.*

Some HR managers referred to existing Code of Conducts and induction training, wherein staff are made aware of these issues. Some also referred to general complaint systems or internal systems that are available should such cases arise. However, most managers were unable to describe a detailed procedure for how these cases would be dealt with should a complaint be made. Only in some cases did they explain informal mechanisms that would be used (e.g., bringing the person who made the complaint to discuss the matter with the company director and a psychologist).

*HR#3: Yes, the issues connected with gender discrimination or violence at the workplace are taken to the committee. If there are cases, these are being investigated and measures are taken. (...) There are "emergency phones" (telephone doverya) and channels, through which the cases can be reported. Also, there is a psychologist who is helping when the need arises.*

*HR#14: Mechanisms to report are online (chatbot) and anonymous. There is a brochure with a FAQ for all members of staff. There is no exact paragraph about gender inequality, as there is no difference if a bank worker is a he or she.*

*HR#10: We have the Internal Code of Conduct, we also have a policy on Harassment, on Infringement of Rights, and so on. And all our colleagues are familiar with these documents. We periodically conduct trainings and voice the main components of these documents. We also conduct regulatory tests, and all employees must be tested.*

A couple of larger companies did however appear to have more formal procedures, particularly for reporting cases of gender-based violence. For example, these included hotlines or telegram bots through which potential victims could report incidents anonymously for the company to act upon. This would be followed up on by the company's psychologist and lawyer. Even in these cases though, companies were still unable to present precisely-articulated procedures and policy documents that provide a detailed, step-by-step approach for investigating cases, and stating the potential outcomes of such investigations.

*HR#11: We also have a Hotline number for all of our employees.*

*HR#2: If harassment happened, I would make a record and ask the general director. I would treat the victims anonymously, but would name the harasser and try to find out if this is the first one on his record. I would try to find out if [the reported incident] is true or not – I would try to talk with the person involved (there is sometimes slander taking place).*

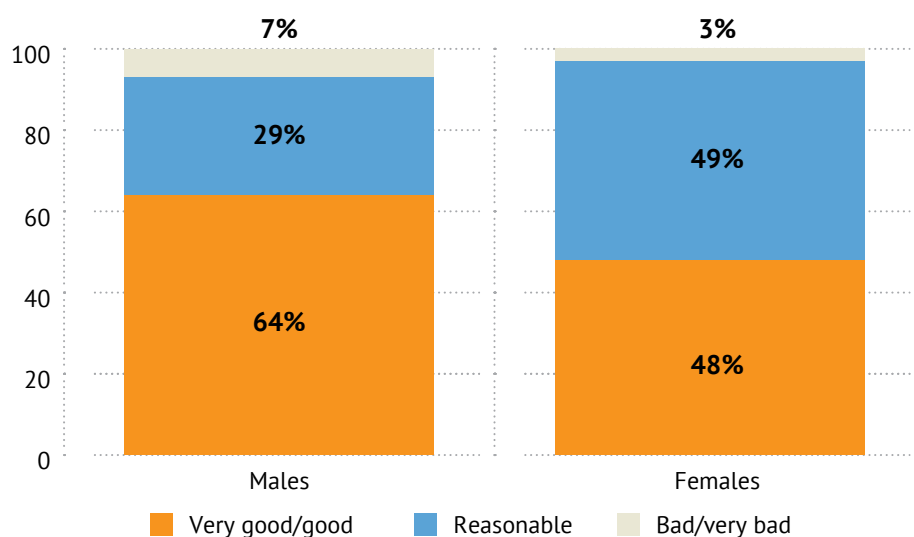
*HR#3: There are emergency phones and channels, by which cases can be reported. Also, there is a psychologist who can help when the need occurs.*

One company has a specific policy on GBV. This policy sets up explicit rules about employee/employer behaviour with respect to GBV, discrimination and unfair decisions, as well as procedures for handling incidents. Every year the company provides training on GBV, discrimination and fairness. Another company, in addition to raising awareness among and training all employees, also uses online tests at the end of the training to determine if there is adequate understanding of information taught.

Given the lack of formal, written policies in many companies, it is unsurprising to find that the most common response (48 per cent) indicated that employees are unaware of any policies designed to discourage or act on incidents of discrimination, harassment and violence. Amongst those who were aware of such policies, men were more likely to have knowledge of them than women (42 per cent vs 31 per cent).

Among those employees who evaluated the company they work for, in terms of how it has dealt with incidents of discrimination, harassment, physical or sexual violence, men and women had noticeably different responses. While nearly two-thirds of men thought their company was doing a very good or good job, less than half of women agreed, with the other half stating that their company was doing a reasonable job (Figure 3.8). There was also a difference by position level. Among those who responded to the question, senior managers were generally more likely to evaluate their company as being very good or good (77 per cent) in dealing with incidents of discrimination, harassment, physical or sexual violence, compared with 44 per cent of mid-level managers, and 57 per cent of non-managerial staff.

**Figure 3.8. Evaluation of company's responses to incidents**



Notes: N (Males) = 323; N (Females) = 464

## 4. BEST PRACTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section attempts to consolidate best practices identified across the companies participating in the survey, and offers recommendations to all businesses in Uzbekistan on how to further promote gender equality and empowerment of women in the workplace.

### 4.1. OVERARCHING RECOMMENDATIONS

#### **Adopt gender equality strategies, set targets, and collect gender-disaggregated data**

Most of the surveyed companies had initiatives in particular areas, rather than a holistic approach to building gender equality. Developing coherent, explicit gender-inclusive strategies for developing inclusive and empowering workplace environments and cultures will help companies make progress towards gender equality. Such strategies should be grounded on the priority areas of each company, taking into account their specific needs and context. Specific, measurable, achievable, results-oriented and time-bound (S.M.A.R.T.) targets will help narrow down and take action in identified priority areas. To monitor progress towards targets, it is recommended to consistently collect gender-disaggregated data and report on progress made. This includes collecting and analysing data on numbers of applications, employees at different levels and operational areas, pay rates, and other matters. In addition, companies may incorporate tools for regularly monitoring staff views and reflections on workplace equality, discrimination, harassment and violence.

### 4.2. FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES

#### **Promote tools for building work-life balance**

Offering employees a greater degree of flexibility to accommodate their needs outside of the workplace, raises their productivity and job satisfaction. Some examples of such tools used by the surveyed companies in Uzbekistan include offering flexible working hours and telecommuting, job sharing, or part-time work with benefits.

#### **Develop positive attitudes among managers**

Beyond simply having work-life balance policies in place, companies also need to ensure these are implemented effectively. Survey results showed that a substantial portion of employees, especially women, reported managers' lack of understanding of their requests related to work-life balance. Developing positive attitudes among managers will therefore contribute to improved employee effectiveness.

#### **Support employees as parents and caregivers**

Companies can also support employees, both men and women, with their parenting or caretaking duties. This can be done by offering childcare onsite or providing referrals to childcare facilities close to the work location, providing paid leave for dependent care, and supporting employees returning from maternity leave. These tools will help ensure parents can combine work and family responsibilities, thereby remaining in the company. It is also recommended to encourage men to take advantage of such benefits, enabling fathers' presence in their children's lives. Firms can also support working mothers of new-borns, by allocating a dedicated space for breastfeeding or pumping in the office.

## 4.3. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN HIRING, PROMOTION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### **Introduce gender-neutral hiring practices**

Gender-neutral hiring practices allow companies to select and attract best talent based on competencies. Though some companies have policies and tools in place to ensure non-discrimination at the recruitment stage, these are often not formalized. It is recommended that businesses integrate the commitment to non-discrimination at the hiring stage into their recruitment policies, and adopt tools to support its implementation. Some best practices of surveyed companies include using gender-neutral language in vacancy announcements, and ensuring gender-diverse interview panels. Other best international tools include blinded reviews<sup>6</sup> of application documents, and prohibiting questions to candidates about their marital and family status, and pregnancy plans.

### **Mentor and coach women employees**

Providing professional development and training opportunities for female workers helps raise their productivity and encourage innovation. Many surveyed companies already have initiatives targeted at women, such as women leadership clubs. It is recommended that these initiatives are undertaken in companies of all industries and sizes, as these will increase opportunities for women to positively contribute to their company's performance, and will also help develop a pool of qualified female candidates for senior positions.

### **Introduce transparent promotion and remuneration principles**

The survey responses showed that most employees believe men and women have equal opportunities for promotion. However, some respondents indicated that men are more likely to get promoted compared to women. To promote an equal environment, it is suggested that companies adopt and implement transparent and clear promotion and remuneration principles, ensuring employees receive equal pay for equal work regardless of their gender.

## 4.4. ENVIRONMENT FREE OF HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION

### **Commit to zero tolerance towards violence and harassment**

As discussed in this report, harassment and violence are some of the most harmful practices in workplaces, leading to lower productivity, work absences and even resignation. Most surveyed companies did not have formalized policies in place for eliminating violence and harassment, while employees have reported cases of both. It is recommended that companies develop a stand-alone policy, or incorporate it into a gender equality strategy or another relevant policy document, committing to zero tolerance of all forms of violence at work. In addition, the document should provide clear guidance on how employees can report such incidents if they occur, and what will be the procedures used within companies to deal with them.

<sup>6</sup> Blinded reviews are when hiring managers evaluate candidates without knowing their gender, marital status, etc.

### **Create confidential reporting mechanisms and confidential support to victims**

While HR managers did not refer to any cases of violence and harassment during interviews, such cases were reported by employees. Absence of reporting methods and mechanisms or a lack of awareness of them may be a possible cause of under-reporting. It is recommended that companies introduce confidential reporting mechanisms to provide victims and witnesses with an opportunity to disclose incidents to their companies. At the same time, confidential support tools, such as providing access to psychological services, will help support victims.

### **Train and inform employees**

Educating employees and managers about violence and harassment will help ensure effective implementation of the abovementioned policy. It is recommended that companies conduct training to raise awareness of what violence and harassment are, and what procedures should be followed if employees face such issues. Some surveyed companies already offer training on these matters, but most do not.

In addition, companies can raise awareness of workplace discrimination, harassment and violence among employees. Stigma around these incidents and the practice of reporting on them can be reduced through regular communication on these topics, being open and honest about the issues, and reassuring employees that there is a robust set of investigation and disciplinary procedures in place to address these incidents.

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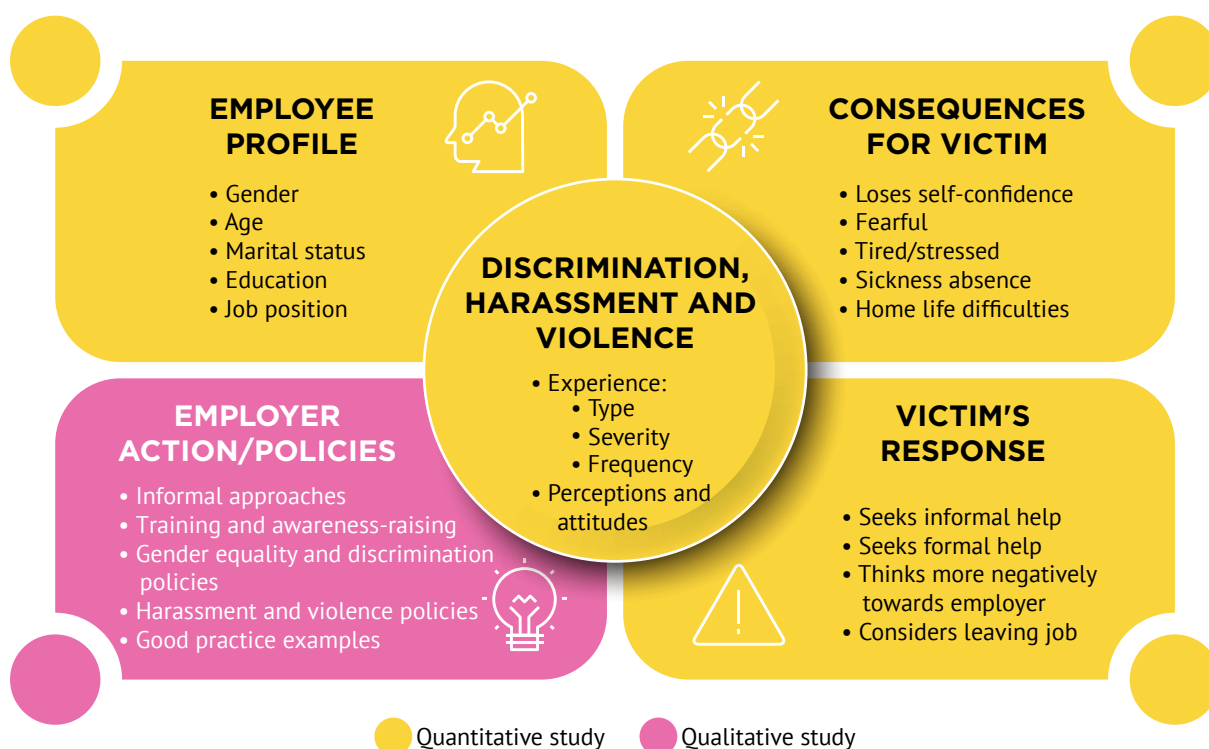
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# ANNEXES

## ANNEX 1. DETAILED STUDY METHODOLOGY

Diagram 1 presents the topics covered in this mixed-methods study. The employee questionnaire was carefully developed based on the literature review of key areas of concern (encapsulated in Diagram 1) and adaptation of questions from leading surveys in the area of the study. The structure and content of the questionnaire paid careful attention to the sensitivity of some of the topics, particularly those regarding harassment and violence. The questions were designed to detect both positive and negative experiences.

**Diagram 1. Conceptual framework for the study**



Topics for the qualitative survey included gender workplace discrimination and violence in relation to: (i) experiences and perceptions of everyday work environment (including discrimination, sexual and non-sexual harassment and violence); (ii) impact of work experiences on home life, health and job performance; and (iii) actions that employees have or have not taken and what they think of their employer's performance in terms of building workplace equality. The topics for the qualitative interview questions were developed in a similar manner to those of the qualitative survey. The interview guide was piloted and revised according to feedback from the exercise. For the data analysis, the survey data was entered into SPSS and descriptive univariate and bivariate analysis was conducted to address the research objectives. The qualitative data were transcribed and then translated into English, and entered into NVivo where they were coded and thematically analysed.



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