



Household Responsibilities, Spousal Support, and Gender Equality:

Public Attitudes in Uzbekistan and Central Asia

Dilafruz Kuchkorova

PhD Candidate Westminster

International University in Tashkent

dil.quchkorova@wiut.uz

Abstract: This study examines public perceptions of gender roles, household responsibilities, and women's career advancement in Uzbekistan, drawing on comparative data from the Life in Transition Survey IV. While female labor force participation is increasing, cultural norms and spousal attitudes continue to influence the opportunities available to women. Findings reveal that although most respondents support shared household and childcare duties, traditional expectations persist, particularly regarding women's domestic roles. Public acceptance of equal income contribution between spouses is widespread, yet strong agreement levels are lower than in neighboring Central Asian countries. The analysis highlights the nuanced interplay between progress toward gender equality and enduring traditional norms, offering insights for policymakers and advocates of women's economic empowerment.

Keywords: Gender roles, career development, spousal support, women in Uzbekistan, work-family conflict, labor division

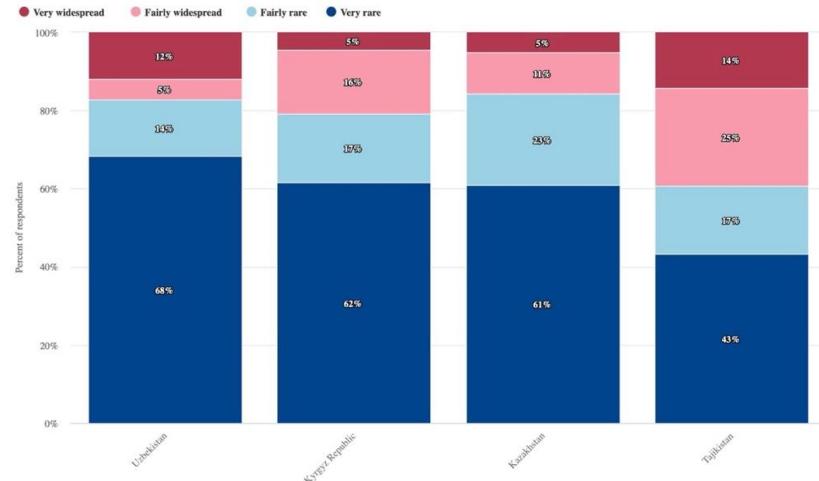


Despite growing female labor force participation in Uzbekistan, many women face barriers to career advancement rooted in family expectations, cultural norms, and spousal dynamics. The role of husbands is particularly critical, as they can either facilitate or hinder their wives' career development through their attitudes, support, or opposition. More women are taking on leadership roles, which has led to talks about the progress made and the problems that still exist in achieving equal opportunities for men and women in different fields. Women bring special qualities to leadership, like new ideas, teamwork, and understanding others' feelings. Studies show that companies do better when more women are leaders. Teams with both men and women in charge tend to make more money, come up with better ideas, and run the company more responsibly. Businesses led by women often make smarter decisions and can handle changes more easily. According to Life in Transactional Survey 4, the majority of respondents believe that gender discrimination is very rare in Uzbekistan. This is the highest percentage among the compared countries, indicating a general perception that gender equality is relatively well established. A combined 81.5% of respondents (68% + 13.5%) believe gender discrimination is rare or very rare. This suggests that public awareness and acceptance of gender equality is relatively strong in Uzbekistan compared to its neighbors. Nearly 17% of respondents still believe that gender discrimination is fairly or very widespread, which may reflect ongoing challenges in employment, leadership roles, or household dynamics. Tajikistan shows the highest perceived gender inequality, which may correlate with lower female labor force participation and more traditional norms. Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic occupy a middle ground, where gender discrimination is acknowledged but not seen as deeply embedded.

Table 1. Gender discrimination statistics in Central Asia



Gender discrimination

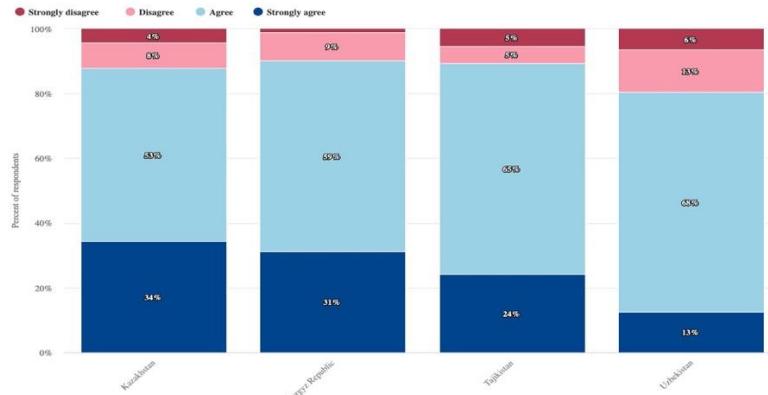


Source: Life in Transition Survey IV. All statistics are derived using survey weights. Please cite the tool as: EBRD (2024). LITS IV Visualizer (version 1.0.3). European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Available at: <https://www.lits-visualizer.ebrd.com>. Accessed 2025-06-21.

Also, Table 2 shows that in Uzbekistan, most people support the idea that men should take as much responsibility as women for household and childcare duties, but fewer people "strongly agree" with this statement compared to the other countries. There is also a slightly higher level of disagreement in Uzbekistan than in the other three countries shown.

Table 2. Public Opinion on Men's Responsibility for Home and Childcare in Central Asia.

Men should take as much responsibility as women for the home and children



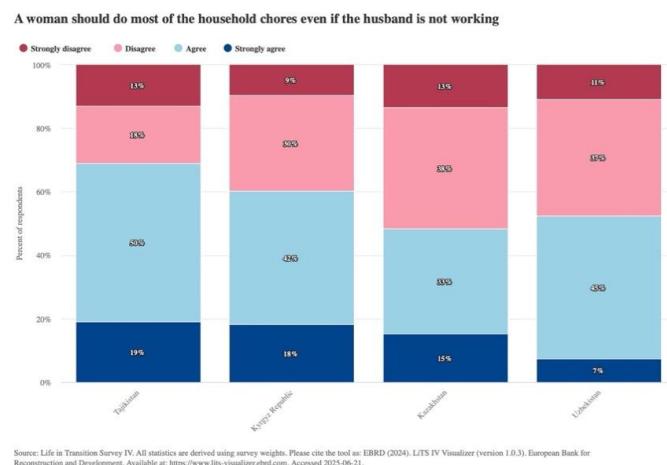
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There is a stereotype that a woman should do most of the household chores even if the husband is not working. And we will see how the citizens of Central Asian countries



agree with this agreement in Table 3. Half of the respondents in Uzbekistan (50%) disagree either strongly or somewhat with the idea that women should do most household chores even if the husband is not working. However, 52% (45% agree +7% strongly agree still support this traditional view to some extent. Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic show stronger disagreement (69% and 60% combined, respectively) compared to Uzbekistan (50%).

Table 3. Beliefs About Women's Responsibility for Housework When the Husband Is Unemployed

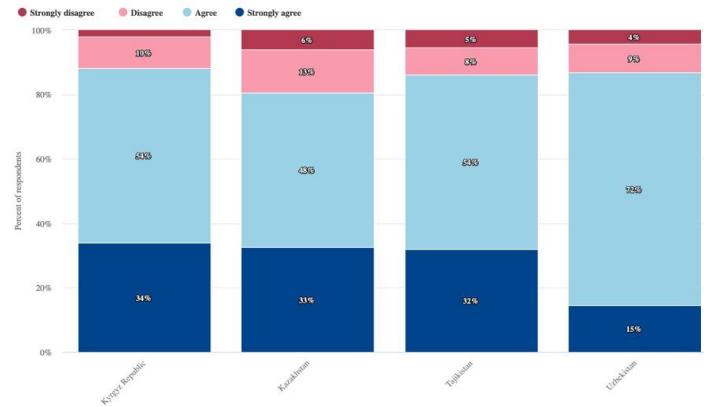


Also, traditional gender roles—where men are expected to earn money and women to manage the home—are widely supported in Uzbekistan, with 88% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing. However, compared to its neighbors, Uzbekistan has a lower share of people who "strongly agree" and a higher share who simply "agree." This may suggest that, while traditional views remain dominant, they may be held with slightly less intensity in Uzbekistan than in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, or Tajikistan.

Table 4. Role distribution of spouses.



It is better for everyone involved if the man earns the money and the woman takes care of the home and children

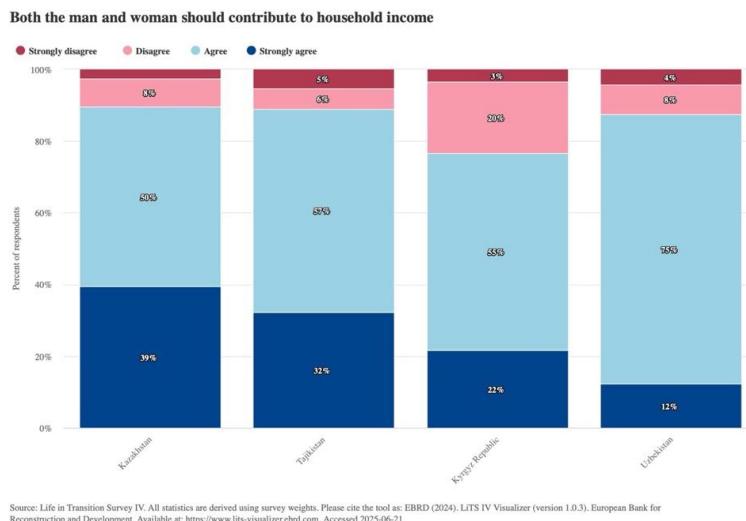


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On the other hand, In recent years, gender roles and economic responsibilities within households have increasingly become a subject of public opinion and policy debate in Central Asia. The idea that both men and women should contribute to household income reflects changing social norms and economic realities across the region. In Uzbekistan, public support for this idea is widespread, though somewhat less intense compared to its neighboring countries. According to the Life in Transition Survey IV (EBRD, 2024), 87% of people in Uzbekistan either agree or strongly agree that both men and women should contribute to household income. Specifically, 12% “strongly agree” while 75% “agree” with this view. Only 13% of respondents disagree (9%) or strongly disagree (4%), showing that the concept of shared financial responsibility is largely accepted in Uzbekistan. When compared to other Central Asian countries, Uzbekistan stands out for having the highest percentage of people who “agree” (75%) but the lowest percentage of those who “strongly agree” (12%). By contrast, Kazakhstan (29%) and Tajikistan (26%) show higher levels of strong agreement, suggesting a more enthusiastic acceptance of gender-equal income contribution in those countries. Disagreement levels are relatively similar across the region, with rates of 9% in Uzbekistan, 6% in Kazakhstan, 5% in Tajikistan, and 12% in the Kyrgyz Republic.



Table 5. The income share of spouses.



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