

Birth Registration: Citizenship is derived by birth within the country's territory or from one's parents. The government generally registered all births immediately.

Medical Care: While the government provided equal subsidized health care for boys and girls, those without an officially registered address, such as street children and children of migrant workers, did not have regular access to government health facilities.

Child Abuse: Legal protections against child abuse exist. Society generally considered child abuse to be an internal family matter. Little official information was available on the subject, including on the government's efforts to combat it.

Early and Forced Marriage: In April the government raised the minimum legal age for marriage of women from 17 to 18, making the age of marriage equal for both sexes. District authorities may lower the age by one year in exceptional cases. In some rural areas, girls 15 years of age or younger married men in religious ceremonies not officially recognized by the state.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: The law seeks to protect children from "all forms of exploitation." Conviction of involving a child in prostitution is punishable by a fine of 25 to 50 times the minimum monthly salary and imprisonment for up to five years.

The minimum age for consensual sex is 16. The punishment for conviction for statutory rape is 15 to 20 years' imprisonment. Conviction for the production, exhibition, and distribution of child pornography (involving persons younger than 21) is punishable by a fine or by imprisonment for up to three years.

Institutionalized Children: According to UNICEF, more than 20,000 children with disabilities resided in institutions. Children who are placed in residential care for educational purposes are overrepresented in these institutions. The most recent reports from the State Statistics Agency, published in 2017, indicated that 84 percent of all children placed in residential care were children with disabilities, with children between the ages of seven and 17 representing the largest group.

International Child Abductions: The country is a party to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. See the Department of State's *Annual Report on International Parental Child Abduction* at <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/International-Parental-Child-Abduction/for-providers/legal-reports-and-data/reported-cases.html>.

Anti-Semitism

There were no reports of anti-Semitic acts or patterns of discrimination against Jews. There were eight registered Jewish congregations. Observers estimated the Jewish population fewer than 10,000, concentrated mostly in Tashkent, Samarkand, the Fergana Valley, and Bukhara. Their numbers continued to decline due to emigration, largely for economic reasons.

Trafficking in Persons

See the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at <https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

Persons with Disabilities

The law prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities, but societal discrimination based on disability occurred.

The law allows for fines if buildings, including private shops and restaurants, are not accessible, although no information was available concerning the imposition of fines. Disability activists reported accessibility remained inadequate, noting, for example, that many of the high schools constructed in recent years had exterior ramps but no interior modifications to facilitate access by wheelchair users.

The Ministry of Health controlled access to health care for persons with disabilities, and the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations facilitated employment of persons with disabilities. No information was available regarding patterns of abuse in educational and mental health facilities.

Disability rights activists reported that discrimination occurred and estimated that approximately 8,500 adults with disabilities (of more than 600,000) were employed and approximately 75 percent lived below the poverty line. The city of Tashkent set aside 2,500 housing units for persons with disabilities. The government mandates that social infrastructure sites, urban and residential areas, airports, railway stations, and other facilities must provide for access to persons with disabilities, although there were no specific government programs implemented and activists reported particular difficulties with access.

Students who were blind or with vision disabilities studied dated braille books published during Soviet times, but there were some computers adapted for persons with vision disabilities. The number of persons with disabilities has significantly increased in institutions of higher learning as the result of a government quota system. In 2017 only 50 persons with disabilities were accepted to higher education. This year the number was 1,659 as of late September.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

The law does not require Uzbek language ability to obtain citizenship, but language often was a sensitive issue. Uzbek is the state language, and the constitution requires that the president speak it. The law also provides that Russian is “the language of interethnic communication.”

Officials reportedly reserved senior positions in the government bureaucracy and business for ethnic Uzbeks, although there were numerous exceptions.

Complaints of societal violence or discrimination against members of ethnic minority groups were rare.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law criminalizes consensual same-sex sexual activity between men, which is punishable by up to three years’ imprisonment if convicted of this crime. No information was available on enforcement of this law during the year. The law does not criminalize consensual same-sex sexual activity between women.

Society generally considered same-sex sexual activity as a taboo subject. There were no known LGBTI organizations. Deeply negative social attitudes related to sexual orientation and gender identity limited the freedom of expression of the LGBTI community and led to discrimination. The law does not prohibit discrimination against LGBTI persons in housing, employment, nationality laws, and access to government services, such as health care.

Following the country’s Universal Periodic Review in 2018, the government rejected recommendations related to decriminalization of LGBTI status and called LGBTI issues “irrelevant to Uzbek society.”

On September 12, police found the body of Shokir Shavkatov in an apartment in Tashkent just days after he disclosed on Instagram that he was gay. According to media reports, police say he suffered “several” knife wounds on his “neck and arms,” noting that his throat had been cut “so deeply that he was nearly decapitated.” Police later charged two suspects with murder. Activists say his murder was an act of hatred toward sexual minorities. In the weeks before the attack, local activist Shohrukh Salimov, via a video appeal posted from Turkey, urged President Mirziyoyev to abandon parts of the criminal code that prohibit sexual relations between males. Other LGBTI activists reported harassment from individuals suspected to have links with the security services.

HIV and AIDS Social Stigma

The law protects those infected with HIV from discrimination and provides for free health care. As of 2018, UNAIDS estimated 52,000 individuals were living with HIV, including up to 6,000 children under the age of 14. Coverage of HIV-infected adults with antiretroviral therapy (ART) was 46 percent, while coverage of children was 93 percent. Persons known to be HIV-positive reported social isolation and discrimination by public agency workers, health personnel, law enforcement officers, landlords, and employers after their HIV status became known. The military summarily expelled recruits in the armed services found to be HIV-positive. Some LGBTI community activists reported that hospital wards reviewed the personal history of HIV-infected patients and categorized them as being drug addicts, homosexuals, or engaged in prostitution. Hospital officials reportedly sometimes marked HIV-infected patients’ files as “homosexual” and referred them to police for investigation, because consensual same-sex sexual conduct between men is a criminal act.

Section 7. Worker Rights

a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining

The law allows workers to form and join independent unions and bargain collectively. Individuals have not been able to exercise these rights because no independent labor unions operated in the country. The law neither provides for nor prohibits the right to strike but does prohibit antiunion discrimination. The law on trade unions states that workers may not be fired due to trade union membership, but it does not clearly state whether workers fired for union activity must be reinstated. Volunteers in public works and workers employed by individuals without documented contracts do not have legal protection.

There is no public information available regarding government enforcement of applicable laws, as there are no known cases of attempts to form independent unions. The law provides penalties for violating freedom of association laws equal to five to 10 times the minimum salary. The government amended the law on “professional unions, rights, and guarantees of their activities.” Despite legal protections, in practice, as stated above, workers have not successfully formed or joined independent unions. Workers continued to worry that attempts to create independent alternative unions would be repressed. Unions remained centralized and dependent on the government.

The state-run Federation of Trade Unions of Uzbekistan incorporated more than 35,000 primary organizations and 14 regional trade unions, according to official reports. Regional and industrial trade unions remained state managed.

Government-organized unions demonstrated minimal bargaining power. For example, government ministries, including the Ministry of Agriculture, in consultation with the Federation of Trade Unions, continued to set wages for government employees and production quotas in certain sectors. In the emerging private sector, management established wages or negotiated them individually with persons who contracted for employment. There was no state institution responsible for labor arbitration.

b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits all forms of forced or compulsory labor, except as legal punishment for such offenses as robbery, fraud, or tax evasion or as specified by law. Certain sections of the criminal code allow for compulsory labor as a punishment for offenses including defamation and incitement of national, racial, ethnic, or religious enmity. Penalties are not sufficient to deter violations.

Inspectors from the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations have authority to enforce laws on forced labor. The lead for issues related to forced labor or trafficking in persons is the special rapporteur of the National Commission on trafficking in persons and forced labor. The ILO increased the scope of its third-party monitoring on child and forced labor in the cotton harvest during the year.

The government continued its efforts to combat all forms of forced labor. During the year the government informed the public of the prohibition against forced labor, including in the annual cotton harvest.

A July 30 presidential decree instructed the government to begin a process of criminalizing forced labor violations, which heretofore had been punished only by administrative fine. In December the parliament adopted legislation criminalizing forced labor, however, forced labor violations are only criminalized in the second instance. The first violation is still punished by administrative fines. The decree additionally created a national commission for trafficking in persons and forced labor to oversee and coordinate government efforts. The national commission is divided into subcommittees for trafficking in persons, chaired by the minister of the interior, and for forced labor, chaired by the minister of employment and labor Relations. Both act as deputy chairs to the national commission itself.

The government appointed a special rapporteur for the national commission, Tanzila Narbaeva, who also serves as chair of the Senate. The government empowered the special rapporteur to report on the issue directly to the president and to set up regional or territorial commissions to oversee the implementation of the decree at the local level. This decree also called for the drafting of an amendment to the law on combatting trafficking in persons to include a mechanism for identifying trafficking victims and mandated an update to legislation on human trafficking and forced labor that criminalizes forced labor.

While the government maintained formal prohibitions on the use of forced labor in all economic sectors--and enforced these provisions--the laws as written were not sufficient to comply with international labor standards. Because cotton production quotas remained in place, there continued to be pressure on local officials to meet production targets. Such pressure encouraged the use of forced labor.

Administrative penalties against the use of forced labor were increased: The minimum fine for first offense is between 10- to 30-times the minimum monthly salary, and for repeated offenses the penalty is 30- to 100-times the minimum monthly salary. As stated above, the law adopted in December will impose criminal penalties for repeated instances of forced labor. In October the president approved the *Agriculture Development Strategy 2030*, which is designed to phase out quotas for agricultural products by 2023.

The government allowed the ILO access in real time to its feedback mechanism for reporting labor violations to see how it responded to complaints. The government additionally made efforts to meet with international organizations, NGOs, civil society organizations, and local activists to discuss the issue of forced labor publicly and to receive feedback including suggestions and criticism to enable it to

improve its approach to forced labor in the cotton harvest. The government acknowledged its problem with forced labor and sought assistance to eliminate it.

Also see the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at <https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

The law prohibits the worst forms of child labor. The law sets the minimum working age at 16 and provides that work must not interfere with the studies of those younger than 18. The law does not allow children younger than 15 to work at all, but this provision was not always observed. Children aged 15, with permission from their parents, may work a maximum of 24 hours per week when school is not in session and 12 hours per week when school is in session. Children who are 16 through 18 may work 36 hours per week while school is out of session and 18 hours per week while school is in session. Decrees stipulate a list of hazardous activities forbidden for children younger than 18 and prohibit employers from using children to work under specified hazardous conditions, including underground, underwater, at dangerous heights, and in the manual harvesting of cotton, including cotton harvesting with dangerous equipment.

Children were employed in agriculture; in family businesses, such as bakeries and convenience stores; and in services, such as street vending and scrap metal collection.

Inspectors from the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations have authority to enforce laws on child labor. No information was available on the enforcement of these laws. Penalties were sufficient to deter violations. There was no systemic use of child labor, although individual instances of child labor violations continued to exist.

There was no evidence of any government-compelled child labor. The government prohibition against the use of students remains in force.

Also see the Department of Labor's *Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor* at <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor/findings> and the Department of Labor's *List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor* at <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/reports/child-labor/list-of-goods>.

d. Discrimination with Respect to Employment and Occupation

Laws and regulations prohibit discrimination with respect to employment and occupation based on race, gender, religion, and language. The labor code states that differences in the treatment of individuals deserving of the state's protection or requiring special accommodation, including women, children, and persons with disabilities, are not to be considered discriminatory. The law does not prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, age, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, or social origin. HIV-positive individuals are legally prohibited from being employed in certain occupations, including those in the medical field that require direct contact with patients or with blood or blood products as well as in cosmetology or haircutting. There were insufficient publicly available data to determine government enforcement of these laws and regulations. There were no reliable data on employment discrimination.

The Uzbek labor code prohibits refusing employment based on an applicant's criminal record or the criminal record of a close relative.

Foreign migrant workers enjoy the same legal protections as Uzbek workers as long as their employers follow all legal procedures for their employment. The law provides for a number of punishments of Uzbek employers who do not follow all legal procedures. The government did not strictly enforce employment law, primarily due to insufficient staffing of relevant entities and endemic corruption.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

The law provides for a national minimum wage. The government did not provide an estimate for poverty income levels. According to international estimates, 11.4 percent of the population met the definition of being below the poverty line in 2018. No figures were available for 2019.

The law establishes a standard workweek of 40 hours and requires a 24-hour rest period. The law provides for paid annual holidays. The law provides overtime compensation as specified in employment contracts or as agreed with an employee's trade union. Such compensation may be provided in the form of additional pay or leave. The law states that overtime compensation should not be less than 200 percent of the employee's average monthly salary rate. Additional leave time should not be less than the length of actual overtime work. An employee may not work more than 120 hours of overtime per year, but this limitation was not generally observed, particularly in the public sector. The law prohibits compulsory overtime. The government effectively enforced these laws in

the formal economy. No data was available on enforcement of these laws in the informal economy.

The Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations establishes and enforces occupational health and safety standards in consultation with unions. According to the law, health and safety standards should be applied in all sectors. The government effectively enforced these laws in the formal economy. No data was available on enforcement of these laws in the informal economy.

Employers are responsible for ensuring compliance with standards, rules, and regulations on labor protection as well as obligations under collective agreements. The law provides that workers may legally remove themselves from hazardous work if an employer fails to provide adequate safety measures for the job, and the employer must pay the employee during the time of the work stoppage or provide severance pay if the employee chooses to terminate employment. Workers generally did not exercise this right because it was not effectively enforced and employees feared retribution by employers. The law requires employers to insure against civil liability for damage caused to the life or health of an employee in connection with a work injury, occupational disease, or other injury to health caused by the employee's performance on the job. In addition, a company's employees have the right to demand, and the administration is obliged to provide them with, information on the state of working conditions and safety at work, available personal protection means, benefits, and compensations.

The number of labor inspectors increased throughout the year, and there was a rise in the number of public complaints received as well as penalties issued.

The Ministry of Labor maintains protocols requiring investigation into labor complaints within five business days. The ministry or a local governor's office could initiate a selective inspection of a business, and special inspections were conducted in response to accidents or complaints. A 2017 presidential decree prohibited unannounced inspections of private businesses, including labor inspections, in an effort to crack down on corrupt government practices, but the government reversed itself, and unannounced inspections are legal again.

Reports suggested that enforcement was uneven. The law remained unenforced in the informal economy, where employment was usually undocumented. Despite an increase in the number of labor inspectors, the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations still lacks adequate staff to enforce compliance. Penalties were not sufficient to deter violations in the informal sector.

The government continued with the extension of the ILO's Decent Work Country Program until 2020. The most common labor violations were working without contracts, receiving lower than publicly announced payments, delayed payments, and substandard sanitary or hygienic working conditions.

Many employees had official part-time or low-income jobs and many continued to work informally. The government worked closely with the ILO's Decent Work Country Program on efforts to shift more of the economy from an informal to the formal economy and to provide labor and social protections to those working informally.

Workers did not report any occupational health and safety violations. Private sector employers most commonly committed violations of wage, overtime, and occupational health and safety standards. Although regulations provide for safeguards, workers in hazardous jobs often lacked protective clothing and equipment. More specific information on sectors in which violations were common and on specific groups of workers who faced hazardous or exploitative working conditions was not available.