



REGIONAL LABOR MARKET DISPARITIES IN  
UZBEKISTAN: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF  
EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT  
INDICATORS

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ARTICLE INFO:

Received: 16.10.2026

Revised: 17.10.2026

Accepted: 18.10.2026

KEY WORDS:

regional labor  
market, employment,  
unemployment, labor  
resources, regional  
disparities, economic  
development, population  
employment, jobs.

ABSTRACT

*This article provides a comparative analysis of regional labor market disparities in Uzbekistan based on employment and unemployment indicators. The main objective of the study is to identify differences in employment levels and unemployment rates across the country's regions, examine the factors behind these differences, and substantiate ways to address existing problems. It also examines how regional demographic characteristics, levels of economic development, labor resources, and opportunities to create new jobs affect labor market conditions. The article uses statistical data analysis, interregional comparison, and generalization. Based on the findings, scientific and practical proposals and recommendations are developed to reduce imbalances in regional labor markets, increase employment, lower unemployment, and ensure the efficient use of labor resources.*

INTRODUCTION

Under conditions of globalization and economic transformation, the effective functioning of the labor market is one of the key prerequisites for sustainable economic development, rising household incomes, and social justice. The rational use of labor resources, creation of new jobs, improvement of workers' professional skills, and reduction of unemployment are important priorities of national economic policy. From this perspective, a comparative analysis of regional labor market disparities in Uzbekistan, particularly using employment and unemployment



indicators, is of considerable academic and practical importance. The country's regions differ in their economic specialization, population density, demographic growth, investment attractiveness, industrial capacity, and level of demand for labor. The development of Uzbekistan's labor market is closely linked to the country's long-term socioeconomic reform program. The "Uzbekistan-2030" Strategy, approved by Presidential Decree No. PF-158 dated 11 September 2023, identifies improving public welfare, ensuring sustainable economic growth, and developing human potential as key strategic priorities [1]. In addition, Presidential Decree No. PF-143 dated 23 September 2024 introduced a new phase of measures under the "From Poverty to Prosperity" initiative, aimed at reducing poverty and improving living standards [2]. Presidential Resolution No. PQ-347 dated 4 October 2024 also focuses on improving the effectiveness of policies to promote employment and reduce poverty [3]. According to data published by Uzbekistan's national statistical authorities, the country's unemployment rate followed a downward trend between 2020 and 2025. The rate was 10.5% in 2020, 9.6% in 2021, and 8.9% in 2022; it then declined to 6.8% in 2023 and 5.5% in 2024. In 2025, the unemployment rate fell further to 4.8% [7]. This downward trend indicates an overall improvement in labor market conditions. Employment rate indicators provide additional information for assessing the state of the labor market. Official statistics show that Uzbekistan's employment rate rose from 66.0% in 2020 to 68.3% in 2024 and reached 70.5% in 2025 [4]. Although this trend suggests more effective use of labor resources, a comprehensive assessment requires employment and unemployment indicators to be analyzed together and their dynamics compared across regions. In particular, employment growth should be assessed in terms of the working-age population, the quality and stability of jobs, the prevalence of informal employment, labor migration, and the match between workers' skills and employers' requirements. Moreover, labor market efficiency cannot be fully assessed using quantitative employment indicators alone without considering labor productivity, wages, working conditions, and job stability.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Regional labor market imbalances have been widely studied by international and local researchers. Okun (1962) identified the relationship between economic growth and unemployment, providing a theoretical basis for analyzing employment dynamics [9]. The International Labour Organization (ILO) emphasizes the importance of vocational education, productive employment, and decent working conditions in reducing unemployment [8]. The World Bank also highlights the importance of creating new jobs, increasing wages, and reducing regional inequalities in Uzbekistan's labor market. Uzbek researchers have studied employment development, factors determining unemployment, and labor market efficiency. Amirdjanova (2022) examined labor market development and employment in Uzbekistan [10], while Doniyorova (2023) analyzed approaches to improving population employment [11]. Their research helps explain structural issues affecting employment and labor market development.



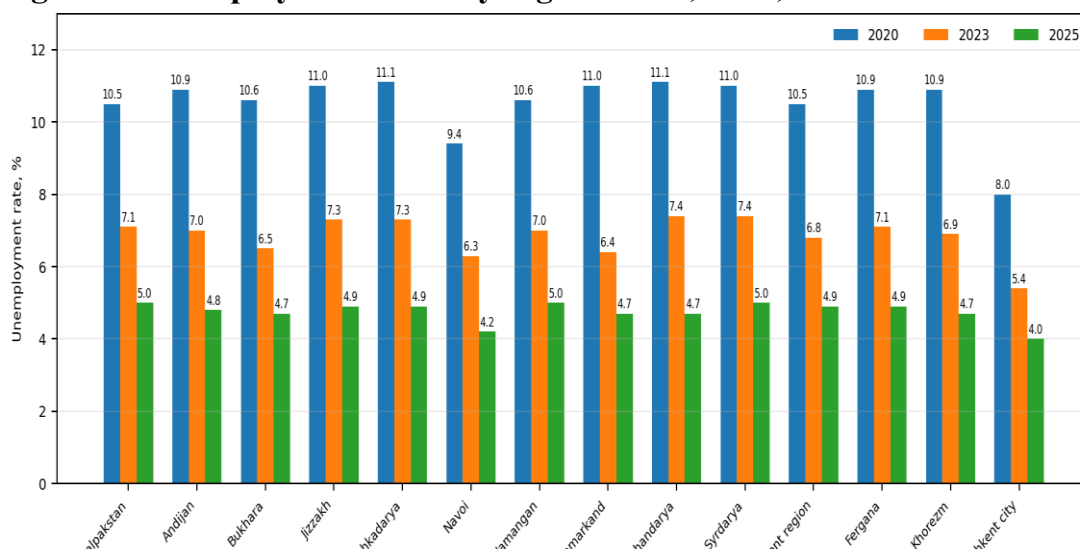
## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This article uses quantitative research methods to examine regional labor market disparities in Uzbekistan, focusing on employment and unemployment indicators. The study is based on official statistical data published by the National Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan, particularly its SIAT statistical database, as well as relevant reports from the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Bank. Comparative analysis is used to identify differences in employment and unemployment rates across Uzbekistan's regions. Dynamic analysis examines changes in these indicators over time and identifies key labor market trends. Statistical grouping and descriptive statistics are used to organize regional data, calculate average values, and assess disparities among regional units.

## ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The analysis of Uzbekistan's labor market in 2020–2025 focuses on changes in employment and unemployment rates and disparities between regions. At the national level, the employment rate increased from 66.0% in 2020 to 70.5% in 2025, while the unemployment rate fell from 10.5% to 4.8%. This represents an increase of 4.5 percentage points in employment and a decrease of 5.7 percentage points in unemployment. These changes indicate an overall improvement in labor market conditions during the period under review.

**Figure 1. Unemployment rates by region: 2020, 2023, and 2025**



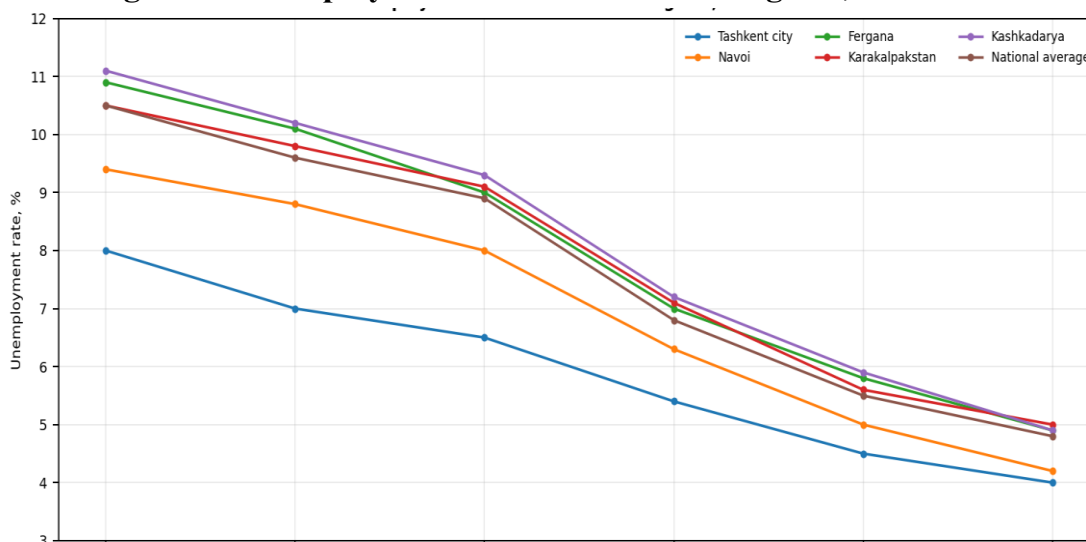
Source: National Statistics Committee of Uzbekistan (stat.uz).

2020-In 2020, unemployment was high across all regions amid the effects of the pandemic. The highest rates were recorded in Kashkadarya and Surkhandarya regions (11.1%), while the lowest were in Tashkent city (8.0%) and Navoi region (9.4%). By 2023, regional rates ranged from 5.4% in Tashkent city to 7.4% in Surkhandarya and Syrdarya. In 2025, the rate had fallen to between 4.0% and 5.0% in all 14 regions: the lowest rates were in Tashkent city (4.0%) and Navoi region (4.2%), while the highest were in Karakalpakstan, Namangan, and Syrdarya



(5.0%). Thus, the interregional gap, which had exceeded 3 percentage points six years earlier, had narrowed to 1 percentage point by 2025.

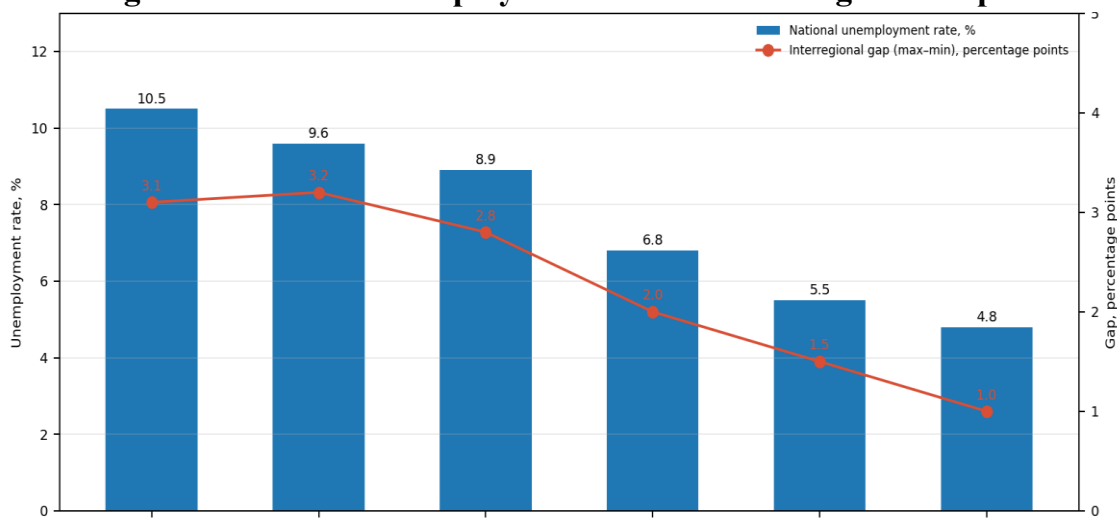
**Figure 2. Unemployment trends in selected regions, 2020–2025**



Source: National Statistics Committee of Uzbekistan (stat.uz).

National unemployment declined from 10.5% in 2020 to 4.8% in 2025. The sharpest decline occurred between 2022 and 2023, when the rate fell from 8.9% to 6.8%, a decrease of 2.1 percentage points. The pace then slowed: the decline was 1.3 points in 2023–2024 and 0.7 points in 2024–2025. Tashkent city had the lowest rate throughout the period (8.0% → 4.0%), while Navoi region also remained consistently below the national average (9.4% → 4.2%). Although Kashkadarya (11.1% → 4.9%) and Fergana (10.9% → 4.9%) were above the national average in 2020, their rates were almost equal to the national average of 4.8% in 2025. Karakalpakstan had a rate close to the national average in 2020 (10.5%) but was above it in 2025, at 5.0%.

**Figure 3. National unemployment rate and interregional disparities**

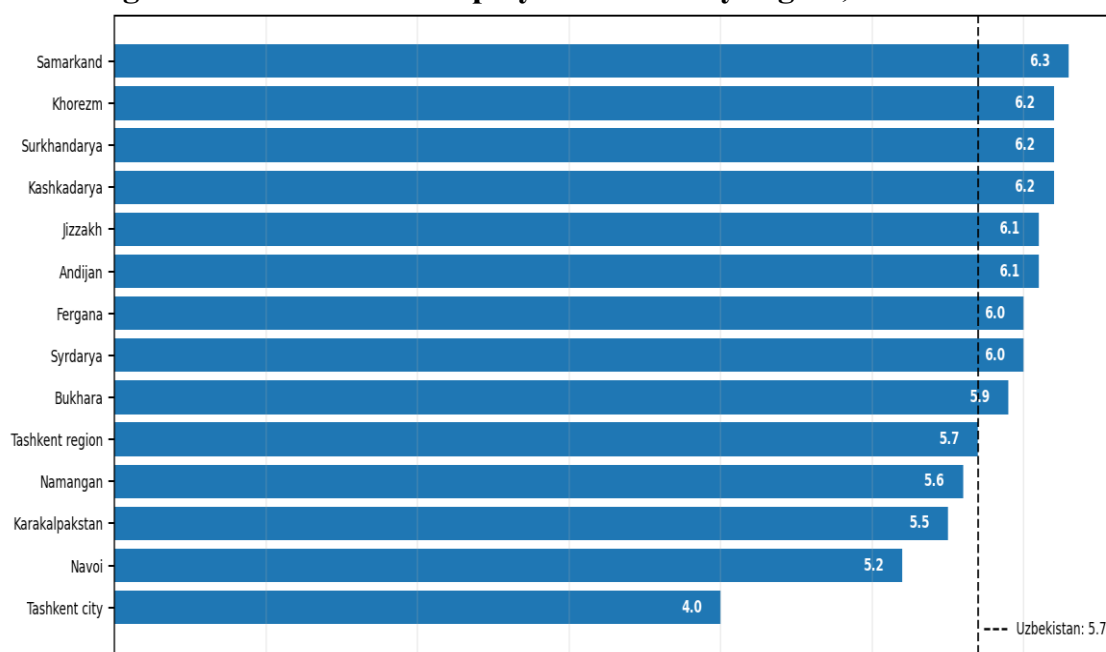


Source: National Statistics Committee of Uzbekistan (stat.uz).



The bars show the national unemployment rate, while the line shows the difference between the highest and lowest rates among the 14 regions, in percentage points. The gap was 3.1–3.2 points in 2020–2021, then fell to 2.8 in 2022, 2.0 in 2023, 1.5 in 2024, and 1.0 in 2025. Tashkent city recorded the lowest rate each year. It should be noted that the narrowing gap is partly associated with the overall decline in unemployment and the rates approaching the lower end of the range. Therefore, regional differences in unemployment have nearly disappeared, but this does not mean that labor market quality—such as wages and formal employment—is equal across regions.

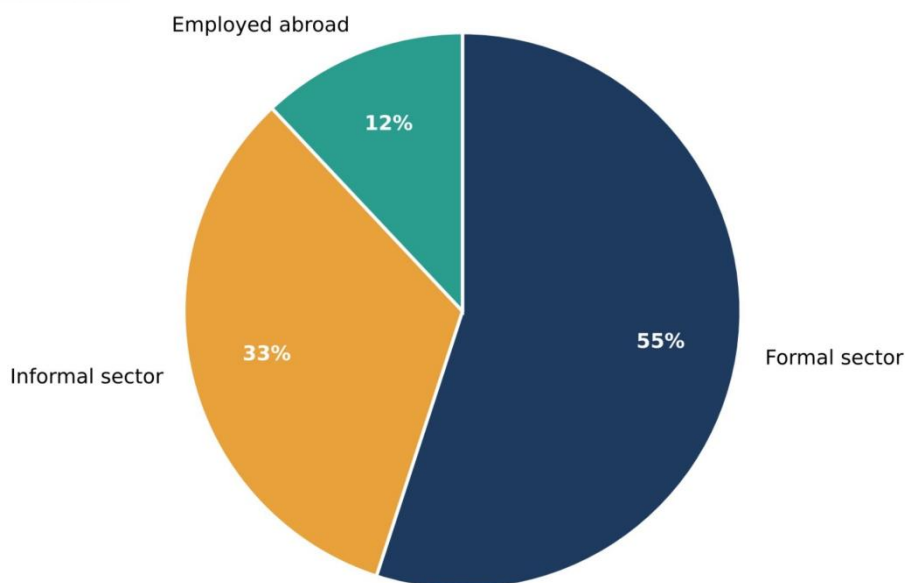
**Figure 4. Decline in unemployment rates by region, 2020–2025**



Source: National Statistics Committee of Uzbekistan (stat.uz).

The national unemployment rate declined by 5.7 percentage points. The largest decrease was recorded in Samarkand region (11.0% → 4.7%, or 6.3 points), followed by Kashkadarya, Surkhandarya, and Khorezm (6.2 points each). The smallest absolute decreases were observed in Tashkent city (4.0 points), Navoi (5.2), and Karakalpakstan (5.5), where the initial rate was lower or the 2025 rate remained relatively higher. In other words, regions with the highest unemployment in 2020 recovered most rapidly, explaining the narrowing of interregional disparities.

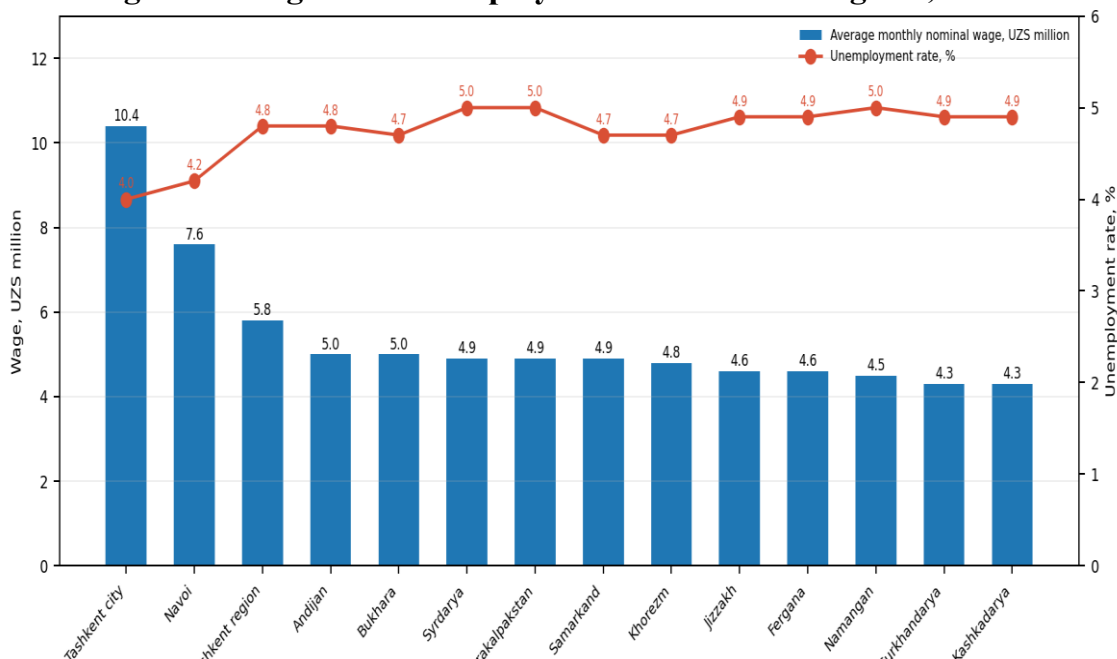
**Figure 5. Employment structure in Uzbekistan, January–June 2025**



Source: Ministry of Poverty Reduction and Employment data, reported by Spot.uz.

2025-According to the results for January–June 2025, of the 14.6 million employed people, 55% worked in the formal sector, 33% in the informal sector, and another 12% (approximately 1.8 million people) were employed abroad. During the same period, the number of unemployed people exceeded 781,600, and the unemployment rate was 5.1%. In the third quarter of 2025, formal-sector employment increased to 8.58 million people (+17%), while informal-sector employment declined to 4.38 million (–26.9%).

**Figure 6. Wages and unemployment rates across regions, 2025**



Source: National Statistics Committee of Uzbekistan (stat.uz).

From January to September 2025, the average monthly nominal wage across the country was UZS 6,166.9 thousand. The figure was UZS 10,379.6 thousand in Tashkent city (approximately



1.7 times the national average) and UZS 7,612.3 thousand in Navoi region; the lowest was UZS 4,270.8 thousand in Kashkadarya region (2.4 times lower than in Tashkent city). The regions with the lowest unemployment rates—Tashkent city (4.0%) and Navoi (4.2%)—also had the highest wages. Although unemployment varied by only 0.3 percentage points across the other 12 regions (4.7–5.0%), wages ranged from UZS 4.3 million to UZS 5.8 million. Thus, in 2025, regional disparities were more evident in employment quality and income than in unemployment. Wage growth was highest in Samarkand region (124.8%) and lowest in Andijan region (112.0%) compared with the same period in 2024.

Regional unemployment indicators also reveal differences in labor market conditions. Between 2020 and 2025, unemployment declined in several regions, including Andijan, Bukhara, and Jizzakh. Nevertheless, disparities in economic development, population growth, professional qualifications, and access to formal employment continue to affect regional labor market conditions. Expanding vocational education, supporting entrepreneurship, attracting investment, and creating stable jobs may help improve employment indicators. Regional employment programs should be designed in line with the economic and demographic characteristics of each region. Regular monitoring of employment and unemployment indicators is also important for evaluating policy effectiveness and ensuring balanced regional development.

## **CONCLUSION**

This article examined regional labor market disparities in Uzbekistan during 2020–2025, focusing on employment and unemployment indicators. The analysis highlights the importance of regional economic development, demographic characteristics, investment, and workforce skills in shaping labor market outcomes. The findings show that improvements in national employment indicators do not eliminate disparities between regions. Differences in economic opportunities and access to formal employment remain important challenges. Therefore, employment policies should be developed in accordance with the specific needs and economic potential of each region. To reduce these disparities, it is recommended to expand vocational education, support small and medium-sized businesses, attract investment to less-developed regions, and encourage the creation of stable jobs. Strengthening cooperation between educational institutions and employers can also help align workforce skills with labor market needs.

In addition, regularly monitoring regional employment and unemployment indicators is essential for evaluating policy effectiveness and identifying areas that require additional support.

In conclusion, reducing regional labor market disparities requires a comprehensive approach tailored to each region. Effective employment policies can contribute to sustainable economic growth, improved living standards, and more balanced regional development in Uzbekistan.



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