



UZBEKISTAN AS A SOCIAL STATE FOUNDATIONS OF WELL-BEING IN THE SOCIAL PROGRESS INDEX

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15023113>

Abstract: This article examines the concepts of the Social Progress Index, the current position of our developing country as a social state within the "Foundations of Well-being" direction of the Social Progress Index, the socio-political reforms being carried out in our country to build a social state, and their role in improving the prosperity and healthy lifestyle of our people, as well as aspects of their development from a scientific and practical perspective.

Keywords: Social Progress Index, foundations of well-being, social state, social rights, social policy, social reforms, Constitution, law, regulatory legal document, public interest, poverty reduction, decent living conditions.

Introduction

Uzbekistan is a sovereign, democratic, legal, social, and secular state with a republican form of governance. The concept of a social state refers to a society that prioritizes the social sphere at the highest level, ensuring the equality of citizens' rights, enabling every citizen to achieve a decent quality and standard of living, mitigating social inequalities, and providing assistance to vulnerable segments of the population through the fair distribution of the state budget in accordance with the principles of social justice.

The Social Progress Index, one of the most comprehensive assessment systems covering social and environmental indicators, encompasses data on social progress across 170 countries over a 13-year period (2011–2023). It evaluates indicators across three main directions: Basic Human Needs, Foundations of Well-being, and Opportunity. In 2024, Uzbekistan secured a solid 81st place in this index, a notable improvement from its 102nd position in 2020—a fact widely acknowledged. [1]

How did Uzbekistan achieve such rapid and positive results? Given that it has been only 33 years since Uzbekistan gained independence and has outperformed countries such as Bolivia, India, and Iraq, what are the reasons and legal foundations behind this progress? Below, we present our personal insights regarding Uzbekistan's standing in the "Foundations of Well-being" direction of the Social Progress Index.

MAIN BODY

1. Foundations of Well-being in the Social Progress Index. The "Foundations of Well-being" direction of the index assesses the essential conditions necessary for the population's well-being. It comprises four sub-indicators: access to basic knowledge (literacy and primary education levels), access to information and communication (availability of internet, telephone, and mass media), health and well-being (population health levels and quality of medical services), and environmental quality (air, water, and environmental cleanliness).[2]

This direction encompasses the core elements required for an individual's overall well-being and health, including physical, mental, emotional, and social aspects. A social state, in turn, implements organizational measures to improve these elements positively.

2. The Role of a Social State in Enhancing Well-being. A social state prioritizes social spheres to improve the quality of life and ensure long-term well-being. These elements are closely interconnected, and their balance enables individuals to lead a fulfilling life.

Key social domains include balanced nutrition, an active lifestyle or sports, adequate and quality sleep, disease prevention and timely diagnosis, practices such as meditation or breathing exercises to foster optimism, setting and pursuing life goals, seeking help from specialists or friends when needed, strengthening family, friendly, and professional relationships, spending time with loved ones, participating in social projects or volunteering, finding inner peace through religion or personal beliefs, enhancing mental clarity and emotional stability, spending time in nature, acquiring new knowledge and skills, engaging in creative pursuits such as art or writing, striving for personal growth, balancing income and expenses, securing the future through savings or investments, and managing finances effectively—all of which significantly contribute to elevating the quality of human life.

3. Access to Basic Education. In the "Basic Education" sub-direction of the index, the extent to which quality education is guaranteed for all, equal access to secondary education for men and women, the proportion of the population not attending school, the ratio of primary school students to the official number of children of corresponding age, and the proportion of individuals with secondary education are evaluated.

Article 50 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan states: "Everyone has the right to education. The state ensures the development of a continuous education system, its various types and forms, and the advancement of state and non-state educational institutions. The state creates conditions for the development of preschool education and upbringing. The state guarantees free general secondary education and initial vocational education. General secondary education is compulsory. Preschool education and upbringing, as well as general secondary education, are under state supervision. Inclusive education and upbringing are provided for children with special educational needs in educational institutions." [3]

This demonstrates that ensuring compulsory and quality education for all is under state control. The National Guard oversees school attendance, notifying parents of students absent without valid reasons about the obligation of education, with fines imposed if no results are achieved. Furthermore, after completing the mandatory 11-year education in Uzbekistan, school graduates can voluntarily pursue studies at vocational colleges. Those wishing to acquire a trade can opt for programs ranging from 6 months to 2 years.

4. Access to Information and Communication. The "Information and Communications" sub-direction of the index covers the independence of journalistic activities, prevention of unjustified interference by individuals or organizations in their work, and the population's access to internet and mobile communication systems.

Today, the population of Uzbekistan increasingly perceives mass media as the "fourth estate." Citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan have begun to express their opinions freely through mass media and trust it. Consequently, the number of appeals to the media has sharply increased in recent times. Live broadcasts, real events, and in-depth investigations into the root causes of issues are now reflected in the media.

Article 81 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan stipulates: "Mass media are free and operate in accordance with the law. The state guarantees the freedom of mass media activities, their rights to seek, obtain, use, and disseminate information. Mass media are responsible for the reliability of the information they provide." [4] Article 82 further states: "Censorship is prohibited. Obstructing or interfering with the activities of mass media entails liability in accordance with the law." [5]

5. Legal Protection of Journalism. To develop this sphere and ensure its legal foundations, Article 10 of the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. 402-I "On the Protection of Journalistic Activities," dated April 24, 1997, states: "The rights, honor, and dignity of journalists are protected by law. The state guarantees journalists the freedom to obtain and disseminate information and ensures their protection in carrying out their professional duties. Interference in journalistic activities or demanding information obtained during the performance of professional duties is prohibited." [6]

Thus, the independence of journalists in Uzbekistan is legally protected, ensuring their right to freely search for, obtain, and disseminate information, reinforced by laws and other regulatory legal documents. These domains are unimaginable without internet and mobile communication systems. While some individuals may not watch television, listen to the radio, or read newspapers, it is nearly impossible to find someone who does not use the internet or mobile communication. These systems provide fast, convenient, and affordable information access. Virtually all populated areas of Uzbekistan, from urban centers to remote regions, are equipped with internet and mobile communication systems. Various communication providers operate to ensure citizens' rights to choose quality and convenient services, striving to improve systems and remain competitive.

6. Health and Well-being. In the "Health" sub-direction of the index, the population's ability to freely access medical services, satisfaction with the quality of services received, mortality rates among individuals aged 15–50, and the proportion of people over 60 are evaluated.

Article 48 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan states: "Everyone has the right to health protection and access to qualified medical services. Citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan are entitled to receive a guaranteed scope of medical care at state expense in the manner prescribed by law. The state takes measures to develop the healthcare system, its state and non-state forms, various types of medical insurance, ensure the sanitary-epidemiological well-being of the population, promote physical education and sports, and create conditions for fostering a healthy lifestyle among the population." [7]

This underscores the constitutionally guaranteed right to access medical services. Currently, alongside state-affiliated multidisciplinary polyclinics and hospitals across all administrative units of the republic, the role of non-state medical institutions is significantly increasing. Over the past seven years, extensive efforts have been made to increase the private sector's share in healthcare, support, and develop non-state medical institutions. As a result, while the number of private hospitals was 3,454 in 2017, it has risen to 9,200 today, with an average annual increase of 500–600 facilities. [8]

This expansion provides people with greater choice in accessing quality medical services. Both private and public healthcare institutions strive to deliver high-quality and competitive services, fully supported by the state. In countries with advanced medical services, medical tourism increases, which is a vital factor for the national economy.

7. Environmental Quality. To improve activities in the "Environmental Quality" sub-direction of the index, the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PF-81, dated May 31, 2023, "On Measures to Transform the Sphere of Ecology and Environmental Protection and Establish the Activities of the Authorized State Body," was adopted. [9]

This decree renamed the Ministry of Natural Resources to the Ministry of Ecology, Environmental Protection, and Climate Change, taking into account new tasks and functions. Additionally, within the organizational structure of the Prosecutor General's Office, a Department for Oversight of the Enforcement of Legislation in the Fields of Ecology, Environmental Protection, and Forestry was established, comprising six additional staff units.

As part of the decree's implementation, Presidential Resolution No. PQ-171, dated May 31, 2023, "On Measures to Effectively Organize the Activities of the Ministry of Ecology, Environmental Protection, and Climate Change," was adopted. [10]

The resolution outlined priority directions for the ministry, including developing and implementing a unified state policy on environmental protection, rational use and restoration of natural resources, waste management, and climate change; conducting state environmental oversight in protecting the atmosphere, land, subsoil resources, water, forests, protected natural areas, and biodiversity, as well as managing waste; protecting, conserving, multiplying, restoring, and rationally using forests to enhance their productivity; introducing "green" growth principles, reducing harmful emissions, and minimizing the negative impact of human activity on the environment.

These efforts reflect Uzbekistan's commitment as a social state to positively transform the environment and ensure a clean and prosperous living environment for its citizens, highlighting the state's focus on this area and its critical importance for the country's future.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, despite having gained independence just 33 years ago and being among developing nations, Uzbekistan has risen to 81st place among 170 countries in the Social Progress Index, surpassing countries such as Bolivia, India, and Iraq in terms of results. [11]

In the "Foundations of Well-being" direction, Uzbekistan's state governance and reforms prioritize human interests, particularly social spheres, at the highest level. Considering these achievements, we can anticipate even better results in the coming years.

Footnotes:

1. Social Progress Index Official Website, <https://www.socialprogress.org/social-progress-index>.
2. Social Progress Index Data Visualization, https://public.tableau.com/shared/S6XW75WJ5?:display_count=y&:origin=viz_share_link&:embed=y.
3. Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, National Database of Legislation, May 1, 2023, No. 03/23/837/0241.
4. Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, National Database of Legislation, May 1, 2023, No. 03/23/837/0241.
5. Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, National Database of Legislation, May 1, 2023, No. 03/23/837/0241.



6. Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. 402-I “On the Protection of Journalistic Activities,” dated April 24, 1997, <https://lex.uz/docs/-9540>.
7. Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, National Database of Legislation, May 1, 2023, No. 03/23/837/0241.
8. Ministry of Health: The Number of Private Medical Institutions in Uzbekistan Reaches 9,200, <https://gov.uz/oz/ssv/news/view/20014>.
9. Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PF-81, dated May 31, 2023, “On Measures to Transform the Sphere of Ecology and Environmental Protection and Establish the Activities of the Authorized State Body,” <https://www.lex.uz/docs/-6479180>.
10. Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PQ-171, dated May 31, 2023, “On Measures to Effectively Organize the Activities of the Ministry of Ecology, Environmental Protection, and Climate Change,” <https://www.lex.uz/docs/-6479134>.
11. Social Progress Index Official Website, <https://www.socialprogress.org/social-progress-index>.