

## National News

A new report on the *State of Human Resource, 2025*, showed that with the easing of restrictions on recruitment, 681,277 positions have been approved across government, but only 374,642 staff are in the posts, representing a net increase of 18,138 positions from 2024.

BY MIKE SEBALU

The government is still grappling with 306,635 vacant positions despite a huge number of youth and university graduates entering the job market, yet remain unemployed.

A new report on the *State of Human Resource, 2025*, showed that with the easing of restrictions on recruitment, 681,277 positions have been approved across government, but only 374,642 staff are in the posts, representing a net increase of 18,138 positions from 2024.

The report was released by the Ministry of Public Service in Kampala recently. Mr Jose Tegeyeza, the Commissioner of Statistics, Monitoring and Evaluation, Ministry of Public Service, said: "Between 2024 and 2025, the Public Service saw an overall fill rate improvement of just one percent as the creation of new structural positions outstripped actual recruitment."

"Nearly one out of every two approved positions in Uganda remains unfilled as of December 2025," he added.

The report said while the actual employee headcount has grown by more than 32,000 since 2021, the simultaneous creation of new administrative and service structures has driven the overall fill rate (the number of people employed at that point) down by six percent from 61 percent in 2021.

### Workforce capacity dashboard

The report said administrative structures have retained capacity while frontline services continue facing systematic deficits.

Government agencies constitute 71 percent filled positions, Uganda Police Force (69 percent) and teaching service (67 percent).

On the other hand, frontline health and higher education face severe, systematic deficits, with referral hospitals taking the largest share of deficits at 69 percent, public universities (66 percent) and primary health care with 61 percent.

Currently, the teaching service has filled 177,667 positions, leaving a gap of 87,080 positions; primary healthcare filled 43,567, leaving a gap of 84,664; Local government filled 43,798 with a gap of 32,509, and Uganda Police Force with filled 48,090, leaving a gap of 21,733.

Others include Uganda Prison Service with 14,896 filled and a gap of 27,828 positions, ministries and departments filled 16,206 with a gap of 13,559 positions, referral hospitals filled 7,930 with a gap of 18,829 positions, public universities filled 8,451 with a gap of 16,373, and government agencies with 12,037 positions and a gap of 4,860 positions.

But Mr Dennis Ojok, a senior statistician at Ministry of Public Service, clarified that while health and universities face the highest percentage gaps, the teaching service holds the largest absolute number of vacancies of 87,080 in

# Govt struggles to fill 300,000 vacant posts



People check a jobs shortlist for their names at Kololo in Kampala. PHOTO/FILE

the public sector.

### Gender parity

Even though the gender parity is improving, the report reveals that deep structural barriers still persist in leadership and security.

Mr Ojok said the overall ratio of 59 percent (222,635) are male and 41 percent (152,007) are female. Majority of the women are in health services (56 percent), and male mostly dominate the

Police (77 percent) and Prisons (70 percent).

However, he said while sectors like primary health and teaching boast high female representation at entry and operational levels, the report reveals that persistent structural barriers have continued to prevent female career progression into strategic leadership roles across the public service.

### The looming exit

Of the total workforce (374,642), 22 percent (over 80,000) are aged 50 and above, 69 percent (over 146,000) are aged 30-49 years, and only nine percent (over 30,000) are aged 18-29 years.

The report shows the extremely narrow entry-level pipeline (nine percent) which limits long-term talent replenishment, creating a looming succession crisis as the 22 percent will exit over the next decade. Mr Ojok said this calls for targeted recruitment to ensure public service continuity.

"Entrants between 18 and 29 are few, and those set to exit public service are very many. This is becoming a challenge because when people leave, the problem of educational memory will arise," he said.

The report said 44 percent of the workforce has served for 10 years or less, and this was reflected in the recent post-pandemic hiring surges.

The report further reveals that 25 percent of all staff have been stagnant in their current appointments for over 12 years, indicating severe promotion bottlenecks.

The Public Service Standing Orders said employees are eligible for promotion after three years; however, in this case, one in four public officers have been in the same role for over 12 years.

The report added that even the vast majority of the workforce is sitting on lower salary scales, creating steep structural limits on career progression.

### Education sector

With an approved establishment of

291,571 positions and 188,118 staff as of December 2025, the education sector is regarded as the undisputed engine of the State workforce, representing nearly one in two public servants.

The report indicates that the filling rate improved from 62 percent in 2024 to 65 percent in 2025, a net gain of 7,095 employees, yet the structural deficit remains massive.

At the primary level, the staffing gap has been reduced with a fill rate of 81 percent (137,849 staff in post). At the secondary level, the fill rate stands at 46 percent, with public universities at 34 percent, and tertiary institutions at 29 percent only.

The report identifies secondary schools as having nearly all approved administrative leadership, but lacking the core teaching cadres required to actually deliver learning outcomes.

At public universities, the reports says there is a dual crisis with a severe lack of senior academicians and a broken entry pipeline with no internal mechanism to groom the next generation.

The overall academic staffing stood at 31 percent with a filling rate of 12 percent for professors (133 currently employed), associate professors at 19 percent (277 in post), and senior lecturers at 29 percent.

Lecturers stood at 43 percent, while assistant lecturers were at 41 percent. Teaching assistant filling gap stands at 12 percent with only 136 currently employed against the approved 1,164 positions.

Mr Tegeyeza said the report also identified severe staffing inequality with specialised central institutes maintaining stability, whereas regional and rural universities face systematic neglect.

"Most affected are the frontline training institutions managed by local governments, with the 71 percent vacancy rate (4,587 staff currently employed against established 16,010). That directly undermines the delivery of technical and vocational skills vital for economic transformation," he added.

# 87,080

This is the number of unfilled positions in the teaching service.

### Human Resource in local govt

According to the report, local governments operate at 57 percent capacity, with cities operating at 52 percent.

But despite successfully establishing leadership and community mobilisation structures, the majority lack the technical engineering and planning staff required to execute infrastructure and economic development.

The report showed that only 19 percent of district engineers, 30 percent of city planners, and 53 percent of district natural resource officers are filled to date. That is compared to 95 percent of political leaders, 94 percent of CAOs/town clerks, and 99 percent of community development officers filled respectively.

### Early retirement

The report also observed a 488 percent spike in early retirement from 449 in 2021 to 2,166 in 2025.

Primary school teachers account for an overwhelming 73 percent, with 1,588 exiting in 2024/25 alone.

According to the report, a total of 5,725 staff exited early in five years, with the majority being females (40.5 percent) aged at 63 percent and 51 percent respectively. On the other hand, males dominated the later post-50 exits (57 percent and 63 percent), and 73 percent of early retirements occurred between ages 46-55.

Mr Ojok said the main drivers for early retirement are attributed to family matters, constituting 16.08 percent, immediate age eligibility (6.61 percent), and politics (3.9 percent).

"The report projected 34,340 statutory retirements by 2030, with the teaching service carrying the biggest share with 19,801 officers," he added.

Mr Ojok also noted that 9.2 percent of the total active workforce will retire, with a massive peak of 8,215 exits hitting in 2029. That will be 13.8 percent from public universities, 12.4 percent from referral hospitals, 11.0 percent from teaching service, and a further 11.0 percent from ministries/departments.

This figure, colliding with a pre-existing 306,635 vacancy gap, creates an imminent threat to institutional memory and basic state functionality if succession planning is ignored.

### Recommendations

To address the current human resource challenge in the government, the report recommends that the relevant authorities prioritise recruitment strictly toward technical cadres plus fast-track hiring in hospitals, schools, universities, and science institutions.

The report also calls for the ring-fencing of wage allocations to protect essential frontline staff from budget reallocations and to conduct immediate and periodic establishment rationalisation.

It is also expedient to operationalise sustainable pension reforms by fast-tracking the implementation of the contributory pension schemes. This is introducing retention incentives for critical cadres to delay early retirement, promoting phased retirement approaches, and reducing processing delays, among others.