

## **THE ROLE OF WOMEN JUDGES IN ENSURING JUSTICE AND STRENGTHENING GENDER EQUALITY IN THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM OF UZBEKISTAN**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The article examines the development of gender equality and women's leadership in the judicial system of Uzbekistan in the context of ongoing democratic reforms and gender policy modernization. Special attention is paid to the increasing number of women judges and their growing role in ensuring justice and public trust in the legal system. Based on statistical data from 2018 to 2025, the study analyzes the dynamics of women's representation at various levels of the judiciary, including leadership positions. It also explores legal and institutional mechanisms aimed at promoting gender equality and the participation of women in the justice sector. The article identifies key barriers and offers practical recommendations to strengthen gender balance in the judicial and law enforcement systems.

### **KEYWORDS**

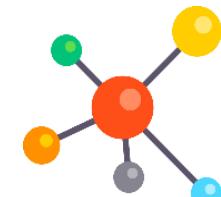
Gender equality, women judges, leadership, judicial system, democratic reforms, Uzbekistan.

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the context of modern democratic governance and rule of law, the active participation of women in the judiciary plays a crucial role in shaping a fair and inclusive justice system. Increasing the proportion of women judges in Uzbekistan opens up wider opportunities for viewing and evaluating social relations from a woman's perspective. A female judge, as a mother, sister, or daughter, can express a humane

and empathetic attitude toward the social realities reflected in the disputes she examines. This undoubtedly contributes to the strengthening of social justice and public trust in the legal system.

The analysis of Uzbekistan's core international commitments and gender equality indices demonstrates the state's systematic approach to promoting equal rights for women and men. President



Shavkat Mirziyoyev emphasized the importance of women's engagement by stating: "Today, every woman must not be merely an observer of democratic processes but an active and initiative-taking participant." This policy direction reflects a deep understanding of the fact that a just and transparent judicial system requires equal participation of both men and women in the administration of justice.

Over the past decade, the participation of women in Uzbekistan's judiciary has been steadily increasing. This trend reflects broader reforms aimed at ensuring gender equality, transparency in judicial appointments, and the establishment of merit-based selection mechanisms. It also aligns with the state's strategic objectives, including the "Strategy for Achieving Gender Equality in Uzbekistan by 2030," which aims to raise the proportion of women judges to 30%.

## **METHODS**

This article is based on a comprehensive analysis of official statistical data, state legal acts, presidential decrees, and reports of the Supreme Judicial Council of Uzbekistan between 2018 and 2025. It also draws on international standards and indices related to gender equality and women's participation in judicial governance.

The research methodology includes:

1. Comparative statistical analysis of women's participation in different sectors of the judicial system over several years.
2. Normative legal analysis of laws and regulations that regulate the appointment, promotion, and training of judges.
3. Case study approach examining the professional careers of prominent female judges in Uzbekistan.

4. Gender analysis to assess the impact of increased women's representation on judicial processes and social justice outcomes.

Primary data sources include official reports of the Supreme Court, the Constitutional Court, the Ministry of Justice, the National Guard, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. International references include gender equality indices and human rights monitoring reports.

## **RESULTS**

The judicial system of Uzbekistan currently employs over 8,000 staff members, of whom nearly 3,000 (38%) are women. As of 2024, 182 women serve as judges, representing 14% of the total judicial corps. Additionally, 26 women hold leadership positions in various judicial institutions.

Prominent female leader in the judiciary is Sayyora Rejipbaevna, currently serving as a judge of the Constitutional Court. Among the five Constitutional Court judges, one is a woman. State policies aimed at supporting women have led to a significant increase in their involvement in political and social processes. In 2021, women accounted for 20% of the Constitutional Court, 14.6% of the Supreme Court, 20.4% of the regional courts, 15.8% of the Supreme Economic Court, and 22.6% of the regional economic courts.

Between 2018 and 2023, the share of female judges increased from 11.9% to 14%, and is projected to reach 16% by 2025. Growth was particularly noticeable in the Republic of Karakalpakstan, Andijan, Bukhara, Jizzakh, Navoi, Samarkand, Tashkent region, Fergana region, and Tashkent city.

In parallel, there has been notable progress in other law enforcement sectors. The participation of women in the National Guard and the Ministry of Internal Affairs has increased. Since February 2024, juvenile



inspector-psychologists have been transferred to the structure of the National Guard, increasing women's involvement in child protection and human rights. Women now make up 7% of the National Guard's personnel.

The share of women in the Ministry of Internal Affairs increased from 5% in 2015 to 8.7% in 2018 and 10.2% in 2024. Leadership positions held by women in the judiciary account for 6%, while in law enforcement agencies this figure is 2%. The 2021 Senate decision approving the Gender Equality Strategy by 2030 sets a target to increase the share of women judges to 30%. In 2024, the judicial selection process became more transparent, resulting in 783 candidates being appointed: 142 for five years, 146 for ten years, and five on a permanent basis. Among them, 34 were women, bringing their total number to 225 (16% of the judicial corps).

Women judges are distributed as follows:

111 in civil courts

31 in criminal courts

27 in economic courts

17 in administrative courts.

Twenty-eight women were appointed to leadership judicial positions. Three Uzbek female judges are members of the International Association of Women Judges. Within the Supreme Court, women represent 21% of the judiciary. Currently, five women serve as regional court chairs or deputy chairs. Seventy-five female judges work at the Supreme Judicial Council, the Supreme Court, and regional courts, while 20 women head district and inter-district courts. Four women — Nodira Bobokhonova, Guzal Ziganshina, Malikaxon Kalandarova, and Feruza Eshmatova (also the Ombudsperson) — are members of the Supreme Judicial Council.

Training of women in the judiciary has also advanced. In the 2020–2021 academic year, 41 women studied at the Higher School of Judges under the Supreme Judicial Council. In the same period, 16 out of 76 graduate students (23%) were female. These graduates are eligible for judicial positions, ensuring further gender balance in the judiciary.

## DISCUSSION

The steady increase in the number of women judges in Uzbekistan reflects a deep structural transformation of the judicial system. Gender equality is no longer viewed merely as a social issue but as a critical factor in ensuring the fairness, independence, and effectiveness of justice.

Women judges bring unique perspectives to legal decision-making, particularly in cases involving family, social, and human rights issues. Their approach often emphasizes restorative justice, compassion, and community engagement, which strengthens public trust in the courts.

However, significant challenges remain. Despite progress, women are still underrepresented in top leadership positions within the judiciary. Only 6% of leadership roles are occupied by women. Cultural stereotypes, work-life balance challenges, and limited access to specialized judicial training have slowed progress.

Addressing these challenges requires systematic measures, including:

1. Expanding special training programs for female judicial candidates.
2. Introducing flexible work conditions for pregnant women and mothers of young children, including a 10% reduction in workload.



3. Creating remote learning opportunities for women who cannot study in the capital due to family reasons.

4. Establishing a Women Judges Community under the Supreme Judicial Council to develop recommendations and promote solidarity among women judges.

The implementation of these initiatives will not only ensure gender equality but also strengthen the credibility and integrity of the judiciary as a whole.

## **CONCLUSION**

Uzbekistan has made significant progress in increasing women's participation in the judicial system, both in numbers and in leadership roles. The ongoing reforms, gender-sensitive policies, and transparent selection mechanisms have created a foundation for sustainable gender equality in the judiciary.

Women judges are now recognized as key actors in ensuring justice, human rights protection, and strengthening the rule of law. The 2030 Gender Equality Strategy sets ambitious but achievable goals to bring the share of women judges to 30%.

To reach this goal, it is essential to continue:

1. Expanding women's access to judicial education and leadership programs.
2. Institutionalizing gender-sensitive policies in recruitment and promotion.
3. Supporting female judges through special quotas and work-life balance measures.

Strengthening the role of women judges is not only a matter of equality — it is a strategic step toward building a fair, transparent, and accountable judicial system that reflects the diversity and values of Uzbek society.

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