

## WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL PROCESSES: LEGAL FRAMEWORKS AND PRACTICAL CHALLENGES

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### Abstract

This article analyzes women's participation in political processes, the legal frameworks that protect them, and the practical challenges they face. The study examines not only the internal political system of Uzbekistan but also international experiences. The article demonstrates that the level of women's participation in elections and their involvement in decision-making processes is increasing; however, various obstacles still exist in practice. These obstacles are primarily related to social stereotypes, gender inequality, and insufficient political knowledge. The article also provides recommendations for enhancing women's political activity and ensuring their broader inclusion in decision-making processes.

### Keywords

women's political activity, gender equality, political decisions, participation in elections, legal protection, practical problems, democratic processes.

### Introduction.

Women's participation in political processes is not only essential for ensuring gender equality but also constitutes an integral component of building a democratic society and achieving sustainable development. Active involvement of women in political life and their ability to voice opinions in decision-making processes reflect society's commitment to social justice, protecting not only individual rights but also public interests. Therefore, women's participation in political processes has become an increasingly discussed issue in the political life of Uzbekistan.

In the context of Uzbekistan, women's political participation has been a key focus of social policy for several years. Measures to ensure gender equality and increase women's political activity have encouraged their active engagement in public life. In recent years, not only social campaigns but also institutional structures and mechanisms reinforcing women's roles in political processes have been introduced. For example, the establishment of women's wings within political

parties and specialized training programs to prepare their candidates for leadership positions has become a widespread practice. These initiatives contribute to enhancing gender sensitivity in politics and increasing women's inclusion in decision-making processes.

International standards also play an important role in protecting and promoting women's participation in political processes [1]. International instruments, such as the "Convention on the Political Rights of Women" guarantee women the right to vote and stand for election on equal terms with men and provide the right to hold public and state office [2]. These international approaches serve as a foundation for strategies aimed at strengthening women's political participation and help prevent discrimination while expanding women's opportunities for political representation.

Political science research in Uzbekistan shows that women's participation in elections and their political roles are steadily increasing. According to data from the Central Election Commission [3], the number of women in the national parliament ranks prominently at the global level, confirming a positive trend. This indicates that both state policy and society are increasingly attentive to gender equality in the political sphere. However, in practice, several challenges remain regarding women's participation in political processes. One major challenge is the persistence of gender stereotypes and traditional social values. Historically, politics is often perceived as a "male domain," which creates barriers for women's political engagement. As a result, women frequently face personal constraints and psychological difficulties in asserting their rights. Therefore, increasing political activity requires not only legal guarantees but also comprehensive awareness-raising campaigns.

In addition, women's participation in political processes in Uzbekistan depends significantly on the support of relevant institutions. Local political organizations, non-profit sectors, and international partners organize training programs, leadership initiatives, and social events aimed at encouraging women's political engagement. Such initiatives are crucial for preparing women not only to participate in elections but also to play active roles in political parties and state institutions.

### **Research Methodology.**

This article was developed based on empirical and analytical approaches. Within the scope of the study, statistical data, surveys, and analyses of both domestic and international experiences were examined. Qualitative and quantitative research methods were applied to identify the participation of women

in political processes and the factors limiting their involvement. At the same time, existing scientific literature and expert analyses were compared, and general trends were determined based on numerical data. The article also takes into account regional and local political contexts. In the results and discussion sections, the collected data were systematically analyzed to determine women's political representation and their role in decision-making processes.

### **Analysis and Results.**

Analysis of existing statistical data on women's participation in political processes indicates that Uzbekistan has experienced significant growth in this area in recent years. The statistical compilation "Women and Men in Uzbekistan: Facts and Figures" prepared by the National Statistics Agency includes multiple indicators related to political participation [4], and their analysis sheds light on the role of women in society and state governance.

Currently, the increase in women's representation in the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis of Uzbekistan is clearly visible. As of June 2025, out of a total of 150 deputies in the Legislative Chamber, 56 were women, accounting for 39.2%. This figure was only 16% in 2014, indicating that women's representation in parliament has nearly doubled. Similarly, the number of women in the Senate shows an upward trend, with 16 out of 59 senators (27.1%) being women. This demonstrates that women's participation in high political bodies is also increasing. This growth is reflected not only in numbers but also in the qualitative aspect of women's political participation: women are increasingly involved not only as deputies or senators but also in specialized commissions and policy-making processes. This reflects social changes aimed at achieving gender balance in Uzbekistan's political landscape. However, the analysis of women's political participation should not be limited to parliamentary representation. Uzbekistan's Women Political Empowerment Index also confirms this [5]; in 2023, the country scored 0.654, significantly higher than the 0.381 recorded in the 1990s. This index measures women's core civil liberties, participation in political discourse, and representation in official political positions. Nevertheless, the score remains below the global average of 0.728, signaling that full equality has not yet been achieved.

Further analysis highlights the dependence of women's political engagement on social climate and stereotypes. Several studies indicate that in certain segments of society, politics is often perceived as a "male domain," which creates barriers to women's political activism. Such stereotypes lead to reduced participation in decision-making, preventing women from adequately expressing their interests in the political arena. Additionally, a 2024 baseline assessment conducted by UNDP

revealed that across almost all regions of Uzbekistan, social stereotypes and lack of leadership experience are the main obstacles to increasing women's political leadership [6]. While strict gender equality strategies have been implemented, their practical impact is not always evident. Moreover, women's political participation extends beyond parliamentary representation. The practices of political parties in nominating female candidates and promoting their engagement in civic activities also play a crucial role. International monitoring indicates that political parties in Uzbekistan involve women as candidates, but the number of nominees for long-term leadership positions remains low. This shows that political activity is increasing mainly at the parliamentary level, while gender disparities persist in local and intra-party processes.

The social dimension of women's political participation is also an important object of analysis. Increased political activity allows women not only to gain parliamentary representation but also to play a more significant role in social organizations, non-governmental activities, mass media, and civil society. This helps them express their voice even in areas not directly related to political decision-making.

The analysis demonstrates that although women's political participation is increasing, several internal and social barriers remain. These include gender stereotypes and traditional societal norms. Studies suggest that in some areas, women associate their political role with social obligations or family responsibilities, which may limit long-term participation in political processes. Furthermore, preparation for political activity is crucial: expanding political training, leadership programs, and opportunities for experience exchange for women contributes to enhancing political representation.

### **Discussion.**

Women's participation in political processes today manifests as a multifaceted and complex phenomenon in both global and local contexts. Continuous democratic reforms and measures aimed at gender policy provide incentives for enhancing women's political activity in modern societies; however, in practice, significant challenges remain to fully realize this process. In the case of Uzbekistan, women's representation in politics has grown considerably according to statistical indicators, yet ensuring the qualitative consistency of this growth remains a pressing issue.

National and international research indicates that the increasing share of women in the Uzbek parliament confirms significant changes in political representation. For instance, in recent years, women's representation in the

Legislative Chamber of parliament has reached around 39%, reflecting a notable increase compared to previous years. This implies that women are gaining greater representation in political debates and decision-making processes. This trend indicates the development of gender policy in the country and reflects a broader societal aspiration to enhance political engagement. At the same time, analysis shows that women's participation in political processes often does not translate into qualitative changes beyond quantitative indicators. In other words, although the number of women in parliament or other political positions has increased, their influence in decision-making, role in formulating high-level political strategies, and positions within political parties remain limited. This trend reflects the phenomenon of "representation without influence," indicating that despite women attaining leadership positions, there are still challenges regarding their actual participation in the decision-making system.

Research and practical studies indicate that female candidates within political parties are often not nominated for high-level positions or receive fewer resources and support during election campaigns compared to their male counterparts. This situation is directly linked to societal gender stereotypes, as politics is still widely perceived as a "male domain," with women frequently directed toward administrative or "soft" roles. These stereotypes are particularly evident at the local political or party level, where women require additional social incentives to initiate political engagement.

Moreover, social and cultural factors negatively influence women's political activity. Many members of society, influenced by traditional family roles and gendered expectations, may hold views that restrict women's political participation. These stereotypes often tie women to domestic responsibilities, discouraging them from actively engaging in political processes. Consequently, this reduces women's political motivation and limits their ability to achieve adequate representation in political arenas. Additionally, a baseline assessment conducted by UNDP analyzed gender-based barriers in greater depth, revealing the underlying reasons for women's limited leadership and representation in politics. The study, conducted at the regional level, identified factors such as entrenched stereotypes, social isolation, lack of leadership experience, and restricted access to resources. These factors particularly necessitate additional preparation and support for women seeking active political participation.

Other analyses also demonstrate that women's political involvement extends beyond parliamentary representation. Women influence political processes through participation in civil society organizations, non-governmental initiatives, and

media platforms. In the context of Uzbekistan, women actively engage in initiatives promoting gender equality and social issues, which represents forms of political activity that complement their formal political roles. Their contribution in these spheres plays a significant role in shaping public opinion, even outside formal political positions.

Discussion of these findings shows that while statistical and empirical analyses confirm an increase in women's political representation, significant obstacles remain in terms of the substance and impact of their participation. These barriers are linked to societal stereotypes, intra-party challenges, limited leadership experience, and access to resources, which restrict the potential for women's political influence and representation. Therefore, measures to enhance women's political participation should not be limited to increasing parliamentary representation. Instead, comprehensive strategies should be developed to strengthen their political influence, support leadership capacity, and reduce societal stereotypes. These strategies should be implemented through awareness campaigns, political education and training programs, and expanded access to resources and opportunities for women.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations.**

This article analyzed women's participation in political processes, examining practical challenges and available opportunities. The results indicate a significant increase in women's representation within Uzbekistan's parliamentary and political systems: women constitute approximately 39 % of the Legislative Chamber and 27 % of the Senate. These figures reflect a positive trend in women's political activity and their involvement in decision-making processes. However, as discussed in the analysis, while the numbers have increased, women's real influence in political processes and their leadership potential remain limited. Factors such as nomination opportunities within political parties, societal stereotypes, and insufficient political preparation continue to hinder women from actively participating in high-level political positions. Therefore, enhancing mere representation is not sufficient; it is equally important to improve the qualitative aspects of political participation.

Based on these findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Specialized training programs, seminars, and practical workshops should be organized to prepare women for political leadership and decision-making processes. This will enhance their professional capabilities and strengthen their participation in policy formulation.

2. Political parties should provide women with opportunities to be nominated for high-level positions and ensure equitable allocation of resources during election campaigns. This approach will improve the qualitative aspect of political representation.

3. Social awareness campaigns should be conducted to eliminate the stereotype that politics is a “male domain.” Mass media and non-governmental organizations can play a key role in promoting gender equality and increasing public awareness.

4. Women’s political involvement should be promoted not only at the parliamentary level but also within local councils and civil society. This will help ensure gender balance across the entire political system.

5. A regular monitoring system should be established to assess women’s political representation and participation, with results guiding the development of new strategies. This will enhance the effectiveness of political reforms.

In conclusion, Uzbekistan demonstrates positive trends in women’s political representation and activity, with increasing numerical indicators. At the same time, qualitative improvement, removal of social barriers, and strengthening political preparation are essential for fostering greater female participation in political processes. Implementing these strategies will reinforce gender equality and enhance the effectiveness of the political system.

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