Strengthening Femicide Data Collection and Media Reporting in Uzbekistan: Research Findings and Recommendations

by Svetlana Dzardanova and Niginakhon Saida

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Executive summary

This paper examines how femicide data is collected and reported in Uzbekistan, identifying gaps across both open-data systems of the state and media coverage. The analysis shows that state institutions do not collect or publish femicide-specific data, and existing homicide statistics remain fragmented, outdated, and insufficiently disaggregated by gender, age, or victim–perpetrator relationship. The findings also reveal that these institutions are largely unresponsive to formal requests for information, including those submitted by researchers or established international agencies. Media reporting on gender-related killings of women, while growing, remains superficial: Nearly half of all reports omit key details about victims or perpetrators, while the majority rely heavily on official press releases and rarely follow cases through to court outcomes.

The authors provide tailored recommendations for government bodies and media outlets to strengthen the collection and accessibility of femicide data in Uzbekistan. These include improving the centralized open-data system on homicide and femicide, enhancing the usability and functionality of official databases, improving communication practices, and raising journalistic standards for reporting gender-related killings. The authors believe that stronger data gathering and reporting is crucial for informing legislative reforms, as well as for the recognition of femicide as a distinct form of gender-based violence, which in turn can support more effective policy responses.

Keywords: Femicide, Femicide Reporting, Media Reporting, Uzbekistan

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Introduction

In 2023, 85,000 women and girls were killed worldwide, 60 percent of whom were reportedly murdered by their partners or family members. In Uzbekistan, official figures on the homicide of women and girls are not publicly available; however, the latest 2021 estimates from the United Nations World Population Prospects and the UNODC indicate approximately 179 cases.[1] Gender-related killings of women and girls, or femicide, is not codified as a separate criminal offence in the Uzbek Criminal Code, but is prosecuted under the general homicide laws. As such, it remains largely underreported and overlooked. Not every homicide of a woman is a femicide. Femicide refers specifically to the killing of a woman because of her gender, making it a distinct social phenomenon rather than a subset of homicide. The issue of this

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[1]   'Female Homicide Victims'. 2025. Our World in Data. Accessed November 19 https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/female-homicide-victims?mapSelect=~UZB

distinction has recently moved beyond academic and activist discourse and gained policy relevance. More countries are adapting their legislation to recognize femicide as a separate crime, with Brazil[2] and Italy[3] among the most recent cases.

Classifying femicide as a separate crime has more than symbolic value. It formally recognizes gender-based violence as a structural problem, increases public visibility, and improves the quality and consistency of police and judicial responses. It would also enable better data collection and analysis, as well as facilitate the development of more effective preventive mechanisms. Without legal recognition, systematic collection of femicide data remains difficult and leaves the gendered motivations of perpetrators invisible.

The primary sources of femicide-related data in Uzbekistan are the Statistics Agency under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), the Prosecutor General's Office, the Supreme Court's archive, and media reporting.

The activities of the Statistics Agency are guided by national laws and regulations, with the key ones being the Law on Official Statistics, the Law on the Census, and the Law on the Open Activities of Public Authorities and Government Bodies.[4] It aggregates the data provided by other state agencies. The Ministry of Internal Affairs website also has an Open Data section as well as contacts to its Press Centre. These agencies share selected crime data through their social media channels, mainly on Telegram.

Despite recent legislative and institutional progress, gaps in official statistics continue to affect policy and programming. This paper addresses these limitations by examining how femicide-related data is currently collected by key government institutions in Uzbekistan and how these cases are subsequently reported in the media.

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[2]   'Lula Sanctions Law Increasing Femicide Sentences to up to 40 Years'. 2024. Agência Brasil. October 11. https://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/en/justica/noticia/2024-10/lula-sanctions-law-increasing-femicide-sentences-40-years

[3]   Rainsford, S. 'Italian parliament unanimously votes to make femicide a crime'. 2025. BBC. Accessed December 14. https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c1dzp050yn2o

[4]   'Законы Республики Узбекистан.' n.d. *Национальный комитет Республики Узбекистан по статистике.* Accessed November 19. https://stat.uz/ru/normativnye-akty/zakony-respubliki-uzbekistan

Background and Methodology

This policy paper builds on findings from the Femicide Research in Uzbekistan,[5] part of the regional Making Every Woman and Girl Count initiative implemented by UN Women, the School of Data, and Data Against Feminicide.[6]

The research team collected the data through media analysis and review of the Supreme Court's online archives. Media data were obtained by web-scraping five selected online outlets (Gazeta.uz, Podrobno.uz, Ozodlik.org, Darakchi.uz, and Kun.uz) using a JavaScript code equipped with a list of targeted search keywords.[7] A list of keywords was developed based on the one used in a similar project that focused on femicide cases in Kyrgyzstan.[8] In total, over 16,000 news articles were extracted: Gazeta.uz (664), Podrobno.uz (2,379), Ozodlik.org (12,546), Darakchi.uz (271), and Kun.uz (703). The dataset then underwent a thorough data-cleaning process to remove duplicates caused by overlapping keywords or multiple outlets reporting the same case.

Additional data was scraped from sud.uz, the official website hosting Supreme Court decisions. Using Python scripts with BeautifulSoup and Selenium libraries, files were downloaded by court instance and criminal case type. The analysis focused on criminal cases falling under the relevant articles of the Criminal Code of Uzbekistan, including homicide-related articles, inducement to suicide, and intentional grievous bodily harm resulting in the death of the victim. Only first-instance court files were included, as they contained the most comprehensive information.

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5   'In Focus: Femicide research in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan'. 2025. UN Women. Europe and Central Asia. Accessed November 19. https://eca.unwomen.org/en/stories/in-focus/2024/06/in-focus-femicide-research-in-kazakhstan-tajikistan-and-uzbekistan

6   The analysis and recommendations in this paper are based on the data collection process used during the femicide research conducted by Niginakhon Saida, Svetlana Dzardanova, Gulnoza Akhmedova, Deniz Nazarova, and Savia Hasanova, the latter as a team mentor, as part of a joint initiative of the UN Women "Making Every Woman and Girl Count" regional programme, the School of Data, and Data against Feminicide. The views, conclusions and recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not represent the views of UN Women, the United Nations, or any of its affiliated organizations.

7   The list of keywords: *убита* - killed/murdered; *найдено тело женщины* - a body of a woman was found; *скончалась* - died; *погибла* - died/killed; *труп женщины* - woman's body; *смерти избил* - beaten [to] death; *скончалась от полученных травм* - died from the injuries received; *убийство женщины* - murder of a woman; *изнасилование женщины* - rape of a woman; *умерла* - died

8   Kapushenko, Anna, and Savia Khasanova. n.d. 'Фемицид. Кто и как убивает женщин в Кыргызстане? Краткие Выводы'. Soros Foundation–Kyrgyzstan. https://soros.kg/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/%D0%A4%D0%B5%D0%BC%D0%B8%D1%86%D0%B8%D0%B4_%D0%BA%D1%80%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%BA%D0%B8%D0%B5-%D0%B2%D1%8B%D0%B2%D0%BE%D0%B4%D1%8B-%D0%B8%D1%81%D1%81%D0%BB%D0%B5%D0%B4%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%8F_%D1%80%D1%83%D1%81%D1.pdf

To supplement these sources, the team submitted formal requests in September 2024 to four key state institutions seeking official data on homicides and related offences. No responses were received, leaving the team to rely exclusively on publicly accessible sources.

Finally, the scraped and cleaned data underwent a manual verification process, during which team members manually reviewed each article and court document to confirm their relevance to femicide cases.

These efforts resulted in an extended dataset covering 305 femicide cases involving 334 victims in Uzbekistan or among Uzbek migrant women between 2014 and 2024, comprising over 50 variables related to victim, perpetrator, and case characteristics.

Findings and Recommendations

In this section, the authors examine key gaps in data accessibility and the challenges encountered during the femicide data collection process. Based on these findings, the authors offer tailored recommendations for state agencies and online media outlets. Each identified gap is followed by a focused, actionable recommendation to support practical improvements.

For State Bodies and Agencies

State agencies do not provide separate statistics for femicide in Uzbekistan. The State Statistics Agency publishes annual figures on homicides and attempted murders, disaggregating perpetrators by gender on its Open Data page under the Crime and Justice section.[9] However, critical details regarding the victims, such as gender, age, marital status, occupational and educational background, and residence, are either not collected or are not effectively disclosed to the public. This creates an information gap. Local departments in each region may provide reports on the number of homicides in their area, but comprehensive data on the nuances of these cases is largely absent.

[9]   'Правонарушение'. n.d.   Национальный комитет Республики Узбекистан по статистике.
Accessed November 19. https://stat.uz/ru/ofitsialnaya-statistika/crime-and-justice

Moreover, the data published by state institutions regarding homicides is inconsistent and fragmented. For instance, the State Statistics Agency provides only basic data, such as the annual number of homicide cases and a breakdown of perpetrators by gender. In contrast, the General Prosecutor's Office offers very little relevant crime data on its website, with the most recent reports dating back to 2018.[10] Their Telegram and other social media pages are more frequently updated, but they serve more as news platforms than as archives, making it difficult to systematically collect and analyse data. The updates in these channels are sporadic and often focused on agency meetings and events rather than detailed reports on criminal cases.

Similarly, the Departments of Internal Affairs in each region maintain social media pages to report on crimes within their jurisdictions. However, these reports do not offer a comprehensive overview but instead highlight select cases across a wide range of crimes and misdemeanours.

These practices leave gaps in understandings of what data is collected and how it is analysed, making it difficult for decision makers, researchers, journalists, and other stakeholders to identify patterns specific to certain types of crimes, such as femicide. Without access to detailed data, efforts to analyse trends or develop effective interventions are significantly hampered.

- • To improve transparency and support evidence-based analysis and policymaking, state institutions responsible for collecting and publishing data on criminal cases should publish consistent, detailed, and publicly accessible data on homicides, including key victim and case characteristics.

According to the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Guarantees and Freedom of Access to Information, institutions, journalists, and the general public are entitled to access information. During the femicide research, the team initially sought assistance from state institutions to support more accurate data collection. Requests for data on homicides and related offences from 2014 to 2024 were sent to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Supreme Court, the State Statistics Agency, and the General Prosecutor's Office through UN Women channels and in coordination with UN Uzbekistan in early September 2024. However, no

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[10] 'Бош Прокуратура'. 2025. Accessed November 19. https://www.prokuratura.uz/#/.

responses were received by mid–October 2024. This lack of response suggests that, even with the involvement of the big established agencies such as UN Women, independent researchers, journalists, or concerned citizens are unlikely to receive the data they are entitled to, at least not in a timely manner.

- State institutions should consistently follow existing procedures for responding to information requests and ensure timely compliance with the Law on Access to Information.

The Supreme Court's website is a good source for those collecting data on criminal cases that have gone through the judicial process. While the website provides archives of reviewed administrative and criminal cases, it is difficult to navigate. The archived cases on the website are divided into two major categories – criminal and administrative. Both groups contain a vast range of crimes, making it difficult for users to find targeted data. The filtering function remains ineffective, forcing website users to manually sift through large amounts of information.

- To address this issue, the Supreme Court should invest in developing a user-friendly, well-functioning website with advanced filtering capabilities. The improved site should allow users to easily filter cases by crime type, year, region, and other relevant criteria. Implementing an intuitive search engine would also enable stakeholders to efficiently locate specific cases or datasets.

State agencies often struggle to effectively engage with the media and the public. In most cases, they release written statements on their Telegram pages or websites, but these messages tend to be generic and contain only minimal information. When government officials give interviews, they frequently rely on formal, legal language, making their communication dry and difficult for the average person to follow.

This withholding or obfuscation of information negatively impacts the performance of state institutions, particularly the police, the Prosecutor's Office, and the judiciary, which already struggle with low public trust. Research has shown that many women in abusive relationships choose not to report the abuse because they lack confidence in the ability or willingness of government bodies to help them.[11] When state agencies

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[11] Dzardanova, S. and Uralova, N. Study – The impact of COVID-19 pandemic on gender-based-vi-

openly share information with the public, such as details about crimes they have solved, criminals they have apprehended, or lives they have saved, it helps build trust within the community. This trust, in turn, makes their work more effective, as people become more inclined to cooperate with law enforcement. Silence or extreme minimalism in reporting, by contrast, often fuels speculation, mistrust, and informal narratives that are harder to control.

- To improve public communication, public relations specialists of state institutions should move away from rigid legal language and adopt a more relatable, person-to-person approach. By using clear, accessible language they can ensure that their messages reach ordinary citizens.

- To improve both public perception and operational efficiency, state agencies should consistently disclose information on crimes and ongoing investigations.

Most crimes that result in or contribute to the death of women and girls are prosecuted under a variety of Criminal Code articles, such as premeditated murder, death by negligence, inducement to suicide, and intentional grievous bodily harm that results in the death of the victim. Although the court considers various aspects of a crime, such as the victim's economic dependence on male family members, her social behaviour, and participation in the labour market, these factors are not given the weight they deserve. The defining characteristic of femicide is that victims are targeted because of their gender. Perpetrators often view women as less valuable, less deserving of protection, and as an extension of male property, which fuels gender-based violence. This gendered perception lies at the heart of femicide.

- The key recommendation is to codify femicide as a distinct legal category in Uzbekistan to ensure that gender-specific motives and societal inequalities leading to this crime are appropriately addressed in the investigation, prosecution and judicial processes.

Brazil's most recent reform, which legally distinguished femicide as a separate crime, demonstrates the potential for such data to influence

olence in Central Asia. 2022. IEP Berlin. https://iep-berlin.de/en/projects/enlargement-neigh-bourhood-and-central-asia/eurasia/studie-gbv/

policy.[12] This reform led to stricter sentencing, enhanced monitoring of perpetrators, and increased protections for women. Implementing similar measures could ensure a more effective legal framework and targeted interventions to combat femicide in Uzbekistan.

For the Media

In recent years, the Uzbek media landscape has grown significantly. In 2016, 1,514 mass media outlets were in operation, and by 2021, this number had increased by 379, reaching 1,893.[13]

Despite this growth and diversity, the expansion has not translated into competitive or high-quality reporting. Through the analysis of hundreds of femicide reports, the team identified the following gaps in the media's coverage of homicides, with femicide being especially underreported or inadequately covered.

In femicide reporting, media outlets frequently provide minimal details. The research team identified 237 femicide cases reported on by five[14] selected media outlets over the past ten years, involving a total of 267 victims. Each news piece was often accompanied by additional reports from other outlets. We found that a typical femicide news report is brief, ranging from 200 to 500 words.[15] These reports tend to be dry, simply stating that, for example, a husband killed his wife by strangulation or a woman's body was found in a canal with her children, without further elaboration.

The team's review of media content revealed that many femicide reports omit critical details. In 42.3 percent of cases, the victim's name or initials are not mentioned, while 30.1 percent of reports lack the victim's age. Information about the victim's occupation is missing in 76.5 percent of cases, and their educational background in 71.8 percent. Disability status is left out in 98.7 percent of reports, and whether or not the victim had children is not reported in 32.3 percent of cases. Furthermore, at

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[12]   'Lula Sanctions Law Increasing Femicide Sentences to up to 40 Years'. 2024. Agência Brasil. October 11. https://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/en/justica/noticia/2024-10/lula-sanctions-law-increasing-femicide-sentences-40-years

[13]   'O'zbekistonda qancha OAV faoliyat olib bormoqda?' Qalampir.uz. 2021. Accessed November 19, 2025. https://qalampir.uz/uz/news/uzbekistonda-k-ancha-oav-faoliyat-olib-bormok-da-49600

[14]   Gazeta.uz, Podrobno.uz, Ozodlik.org, Darakchi.uz, and Kun.uz

[15]   Of all the articles read during this research project, Ozodlik publications were exceptionally longer, often covering multiple crimes or offering a broader national context.

least 16 percent of reports fail to mention the motive for the crime, and 38.9 percent do not disclose the perpetrator's name or initials.

Most media outlets tend to report on the same femicide cases with similar texts. They often almost copy-paste information from the social media pages of the local police or General Prosecutor's Office. In several cases, the media did not omit details because they were unavailable, but due to a lack of effort. In one instance, for example, the news article provided no details about the victim's identity but included a copy of a protection order where her full name was clearly visible. In other cases, different media outlets used varying initials for the same victim, complicating the team's efforts to verify the cases.

Most media outlets exhibit inconsistency in their femicide reporting, often neglecting to conduct follow-up investigations on the crimes they cover. They rarely inform the public about whether a perpetrator has been found and arrested, the progress of court proceedings, or the outcomes of verdicts.

- To improve the quality of femicide reporting, journalists should receive regular training on fact-checking, basic investigative skills, sensitivity in reporting, and utilizing all available sources.

- To improve public awareness and support accountability, outlets should consistently track the cases they report on, including updates on arrests, court proceedings, and verdicts. This approach would ultimately lead to greater public engagement and hold law enforcement more accountable.

Media outlets often fail to disclose the full identities of both victims and perpetrators. This can be due to state agencies' reluctance to release names in order to protect ongoing investigations. This practice, however, is never explained or justified to the audience. Only a small number of outlets clearly state that names have been changed, initials altered, or pseudonyms used, leaving readers without transparency about how and why identifying information is withheld. This practice harms the discourse around femicide in two key ways. First, it dehumanizes victims, reducing them to mere initials. Second, it withholds critical information about perpetrators who may pose ongoing threats to their communities. The lack of transparency also hinders follow-up investigations and skews crime statistics, making it harder to assess patterns and ensure accountability.

- Media outlets should strengthen transparency by reporting essential details about femicide cases (within ethical and legal limits) to humanize victims, support follow-up investigations, and keep the public informed about perpetrators who may pose ongoing threats.

- Media framing of social issues is important for forming public understanding. In Uzbekistan, outlets frequently report femicide as resulting from "a family conflict," with at least one in five reports citing this vague motive as per this research. In the patriarchal context of Uzbek society, this ambiguity often leads to assumptions that the victim may have somehow provoked the violence. Many people might speculate that the victim "deserved" her fate, believing she was disobedient, unfaithful, or ill-mannered.

- The media should use their platform to combat these misconceptions, emphasizing that it is a gender-specific crime driven by deep-seated societal inequalities. By raising awareness and promoting empathy, the media can contribute to changing public attitudes and encourage action against gender-based violence.

Through consistent and responsible coverage of femicide cases, media outlets can play a key role in pushing for legislative changes, such as making femicide a separate legal category. This, in turn, could result in stricter laws against gender-related killings of women and better protections for women at risk.

Conclusion

Femicide in Uzbekistan remains largely invisible within official statistics. Although public discourse on the issue is growing, the absence of femicide-specific data significantly undermines efforts to understand and address this crime.

The recommendations presented in this paper aim to improve femicide data collection and reporting in order to inform more effective policies and legal reforms. Improving the centralized open-data system,

strengthening institutional communication practices, enhancing the functionality of official databases, and raising journalistic standards would create a more accurate and accessible evidence base.

Ultimately, recognizing femicide as a distinct crime and ensuring the systematic documentation of these cases will contribute to stronger protections for women and girls, and support Uzbekistan's broader commitments to advancing gender equality.

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