



International Foundation
for Electoral Systems

Election FAQs: Uzbekistan

Presidential Elections

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Europe & Eurasia

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

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Election Snapshot

- Election Day: July 9, 2023 (08:00-20:00)
- Registered voters: 22,200,000
- Polling stations: 10,784
- Out-of-country voting: 56 polling stations at embassies and consulates in 39 countries
- Candidates: 4
 - Abdushukur Khamzaev, Ecological Party
 - Robakhon Makhmudova, Social Democratic Party Adolat (Justice)
 - Shavkat Mirziyoyev (incumbent), Uzbekistan Liberal Democratic Party
 - Ulugbek Inoyatov, People's Democratic Party
- Campaign expenditure and donation limits: Presidential campaigns are entirely publicly funded, and private donations are prohibited; UZS 19,655,000,000 (or USD 1,697,258) has been allocated for election expenses, and each candidate's campaign will be allocated UZS 4,914,000,000 (or USD 424,336).
- Due to constitutional amendments adopted by popular referendum on April 30, 2023, the President's term of office has been extended from five to seven years; the 2023 snap elections will be the first under the new term of office.

When is Election Day?

Uzbekistan's 2023 snap presidential election is scheduled for July 9, 2023. Voting will occur from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. local time¹ in 10,784 polling stations across Uzbekistan and overseas.² President Shavkat Mirziyoyev called the election on May 8, one week after voters overwhelmingly approved his championed constitutional reforms.³

Voters who will not be at their place of residence on Election Day may vote early. Early voting opens 10 days before Election Day (June 28, 2023) and closes three days before Election Day (July 5, 2023).⁴ Voters must apply to vote early and indicate on the application the reason for their absence on Election Day, for example, vacation or work abroad.⁵

Why are these elections important?

Voters in Uzbekistan overwhelmingly voted in favor of a constitutional referendum in April 2023; the changes approved, among other things, established Uzbekistan as a secular social state, enhanced legal gender equality protections, expanded voting rights to prisoners, enshrined state anti-poverty and anti-discrimination obligations in the Constitution, and expanded land ownership rights.⁶ The constitutional changes also changed the president's term from five to seven years and limited presidents to two consecutive terms.⁷ During the announcement of the snap elections, incumbent President Shavkat Mirziyoyev indicated he would be seeking a mandate to continue

¹ Election Code of Uzbekistan, Article 51. (2019).

² OSCE ODIHR Needs Assessment Mission Report. (2023).

³ Reuters. "[Uzbek president calls snap poll under new constitution.](#)" (May 8, 2023).

⁴ <https://saylov.uz/en/docs/ozbekiston-respublikasi-prezidenti-saylovida-muddatidan-oldin-ovoz-berish-taribi>

⁵ Election Code of Uzbekistan, Article 57. (2019).

⁶ OSCE ODIHR. "[Statement on Preliminary Findings and Conclusions for the 30 April Referendum.](#)" (April 30, 2023).

⁷ Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Article 106. (2023).

building on the reforms approved by voters.⁸ As the term limits will not consider previous terms of office, the amendments will enable Mirziyoyev to run for an additional two terms (up to 14 years in office). While Mirziyoyev currently has three and a half years remaining in his second term resulting from the 2021 presidential election, he stated the decision to conduct snap elections was based on the need for a leader who would lead the country and its people per the new constitution. Justifying the snap election as seeking a mandate from the people, Mirziyoyev stated, "...in the system of renewed state power, our people, I repeat, only the people will elect the leader they trust."

Uzbekistan has witnessed significant development since Mirziyoyev succeeded long-time President Islam Karimov, who ruled the country from its independence in 1991 until his death in 2016. Mirziyoyev embarked on a reform agenda upon taking office, easing the Karimov government's harsh censorship policies and implementing changes intended to invigorate citizen-government interaction, revitalize civil society, and boost women's participation in government.⁹ However, significant barriers remain to the development of a truly pluralistic, competitive political environment in Uzbekistan; despite progress in encouraging gender equality, discrimination and violence against women and the LGBT community remain critical issues, as does endemic corruption in the country's economic and political life and a lack of genuinely competitive elections.¹⁰ The 2023 snap elections will help indicate how effective the changes implemented since Mirziyoyev took office have been in reforming and opening Uzbekistan's political system.

The president is vested with significant executive and legislative authority and serves as the highest government figure in the country. The president issues binding decrees and plays a crucial role in the appointment of Senators; members of the judiciary; the prosecutor general; and local and regional government executives. Only two presidents have held office since the role was created following Uzbekistan's independence. Incumbent Shavkat Mirziyoyev was appointed to the role following the previous president Islam Karimov's death and was elected in his own right in December 2016.

Who are citizens voting for on Election Day?

Citizens will vote for the President of Uzbekistan, a central role in Uzbekistani politics imbued with significant executive and legislative powers under the Constitution. Five political parties officially submitted registration requests to the Central Election Commission (CEC) to participate in the presidential elections. Per Uzbek election law, only political parties have the right to nominate candidates, and no independent candidates may be nominated either from citizens' initiative groups or as self-declared candidates. Four political parties out of the five registered parties formally nominated candidates by the legislative deadline to run in the election.

The four candidates registered by the CEC for the 2023 presidential elections include in alphabetical order:¹¹

⁸ Al Jazeera. "[Uzbekistan's leader calls for snap presidential election in July](#)." (May 8, 2023).

⁹ OSCE ODIHR. "[Needs Assessment Mission Report](#)." (May 18, 2023).

¹⁰ Human Rights Watch. "[Charting Progress in Mirziyoyev's Uzbekistan](#)." (October 7, 2019).

¹¹ Central Election Commission. "[Candidates registered for the office of President of the Republic of Uzbekistan](#)." (June 5, 2023)

- Ulugbek Inoyatov, the People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan
- Abdushukur Khamzaev, the Ecological Party
- Robakhon Makhmudova, the Social Democratic Party
- Shavkat Mirziyoyev, Uzbekistan Liberal Democratic Party (incumbent)

Makhmudova, who currently serves on the Supreme Court of Uzbekistan, has suspended her judicial authority in order to run for the presidency. She is the only female candidate running in this election and the second female candidate ever to be nominated by a political party for a presidential election in Uzbekistan. Democratic Party Milliy Tiklanish (National Revival), which contested the previous 2021 presidential elections and is one of the five parties represented in Parliament, has decided to formally support incumbent President Mirziyoyev rather than run its own candidate for this election cycle.

What is the electoral system?

Uzbekistan is a presidential republic in which power is nominally shared between the president and the *Oliy Majlis*, or parliament. The president is elected from a single nationwide constituency. Should one of the candidates win more than 50 percent of the vote on Election Day, they will be elected president outright. If no candidate meets the 50 percent threshold, a second round will be scheduled between the top two vote-getters between 15 days and one month after the first round.¹² The first round must also achieve a voter turnout of at least 33 percent of all registered voters.

What is the legal framework for conducting the elections?

Presidential elections in Uzbekistan are regulated by the country's Election Code; the Law on Financing of Political Parties; the Constitution, most recently amended earlier this year; and the decrees of the Central Election Commission and the President.

Uzbekistan's Election Code has been amended several times in the last two years to incorporate recommendations from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, including provisions regulating the misuse of state resources for political campaigns and clarifying the election dispute resolution process. However, several key recommendations remain unaddressed, including the lack of a provision for independent, domestic election monitors and concerns regarding the right to speech and assembly, as well as onerous restrictions on registering new political parties.¹³

Who is eligible to run as a candidate?

Any citizen who is at least 35 years of age, fluent in the Uzbek language, and has lived in Uzbekistan for at least 10 years before the election is eligible to run for the presidency. However, Uzbek electoral law prohibits citizens employed with religious organizations or previously

¹² OSCE ODIHR. "[Needs Assessment Mission Report](#)." (May 18, 2023).

¹³ OSCE ODIHR. "[Needs Assessment Mission Report](#)." (May 18, 2023).

convicted of a premeditated crime from being nominated. Presidents who have served two terms in office are ineligible to run again.¹⁴

As candidates must be formally nominated by a registered political party, no new political parties could be registered in time to nominate a candidate, given the brief timeframe between the calling of the elections and Election Day. Independent candidates whom a party has not put forward are prohibited under election law from running for the presidency.

What are the campaign expenditure and donation limits?

Election-related expenses for presidential campaigns are entirely publicly funded, and funding from other sources, including private donations and political party funding, is prohibited. Ahead of each election, the Central Election Commission (CEC) works with the Ministry of Finance to develop a cost estimate for the election, and funds are then allocated from the national budget for election expenses. Each nominating party receives an equal amount of money to cover campaign-related expenses on behalf of its candidate and must submit two campaign finance reports to the CEC during the election period. The reports consist of an interim report submitted before Election Day and a final report submitted after election results have been announced. Any unused funds remaining after the campaign's conclusion must be returned to the national budget.¹⁵ For the 2023 presidential election, a total of UZS 19,655,000,000 (USD 1,697,258) has been allocated for election expenses, and nominating parties will each be allocated UZS 4,914,000,000 (USD 424,336) for campaign expenses.¹⁶

What is the election management body? What are its powers?

Elections in Uzbekistan are managed by the Central Election Commission (CEC). Parliament appoints the CEC's members based on recommendations from regional and municipal leaders and the head of the autonomous region of Karakalpakstan. Uzbekistan's Election Code does not mandate a specific number of members for the CEC, requiring only that it consist of at least 15 members.¹⁷ Currently, 21 commissioners serve on the CEC, including seven full-time members and a chairperson responsible for managing the body and administering its meetings.¹⁸ The Election Code specifically charges the CEC with, among other responsibilities, managing and supporting lower-level commissions, forming election constituencies and overseas polling stations, issuing mandates to international observers, developing and distributing election budgets, and considering appeals from voters and other election stakeholders.¹⁹ Following the adoption of amendments to the constitution on May 1, 2023, the CEC now has the authority to administer local elections in addition to presidential and parliamentary elections.

Fourteen District Election Commissions (DECs) operate under the authority of the CEC during presidential elections and are appointed by the CEC based on recommendations from regional leadership.²⁰ Currently, DECs are formed on a temporary basis in preparation for upcoming

¹⁴ Constitution of Uzbekistan, Article 106.

¹⁵ OSCE ODIHR. "[Needs Assessment Mission Report.](#)" (May 18, 2023).

¹⁶ [OSCE ODIHR Interim Report.](#) (2023).

¹⁷ Election Code of Uzbekistan, Article 12. (2019).

¹⁸ OSCE ODIHR. "[Needs Assessment Mission Report.](#)" (May 18, 2023).

¹⁹ Election Code of Uzbekistan, Article 14. (2019).

²⁰ Election Code of Uzbekistan, Article 21. (2019).

elections. Each DEC is charged with administering elections within its respective territory, establishing and overseeing precinct commissions, and submitting election results from their constituencies to the CEC.²¹ Each of the 10,784 polling stations is managed by a Precinct Election Commission (PEC) whose members are appointed by the territorial DEC. The composition of PECs and the number of members can be adjusted at the discretion of the DEC.²² Each PEC is responsible for the list of voters within its jurisdiction, organizing the voting process, and administering the vote count at each polling station.²³

Who can vote in these elections, and how many registered voters are there?

All citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan have the right to vote under the Constitution as amended in 2023.²⁴ The amendments, approved by a popular referendum in April 2023, among other things, removed restrictions on the right to vote for prisoners and citizens who have been declared incapacitated or disabled by a court.²⁵

Voter registration in Uzbekistan is passive; citizens who are 18 or will turn 18 on or before Election Day are automatically added to the voter list for their territory of residence. Separate lists are created for military units, diplomatic missions, permanent medical facilities, and detention facilities.²⁶ Voters can check their personal information, find out what voter list they are on, and determine their designated polling station by checking the Central Election Commission's website.²⁷

For the 2023 presidential election, approximately 22.2 million people are registered to vote.²⁸

What provisions are in place that support the equal rights of women, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized groups?

Uzbekistan's Election Code requires that Precinct Election Commissions implement measures to ensure the accessibility of polling stations by voters with disabilities. Stations must be spacious and well-lit to allow voters with visual impairments to vote easily, and they are required to have a separate entrance and exit, both accessible with ramps. Stations must also be equipped with special voting booths accessible to voters with disabilities, including those who use wheelchairs.²⁹ If a voter cannot fill out their ballot on their own, they may invite another person into the booth to assist them, so long as the individual in question is not an election commissioner, observer, or media representative.³⁰

²¹ Election Code of Uzbekistan, Article 22. (2019).

²² Election Code of Uzbekistan, Article 23. (2019).

²³ Election Code of Uzbekistan, Article 24. (2019).

²⁴ Constitution of Uzbekistan, Article 128.

²⁵ Kun.uz. "[List of proposed changes to the Constitution.](#)" (June 25, 2022).

²⁶ Election Code of Uzbekistan, Article 27. (2019).

²⁷ Central Election Commission. "[Determination of the polling station.](#)" (May 30, 2023).

²⁸ [OSCE ODIHR Interim Report.](#) (2023).

²⁹ Election Code of Uzbekistan, Article 50. (2019).

³⁰ Election Code of Uzbekistan, Article 55. (2019).

Is out-of-country voting allowed?

Yes. Fifty-six overseas polling stations have been designated at diplomatic missions and embassies in 39 countries worldwide. Out-of-country votes will be included in the vote counts for Tashkent city election district 14.³¹

Who can observe during Election Day? How can they get accreditation?

International organizations, domestic political parties, and media representatives are entitled to observe the snap presidential elections, as are representatives of *mahallas*, which operate as semi-formed neighborhood councils regulated by the government. There are no provisions in the country's Election Code for observation of Election Day proceedings by domestic non-governmental organizations and citizen observers.³²

Organizations interested in observing must submit an application to the Central Election Commission (CEC) at least 10 days before the election. Within five days of receipt, the CEC will decide whether to issue the organization and its members a mandate for observation. Qualifying observers may be present at meetings of the CEC, District Election Commissions, and Precinct Election Commissions; may observe preparations for voting at polling stations, as well as voting and vote counting processes on Election Day; and are entitled to receive certified copies of the protocols of election results.³³

As of July 3, 2023, 785 international observers from 36 countries and 10 international organizations have been accredited, including 200 from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR). In addition, 1,299 media representatives have been accredited to observe the election.³⁴

Where are vote counting and tabulation held?

Votes are counted by hand at each polling station by the members of that station's Precinct Election Commission (PEC).³⁵ Election observers may be present throughout the counting and tabulation process. Votes using the mobile ballot box are reconciled with the at-home voters' list, then combined with ballots from in-person voting at the polling stations.

After the ballots have been counted, the PEC drafts a protocol enumerating the results, the number of voters on the voter list, the total number of votes received, and the number of early votes. This protocol is then signed by all members of the PEC and submitted to the appropriate District Election Commission, which in turn sends it to the Central Election Commission. Upon completion and signing of the protocol, it must be publicly displayed at the polling station and made available for public inspection for at least 48 hours following the signing.³⁶

³¹ [Meeting of the Central Election Commission](#). (May 24, 2023).

³² Election Code of Uzbekistan, Article 8. (2019).

³³ Election Code of Uzbekistan, Article 33. (2019).

³⁴ Central Election Commission. ["Information on the meeting on the Central Election Commission on July 3 2023."](#) (July 3, 2023)

³⁵ Election Code of Uzbekistan, Article 24. (2019).

³⁶ Election Code of Uzbekistan, Article 58. (2019).

When will official results be announced?

The Central Election Commission (CEC), upon receiving protocols from all Precinct Election Commissions, must adopt a resolution and announce the confirmed results within 10 days from Election Day—in this case, before July 19, 2023. The announcement must be published through the CEC website and other government and media channels.³⁷

How will election disputes be adjudicated?

Political parties, candidates, observers, and voters may file complaints with the appropriate Precinct Election Commission (PEC). Each PEC records and tracks the election-related complaints it receives in a special register and must update both the register and the submitting parties with its decisions. The Central Election Commission maintains a hotline and online resources for submitting election-related complaints throughout the election period and after Election Day. Following the 2021 amendments to the Election Code, appeals are adjudicated solely through the courts rather than through both the courts and higher election commissions in parallel.³⁸ The Election Code requires the court with which the appeal has been filed to consider the appeal within three days, or immediately, if the appeal was filed less than six days before Election Day. Anyone submitting a complaint or an appeal has the right to make their case before the adjudicating commission or court directly.³⁹

³⁷ Election Code of Uzbekistan, Article 97. (2019).

³⁸ [OSCE ODIHR Needs Assessment Mission Report](#). (2023).

³⁹ Election Code of Uzbekistan, Article 102. (2019).

Resources

- Constitution of Uzbekistan
- Central Election Commission
- Electoral Code of Uzbekistan
- The Law on Financing of Political Entities and Election Campaigns
- The Law on the Electoral Roll
- IFES Election Guide
- [OSCE/ODIHR Needs Assessment Mission Report](#)

About IFES in Uzbekistan

The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) re-established programming in Uzbekistan in 2021 to support the Central Election Commission and civil society stakeholders. Through its assistance activities, IFES helps strengthen the capacity of election officials to administer open and inclusive elections and foster the accessibility of the civic process for all citizens of Uzbekistan. Through its work with civil society organizations, IFES is working to engage young people, women, and persons with disabilities in civic advocacy and assert their rights as equal citizens to build a culture of inclusive decision-making and informed civic participation.

Disclosure

These FAQs reflect decisions made by the Central Election Commission as of July 3, 2023, to the best of our knowledge. This document does not represent any International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) policy or technical recommendations.