
UZBEK MAGAZIN: SURPRISING POPULARITY

By Iskandar Hamroh, journalist, Uzbekistan

***Oila Va Zhamiyat* (Family and Society) newspaper, engaged in publishing articles on family life and professing traditional values, is the most popular one in Uzbekistan.**

This fact has become known due to the sociological poll on people's attitudes towards the media, held by the republic's *Izhtimoiy Fikr* (Public Opinion) non-governmental centre. Marat Hajimukhamedov, the centre's deputy director, told journalists about the poll results during the roundtable meeting on "Uzbekistan's Mass Media: Issues and Ways of Development" held in early December 2000 in Tashkent, initiated by the International In-service Training Centre of the Uzbekistan Journalists.

SOCIETY IN TRANSITION

Oila Va Zhamiyat's popularity, although it puzzled many experts, was of no surprise to Tashkent Women's Resource Centre workers who always read Uzbekistan's newspapers and magazines and knew many citizens' opinions on particular publications. Marfua Tokhtahojeva, the centre's director, believes the clear trend of traditionalising the Uzbek urban society is obvious, implying that the life mode is increasingly regulated by the ancestors' age-old religious and moral establishments. This is mainly caused by the unresolved economic and social issues of the post-Soviet society, making people looking for "justice" in the past, in patriarchal family values. "*Oila Va Zhamiyat* was ahead of the others to catch on to these sentiments and found its grateful reader," Tokhtahojeva believes.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE FAMILY

According to *Izhtimoiy Fikr* data, the majority of the persons questioned believe that it is family and parents who impact the formation of their attitudes. By the way, urban dwellers make up the overwhelming portion of Uzbekistan's readers. About 40 per cent of them regularly look through the republic's printed media. According to Marat Hajimuhamedov, *Postda* (On the Post) newspaper ranks second in the popularity rating. Criminal chronicles and police life stories are published on its pages. Ranking third is parliamentary *Halk Soozi* (People's Word) where one can always find presidential decrees and governmental decisions; it also contains a parliamentary page.

SMALL AUDIENCE FOR FOREIGN RADIOS

The analyzed opinions of Uzbekistan residents on the electronic media have shown, as was expected, that the Uzbek TV and Radio Company's first channel is the most popular TV channel. *Yeshlar* (Youth) channel follows. These are received across the republic and in the adjacent states' border areas. The viewers are critical in assessing the quality and contents of the Uzbek television's broadcasts. The poll has shown that the dissent is mainly caused by too many entertainment programmes and an insufficient number of scientific, educational and analytical ones. Noteworthy, it is the youth that place educational programmes in the forefront. By the way, the young people are the most critical. They strongly criticized Uzbekistan's media for the lack of democratic spirit. "At this point there are some things to think about, both by the republic's media directors and the state's media policy-makers," Marat Hajimuhamedov commented. The experts were surprised by the fact revealed by the poll that only about one per cent of

Uzbekistan's population listen to Uzbekistan's foreign radio voices such as Radio Liberty or BBC. Marat Hajimuhamedov explained this fact by the strong Soviet radio receivers being inoperable; modern radio equipment is expensive and the cheap radio receivers lack sufficient capacity.