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CONTENTS

BUDGETING BASED ON THE BALANCED SCORECARD SYSTEM IN STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTING.....	8
Pardaeva Shakhnoza Abdinabievna	
TURIZM SOHASIDA TARJIMA NAZARIYASINING O'RNI	13
Bahronova Charos Mirabbos qizi	
THE ROLE OF ESG PRINCIPLES AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CORPORATE SOCIAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS	16
Shokhrukh Abdisalimovich Muratkosimov	
A COMPARATIVE SEMANTIC FIELD ANALYSIS OF "BENEFIT" ACROSS ENGLISH AND UZBEK CULTURES	23
Mohira Husanovna Divanova	
ROSSIYA TIJORAT BANKLARIDA DEPOZIT OPERATSIYALARINI RIVOJLANTIRISHNING O'ZIGA XOS JIHATLARI	30
Rahimov Akmal Matyaqubovich	
USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TECHNOLOGIES AGAINST CYBER THREATS IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR.....	37
Nuratdinov Xushnid Begzadovich, Erejepov Kewlimjay Kaymatdinovich	
PUL-KREDIT SIYOSATI INSTRUMENTLARIDAN FOYDALANISH AMALIYOTINI TAKOMILLASHTIRISH ..	42
A.A. Ismailov	
"O'ZBEKISTON TEMIR YO'LLARI" AJNING AMALIY IQTISODIY HOLATI TAHLILI VA OPSIONLARNI ANIQLASH	48
Bobojonova Zarnigor Shokirovna	
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF DEEP LEARNING ALGORITHMS FOR AUTOMATED SKIN DISEASE DIAGNOSIS FROM DERMOSCOPIC IMAGES.....	56
Nazirova Elmira Shodmonovna, Abdusalomova Shokhista Boboyor qizi	
STRATEGY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FINANCIAL MARKET OF UZBEKISTAN IN THE CONTEXT OF DIGITAL AND GREEN TRANSFORMATION	61
Muftaydinov Mansur Kiyomidinovich	
TOURISM POTENTIAL OF UZBEKISTAN AND FINANCIAL FACTORS FOR ITS DEVELOPMENT	68
Bau Long	
CASH FLOWS OF "TERRITORIAL ELECTRIC NETWORKS" JSC: COMPREHENSIVE ACCOUNTING ANALYSIS AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO IMPROVEMENT	75
Djuraev Davlat Djonibekovich	
MONETARY POLICY INSTRUMENTS.....	78
A.A. Ismailov	
ECONOMIC EFFICIENCY OF IMPLEMENTING INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGIES IN THE SERVICE SECTOR OF REGIONS	83
Abikayumov Bekzod Turdiniyozovich	
KNOWLEDGE STRATEGY AND ITS SYSTEM OF INDICATORS IN STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTING.....	89
Pardaeva Shakhnoza Abdinabievna, Pardaeva Zulfizar Alimovna	
ANALYSIS OF THE REGIONAL DYNAMICS AND STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF LABOR MIGRATION	95
Mukhtorbek Rahimboyev, Alibek Normurodov	

ANALYSIS OF THE REGIONAL DYNAMICS AND STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF LABOR MIGRATION

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Abstract. This article examines migration processes in the Republic of Uzbekistan. An in-depth statistical analysis is conducted on the number of individuals who entered the country for permanent residence (immigration) and those who left the country (emigration). The article also analyzes, by year, the main destination countries of citizens of Uzbekistan who moved abroad for permanent residence. Furthermore, internal migration processes within the country are examined at the regional level. Finally, conclusions are presented based on the results of the analysis.

Keywords: emigration, immigration, migration, relocation, labor activity abroad.

Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqolada O'zbekiston Respublikasidagi migratsiya jarayonlari tadqiq etilgan. Doimiy yashash maqsadida mamlakatga kirib kelganlar (immigratsiya) hamda mamlakatdan chiqib ketganlar (emigratsiya) soni bo'yicha chuqur statistik tahlil o'tkazilgan. Shuningdek, O'zbekiston fuqarolarining doimiy yashash uchun asosan qaysi davlatlarga ko'chib o'tganligi yillar kesimida tahlil qilingan. Bundan tashqari, mamlakat ichidagi migratsiya jarayonlari hududlar kesimida o'rganilgan. Yakunda tahlil natijalari asosida tegishli xulosalar keltirilgan.

Kalit so'zlar: emigratsiya, immigratsiya, migratsiya, ko'chib ketishlar, mamlakat tashqarisidagi mehnat faoliyati.

Аннотация. В данной статье исследуются миграционные процессы в Республике Узбекистан. Проведён углублённый статистический анализ численности лиц, прибывших в страну на постоянное место жительства (иммиграция), а также выехавших из страны (эмиграция). Кроме того, в разрезе лет проанализированы основные страны назначения граждан Узбекистана, переехавших на постоянное место жительства. Также в региональном разрезе изучены процессы внутренней миграции. В заключение представлены выводы, основанные на результатах проведённого анализа.

Ключевые слова: эмиграция, иммиграция, миграция, переселение, трудовая деятельность за пределами страны.

INTRODUCTION

Migration has become one of the most complex global phenomena of the modern era. Today, many countries around the world pay special attention to migration processes and their socio-economic implications. A significant share of international migrants consists of labor migrants, whose movement has a considerable impact on the economic and social development of both sending and receiving countries.

From this perspective, labor migration contributes to the renewal of the workforce, supports labor-intensive sectors such as agriculture, construction, and domestic services, promotes entrepreneurial activity, improves living standards, and helps meet labor market demands. In addition, remittances sent by migrants to their families serve as an important source of household income and contribute to the economic development of their home countries.

This article is devoted to examining the theoretical and methodological foundations of labor migration, its major trends in the global context, and the influence of social and economic factors that shape migration processes in the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Taking into account the rights and interests of the citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the government has introduced a number of measures in recent years aimed at strengthening the effectiveness of the external labor migration management system. In particular, the adoption of Resolution No. PQ-149 of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, dated March 1, 2022, "On Additional Measures to Support Citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan Temporarily Engaged in Labor Activities Abroad and Their Family Members," has contributed to enhancing the protection of citizens' rights related to employment abroad, safeguarding the interests of migrant workers and their families, and creating favorable conditions for their labor activities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to the *Demographic Encyclopedia*, migration (derived from the Latin word meaning "to move") refers to the movement, relocation, or change of permanent residence of individuals or groups of people from one territory to another [1].

Migration has accompanied human development throughout history, from the earliest stages of human civilization to the present day. In general, migration can be defined as the internal and external movement of individuals for various social, economic, political, and demographic purposes. As a multifaceted phenomenon, migration encompasses several forms, among which labor migration occupies a particularly significant place. Labor migration is considered a complex social process associated with changes in the socio-economic structure of society, the redistribution of productive forces, and the increasing social and labor mobility of the population [2].

Therefore, the study of migration is most effective when it considers the interaction between structural factors (institutional arrangements, social norms, and economic conditions) and individual agency (personal and collective decision-making). Migration is shaped by a combination of social, economic, demographic, and political processes operating within specific historical and geographical contexts. Consequently, migration is a highly selective and uneven process that affects different social groups in different ways and to varying degrees [3].

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

According to the definitions provided by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), labor migrants are individuals who engage in economic activity either within their country of residence or by moving to another country where they are legally permitted to work and reside [4].

It is important to emphasize that no single theoretical approach can fully explain the complexity of labor migration. The scientific literature contains numerous concepts and models that interpret migration from different perspectives. While some theories successfully explain migration processes in developed countries, others focus primarily on migration driven by economic factors. Therefore, a comprehensive analysis of labor migration requires the integration of multiple theoretical approaches to better understand the diverse factors influencing migratory movements.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

International labor migration has become one of the key factors influencing the improvement of living standards and socio-economic development in many countries. Within this process, migrants participate in labor markets as an essential component of the workforce, contributing to both the economies of destination countries and the welfare of their households in countries of origin. In the context of the ongoing transformation of the global economy, large-scale labor migration is predominantly directed from countries and regions with surplus labor resources to areas offering broader employment opportunities.

Uzbekistan is an active participant in international labor migration and global labor mobility processes. The movement of labor migrants occurs through both interstate cooperation mechanisms and the individual initiatives of citizens seeking employment opportunities abroad. Statistical observations indicate that migration flows vary across different periods under the influence of economic, demographic, institutional, and social factors. These changes can have diverse effects on the socio-economic development of particular territories,

countries, and regions.

For Uzbekistan, labor migration remains an important factor affecting employment, household incomes, labor market dynamics, and demographic processes. At the same time, migration contributes to the formation of transnational economic and social connections that influence regional development patterns.

To assess migration trends in Uzbekistan, this study examines the dynamics of both external and internal migration and analyzes their structural characteristics over time (Figure 1).

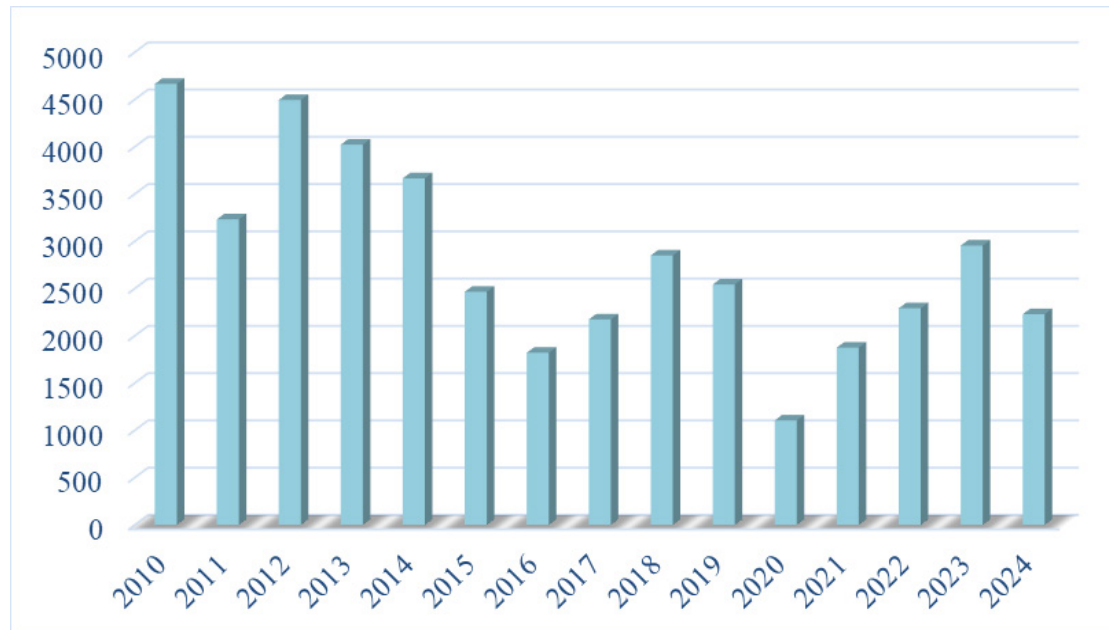


Figure 1. Number of people who immigrated to the Republic of Uzbekistan for permanent residence (persons)¹

According to the results presented in Figure 1, the immigration flow in 2011 decreased by 30.7% compared to 2010, amounting to 3,232 individuals and marking the beginning of a period of significant decline. In contrast, immigration increased by 39.1% in 2012 compared to the previous year, reaching 4,495 individuals, which indicates a notable recovery in migration inflows.

In 2013, the number of immigrants declined by 10.5% compared to 2012, followed by a further decrease of 8.9% in 2014. The downward trend continued in 2015, when immigration fell by 32.7% relative to 2014, and again in 2016, with an additional decline of 26.2%.

A reversal of this trend was observed in 2017, when immigration increased by 19.3% compared to 2016. The upward movement continued in 2018, with a growth rate of 31.2% relative to the previous year. However, immigration declined once again in 2019, decreasing by 10.8% compared to 2018.

The most substantial decline occurred in 2020, when the number of immigrants fell by 56.5% compared to 2019. This sharp decrease can largely be associated with the restrictions and disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Following this period, immigration flows recovered considerably in 2021, increasing by 69.7% compared to 2020. The positive trend continued in 2022, with a further increase of 22.2% relative to 2021.

However, in 2024, immigration decreased by 24.6% compared to 2023. Overall, the analysis demonstrates that immigration flows in Uzbekistan have been characterized by considerable fluctuations throughout the observed period. The most significant decline was recorded in 2020, while the highest growth rate was observed in 2021. Therefore, the dynamics of immigration during this period can be described as volatile, reflecting alternating phases of growth and decline rather than a stable long-term trend.

The next stage of the analysis focuses on emigration dynamics, which are presented in Figure 2.

¹ Author's development

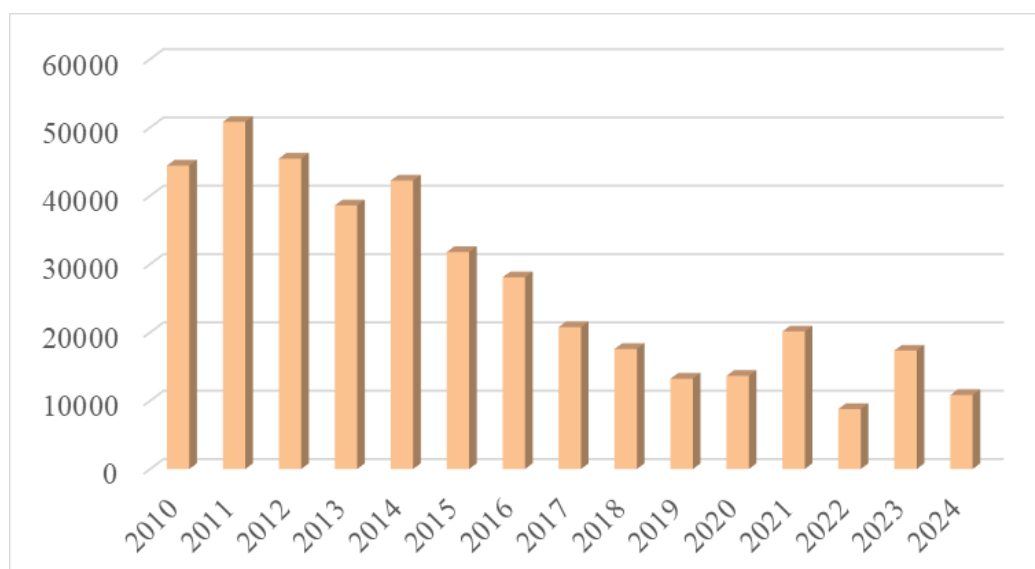


Figure 2. Number of emigrants from the Republic of Uzbekistan for permanent residence (persons)²

According to the data presented in Figure 2, a total of 44,420 individuals left Uzbekistan for permanent residence abroad in 2010. In 2011, the number of emigrants increased by 14.3% compared to the previous year, reaching 50,816 individuals.

Beginning in 2015, the number of people emigrating for permanent residence started to decline, falling by 24.8% compared to 2014. This downward trend continued until 2019, with the average annual decrease estimated at approximately 30%. However, in 2020 and 2021, emigration flows increased once again, rising by 3.0% and 47.5%, respectively. In 2022, a substantial decline of 66.0% was recorded. This was followed by a significant recovery in 2023, when the number of emigrants increased by 97.2%. The upward trend continued in 2024, with a further increase of 37.5% compared to 2023.

The analysis indicates that the number of citizens leaving the Republic of Uzbekistan for permanent residence abroad experienced considerable fluctuations during the period from 2010 to 2024. These changes reflect the influence of various demographic, economic, and institutional factors affecting migration decisions over time.

To obtain a more comprehensive understanding of external migration patterns, it is necessary to examine migration flows by destination country.

According to data from the Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan (KazStat), 2,614 citizens of Uzbekistan moved to Kazakhstan for permanent residence during the first quarter of 2025. This figure represents a notable decrease compared to the fourth quarter of 2024, when 4,755 citizens of Uzbekistan relocated to Kazakhstan. At the same time, citizens of Uzbekistan accounted for more than half of the 4,920 foreign nationals who arrived in Kazakhstan for permanent residence during the first quarter of 2025.

These migration patterns suggest that ethnic Kazakhs constitute a significant share of migrants relocating from Uzbekistan to Kazakhstan for permanent residence. Their migration decisions may be associated with cultural proximity, family and kinship networks, as well as government programs aimed at supporting the return of ethnic Kazakhs, including the “Qandas” program. According to KazStat (2025), approximately 60% of new permanent residents arriving from Uzbekistan during the first quarter of 2025—equivalent to 1,568 individuals—were ethnic Kazakhs (Figure 3).

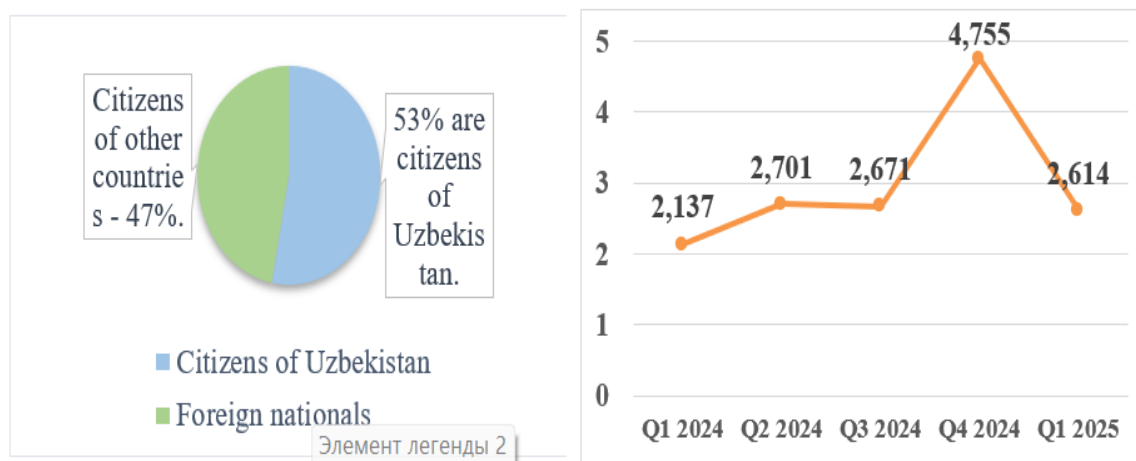


Figure 3. The number of Uzbek migrants who relocated to Kazakhstan for permanent residence, Q1 2024 – Q1 2025 (in absolute numbers and %)³

According to data published by the Presidency of Migration Management of the Republic of Türkiye (PMM), the number of citizens of Uzbekistan holding valid residence permits in Türkiye reached 58,484 as of the end of March 2025. This figure ranked Uzbek citizens seventh among all foreign nationals residing in the country. Compared to the 56,490 residence permit holders recorded at the end of December 2024, this represents an increase of 3.5%, indicating that Türkiye continues to serve as a stable and attractive destination for migrants from Uzbekistan.

A more detailed examination of residence permit categories reveals the diverse migration profile of Uzbek citizens residing in Türkiye. As of the end of March 2025, 21,114 Uzbek citizens held short-term residence permits, placing Uzbekistan ninth among all foreign national groups in this category. In addition, 15,714 individuals possessed residence permits based on family reunification or family ties, making Uzbek citizens the second-largest group under this category.

Educational migration also represents an important component of migration flows to Türkiye. According to PMM data, 5,961 citizens of Uzbekistan held student residence permits as of March 2025, ranking seventh among international student groups residing in the country. These figures indicate that migration from Uzbekistan to Türkiye is not limited to labor-related mobility but also encompasses family reunification and educational migration, reflecting the growing diversity of migration channels between the two countries (PMM, 2025a) (Figure 4).

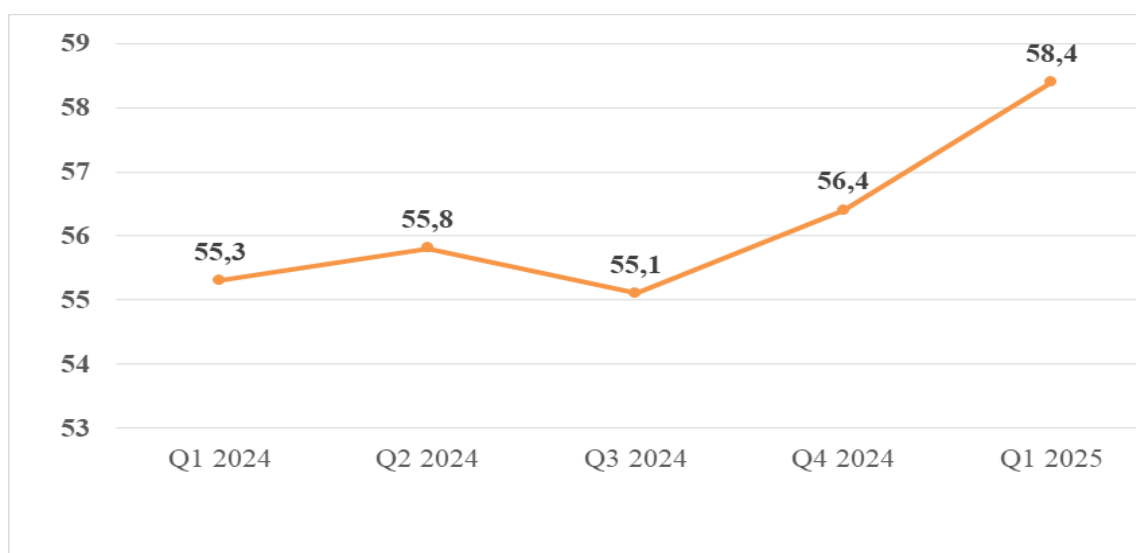


Figure 4. Number of Uzbek international migrants with a residence permit in the Republic of Turkey⁴.

³ Author's development

⁴ Author's development

The Republic of Korea remains one of the most important destination countries for migrants from Uzbekistan. According to data provided by the Korea Immigration Service (KIS) under the Ministry of Justice, the number of citizens of Uzbekistan residing in the Republic of Korea reached 97,899 as of March 2025. This accounted for approximately 3.7% of the country's total foreign population, estimated at 2.6 million individuals. Compared to December 2024, when 94,893 Uzbek citizens were registered, this represents an increase of approximately 3.0%.

As of March 2025, a total of 63,403 Uzbek citizens held valid residence permits, representing approximately 65% of all Uzbek migrants residing in the country. This figure reflects a moderate increase compared to the 61,733 residence permit holders recorded in December 2024. At the same time, the number of Uzbek citizens holding short-term residence permits increased substantially, reaching 5,573 individuals in March 2025, compared with 4,349 in December 2024 (KIS, 2025a).

Labor migration continues to play a central role in migration flows from Uzbekistan to the Republic of Korea. According to KIS data, 24,966 Uzbek citizens holding residence permits also possessed valid work permits as of March 2025. This group accounted for approximately 39% of all Uzbek migrants with residence permits. Although the figure remained relatively stable, it was slightly lower than the 25,090 work permit holders recorded in December 2024, representing a decrease of about 1.0% (KIS, 2025a).

Overall, the statistics indicate a gradual increase in the number of Uzbek migrants residing in the Republic of Korea, accompanied by growth in both long-term and short-term residence categories. The data further confirm the continued importance of the Republic of Korea as a destination for labor, educational, and other forms of international mobility among citizens of Uzbekistan (Figure 5).

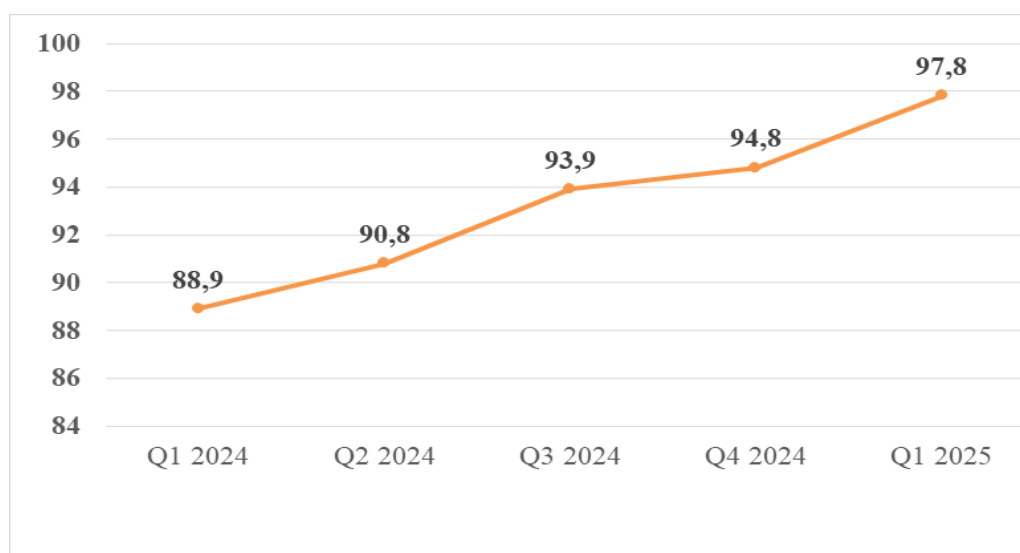


Figure 5. The number of migrants from Uzbekistan residing in the Republic of Korea⁵

As of March 2025, the number of ethnic Koreans among migrants from Uzbekistan residing in the Republic of Korea totaled 42,365 individuals, accounting for approximately 46% of all Uzbek migrants in the country. This figure remained largely unchanged compared to the 42,543 individuals recorded in December 2024, indicating the relative stability of this population group over the observed period (KIS, 2025a).

Educational migration has also become an increasingly significant component of migration flows from Uzbekistan to the Republic of Korea. According to KIS data, the number of students from Uzbekistan enrolled in educational institutions in the Republic of Korea reached 17,534 as of March 2025. Compared to the 15,352 students recorded in the fourth quarter of 2024, this represents a substantial increase, reflecting the growing interest of Uzbek citizens in obtaining higher education abroad, particularly in the Republic of Korea.

Furthermore, students from Uzbekistan accounted for more than 6% of the total foreign student population in the country, which amounted to 286,318 individuals during the same period. This highlights the increasing role of educational mobility in strengthening academic, cultural, and social ties between Uzbekistan and the Republic of Korea (KIS, 2025a).

The next stage of the analysis focuses on the dynamics of internal migration within Uzbekistan, the results of which are presented in Table 1.

5 Author's development

Table 1

Number of arrivals by regions of the Republic of Uzbekistan (persons)⁶.

Classifier	2010	2013	2016	2019	2022	2024	Change in 2024 compared to 2010 (+,-)
Republic of Karakalpakstan	14275	14238	9866	10003	7754	10429	-3846
Andijan	5737	6498	5854	7588	6585	7202	1465
Bukhara	4244	5225	5994	5584	6236	9303	5059
Jizzakh	7950	8533	7938	10317	6631	7586	-364
Kashkadarya	10077	13916	10194	10727	9138	11109	1032
Navoi	11442	12321	12104	10540	8721	12341	899
Namangan	4393	4938	4619	5052	2506	3314	-1079
Samarkand	12332	12738	10273	8035	9071	13330	998
Surkhandarya	11600	13081	12925	10378	9577	10839	-761
Syrdarya	6708	7766	5799	8934	6885	7580	872
Tashkent Region	15467	17954	19689	18602	27350	32434	16967
Fergana	12747	13292	12135	12667	8618	13362	615
Khorezm	7239	7333	6175	5752	6685	10822	3583
Tashkent City	15564	17251	17983	34682	99064	92145	76581

As shown in Table 1, the number of individuals who moved to the Republic of Karakalpakstan for permanent residence in 2024 was 3,846 lower than the corresponding figure recorded in 2010. Similar declines in migration inflows were observed in Jizzakh, Namangan, and Surkhandarya regions, where the number of arrivals decreased by 364, 1,079, and 761 individuals, respectively.

In contrast, most other regions experienced a gradual increase in the number of arrivals during the study period. The highest migration inflows were recorded in Tashkent City, Tashkent Region, and Fergana Region, reflecting their relatively strong economic potential, employment opportunities, and urban development dynamics.

Among all regions, Tashkent City attracted the largest number of internal migrants. In 2024, the number of arrivals reached 92,145 individuals, which was 76,581 higher than the corresponding figure recorded in 2010. This substantial increase highlights the continuing role of the capital city as the primary center of economic activity, employment, education, and social infrastructure within the country.

Overall, the observed trends indicate a growing concentration of internal migration toward economically developed and urbanized regions, while several peripheral regions experienced comparatively lower migration inflows over the same period (Table 2).

Table 2

Number of people who have moved out, by region of the Republic of Uzbekistan (persons)⁷

Classifier	2010	2013	2016	2019	2022	2024	Change from 2010 to 2024 (+,-)
Republic of Karakalpakstan	26971	20528	14449	14110	13270	14843	-12128
Andijan	6296	7489	7525	9731	8471	9068	2772
Bukhara	6929	7579	7967	9265	9344	12801	5872
Jizzakh	11174	9261	9199	11567	8498	9824	-1350
Kashkadarya	10894	10686	12109	17466	16427	17819	6925

⁶ Author's development

⁷ Author's development

Navoi	13719	14804	13659	11368	9239	13786	67
Namangan	5099	5065	5548	6385	4916	5355	256
Samarkand	15371	15191	14696	13809	14399	16388	1017
Surkhandarya	12742	12326	14388	13283	14007	13857	1115
Syrdarya	8758	7611	6974	9471	7907	8421	-337
Tashkent Region	27547	27113	25425	23250	32349	28856	1309
Fergana	8315	7655	7368	7574	8231	12391	4076
Khorezm	15991	30855	14375	7786	62665	71616	55625

As indicated in Table 2, the regional distribution of emigration in Uzbekistan underwent notable changes during the period under review. While the Republic of Karakalpakstan recorded the highest number of emigrants in 2010, Tashkent City occupied the leading position by 2024.

In the Republic of Karakalpakstan, the number of emigrants in 2024 was more than two times lower than the corresponding figure recorded in 2010. Similar downward trends were observed in Jizzakh and Sirdaryo regions, where the number of emigrants decreased by 1,350 and 337 individuals, respectively, over the same period.

By contrast, the highest levels of emigration in 2024 were recorded in Tashkent City, Tashkent Region, and Qashqadaryo Region. The number of emigrants from these territories reached 71,616, 28,856, and 17,819 individuals, respectively. Compared with 2010, these figures represent increases of 55,625, 1,309, and 6,925 individuals.

Overall, the analysis demonstrates that migration patterns across the regions of Uzbekistan between 2010 and 2024 were characterized by significant territorial differences and varying rates of change. Tashkent City emerged as the country's most active migration center, reflecting its dominant role in economic, educational, and social development processes.

At the same time, the persistence of outward migration in a number of regions may be associated with differences in employment opportunities, economic activity, urbanization levels, and access to social infrastructure. These findings highlight the importance of balanced regional development policies aimed at strengthening economic opportunities and improving living conditions across all regions of the country.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The analysis conducted in this study demonstrates that migration processes in the Republic of Uzbekistan have undergone significant structural and regional transformations during the period under review. Both immigration and emigration flows exhibited considerable fluctuations influenced by economic conditions, demographic factors, institutional changes, and global events. In particular, the sharp decline in migration indicators during the COVID-19 pandemic and their subsequent recovery highlight the sensitivity of migration processes to external shocks.

The results indicate that international labor migration remains one of the most important mechanisms for improving household incomes and supporting the socio-economic well-being of the population. Remittances sent by migrants contribute substantially to the welfare of families and indirectly support economic development. At the same time, migration has become increasingly diversified, encompassing not only labor mobility but also educational migration, family reunification, and permanent relocation.

The study reveals that Kazakhstan, Türkiye, and the Republic of Korea continue to be among the principal destination countries for citizens of Uzbekistan. The growing number of Uzbek students and skilled workers abroad reflects the expansion of international educational and professional opportunities. These trends contribute to the formation of broader economic, social, and cultural linkages between Uzbekistan and the global community.

The analysis of internal migration demonstrates a strong concentration of population movements toward economically developed and urbanized territories, particularly Tashkent City and Tashkent Region. This pattern reflects existing regional disparities in employment opportunities, infrastructure development, and living standards. Therefore, balanced regional development policies remain essential for reducing excessive migration pressure on major urban centers and creating sustainable economic opportunities in other regions of the country.

Overall, migration should be viewed not only as a demographic phenomenon but also as an important factor of socio-economic development. Strengthening legal protection for labor migrants, improving employment opportunities within the country, expanding vocational training programs, and promoting balanced regional development can enhance the positive effects of migration while minimizing its potential challenges. In this regard, the effective management of migration processes will remain an important component of Uzbekistan's long-term economic and social development strategy.

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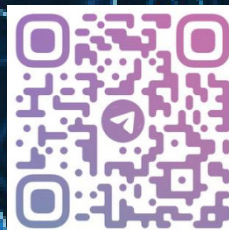
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