



## LABOR MIGRATION ISSUES IN UZBEKISTAN

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<b>ABSTRACT</b>	<b>KEYWORDS</b>
<p>The article examines the root causes of international migration from Uzbekistan through the lens of demographic and socio-economic development. It focuses on the challenges of employing a growing population, infrastructure deficits in regions, and low-income levels in rural areas. The study concludes with recommendations aimed at creating conditions for legal and protected migration.</p>	<p>Labor market, labor resources, regulated migration, irregular migration, labor migrants, money transfers.</p>

### **Introduction**

The role of migration in the economic development of the countries involved in this process has been increasingly significant in recent decades. Moreover, the 21st century is becoming the “century of global migration” [5].

Economic factors, such as the availability of jobs with higher wages and the lack of opportunities to realize oneself in the labor market of the country of departure, influence the decision to migrate. An important role is also played by the social factor, i.e., the opportunity to obtain a prestigious education in another country as a springboard for a future career there or back home through improved proficiency in a foreign language.

Information factors (such as the development of the Internet) and the accessibility of air travel have also contributed to shaping migration flows in the era of globalization.

Demographic imbalances that have developed over recent decades also significantly affect the development of migration processes, particularly the increase in the share of the population in developing countries and its decline in developed states.

According to forecasts, by 2050 more than 86% of the world's population will live in developing countries. In the poorest of these countries, the population may double within the next 20 years due to high birth rates.

The decline in population numbers in developed countries is driven by falling birth rates, which result from changing attitudes toward children, a decrease in their perceived value, and greater involvement of women in public life. As a result, most economically developed countries, which have entered a demographic crisis, pursue policies aimed at increasing birth rates by encouraging migration.

Uzbekistan is among the countries with high birth rates. According to the National Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the country leads the CIS in birth rate levels. As of 2024, the birth rate was 24.9 births per 1,000 people. Next come Kazakhstan (23.5), Kyrgyzstan (22.4), Armenia (12.4), Azerbaijan (11.2), Moldova (11.2), and Russia (9.6) [6].

In this regard, the issue of employment becomes extremely pressing. Currently, more than 600,000 young people enter Uzbekistan's labor market annually, and by 2030 this number will rise to 1 million [6].

At the same time, according to the Ministry of Labor of Uzbekistan, as of July 1, 2024, there were 876,000 unemployed people in the country, which accounts for 5.8% of the economically active population.

Moreover, half of Uzbekistan's population lives in rural areas, where agricultural work is the main source of income, but demand for labor is limited. In addition, disparities in the socio-economic situation have exposed infrastructure problems (such as gas, electricity, heating supply, access to quality drinking water, and overall water shortages for irrigating land plots to grow vegetables and fruits, as well as traditional crafts that are vital for life in rural areas of the country).

As a result of the search for better living conditions, a significant portion of the working-age population from rural areas migrates to Tashkent, meaning internal migration is also increasing. This is confirmed by World Bank experts. According to their assessment, migration is more common among less affluent segments of the population and rural households.

Indeed, reasonably regulated migration can bring positive effects for the economy, demographic situation, social development, and cultural life of host countries, where these flows can compensate for labor shortages, as well as for migrant-supplying countries through an increase in cross-border remittances, which stimulate domestic demand and consumption.

The capital's economic prospects drive internal migration, resulting in a surge in energy demand, traffic congestion, and urban development. Consequently, this process degrades the urban livability that initially served as the primary attraction for migrants.

Unregulated migration, on the contrary, can encourage the growth of the shadow economy, increase crime rates, reduce wages for local workers, and intensify interethnic and interreligious tensions [5].

Thus, under the current circumstances, the world stands on the threshold of the need to develop a fundamentally new approach to migration regulation at the global level. This study will be devoted to that issue.

## Literature Review

Many scholars have devoted their works to the pressing issues of migration. Special attention should be given to the studies by Ryazantsev S. and Bozhenko V. [5], who analyzed socio-demographic groups of the population that were previously less mobile, as well as such alarming phenomena as the use of

migration flows by transnational criminal organizations, resulting in migrants becoming victims of criminal groups.

Grozin A. [6] raises concerns by highlighting both economic and demographic imbalances in Uzbekistan’s regions as one of the leading factors driving internal migration within the country.

The research conducted by experts from the “Development Strategy” Center, Sharipov J. and Nuriddinov R., is also noteworthy, as they propose ways to ensure orderly and safe labor migration [7]. Despite the diversity of issues caused by labor migration under Uzbekistan’s current socio-economic conditions—such as population growth driven by historically established attitudes toward childbirth and population structure—it has become evident that the demographic potential is not being utilized effectively, which calls for further research and development.

**Research Methodology**

The theoretical and methodological basis of this work includes the following documents:

1. Presidential Decree of the Republic of Uzbekistan on the Strategy “Uzbekistan – 2030” dated September 11, 2023, No. PD-158 [1];
2. Presidential Decree of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated October 17, 2024, No. PD-162 “On Priority Measures for Reforming the System of Migration Process Management” [2];
3. Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. 252 dated April 22, 2025, “On Measures to Further Improve the System of Organized Employment of Citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan Abroad” [3];
4. Order of the Minister of Employment and Labor Relations of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated August 10, 2018, “On Approval of the Regulation on the Procedure for Voluntary Registration of Citizens Traveling Abroad for Employment, as well as Those Working Abroad under Private Labor Contracts” [4].

In this article methods of observation and comparison, synthesis, and analysis were applied.

The theoretical value of the study lies in identifying the need for conducting marketing research to determine the required professions and expected wages abroad, as well as strengthening the role of local administrations in facilitating labor migration of the population.

**Results and Discussion**

As of January 2024, the number of labor migrants from Uzbekistan amounted to two million people. Of these, 1,452,300 people were men (72.4%) and 547,700 people were women (27.6%).

The Russian Federation accounts for 60% of the total number of migrants from Uzbekistan, which is 1.2 million people. The remaining preferences are distributed as follows (see Table 1): Kazakhstan (191.8 thousand people or 10%), Turkey (113.8 thousand people or 6%), South Korea (68.1 thousand people or 3%), and other countries (424.4 thousand people or 21%) [7].

**Table 1 Migration from Uzbekistan as of 01.01.2024, in millions of people and in %**

Total, people	mln	Russia	in %	Kazakhstan	in %	Turkey	in %	South Korea	in %	Other countries	in %
2,0	1, 2	60,0	0,19	10,0	0,12	6	0,07	3,0	0,42	21	

Most likely, Russia and Kazakhstan are chosen for geographical reasons as well as language opportunities, despite the somewhat changed status of the Russian language compared to the Soviet period.

Today, among part of Uzbekistan’s population, Russian language proficiency is common at a household level, characterized by a limited vocabulary and frequent violations of pronunciation and grammar rules [8].

Therefore, by 2025, estimates of the Russian-speaking population in Uzbekistan vary significantly: according to different sources, between 18.5% and 70% of the population speaks Russian. The substantial differences lie in the criteria—some studies consider only active use of the language, while others also include passive knowledge (understanding speech and texts without regular oral communication).

Due to linguistic similarity (Turkish and Uzbek belong to the Turkic language family and share several features in grammar, phonetics, and vocabulary), religious affiliation, and visa-free entry opportunities, 6% of Uzbeks migrate to Turkey in search of better prospects.

As a result of introducing a simplified mechanism for issuing work visas for citizens of Uzbekistan—directly through the city administration—citizens who have completed three-month courses in professional training and Korean language study will be able to obtain a work visa and find employment in Korea. This has led Uzbeks to consider Korea as a potential destination for labor migration. Their share currently accounts for 3% of the total number of external migrants, although Korea remains in the fourth place among preferred destinations for labor migrants.

Uzbek labor migrants abroad typically find employment in building construction, road and bridge construction, and other infrastructure projects; in manufacturing; in the service sector, including cleaning, cooking, childcare, and elderly care; in food service as general workers, cooks, waiters, and bartenders in cafés and restaurants, as well as couriers for home food delivery.

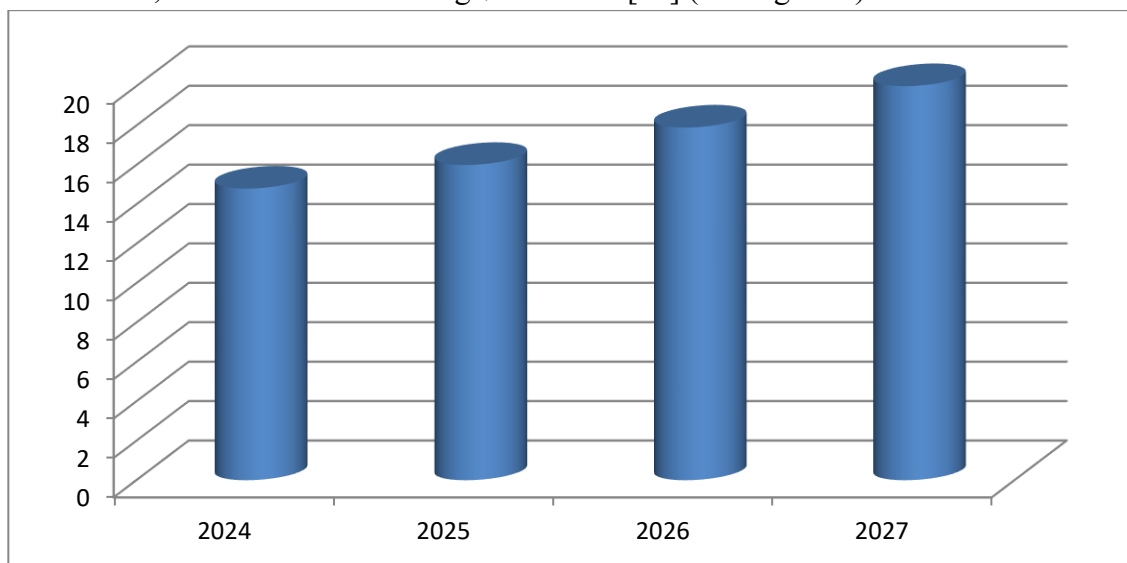
In the trade sector, migrants work in markets and shops. In transportation, they work as drivers and loaders; in agriculture, they are employed for harvesting, livestock care, and other branches of the economy (see Table 2).

**Table 2 Number of labor migrants from Uzbekistan by sectors of employment abroad as of January 1, 2024, in % [7]**

<b>Construction</b>	<b>52,7</b>
<b>Manufacturing</b>	<b>12,8</b>
<b>Services</b>	<b>9,7</b>
<b>Food service</b>	<b>6,9</b>
<b>Trade</b>	<b>6,7</b>
<b>Transport</b>	<b>4,3</b>
<b>Agriculture</b>	<b>4,1</b>
<b>Other sectors</b>	<b>2,8</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0</b>

Money transfers from abroad by labor migrants not only provide material support to help large migrant families stay afloat but also contribute to the growth of domestic demand and consumption, while supporting the stability of the national currency [9].

Thus, remittances from “guest workers” play a significant role in Uzbekistan’s economy. “For example, by the end of 2024, the volume of money transfers to Uzbekistan increased by almost 30%, reaching \$14.8 billion. Transfers from Russia grew by 29%, despite the number of migrants in that country decreasing by 1.7 times due to the conduct of the Special Military Operation. Transfers from the USA increased by 35%, from the UK by 1.8 times, and from Korea by 1.6 times” [10]. The Central Bank links the trend of growing remittances to the strengthening of partner countries’ currencies and the increase in migration to higher-income countries. In the first quarter of the current year alone, Uzbekistan received \$3.3 billion, which is 32% more than the previous year. For the period 2025–2027, an annual increase in remittances of 10–15% is forecasted “as part of a fundamental trend,” with the total reaching \$20 billion [11] (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1. Forecast of money transfers to Uzbekistan, in billion USD**

Thus, considering the current socio-economic situation in the country and the importance of youth employment, the geography of migration is expanding. “In 2025 alone, measures are planned to employ more than 200,000 citizens in 21 economically developed countries, such as Germany, the United Kingdom, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Israel, Canada, Poland, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and others,” stated the head of government [12].

The Government of Uzbekistan is diversifying labor migration markets to expand the list of countries and reduce dependence on one or several main destinations.

In the coming years, this work will continue in Uzbekistan through the creation of conditions for citizens wishing to work abroad to acquire professional skills and foreign language proficiency, the Prime Minister announced.

In addition, new measures are being introduced to support and prepare labor migrants. For example, to further strengthen cooperation between St. Petersburg and the Samarkand region, an agreement was reached to ensure the social and medical rights of Uzbek citizens and to organize safe and orderly migration [13].

Alongside support for labor migrants, important trends have emerged in the country regarding the return of labor migrants’ home. Recently, the government of Uzbekistan invited citizens, including those working abroad, to participate in the construction of New Tashkent. Recruitment was carried out

for 38 construction specialties, including bricklayers, plumbers, and electricians, with reported salaries ranging from 8 to 15 million soums [14].

In October 2024, during a visit to the Tashkent region, the President commented on Uzbek citizens working abroad: “If they earn \$1,500–\$2,000, that’s excellent, we will support them. If they earn less than that amount, it’s better to create conditions for them here” [15].

## Conclusion

In summary, the analysis of the current situation with migration processes in Uzbekistan reveals the government’s concern about ensuring employment for the country’s vast and growing demographic potential.

To ensure orderly and safe labor migration, we propose:

1. To provide preliminary legal training for labor migrants in accordance with the labor legislation of the destination country.
2. The Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation of the Republic of Uzbekistan, together with the Ministry for Poverty Reduction and Employment, should conduct marketing research to identify the required professions and expected wages abroad, followed by targeted training of specialists before departure.
3. To ensure continuous monitoring of the status of labor migrants in the destination country by developing criteria and indicators for assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of regional administrations (hokimiyats) in managing labor migration of the population.

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