



**TERRITORIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF
DEMOGRAPHIC PROCESSES AND THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF SOCIAL PROTECTION
POLICY IN NAVOI REGION**

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ABSTRACT

This article examines demographic processes, the spatial distribution of the population, and migration dynamics in Navoi Region, as well as their impact on the implementation of social protection policy. It explores the challenges of ensuring employment in remote desert areas, reducing shortages of qualified personnel, developing social infrastructure, and addressing the territorial characteristics of mahalla and ovul citizens' assemblies. Based on an analysis of the relationship between demographic factors and socio-economic conditions, the article considers ways to improve the effectiveness of regional social protection policy.

In 2024, the permanent population of Navoi Region amounted to 1,075.3 thousand people, of whom 531.1 thousand (49.2%) lived in urban areas. This makes the region one of the areas with a relatively high level of urbanization in the Republic of Uzbekistan [1]. Comparing the urbanization processes in Navoi Region with those in other regions of the country, as of January 1, 2024, the total population of Syrdarya Region was 914 thousand, with the urban population accounting for 43.1% of the total [2]. In Jizzakh Region, the permanent population reached 1,535.2 thousand, of whom approximately 46.9% lived in cities and urban-type settlements [3].

In conclusion, it can be observed that the number of people living in urban areas in Navoi Region is increasing compared with other regions of the republic, largely due to its higher level



of industrialization. The region is home to cities and industrial centers with modern infrastructure, such as Navoi, Zarafshan, and Uchkuduk. In particular, cities such as Zarafshan, Uchkuduk, Zafarobod, and Gazgan in the region belong to the category of “resource-based cities.” The economies of these cities have developed around specific industries. For example, Zarafshan and Zafarobod specialize in non-ferrous metallurgy, Uchkuduk in the uranium industry, and Gazgan in marble extraction, while many other cities in the region have an agro-industrial character [4].

Large industrial enterprises, which constitute the main pillar of the regional economy, contribute to a relatively high proportion of highly skilled industrial workers and technical specialists within the population.

In conclusion, it can be stated that the extreme natural and climatic conditions and demographic dynamics of Navoi Region necessitate a specific model for implementing social protection policies in the area. While the dispersed settlement of the population in the northern desert areas of the region increases the costs of social infrastructure, the high population density in industrialized centers intensifies the demand for social guarantees. Therefore, integrating geographical and demographic analyses into the planning of regional social policies is a key criterion for ensuring the targeted and effective implementation of government programmes.

As in all other regions of the Republic of Uzbekistan, in every district and city, mahalla (neighbourhood) and ovul (rural settlement) of Navoi Region, the mahalla (ovul) serves as a reliable bridge between the state and the people in the social and political life of society. It plays an important role in improving public welfare, promoting the socio-economic development of the region, and addressing existing problems.

According to the findings of the research, the citizens’ self-governing bodies operating in Navoi Region differ from those in other regions of the republic in the following respects.

1. Among the administrative territories of Uzbekistan, apart from the Republic of Karakalpakstan, Navoi Region is one of the few areas where ovul citizens’ assemblies exist. The region has 19 ovul citizens’ assemblies operating in Konimex, Tomdi, and Uchkuduk districts. In other regions of the republic, ovuls and ovul citizens’ assemblies are not found within the local governance system [10].

2. The geographical distribution of citizens’ assemblies in Navoi Region also has distinctive characteristics, as a considerable number of them are located far from the regional centre. In Khatirchi and Nurata districts, some settlements are situated in mountainous areas, while Konimex, Tomdi, and Uchkuduk districts are located in remote desert areas. This geographical distribution requires specific approaches to ensure the effective delivery of social services to the population and the efficient operation of mahalla and ovul citizens’ assemblies. Furthermore, ensuring employment in these areas is one of the principal priorities of social protection policy.

To this end, on September 29, 2017, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan adopted Resolution No. PQ-3301, entitled “On Additional Measures for the Integrated Development of



Tomdi, Uchkuduk, Konimex, and Nurata Districts and Zarafshan City of Navoi Region and for Ensuring Employment of the Population.” The resolution provides for the implementation of measures aimed at the comprehensive development of Uchkuduk, Tomdi, and Konimex districts, the Dehibaland, Sentob, Temirqovuq, Qizilcha, Gum, and Choya settlements in Nurata district, and the city of Zarafshan, as well as at fundamentally improving the quality of living conditions for their populations.

In particular, from October 1, 2017, to January 1, 2028, newly established entities operating in industry and the service sector, except for commercial enterprises and automotive gas-filling stations, are exempt from the single tax and the fixed-rate tax. Farms and business entities engaged in livestock breeding, camel breeding, and the processing of related products are exempt from the single social payment. Individual entrepreneurs registered and operating in these areas pay fixed amounts of personal income tax equal to one-quarter of the minimum rate established for the respective area. Specialists of legal entities registered and operating in these areas are exempt from income (profit) tax on the income they receive as shareholders [11].

As part of the reforms implemented to improve the system of student admission to higher education institutions in the Republic of Uzbekistan, beginning with the 2017–2018 academic year, the State Commission was granted the authority to admit applicants residing in the remote desert areas of Navoi Region, particularly in Konimex, Uchkuduk, and Tomdi districts, to higher education institutions under targeted state grants. This provision applied to applicants who had obtained the required minimum passing score of 68 points or higher in the entrance examinations and had resided permanently in these remote desert areas for at least three years [12].

This benefit was granted on the condition that, upon completing their studies, recipients would work for at least four years in budget-funded organizations within the area where they resided, in accordance with an agreement concluded with the relevant regional administration and higher education institution. It can be observed that the average monthly wages in these remote desert areas of Navoi Region are lower than the regional average. Therefore, a system of special coefficients (incentive ratios) and salary supplements has been introduced for specialists recruited from other regions to work in budget-funded institutions in remote and hard-to-reach areas, particularly in the healthcare and public education systems [13]. These measures serve as an effective economic instrument for reducing shortages of qualified personnel in outlying areas. It should also be noted that the mahallas and ovuls in these areas lack irrigated agricultural land. Furthermore, shortages of drinking water and inadequate wastewater infrastructure remain ongoing problems, while urban infrastructure has yet to be fully developed.

3. Birth rates in the region are also increasing. In the long term, this trend is likely to increase the proportion of young people relative to the population above working age. On the one hand, this may reduce the burden of pension payments on the regional budget; on the other



hand, it creates the challenge of ensuring employment opportunities commensurate with the anticipated growth in the region's labour force.

4. Migration processes also play a significant role in the socio-economic life of Navoi Region. The region is considered one of the republic's areas with active migration flows. According to recorded figures, 2,369 people left the region in 2022, 2,436 in 2023, and 2,940 in 2024 [13]. Meanwhile, in 2022, more than 3,150 people moved to Navoi Region for permanent residence. This figure reached 3,380 in 2023, and in 2024 the number of arrivals increased further, exceeding 3,720 people [10].

These indicators have both positive and negative implications for the region's socio-economic development. To achieve sustainable economic growth in the long term, it would be appropriate to create stable, high-income jobs with high labour productivity and develop programmes that encourage young professionals to remain in the region. In particular, it is important to introduce measures such as establishing financial funds to support innovative projects and providing additional benefits and incentives to young families based on the professional qualifications of the household head. Such measures could influence young people's decisions to move to other regions while also expanding opportunities to train and retain specialists needed by the region.

5. The demographic characteristics of the districts of Navoi Region have naturally influenced the number of citizens' assemblies in each area. In particular, Khatirchi District, which has a high population density and a well-developed agricultural sector, has 68 mahalla citizens' assemblies. In contrast, Tomdi District, a desert area where livestock breeding is the main economic activity and which has the smallest demographic indicators in the region, has seven oval citizens' assemblies [12].

6. The distinctive ethnic composition of Navoi Region serves as an important factor in promoting interethnic harmony and social stability. In Tomdi, Uchkuduk, and Konimex districts, representatives of the Kazakh ethnic group predominate among the chairpersons of mahalla citizens' assemblies. Meanwhile, the participation of representatives of other ethnic groups in local self-governing bodies can be observed in other districts: Karakalpaks in Navbahor District, Turks in Khatirchi District, and Tajiks in Nurata District. In particular, the presence of representatives of ethnic groups such as Russians, Ukrainians, Koreans, and Tatars among the chairpersons of mahalla citizens' assemblies in cities such as Navoi and Zarafshan reflects the region's social cohesion and inclusive governance.

Furthermore, educational institutions in the region provide instruction in Uzbek, Kazakh, Karakalpak, Tajik, and Russian. For example, in 57 general education schools in Nurata District, instruction is provided in four languages: Uzbek, Kazakh, Tajik, and Russian [2]. In Konimex District, of the 36 general education schools, two provide instruction in Russian, three in Uzbek, and three in Karakalpak, while the remaining schools provide instruction in Kazakh [3].



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