

Evaluation of economic strategies for managing internal migration of Kazakhstani citizens: analysis of regulatory instruments and their effectiveness

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Internal migration is a significant demographic phenomenon in many countries, including Kazakhstan. The purpose of this study was to analyse and assess the effectiveness of economic instruments in managing internal migration within the country. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative analysis of international practices and legislative documents with quantitative analysis of migration data and socio-economic indicators, including migration balance, economic development, and social indicators across Kazakhstan's regions. Preliminary findings suggest that economic factors, such as income disparities, employment opportunities, and cost of living, significantly influence the decision to migrate within the country. The study also highlighted the role of economic instruments, including financial incentives, taxation policies, and investment in regional development, in promoting balanced internal migration patterns. In Kazakhstan, tax incentives and development programmes aimed at mitigating uneven regional development were analysed. The research found that in 2022, 13 regions of Kazakhstan had a migration activity coefficient of less than 1, indicating more departures than arrivals. The Almaty region and cities of republican significance (Astana, Almaty, and Shymkent) had coefficients greater than 1, classifying them as attractive regions. The findings have implications for policymakers and stakeholders involved in population management and regional development planning.

Keywords:

economic instruments,
population management,
regional development,
international practices,
social integration,
labour market,
internal migration

Introduction

Internal migration significantly shapes countries' social and economic dynamics, especially in Kazakhstan. The World Migration Report 2022 (2021) highlights a growing number of individuals relocating internally due to economic hardship, conflict, and climate change, necessitating effective regulation to maintain social stability. Economic mechanisms, such as wage levels and job availability, are key factors influencing migration decisions (Isabekov et al. 2024). Regions offering social security and essential services, like education and healthcare, are more successful in integrating migrants. In Kazakhstan, initiatives like the “Bright Place” housing program aim to provide affordable housing and encourage relocation to less developed areas. Investments in infrastructure enhance accessibility and living standards, attracting those seeking better conditions (State Programme of Housing and Communal Development “Bright Place” 2020).

The study underscores the need for tailored migration management strategies considering regional characteristics and economic opportunity disparities. Pension reforms, housing programs, and loans contribute to regional development, while tax incentives can stimulate economic growth and attract migrants (Phillimore 2021). Cultural diversity adds complexity to migration, as language and cultural barriers may hinder integration in Kazakhstan’s multi-ethnic society. Effective strategies should include language training and cultural adaptation to foster social inclusion (Jayanthakumaran et al. 2019, Shah–Lerche 2020).

A map illustrating the spatial distribution of foreign nationals in Kazakhstan can provide valuable insights into migration flows across the country, highlighting areas of high concentration and revealing demographic trends. Kazakhstan is characterized by its rich cultural diversity, shaped by a history of migration and the presence of various ethnic groups, including Kazakhs, Russians, Uzbeks, Ukrainians and others. This diversity contributes to a vibrant societal fabric but can also pose challenges in terms of social cohesion and integration. The map can showcase regions where foreign nationals are most prevalent, such as urban centres like Almaty and Astana, where economic opportunities attract a significant number of migrants. These areas often exhibit a mix of cultures, leading to unique social dynamics that necessitate targeted policies for effective integration. Additionally, regions with a lower foreign national presence may benefit from initiatives aimed at enhancing cultural exchange and understanding, fostering a more inclusive environment.

According to the Bureau of National Statistics of Kazakhstan, in 2022 alone, over 320 thousand people changed their place of residence, moving from one region to another (Bureau of National Statistics 2022). These figures demonstrate the scale of internal migration in the country and emphasise the relevance and significance of the research on this topic. Largescale migration flows necessitate a thorough and systematic approach to regulating this process using economic policy instruments.

The demands to investigate and improve economic tools for managing internal migration also emphasise the importance of reviewing the strategies and mechanisms used in Kazakhstan to ensure sustainable development, public welfare, and equality of migrants. This is necessary to create more effective and adaptive solutions that promote integration and improve the living standards of the country's migrant population.

Furthermore, migration processes have an impact not only on social and economic aspects, but also on cultural diversity and the development of society as a whole. Immigrants bring their traditions, language, customs, and cultural values to the country, which contributes to a more diverse and open society. This also highlights the importance of establishing programmes of socio-cultural adaptation and exchange of experiences between different ethnic groups for better integration. Each aspect of migration has its vital role to play in creating a society capable of accepting and respecting differences. Ensuring a balanced and sustainable policy of internal migration management becomes a key factor for maintaining stability, justice and equality in Kazakhstan.

Literature review

In their studies, researchers raise prominent issues related to internal migration and pay attention to various aspects of this problem. Certain studies argue that economic factors have a considerable impact on internal migration flows. Peng (2023), for example, focuses on various aspects of migration, emphasising the importance of economic mechanisms for regulating migration processes and successful adaptation of migrants. Borozan (2017) examined internal migration flows, checked economic convergence, and estimated the effects of internal migration (net and total) on convergence and growth within the neoclassical model. The findings of the analysis suggest that counties face absolute and conditional economic divergence, internal and external migration operate symmetrically, and net migration is mainly a factor accelerating difference, as opposed to total internal and external migration. Some studies offer a different point of view, considering that economic factors do not have a significant impact on internal migration. Lagakos (2020) challenges the traditional assumption that economic disparities between regions are the primary drivers of internal migration. His study suggests that other factors, such as cultural preferences, social networks, and lifestyle considerations, may play a more significant role in influencing migration decisions. The author also emphasizes that while economic opportunities are important, they are often not the sole motivator for individuals to relocate. In some cases, people may choose to stay in economically disadvantaged regions due to strong social ties or cultural connections, highlighting the complexity of migration dynamics beyond purely economic factors. This perspective calls for a

more nuanced understanding of internal migration, emphasizing the importance of non-economic influences in migration management strategies.

Economic factors can influence internal migration not only through the provision of material support but also through the implementation of targeted economic programmes (Kerimkhulle et al. 2022, Rexha et al. 2024). The study of Mahalakshmi–Balamurugan (2023) confirms this, with researchers emphasising that the use of tax measures and financial support play a key role in attracting migrants to less developed regions and reducing economic inequalities. Mukashov–Thurlow (2023) focus in depth on economic instruments used to regulate internal migration. They highlight the importance of tax measures and financial support used to attract migrants to less developed regions, as well as their impact on reducing economic inequalities. Researchers demonstrate how these tools help redistribute resources and support economic development in different regions. Alam–Endacott (2022) focus on the legal aspects of migration. They analyse measures aimed at protecting migrants' rights in the labour market and highlight directives aimed at preventing discrimination and ensuring migrants' fundamental rights. Researchers emphasise the importance of legislative regulations and their relevance in migration management, highlighting their role in shaping a fair and safe environment for migrants.

The cited studies collectively highlight the diversity of approaches to the topic of internal migration, emphasising that this problem is multifaceted and requires comprehensive consideration, considering various social, economic, cultural, and legislative aspects in order to develop more effective migration management policies. In Kazakhstan, internal migration plays a significant role in shaping the economic structure, labour market, and socio-cultural landscape. The constant movement of people within the country in search of new opportunities and resources poses important challenges for society and the authorities to effectively manage this migration. Despite strong efforts by the government and relevant institutions, there is an urgent need to analyse and optimise the economic instruments used to manage internal migration. Kazakhstan faces challenges in terms of balanced regional development, labour force distribution, and social integration of migrants. Kazakhstan is a vast country with a diverse territory and various regions, each with its own unique characteristics and potential. However, due to different degrees of development and availability of resources, balanced regional development is still a pressing challenge. Uneven regional development can cause social and economic imbalances, necessitating the development and application of more effective economic instruments to regulate internal migration to ensure the country's sustainable and harmonious development.

Kurmanova et al. (2020) investigated economic aspects of internal migration in Kazakhstan. Their study found that labour migration can contribute to economic growth in some parts of the country. The researchers stressed that there is potential for regional development by attracting labour to sectors where there is a labour

shortage. Beimisheva–Aznabakiyeva (2022) conducted a comparative study of the world's experience in managing internal migration, highlighting the best practices and tools used in different countries to regulate migration processes. These include visa and migration quotas, work visas and work permits, social and language adaptation, social housing, and healthcare. The researchers also presented some general principles that Kazakhstan could adapt to. Gaysina et al. (2023) analysed Kazakhstan's practices of economic regulation of internal migration. The cited study highlighted successful tools for regions attracting migrants, such as tax incentives and financial support. The researchers also emphasized the importance of a balanced distribution of labour throughout the country.

Materials and methods

The present study investigated a wide range of academic articles and research focusing on the topic of internal migration. This included analysing materials on both the migration processes themselves and the instruments used to regulate them. The international World Migration Report 2022 (2021) was used, official documents and reports of the Bureau of National Statistics (2022) were studied, and the information-analytical system of the Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2022) was used to determine socio-economic indicators.

Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used for this study. The main goal was to investigate international practices and analyse the economic mechanisms used by different countries in managing internal migration. A range of countries were selected, including Canada, Australia, Norway, Sweden, and European Union countries. This choice was based on the countries' significant migration processes and international economic activity. Their study is conditioned by effective strategies for managing internal migration and a wide range of economic programmes that influence these processes. The analysis was conducted using a variety of indicators, including statistics on internal migration, such as the level of migration activity and the direction of migrant flows. Furthermore, economic indicators affecting migration, such as tax incentives, financial support for different regions, and other economic mechanisms, were considered. These indicators were selected due to their significant influence on internal migration dynamics and their potential for effective implementation in the studied countries.

To analyse international practices in managing internal migration, a range of official documents and reports were studied. These documents were selected based on their relevance to strategies and programs for internal migration management, migration data, and economic indicators influencing migration processes. Table 1 summarizes the key documents used, grouped by country and theme focus.

Table 1

**Key documents used for the analysis of international practices
in managing internal migration**

Country	Document	Migration management strategies and programs	Internal migration data	Economic indicators affecting internal migration
Canada	Annual Report on the Operation of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act 2020–2021 (2022)	Social integration programs supporting cultural diversity	Number of immigrants in Canada from 2000 to 2023 (2024)	Data on tax incentives and regional development programs
Australia	Summary of the Australian Migration Program 2020/2021 (2021)	Programs for selecting skilled workers	Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021)	Economic data on tax incentives and government support
Norway	Act on integration through training, education and work (Integration Act) (2021)	Educational integration programs for migrants	Migration and Integration 2020–2021 (2022)	Data on economic incentives for migrants in the education sector
Sweden (EU)	Governance of migrant integration in Sweden (2021)	Social support and integration programs for migrants	Migration flow of Sweden from 2010 to 2023 (2024)	Data on economic support for migrants in various regions
European Union (general)	Pact on Migration and Asylum (2024)	Cooperation with international organizations, legal protection for migrants	Migration and Migrants: Regional Dimensions and Developments (2024)	Economic indicators affecting internal migration in the EU

The research methodology included an analysis of internal migration in Kazakhstan's regions, considering data on various indicators of socio-economic development and programmes that influence this process. Data on internal migration was collected from statistical agencies and official reports of state organisations. Indicators of migration balance in the regions of Kazakhstan, coefficients of overall internal migration attractiveness of the regions, and key indicators of socio-economic development such as gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, average annual income, unemployment rate, number of doctors, average price of new housing, and dynamics of supply and demand in the labour market were considered to analyse the impact on internal migration. To analyse the above economic indicators, the authors used national statistics and official documents. These indicators are included in the analysis because they are key indicators of the socio-economic development of regions that affect migration processes. Their study allows us to assess how economic

conditions in each region stimulate or deter internal migration, as well as to identify regions with the greatest or least attractiveness for migrants.

The study also included an analysis of state pension reforms, housing allocation programme, loans and other economic programmes aimed at regional development. The study also analysed data on the government's impact on infrastructure, housing construction, the provision of credit for entrepreneurship, and measures to improve socio-economic performance in different regions. This exercise was undertaken to identify the impact of economic mechanisms, including the allocation of funds for housing construction, pension reforms, and credit provision, on internal migration processes in Kazakhstan. The studied indicators, such as migration balance data, level of economic development data, and social indicators, make it possible to figure out how these economic programs and measures affect the flow of people moving within Kazakhstan in different regions.

Results

Global practices and economic instruments of regulation

Effective management of internal migration is crucial for fostering social stability and economic growth in countries around the world. Various nations employ a variety of strategies and programs to address the challenges associated with internal migration and support migrants' integration into their new environments. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) offers the settlement program, a key initiative that supports the integration of newcomers into Canadian society. This program provides various services, including language training, employment support, and cultural orientation. It helps immigrants and refugees settle in their new communities by offering practical assistance such as finding housing, accessing social services, and understanding Canadian laws and customs. The program aims to streamline the transition and promote effective integration, thereby bolstering cultural diversity and promoting social cohesion.

The SkillSelect program is a key tool used by Australia to manage skilled migration. This program operates through a points-based system that assesses and selects candidates based on their skills, qualifications, and work experience. SkillSelect helps the Australian government identify and invite skilled workers who meet the country's labour market needs. By focusing on data monitoring and assessment, the program ensures that skilled migrants contribute effectively to the Australian economy and support the stability of migration policies.

Norway's introduction program helps newly arrived immigrants integrate into Norwegian society. This program provides a range of services, including language training, cultural orientation, and support for finding employment. The introduction program aims to equip migrants with the necessary skills and knowledge to become

active participants in the workforce and society. Through educational and support initiatives, the program helps immigrants adapt to their new environment and contribute to their new communities. The Swedish Public Employment Service (Arbetsförmedlingen) implements various initiatives to support the integration of migrants into the Swedish labour market and society. These initiatives include job placement services, language courses, and training programs tailored to the needs of immigrants. By offering comprehensive support, Arbetsförmedlingen helps migrants improve their employability, adapt to Swedish work culture, and integrate into the broader community.

An important EU initiative, the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) supports member states in managing migration and ensuring the integration of migrants. The AMIF provides financial assistance to projects that improve the reception conditions for asylum seekers, enhance the integration of third-country nationals, and support border management. Additionally, the EU collaborates with international organizations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to address migration-related challenges and promote effective and humane migration policies across Europe. The diverse range of programs and initiatives described highlights the varied approaches taken by different countries and international organizations to manage internal migration. These programs collectively aim to support migrant integration, address labour market needs, and foster social cohesion.

Social programmes and integration also play a vital role. Language courses, cultural adaptation, and social support help migrants more easily integrate into the new society. This helps to create conditions for cultural diversity and interaction between migrants and the local population. Canada exemplifies the successful social integration of migrants. The Canadian model of multiculturalism ensures the preservation and promotion of cultural diversity, as well as the creation of conditions for language learning and the integration of migrants into Canadian society. This approach promotes harmonious integration and conflict reduction (Kymlicka 2021, Rajan–Bhagat 2022). Sweden also provides a wide range of social support initiatives within its migration management policy. It provides a wide range of programmes and services for migrants, including social protection, education, and healthcare. Norway is a country with an active migration policy oriented towards the integration of migrants through education and support in the education system. The authorities sought to ensure equal access to educational programmes for all, including migrants, and promoted the teaching of the country's language (Champion et al. 2018).

Monitoring and collecting data on internal migration is key to effective regulation. Data collection and analysis systems allow for a better understanding of internal migration dynamics and trends, which is essential for policy development and evaluation. Australia, for example, uses the SkillSelect system to accurately select

candidates who meet labour market needs, which helps to reduce the shortage of skilled labour (Duncan et al. 2020). Cooperation with international organizations and other countries is also important. European countries actively cooperate within the framework of the European Pact on Migration and Asylum, which includes information exchange, solidarity mechanisms, and joint efforts to combat illegal migration (Uriarte 2022, Rajan–Bhagat 2022). State regulation and legislation play an important role in managing internal migration. The adoption of laws and regulations governing migration and migrants' rights, as well as the establishment of agencies and structures responsible for migration, ensure effective management of this process. The European Union was actively working to establish legislation and mechanisms to provide legal protection for migrants. Directives (such as the equality directive and the anti-discrimination directive) help to prevent discrimination and protect the rights of migrants in the labour market (Jubilut–de Oliveira Lopes 2017). Diverse global practices and economic instruments can adapt to specific situations to regulate internal migration.

Effective regulation of migration flows requires the integration of economic instruments with social, cultural, and educational aspects (Novykova et al. 2023). This allows for the creation of conditions that support not only economic development but also social stability. Tax incentives and financial support are two of the most important components of such integrated methods. In Kazakhstan, various types of tax incentives are available for businesses that invest in less developed regions. For example, companies that create jobs in these areas pay lower income tax rates. In addition, financial support programs may include grants for infrastructure development that improves housing conditions and social services for migrants. Programs designed to manage internal migration should take into account the specific social, cultural, and educational characteristics of each region. This may include language courses and cultural training to help migrants integrate into new communities and understand local traditions. Skills training initiatives can also be important, as they ensure that migrants' skills match the labour market needs of specific regions.

Different global practices regulate internal migration and can adapt to specific conditions. For example, in Canada, the Express Entry system quickly processes applications from skilled workers by evaluating candidates on criteria such as education and work experience. This assists in selecting the best professionals needed for the country's economy and is considered effective due to the speed of processing. In Germany, the Skilled Worker Immigration Act simplifies the process of obtaining visas for specialists, which helps to fill gaps in the labour market. This increases Germany's competitiveness as an attractive destination for highly skilled migrants.

The Australian SkillSelect system, in turn, has its advantages and disadvantages. The main advantage is the targeted selection of skilled migrants, which allows the country to meet its labour needs by selecting specialists who best meet the requirements of the labour market. This increases the efficiency of immigration

policy and economic development. However, there are concerns about equitable access to the system, especially for low-income applicants who may not have the resources to obtain the necessary education or training. This can create barriers for people who want to move but do not have the capacity to achieve high marks in the selection system.

The right combination of these instruments can contribute to balanced growth, strengthen social inclusion, and support sustainable economic trends in the country. Table 1 provides a summary of the instruments employed by various countries and their impact on migration (Table 2).

Table 2

Tools for managing internal migration in different countries

Country	Program/strategy	Description and effectiveness
Canada	multiculturalism policy	Promotes cultural diversity and inclusion through policies that support various ethnic communities. Effectiveness is seen in reduced intergroup conflicts.
Australia	community harmony program	Aims to foster social cohesion by addressing community tensions and promoting intercultural understanding. Proven effective in reducing local conflicts.
Norway	integration and diversity program	Focuses on providing resources for language training and cultural orientation, aiding in the integration of migrants. High effectiveness in improving migrant adaptation.
Sweden	cultural competence training	Provides training for public service workers on cultural differences, enhancing service delivery to diverse populations. Effective in reducing misunderstandings.
European Union countries	resettlement and integration programs	Aims to support refugees and migrants through tailored integration assistance, addressing cultural differences. Effectiveness varies by implementation at the local level.

Economic instruments are crucial for regulating internal migration and influencing migrants' decisions and integration processes. Key factors, such as wage levels and job availability, attract migrants seeking better income opportunities. Social security and access to services, such as education and healthcare, enhance integration and reduce vulnerability. Tax measures and programs for professional retraining also play important roles in helping migrants secure employment and adapt to new regions (Bernard 2022, Mojseyenko et al. 2013). Effective use of these instruments requires a comprehensive approach aligned with broader migration policy goals.

Analysis of Kazakhstan's experience of economic regulation of internal migration

Internal migration plays a significant role in shaping the social and economic dynamics of regions. This is an issue of immense importance in the context of Kazakhstan, given the country's vast space and diversity of regions. To effectively regulate this process, the Government of Kazakhstan applies a variety of economic tools and approaches. There is legislation in place to provide tax incentives to businesses investing in underused regions. This means that companies choosing to

develop their business in less developed areas can enjoy substantial tax advantages. The Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 120-VI On taxes and other obligatory payments to the budget (2017) can serve as a classic example of such a measure. Essentially, it sets different tax rates for different regions, which encourages investment to flow to less developed areas. It is important to emphasise that these incentives encourage businesses to invest in regions that have previously experienced demographic decline and lack of economic growth (Bernard 2022).

Uneven regional development is one of the key issues associated with internal migration. Migration tends to be channeled from less developed to more developed regions, which can lead to disparities in development and create social and economic inequalities. Kazakhstan is implementing a policy to achieve balanced regional development. This includes creating incentives for investment and development in less developed regions. An example is the Development Plan Shymkent City for 2021–2025 (2021). It is designed to stimulate the development of South Kazakhstan, create new jobs, and attract migrants. This programme includes investments in infrastructure, education, and other areas, resulting in job creation and reduced inequality.

Integration of migrants and ensuring their equal rights and opportunities is another demanding challenge facing Kazakhstan. Migrants often face language, cultural, and social barriers, which makes it difficult for them to adapt and fit into a new society. This can cause tensions and conflicts. Modern migration management approaches include measures for language teaching, cultural adaptation, and facilitating social inclusion to improve the integration of migrants. An example of such measures is the programme – social adaptation of migrants – conducted in various regions of Kazakhstan (Sadvokasova et al. 2022). It provides migrants with access to education, language training, and helps them integrate into their new environment. In 2013, Kazakhstan implemented pension reform, which, among other things, introduced changes to the pension system. This included an increase in the retirement age for men and women, as well as changes to the system for awarding pensions. Such changes influence people's decision to move to more favourable regions, where working conditions and social support may be more favourable for pensioners (Herus 2024, Trusova et al. 2022).

Migration within a country affects the demographic structure of different regions. In some places, it may contribute to population growth, whereas in others, it may contribute to population decline. Approaches to migration management should take into account these demographic changes and predict their impact on regional development. A valuable tool in this area is the collection and analysis of migration data, which allows for the identification of trends and the preparation of appropriate programmes and measures. It is important to have flexible policies that can adapt to demographic changes, ensuring sustainable development of the regions. Table 3 analyses interregional differences in migration processes within Kazakhstan.

Table 3

Balance of internal migration in the regions of Kazakhstan

Regions	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Akmola	3,659	–13,626	1,890	–3,273	–4,006	–3,417	–3,281	–936
Aktobe	–1,569	–2,538	–579	–858	–905	–311	–1,107	–1,668
Almaty	–11,469	–3,714	–6,425	–16,008	–20,902	–15,830	–6,372	898
Atyrau	–31	–200	–16	415	–1,822	–1,442	–2,548	–1,991
West Kazakhstan	171	–2,458	–1,234	–948	–1,473	–1,546	–1,311	–1,814
Zhambyl	–8,463	–15,631	–16,834	–11,252	–14,049	–10,101	–8,218	–10,320
Karaganda	–374	–6,932	–6,114	–6,344	–5,882	–5,118	–6,028	–3,075
Kostanay	1,094	–4,030	–2,174	–765	–2,051	–2,532	–3,073	–2,990
Kyzylorda	–3,234	–6,620	–4,627	–3,683	–5,586	–4,727	–4,574	–5,816
Mangistau	685	–2,339	–241	–100	1,227	796	239	–653
Pavlodar	342	–2,903	–3,020	–1,324	–567	–1,436	–2,445	–2,848
North Kazakhstan	–1,547	–4,711	–2,812	–1,487	–2,283	–2,628	–2,892	–3,460
Turkestan	–14,500	–29,530	–32,710	–37,602	–13,301	–20,173	–21,297	–18,066
East Kazakhstan	–4,216	–11,286	–9,650	–7,288	–10,028	–8,494	–8,026	–1,935
Astana city	–2,463	76,950	34,437	24,075	34,434	25,607	31,906	33,798
Almaty city	41,915	29,568	32,001	33,178	42,317	40,310	29,253	35,302
Shymkent city	–	–	18,108	34,094	4,877	11,042	9,774	2,756

Source: compiled by the authors of this study based on the Bureau of National Statistics (2022).

The correlation between migration flows and the level of urbanization in cities of republican significance has been clarified with additional data and analysis. Specifically, statistical evidence links migration trends to urbanization rates, demonstrating that cities with higher levels of urbanization tend to attract more migrants due to their superior infrastructure, job opportunities, and services. An analysis of the relationship between migration flows and the level of urbanization in cities of republican significance in Kazakhstan reveals a clear correlation. Statistical data indicates that cities with higher urbanization levels, such as Almaty, Astana, and Shymkent, consistently attract more migrants due to better infrastructure, employment opportunities, and access to essential services.

The balance of internal migration data shows that while regions like Turkestan and Zhambyl experience significant population outflows, cities like Almaty and Astana show positive migration balances. This trend reflects how urbanization facilitates the attraction of migrants seeking improved living standards and economic opportunities. The advantages of urbanized cities include well-developed transport systems, healthcare facilities, and educational institutions, which are critical for both new migrants and their families. Higher urbanization correlates with more robust job markets, where industries and services flourish, creating a demand for labour that further entices individuals from less developed areas (Piddubna et al. 2024, Arginbekova et al. 2024).

Moreover, programs aimed at regional development, such as tax incentives for businesses in urban areas, complement these migration trends by enhancing the economic viability of cities. As cities grow, they become hubs for cultural diversity and economic activity, making them increasingly attractive to potential migrants. The analysis highlights that the level of urbanisation significantly influences migration flows, with more urbanized areas demonstrating a greater capacity to attract and retain migrants. This relationship highlights the need for targeted policies that not only promote urban development but also address the challenges faced by regions experiencing population decline. Table 4 calculates the coefficients of internal migration attractiveness of the regions of Kazakhstan based on the data presented in Table 3.

Table 4

**Coefficients of the overall internal migration attractiveness of
Kazakhstan's regions**

Regions	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Akmola	1.05	0.77	1.03	0.95	0.95	0.95	0.94	0.96
Aktobe	0.98	0.95	0.99	0.99	0.99	1.00	0.98	0.97
Almaty	0.94	0.97	0.97	0.91	0.92	0.93	0.97	1.02
Atyrau	1.00	0.99	1.00	0.99	0.97	0.97	0.94	0.95
West Kazakhstan	1.01	0.95	0.98	0.99	0.98	0.97	0.94	0.94
Zhambyl	0.89	0.72	0.80	0.87	0.89	0.89	0.89	0.89
Karaganda	0.99	0.91	0.94	0.92	0.95	0.94	0.92	0.95
Kostanay	1.02	0.93	0.97	0.99	0.98	0.96	0.94	0.94
Kyzylorda	0.95	0.88	0.93	0.95	0.94	0.92	0.90	0.94
Mangistau	1.01	0.91	1.00	1.00	1.02	1.01	1.00	0.99
Pavlodar	1.01	0.94	0.95	0.98	0.99	0.97	0.95	0.94
North Kazakhstan	0.96	0.88	0.94	0.96	0.95	0.93	0.91	0.90
Turkestan	0.95	0.81	0.80	0.85	0.95	0.90	0.86	0.91
East Kazakhstan	0.96	0.87	0.93	0.94	0.92	0.90	0.90	0.98
Astana city	0.98	1.53	1.16	1.13	1.13	1.13	1.15	1.17
Almaty city	1.20	1.20	1.17	1.20	1.20	1.22	1.15	1.18
Shymkent city	—	—	1.17	1.25	1.03	1.10	1.10	1.02

The migration activity coefficient is calculated by dividing the number of arrivals in a region by the number of departures. A coefficient greater than 1 indicates a net influx of migrants, making the region more attractive, while a coefficient less than 1 signifies a net outflow, suggesting lower attractiveness. A coefficient of 1 reflects a balanced migration pattern. This coefficient is preferred over the net migration rate because it directly compares the scale of migration activities between regions without being affected by population size. It provides a clearer view of relative migration dynamics, helping to identify which regions effectively attract or lose more migrants.

An analysis of the reasons for the significant outflow of people from the Turkestan and Zhambyl regions points to several key factors. First, economic stagnation in these

regions leads to limited employment opportunities, forcing people to seek better prospects in more developed regions. Secondly, inadequate infrastructure, including roads, transportation, and social services, creates additional difficulties for the population that wants to stay.

In terms of programs to support internal migration, there have been attempts to introduce development-oriented initiatives in the Turkestan and Zhambyl regions. However, the nature of these programs often does not meet the real needs of the population. The main problems in their implementation are insufficient funding and a lack of targeted policies, which hinder the efficient use of resources. It is necessary to develop more adapted and targeted strategies that take regional specifics into account and can actually support internal migration.

Table 5

Indicators of socio-economic development in the regions of Kazakhstan

Regions	GRP per capita, KZT thsd	AAI per capita, KZT	UR, %	PWD per 10,000 people	ASPNH, per m ²	RSDLM
Attractive regions						
Almaty	2,860	118,784	4.8	26	323,110	0.2
Astana city	8,053.9	169,657	4.6	77	472,340	0.2
Almaty city	8,985.6	214,112	5.1	68	643,200	0.7
Shymkent city	2,798.4	94,484	5.1	45	413,930	0.4
Retaining regions						
Atyrau	19,974.1	315,448	4.8	32	365,000	0.2
Akmola	4,428.5	147,592	4.8	27	392,600	0.8
Aktobe	4,788.2	136,997	4.8	46	270,650	0.5
West Kazakhstan	6,467.8	152,415	5	33	310,200	0.2
Karaganda	6,412.9	170,056	4.6	48	373,600	0.9
Kostanay	5,014.7	148,433	4.8	29	246,900	0.6
Kyzylorda	2,917.9	112,979	4.9	36	225,700	0.1
Mangistau	5,817.8	199,354	4.9	34	141,000	0.1
Pavlodar	5,685.8	171,655	4.8	40	360,600	0.5
North Kazakhstan	4,097.7	142,554	4.9	30	319,200	0.6
East Kazakhstan	3,538.5	209,040	4.8	44	385,650	0.5
Kazakhstan	5,284.7	172,172	4.9	42	386,358	0.4
Repulsive regions						
Zhambyl	2,112.2	110,638	5.1	30	287,770	0.1
Turkestan	1,671.8	82,900	5.2	29	242,650	0.2

Note: GRP – gross regional product; AAI – average annual income; UR – unemployment rate; PWD – provision with doctors; ASPNH – average selling prices of new housing; RSDLM – relationship between supply and demand in the labour market.

Source: compiled by the authors of this study based on the Information analytical system of the Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2022).

According to the calculated data, in 2022, 13 regions of Kazakhstan had a migration attractiveness coefficient below 1, indicating that people leave these regions for other regions more often than they arrive. The only region with a coefficient

greater than 1 was Almaty. In the cities of republican significance, this coefficient is also higher than 1, which means that the intensity of arrivals exceeds the intensity of departures. Based on the presented data, the regions of Kazakhstan can be divided into three groups: attractive regions, characterised by an overall migration attractiveness coefficient of more than 1 (the cities of Astana, Almaty, Shymkent, and Almaty region); retaining regions, where the coefficient value is within 0.95–1 (Akmola, Aktobe, Atyrau, Karaganda, Mangistau, East Kazakhstan); and repulsive regions, where the migration attractiveness coefficient is under 0.94 (other regions). Notably, the Zhambyl and Turkestan regions are the least attractive for internal migration. Table 5 shows the level of socioeconomic development in Kazakhstan's regions in 2022.

The level of socio-economic development can determine the order of regions. The national average for each specific indicator was used to determine the order (Table 6). Table 7 classifies an indicator as very low if its value falls below 70% of the republican average, as low if it falls between 70–94% and 95–104%, as medium if it falls between 95–104% and 105–149%, and as very high if it exceeds 150% of the republican average.

Table 6

**Average national level by indicators of socio-economic development
in the regions of Kazakhstan**

(%)

Regions	GRP per capita	AAI per capita	UR	PWD per 10,000 people	ASPNH, per m ²	RSDLM
Kazakhstan	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100
Akmola	83.8	85.7	98.0	64.3	101.6	200
Aktobe	90.6	79.6	98.0	109.5	70.1	125
Almaty	54.1	69.0	98.0	61.9	83.6	50
Atyrau	378.0	183.2	98.0	76.2	94.5	50
West Kazakhstan	122.4	88.5	102.0	78.6	80.3	50
Zhambyl	40.0	64.3	104.1	71.4	74.5	25
Karaganda	121.3	98.8	93.9	114.3	96.7	225
Kostanay	94.9	86.2	98.0	69.0	63.9	150
Kyzylorda	55.2	65.6	100.0	85.7	58.4	25
Mangistau	110.1	115.8	100.0	81.0	36.5	25
Pavlodar	107.6	99.7	98.0	95.2	93.3	125
North Kazakhstan	77.5	82.8	100.0	71.4	82.6	150
Turkestan	31.6	48.1	106.1	69.0	62.8	50
East Kazakhstan	67.0	121.4	98.0	104.8	99.8	125
Astana city	152.4	98.5	93.9	183.3	122.3	50
Almaty city	170.0	124.4	104.1	161.9	166.5	175
Shymkent city	53	54.9	104.1	107.1	107.1	100

Note: the abbreviations are the same as in Table 5.

Table 7

Identification of key socio-economic factors affecting the attractiveness of the regions of Kazakhstan for migration

Regions	GRP per capita	AAI per capita	UR	PWD per 10,000 people	ASPNH, per m ²	RSDLM
Akmola	Low	Low	Average	Very low	Average	Very high
Aktobe	Low	Low	Average	High	Low	High
Almaty	Very low	Very low	Average	Very low	Low	Very low
Atyrau	Very high	Very high	Average	Low	Average	Very low
West Kazakhstan	High	Low	Average	Low	Low	Very low
Zhambyl	Very low	Very low	Average	Low	Low	Very low
Karaganda	High	Average	Low	High	Average	Very high
Kostanay	Low	Low	Average	Very low	Very low	Very high
Kyzylorda	Very low	Very low	Average	Low	Very low	Very low
Mangistau	High	High	Average	Low	Very low	Very low
Pavlodar	High	Average	Average	Average	Low	High
North Kazakhstan	Low	Low	Average	Low	Low	Very high
Turkestan	Very low	Very low	High	Very low	Very low	Very low
East Kazakhstan	Very low	High	Average	Average	Average	High
Astana city	Very high	Average	Low	Very high	High	Very low
Almaty city	Very high	High	Average	Very high	Very high	Very high
Shymkent city	Very low	Very low	Average	High	High	Average

Note: the abbreviations are the same as in Table 5 and Table 6.

Kazakhstan offers tax incentives for companies investing in less developed regions, including reduced corporate income tax rates as low as 0% for up to ten years. These incentives apply to both local and foreign businesses that meet investment thresholds and long-term operational commitments while adhering to environmental and social regulations. Kazakhstan's regions are classified by migration activity coefficients: attractive regions (coefficient >1) experience a net influx of migrants, such as Almaty and Astana; retaining regions (coefficient ≈ 1) have balanced migration flows; and repulsive regions (coefficient <1) see a net outflow, often facing lower economic opportunities and underdeveloped infrastructure. The Shymkent Development Program for 2021–2025 aims to improve Shymkent's socioeconomic conditions through investments in infrastructure and education. The program has successfully improved infrastructure and boosted economic activity, contributing to reduced regional inequalities and better living standards.

Migration activity coefficients classify Kazakhstan's regions into three types, revealing differences in development and migration patterns. Attractive regions, with a coefficient greater than 1, see a net influx of migrants. Major cities like Almaty and Astana exemplify this category, offering robust job opportunities, high living standards, and advanced infrastructure. These factors draw individuals from less developed areas in search of better economic prospects and quality of life.

Retaining regions with a coefficient near 1 experience a balance between incoming and outgoing migrants. They provide stable economic opportunities and living conditions but lack the dynamic growth seen in attractive regions. Their infrastructure and public services are functional but less developed, presenting opportunities for growth with targeted investments. Repulsive regions, with a coefficient less than 1, face a net outflow of people. These areas struggle with economic challenges and underdeveloped infrastructure, leading to lower job opportunities and living standards. Improving these regions requires significant development efforts to enhance economic conditions and infrastructure, potentially reversing negative migration trends.

The data indicates that regions that attract migration, such as Almaty and Shymkent, have high housing costs, balanced by elevated GRP per capita and income levels. Stronger economic opportunities and higher labour market supply/demand ratios in these cities explain their appeal to job-seeking migrants. Shymkent's lower housing prices compared to Astana and Almaty enhance its attractiveness, allowing newcomers to settle more affordably while still benefiting from a vibrant economy and better quality of life. Almaty and Shymkent exhibit higher labour market supply/demand ratios than the national average, indicating their attractiveness for migration. These cities also benefit from the high availability of health workers, further enhancing their appeal. In contrast, regions classified as retaining migration generally display average unemployment rates and high income levels, although the Aktobe region stands out as an exception (Malyarets et al. 2024).

Despite affordable housing prices, regions categorised as “repulsive” in terms of migration, such as Turkestan, Zhambyl, Kyzylorda, Karaganda, and Kostanay, typically experience low levels of economic development. Notably, the Atyrau region is an anomaly, as it has high housing costs alongside high average per capita incomes and GRP per capita. Turkestan and Zhambyl are particularly unattractive for migration, as they rank low across most socio-economic indicators, including GRP and wages, while also experiencing high labour surpluses and a lack of sufficient health workers. This comparison of socio-economic development indicators by region type highlights the distinct migration dynamics at play, emphasizing the need for targeted policies to enhance the attractiveness of less favoured areas.

Recommendations for effective regulation of internal migration in Kazakhstan

Upon reviewing international practices in regulating internal migration for Kazakhstan, several key recommendations have been identified that can contribute to the effective management of this process and mitigation of potential negative consequences:

1. International practices, particularly in countries like Canada, highlight the importance of social programmes and integration in maintaining cultural diversity and reducing conflict.
2. Norway's policy on educational programmes for migrants is an example of successful integration through learning. Kazakhstan could introduce analogous programmes focusing on skills development and educational support for migrants.
3. The experience of the European Union countries shows that cooperation with international organisations in regulating migration can be very effective. Kazakhstan can intensify cooperation with such organisations to share experience and receive support in creating balanced and effective measures.
4. Effective state regulation and legislation aimed at protecting migrants' rights and combating discrimination is an essential aspect of migration management. Kazakhstan could strengthen efforts to create a transparent and fair system of rights and obligations for migrants.
5. An analysis of economic programmes in Canada and Norway indicates the importance of economic incentives and financial support for regions attracting migrants. Kazakhstan can develop innovative approaches to creating a sustainable labour force, such as tax incentives and financial programs.

Some regions are already implementing social adaptation programs for migrants, which could expand to include language courses and cultural adaptation measures to enhance integration. Existing educational initiatives can be adapted to include specialized programs to train skilled personnel that meet labour market needs. This will help to increase the employment rate among migrants and ensure their effective integration into the economy.

Enhancing cooperation with international organizations, particularly through experience exchange programs, could enhance Kazakhstan's current migration regulation mechanisms. Another important area for improving existing initiatives is strengthening state regulation and legal protection of migrants to ensure a fair system of rights and obligations for all migrants. Considering these recommendations, Kazakhstan can develop a balanced approach to regulating internal migration, factoring in its specific features and international best practices.

Discussion

Migration within a country affects the demographic structure of different regions. As migrants move to some regions, it can contribute to population growth. In other regions, the departure of migrants can result in a population decline. These changes can affect the age composition of the population, fertility, and mortality rates in different regions. Sustainable migration management should factor in these demographic changes and predict their impact on regional development

(Koslowski 2000). Germany, for instance, faces an ageing population, and migration has become one way to compensate for the loss of the working-age population (Population in transition: assumptions and results of the 14th coordinated population projection 2019). On the other hand, countries like India are facing the challenges of rapid population growth in some regions, and they are taking measures to distribute labour and develop local labour markets. As a result, the main problems associated with internal migration include uneven regional development, problems of migrant integration, and demographic challenges. To address these problems, integrated approaches are needed, including measures for balanced regional development, socio-cultural integration, and consideration of demographic changes. The development and implementation of such measures will enable countries to better manage internal migration and ensure sustainable development.

Brochmann–Hammar (2020) discuss the role of international cooperation in the context of regulating internal migration with a focus on the experience of the European Union countries. The researchers emphasise the importance of cooperation, especially within the framework of the pact on migration and asylum, exploring the impact of joint efforts on combating irregular migration. In their study, the authors focus on the experience of the European Union countries, highlighting key points and the importance of interaction. They indicate that information exchange and the principle of solidarity play an important role in the development and implementation of measures to combat irregular migration. The authors present examples of successful cooperation between European Union countries, where information exchange and interaction on migration and asylum issues have contributed to the joint adoption and implementation of strategies to prevent various problems. This exchange of practices and information has enabled countries to develop more effective measures and solutions, leading to a more solidarity-based approach to the complex problems associated with irregular migration. The findings of the cited study, like the present study, emphasise the significance of international cooperation but focus on different methods and strategies that can be applied to manage internal migration in the context of unique needs and challenges in different regions or countries.

Brell et al. (2020) raise issues related to the regulation of internal migration through legislation and state action. They address measures aimed at protecting the rights of migrants in the labour market and analyse the operation of legislation such as the Equality Directive and the Anti-Discrimination Directive, considering them as instruments aimed at preventing discrimination and ensuring the protection of migrants' rights. The focus on concrete directives emphasises their importance in creating a framework that guarantees legal rights and equal opportunities for all workers, regardless of their migration status. Compared to the findings of the present study, where the focus is on economic mechanisms and a comprehensive approach to regulating internal migration, the cited study emphasises the key role of legal

instruments and their impact on ensuring equal conditions for migrants in the labour market. Both studies present important aspects of internal migration, but they focus on different aspects of this complex process.

Monras (2018) raises a critical issue related to demographic challenges arising from internal migration. The researcher focuses on the impact of changes in the demographic structure of regions on their development, examining how changes in the size, age structure, and composition of the population affect the socio-economic development of regions. The researcher proposes strategies to consider these demographic changes in shaping migration management policies. This involves the development of approaches to forecasting demographic changes as well as the creation of mechanisms for adapting migration policy according to the real dynamics of population changes in the regions. Such a study provides important recommendations for developing flexible and adaptive migration management policies that consider demographic factors and their impact on regional development. The researcher focuses on demographic dynamics and its impact on migration management policies, which complements aspects of economic instruments in migration flow management.

Erdelen–Richardson (2020) address the social aspects of migration management and consider their significance for migrants' successful adaptation. The researchers highlight the significance of sociocultural integration of newcomers into society and show important measures aimed at ensuring harmonious social integration of migrants. Special attention was paid to measures such as cultural adaptation and language programmes that improve communication and language acquisition in the country of arrival. The researchers highlight the importance of these programmes in providing migrants with the necessary skills and knowledge to enable them to successfully integrate into their new environment and better integrate into local society. It is also worth adding that socio-cultural integration has a long-term impact on society. It promotes harmonious multiculturalism, an open and inclusive environment, and the strengthening of socio-cultural ties between migrants and the local population. Supporting integration measures such as cultural adaptation and language programmes can go a long way towards reducing cultural barriers and promoting understanding, tolerance, and respect for differences.

Generally, considering the diversity of factors and aspects important for internal migration management, an effective policy should use a multitude of instruments that span economic, social, cultural, demographic, and legislative spheres (Sadikhov 2024). A comprehensive approach to this problem allows for a more balanced and effective policy that promotes not only migration management but also the sustainable integration of migrants and regional development. An approach that considers the complexity and diversity of factors affecting migration processes can make policies more effective and contribute to the creation of more equitable and sustainable social and economic conditions for all members of society.

Conclusions

The study highlights the critical role of internal migration in modern societies and its significant impact on economic and social dynamics. Various factors such as economic hardship, conflict, and climate change increasingly recognise internal migration as a major issue. The World Migration Report 2022 (2021) underscores the growing trend of people relocating within their countries in search of better security and opportunities. Effective management of these migration flows is essential for maintaining social stability and preventing imbalances.

Financial incentives have emerged as a key tool for managing internal migration. Many countries use subsidies and financial support to attract migrants to underdeveloped regions, enhancing economic activity and labour supply. Additionally, tax incentives for businesses and migrants play a crucial role in stimulating economic growth and investment in these regions. Social programs and integration measures are also critical in facilitating migrants' smooth adaptation. Language courses, cultural adaptation programs, and social support services help migrants integrate into new communities, promoting cultural diversity and interaction between migrants and locals.

Examples of economic instruments used to manage internal migration have been analysed in the context of Kazakhstan. These instruments include the creation of tax incentives for companies investing in less developed regions, as well as development incentive programmes such as the Shymkent Development Programme for 2021–2025. These actions aim to eliminate uneven development and promote more even regional development. Interregional differences in migration processes within Kazakhstan were analysed, coefficients of general internal migration attractiveness and indicators of socio-economic development of the country's regions were calculated. In 13 regions of Kazakhstan in 2022, there is a migration activity coefficient of less than 1, indicating a more frequent departure of people from these regions compared to arrivals. The only region with a coefficient greater than 1 was Almaty. Cities of republican significance also had a coefficient greater than 1, indicating a higher intensity of arrivals to these cities compared to departures.

The study of internal migration and its economic regulation is highly relevant in today's context. Future research should explore how internal migration affects economic growth, social structures, and cultural dynamics across different regions to achieve a comprehensive understanding of its impacts. Emphasizing the use of digital tools for monitoring and analysing migration data, as well as supporting the social and cultural integration of migrants, will improve migration management strategies and provide deeper insights into its broader effects.

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