

MIGRATION OF POPULATION IN THE NORTHERN BORDER REGIONS OF AZERBAIJAN

Purpose. The main purpose of the research work is to study the migration features of the population in the northern border regions of Azerbaijan, to identify existing problems in this area and to identify ways to solve them.

Method. Comparative analysis, attractiveness of the area, statistical methods were used in writing the article. The northern border regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan were chosen as the research object.

Conclusion. Despite the implementation of several state programs from 2004 until now, there is inequality in the socio-economic development of the regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Unlike the Baku-Absheron zone, there are still serious problems in the socio-economic life of the population in other regions. This leads to an increase in unemployment and poverty in the regions, migration of the population to Baku. Since the border regions are of strategic importance for the state, more attention should be paid to the employment of the population in order to keep them on the ground. Taking into account the strategic importance of the border position of the northern border regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the extreme natural conditions in the mountainous area, it is necessary to give certain concessions to the population living here for the sustainable socio-economic development of the border settlements. The creation of certain infrastructures should be carried out directly at the expense of the state, and for their continuous, constant activity, it is advisable to have these enterprises under state control.

Scientific novelty. Demographic development and participation of the population in the migration process in the northern border regions of Azerbaijan were studied. As a result of these studies, it was found that in some settlements, as a result of the decline in natural growth and migration, the population has sharply decreased. The recommendations and suggestions given in the article are important for determining the strategic importance of population settlement in the northern border regions and eliminating existing problems in the field of demographic development.

Keywords: population, border regions, migration, demography. Azerbaijan

Introduction. Border regions have always been of strategic importance for the state, as they are perceived as a potential place of military occupation or a zone of economic and cultural integration of countries. Changes in world politics usually affect the geopolitical position of the country and its relations with neighboring states. Unfortunately, border regions have always been hostages of big politics. Thus, the direction of their development in most cases depended on the interaction between states. In this regard, the study of border regions is of great importance. The area of the northern border districts is 11400 square km, the population is 915.3 thousand people. Of these, 265.8 thousand people (29%) are urban, and 649.5 thousand people (71%) are rural (as of 01.01.2022) [1]. The region covers Sheki, Zagatala, Gakh, Oguz, Gabala, Balakan, Gusar and Khachmaz administrative districts, as well as Sheki and Khachmaz cities of regional importance. Administrative regions, which make up 13.2% of the territory of the Republic and 9% of the population, have their own economic and political-geographical position advantages. The region borders the Russian Federation to the north, and the Republic of Georgia to the northwest.

Method. The scientific works of scientists who conducted research in this field, methodological instructions, as well as the data of the statistics committee, as well as the conclusions of the scientific research conducted by the author, were used in the process of writing the article.

Discussion. Population size is one of the most important demographic indicators. Along with demographic processes, its study is important for solving socio-economic and cultural problems, mastering new territories, and creating production and service facilities. Establishing settlements in border areas and ensuring their development in various directions is one of the most urgent problems of today. Because these areas act as a guarantor of not only geopolitical, but also geomilitary stability. In this regard, we should consider the research work carried out in the areas of development along the border, forms of settlement systems, demographic situation and migration factors, dynamics of economic development and other directions.

An important role in the formation of demographic potential is played by mechanical growth or migration of the population. The negative dynamics of the migration balance is associated with a low level of socio-economic development of the region, which is associated with low incomes and lack of jobs. And the population of working age with certain qualifications and education leaves the country during this period, and the migration process is aggravated [2, pp. 13–24.]. This leads to a significant deterioration in the demographic situation in the region. Because migration among demographic processes is an instant reaction to all political, economic, social and cultural changes taking place in society. And those who

participate in the migration process, after a while, receive the right to stay in the country where they are going, which leads to their assimilation with the local population.

“The most important socio-economic function of migration is to ensure the concentration of the population in industrial centers and developed territories and their redistribution in the country. Thus, the migration of the population creates conditions for a more correct and efficient use of the labor force, and an increase in production. However, the impact of migration is controversial. This has a significant impact on the labor market, changes the economic and social situation of the population, and serves to increase education and professional training” [3, p.38)]. The massive influx of migrants affects the reduction of jobs in the region, the provision of social infrastructure (housing and health care), as well as the standard of living of the local population, which leads to their dissatisfaction. All these factors, in turn, are capable of provoking a demographic and economic crisis.

In the first years of independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan, economic crisis, loss of jobs, social tension and so on caused mechanical growth of population, i.e. migration (mainly from villages). The population has flowed both to foreign countries (Russia, Ukraine, European countries, etc.) and to large cities within the country (Baku, Sumgayit, Ganja, etc.), and the number of the young generation has sharply decreased, mainly in the villages. In this process, the northern border regions of Azerbaijan were not excluded and the population intensively participated in migration processes. In the following years, sometimes due to specific reasons, tendencies towards regional centers at the local level have strengthened.

We know that migration, which causes changes in the demographic structure of border regions, leads to serious problems in the region. Because citizens in the age group of 18-30 make up the most migrating part of the population. This causes a noticeable decrease in the growth rate of the local population. Based on the statistical indicators of recent years, population migration in the northern border regions was investigated by us. The study also took into account the natural population growth over the corresponding years. Migration indicators in the Republic of Azerbaijan and the northern border regions during 2011-2020 were completely different. If the balance of migration received a positive value in all periods of the Republic of Azerbaijan, although the natural growth trend of the population in the northern border regions was positive, in some years the migration was negative and a constant decrease was observed (table 1). As can be seen from the table, the migration balance in other administrative regions, except Gusar and Balakan regions, has been negative in the region over the 10 years we have studied. Khachmaz administrative region was the most affected by migration. 1495 people migrated here during 10 years. The largest population increase was in Gusar administrative district (509 people). During 2011-2020, the largest population migration in the northern border regions was 859 people in 2011 (table 2). As can be seen from Table 2, migration in the northern border regions of Azerbaijan had a positive balance only in 2018, 2019, 2020. The largest population increase in the region was 242 people in 2020.

Table 1.

Natural population growth and migration in the northern border regions of Azerbaijan (2011-2020), thousand people.

Regions	2011-2020		
	Overall growth thousand people	Natural growth (2011-2020) person	Migration balance person
Balakan	8,5	8464	36
Zagatala	10,2	10388	-188
Gakh	3,6	3647	-47
Sheki	15,6	16566	-966
Oghuz	4,1	4519	-419
Gabala	13,1	13350	-250
Gusar	10,4	9891	509
Khachmaz	19,1	20595	-1495
Northern border regions of Azerbaijan	84,6	87420	-2820
Republic of Azerbaijan	1008,0	994085	13915

Source: Demographic indicators of Azerbaijan.[4, pp. 83-84]

Table 2. Natural population growth and migration in the northern border regions of Azerbaijan (2011-2020).

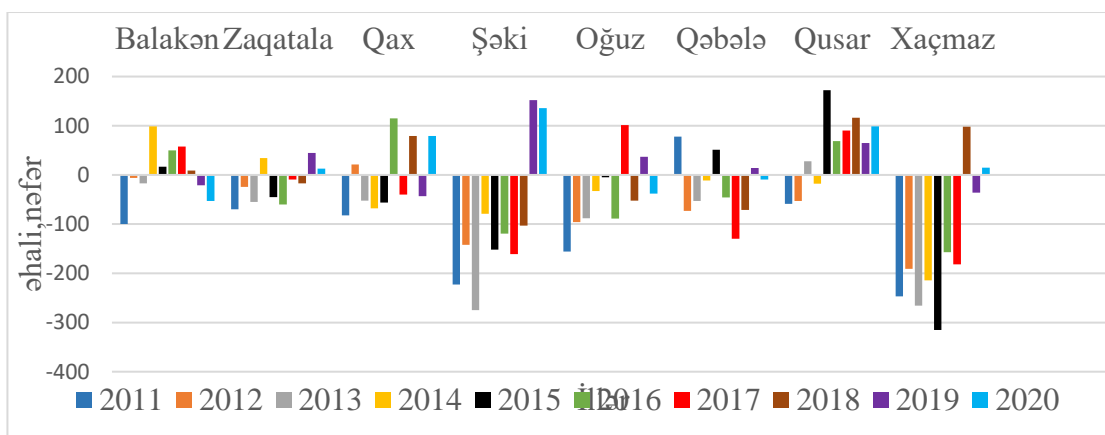
Regions	2011			2012			2013			2014		
	Overall growth thousand people	Natural growth (person)	Migration balance person	Overall growth thousand people	Natural growth (person)	Migration balance person	Overall growth thousand people	Natural growth (person)	Migration balance person	Overall growth thousand people	Natural growth (person)	Migration balance person
Balakan	1,0	1100	-100	0,9	906	-6	0,8	817	-17	1,1	1001	99
Zagatala	1,0	1070	-70	1,1	1124	-24	1,0	1055	-55	1,3	1266	34
Gakh	0,2	282	-82	0,4	379	21	0,3	352	-52	0,4	468	-68
Sheki	2,2	2423	-223	1,8	1942	-142	1,6	1875	-275	1,9	1979	-79
Oghuz	0,4	556	-156	0,4	496	-96	0,4	488	-88	0,5	533	-33
Gabala	1,6	1522	78	1,4	1473	-73	1,4	1453	-53	1,5	1511	-11
Gusar	1,2	1259	-59	1,0	1053	-53	1,1	1072	28	1,2	1218	-18
Khachmaz	2,4	2647	-247	2,3	2491	-191	2,2	2466	-266	2,2	2414	-214
Northern border regions of Azerbaijan (total)	10,0	10859	-859	9,3	9864	-564	8,8	9578	-778	10,1	10390	-290
Republic of Azerbaijan	124,0	122310	1690	121,4	119452	1948	120,6	118288	2312	115,9	114855	1045

Regions	2015			2016			2017			2018		
	Overall growth thousand people	Natural growth (person)	Migration balance person	Overall growth thousand people	Natural growth (person)	Migration balance person	Overall growth thousand people	Natural growth (person)	Migration balance person	Overall growth thousand people	Natural growth (person)	Migration balance person
Balakan	1,0	983	17	0,9	850	50	0,8	742	58	0,7	691	9
Zagatala	1,1	1145	-45	1,1	1160	-60	0,9	909	-9	0,9	917	-17
Gakh	0,4	456	-56	0,5	385	115	0,4	440	-40	0,4	321	79
Sheki	1,7	1852	-152	1,5	1619	-119	1,2	1361	-161	1,2	1303	-103
Oghuz	0,5	505	-5	0,4	489	-89	0,5	399	101	0,3	352	-52
Gabala	1,5	1449	51	1,4	1446	-46	1,1	1230	-130	1,1	1171	-71
Gusar	1,3	1128	172	1,1	1031	69	1,0	910	90	0,9	784	116
Khachmaz	1,9	2215	-315	1,7	1857	-157	1,5	1682	-182	1,8	1702	98
Northern border regions of Azerbaijan (total)	9,4	9733	-333	8,6	8837	-237	7,4	7673	-273	7,3	7241	59
Republic of Azerbaijan	112,6	111513	1087	104,4	102816	1584	88,1	86932	1168	83,4	81732	1668

Regions	2019			2020		
	Overall growth thousand people	Natural growth (person)	Migration balance person	Overall growth thousand people	Natural growth (person)	Migration balance person
Balakan	0,8	821	-21	0,5	553	-53
Zagatala	1,1	1055	45	0,7	687	13
Gakh	0,3	343	-43	0,3	221	79
Sheki	1,5	1348	152	1,0	864	136
Oghuz	0,4	363	37	0,3	338	-38
Gabala	1,2	1186	14	0,9	909	-9
Gusar	0,9	835	65	0,7	601	99
Khachmaz	1,7	1736	-36	1,4	1385	15
Northern border regions of Azerbaijan (total)	7,9	7687	213	5,8	5558	242
Republic of Azerbaijan	85,6	85263	337	52,0	50924	1076

Source: Demographic indicators of Azerbaijan. [4, pp. 83-84.]

Despite the constant decrease of migration in the northern border regions of Azerbaijan during the studied years, these indicators differ by administrative regions. Although natural growth in Balakan, Zagatala, Sheki, Oghuz, Gabala, Khachmaz regions during 2011-2020 was high, there was no increase in the total number of population, and even in some years it was subject to a decrease. The decrease was more and more intense in Khachmaz and Sheki regions. The highest negative indicator of the migration balance was -315 people in Khachmaz administrative district in 2015, and the positive indicator was 172 people in Gusar administrative district in the same year. This can be seen more clearly in graph 1.



Source: Demographic indicators of Azerbaijan. [4].

Graph 1. Migration balance on the northern border regions of Azerbaijan, person

In certain periods, the reduction of the role of the state led to the emergence of economic and socio-demographic differences in the structure of rural areas. Population and productive forces began to gather mainly in favorable areas with developed infrastructure and also around large enterprises. [5 pp. 148-152] The intensity of the migration flow in rural areas depends on the remoteness of the villages from the district centers [6, pp. 64-76.]. Nowadays, rural areas are experiencing a systemic crisis characterized by demographic and socio-economic problems. As a result of the migration of the population to the city, negative trends are observed in the settlement of rural areas. The number of the rural population is decreasing, rural settlements are being emptied, land is being removed from agricultural use, the number of abandoned houses and private land is increasing, social-infrastructure areas are closing and falling apart. (7.pp.160-164.) One of the main causes of migration is the sharp difference between the city and the countryside. This includes the level of employment of the population, the difference in income, opportunities for education, the quality of health care, housing and communal services, etc. [8, pp. 501-522]. The rural population is more likely to migrate in order to improve their living conditions and get a job. This leads to a decrease in the population in some villages. For example, during the years 1999-2009, based on the population census materials, the number of people in the villages of Gakh Ingloi (345 people), Aghayazi (131 people), Ilisu (104 people), Alibeyli (101 people) etc. in Gakh district, in the villages Sheki (304 people), Dashuz (104 people), Sarija (98 people), Kahrizoba (76 people) etc. in Sheki, in the villages Dardoggaz (263 people), Gazangul (67 people), Gargay (37 people) and other villages in Zagatala district decreased. The factors that lead to population migration are diverse and multifaceted. Especially the young generation migrates to increase their job opportunities and realize themselves due to the economic situation. This in itself causes a “brain drain” from the country [9]. But “as labor migration is usually temporary, most of the migrants return to their home country after some time” [10, pp. 9-20]. For example, in our research region, returnees were mostly observed in Gusar in 2015-2020, Balakan in 2014-2018, and Shaki in 2019-2020. During those years, the migration balance of these administrative regions was positive. The reason for this is the adoption and implementation of state programs on the socio-economic development of the regions continuously after 2004, the creation of new jobs in places, the improvement of social security and other factors. The return of the population weakened the emigration process in those regions. A certain part of the population is actively involved in the migration process in the northern border regions of Azerbaijan. As we know, border regions as an important contact zone have a positive impact on socio-economic development. However, the migration of the population from these territories directly affects the national security of the region, as well as the country. To prevent this, a national concept or strategy in the field of

population migration should be developed. Because demographic security is a set of processes that ensure the geopolitical interests of the state. These processes in themselves affect the territorial integrity and national security of the country.

Conclusion. Population migration is a subsystem of demographic indicators, and migration policy is developed based on it. The Republic of Azerbaijan has prepared laws, rules and programs in this direction and is implementing them. Examples include State Migration Program (July 25, 2006), establishment of State Migration Service (March 19, 2007), Labor Migration Quota Determination (June 4, 2009), Migration Code (July 9, 2013), however, it could not play an auxiliary role in solving the problem in these border regions. In this direction, new projects related to the special migration regime should be prepared with the support of the state and the assistance of scientists. Only in this case it will be possible to stabilize the migration flow.

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