

DEMOGRAPHIC DYNAMICS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS IN GOVLAR CITY

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<https://doi.org/10.30546/209805.2025.2.2.1120>

Abstract

Tovuz District, situated in the western part of the Republic of Azerbaijan, holds a strategically important position in the country's interregional economic and transportation networks. Within this district, the town of Govlar has experienced substantial development over the past decades, particularly with regard to urbanization processes and dynamic population growth. This study seeks to conduct a comprehensive analysis of Govlar's socio-economic conditions, with a primary focus on demographic patterns, labour resources, and their structural composition. The findings highlight the critical role of agriculture, which remains the dominant employment sector, complemented by growing service and industrial sectors. Additionally, the study examines the impacts of infrastructural improvements, educational institutions, and vocational training centers on enhancing the quality and stability of the local labour market. Emphasis is placed on identifying current challenges such as seasonal unemployment, infrastructure constraints, and demographic shifts, while also proposing recommendations for sustainable urban planning and socio-economic development. The research concludes that further state and private sector collaboration, coupled with the strategic engagement of international donor organizations, could significantly accelerate Govlar's regional development and improve overall living standards for its residents.

Keywords: urbanization, demographic development, labor resources, economically active population, employed population, unemployment.

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Introduction:

Socio-economic factors play a fundamental role in the formation and development of cities. Among these factors, the varying pace of industrial development in the country's historically established settlements has had a significant impact on either strengthening or weakening the economic base of cities. In most Azerbaijani cities, the economic foundation has been shaped by enterprises in the light and food industries, operating primarily on the basis of local raw materials.

It is well known that the absolute number of urban residents in the republic continues to increase steadily. Population growth is closely associated with the expansion of existing enterprises and the establishment of new production facilities aimed at cultural and domestic needs. However, regional cities in the republic do not develop at a uniform rate, which results in their relatively minor contribution to the total volume of industrial output.

In order to improve the current (socio-economic) level of development of Azerbaijani cities and to regulate the spatial distribution of settlements, it is essential to align their economic and social foundations with the existing and prospective demographic potential.

The regulation of urban settlement geo-demographic conditions and development in the city of Govlar constitutes an integral part of the sustainable socio-economic policy pursued in the country. The necessity of studying the demographic conditions of cities arises in order to ensure a more efficient territorial organization of production and population in the region. Geo-demographic conditions reflect the natural dynamics of the population, as well as the patterns of its structure and spatial distribution.

The population of Govlar has been increasing rapidly. As a result of both natural and migration growth, the increase in population and the subsequent changes in the gender-age and occupational composition have exacerbated demographic challenges in the city. The cities of the region are unable to fully meet the needs of the growing population, which leads to problems such as unemployment, deficiencies in infrastructure services, housing shortages, environmental degradation, income inequality, and rising social stratification. Similar to other global cities, these issues are also observed in Govlar.

According to statistical data for 2024, the most intensive urbanization process has occurred in Govlar. In order to address the emerging problems in the demographic development of urban settlements, it is essential to conduct scientific analyses and, based on the results, to design and implement action plans at the state level.

Materials and Methods. The demographic development characteristics of the urban population in Azerbaijan and the influencing factors have been studied by scholars such as A.M. Hacızade, Sh.G. Demirqayaev, N.H. Ayyubov, V.A. Afandiyev, Z.N. Eminov, S.G. Nagiyev, E.S. Badalov, among others. The statistical basis of this research consists of census data collected over various years, along with statistical indicators from recent years (2020–2023). To achieve the objectives of the study, a range of methods and approaches were employed, including statistical analysis, comparison, evaluation, and generalization techniques.

Analysis and Discussion. The city of Govlar is located in the western part of Azerbaijan, within the territory of the Tovuz district, near the Tovuz River, along the Baku-Tbilisi highway and railway line. Situated approximately 5 kilometers east of the Tovuz district center, the city occupies a strategically favorable position in terms of transportation and logistics. Govlar presents a unique blend of natural beauty, historical heritage, and modern development. Its geographic location enhances its role as a transportation hub, with both the Ganja-Gazakh highway and railway line contributing to the expansion of transport links. This geographical advantage has increased Govlar's importance in trade, the transportation of agricultural products, and other economic activities.

Various theories exist regarding the name and history of the city. Some sources suggest that "Govlar" derives from ancient Turkic languages and translates as "source of water" or "place near the river."

On March 7, 2012, by decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Govlar was elevated from settlement to city status. Today, it stands as the second-largest city in Tovuz district in terms of population and economic potential.

Govlar plays a significant role in the region due to both its geographical location and its socio-economic infrastructure. The natural and climatic conditions of the area offer favorable opportunities for agricultural activities.

Population indicators are among the primary criteria for assessing the economic and social development potential of a settlement. In recent years, Govlar has experienced considerable population growth, reaching 28,000 residents in 2024.

According to the dynamics of natural population growth, the high proportion of young people in the city suggests a forthcoming increase in the labor force. The age and gender distribution of the population is balanced, thereby ensuring a stable influx of workforce into the local labor market.

Table 1:

Age and Gender Distribution of the Population of Govlar City

AGE GROUP	MALES	FEMALES	TOTAL
0-14 years	1,500	1,400	2,900
15-64 years	4,000	3,800	7,800
65+ years	600	700	1300
Total	6,100	5,900	12,000

Source: Demographic Indicators of Azerbaijan, Baku: State Statistics Committee, 2024.

Labour resources are determined by the economically active population and their employment status. In Govlar, the working-age population is primarily concentrated within the 15–64 age group.

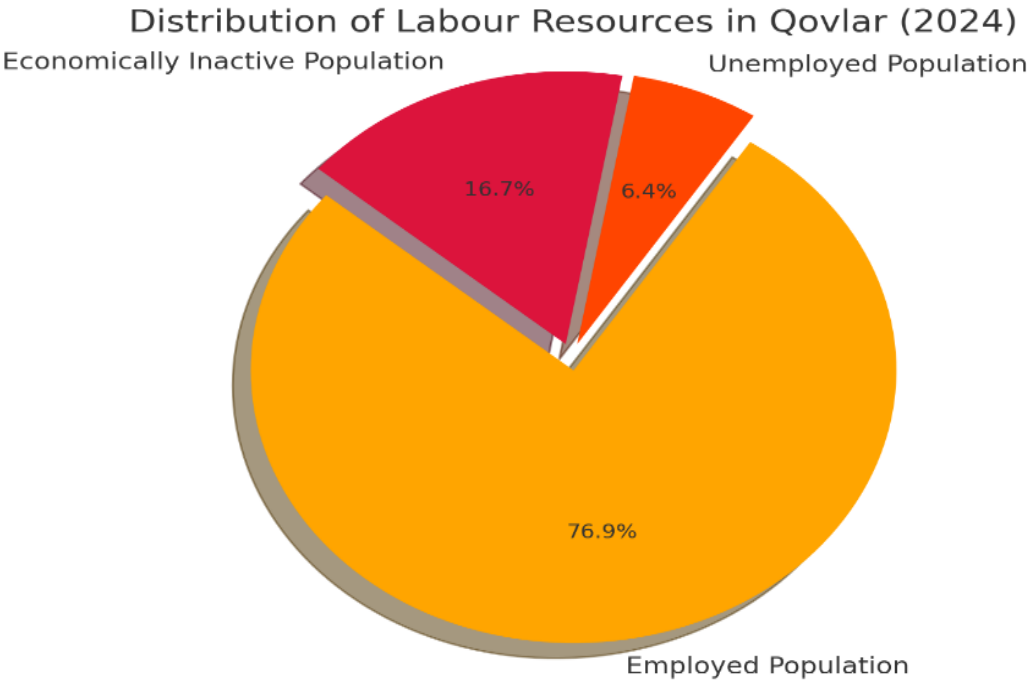
Table 2:

Structure of Labour Resources (2024)

INDICATOR	NUMBER
Working-age population	7,800
Economically active population	6,500
Employed population	6,000
Unemployed population	500
Economically inactive population	1,300

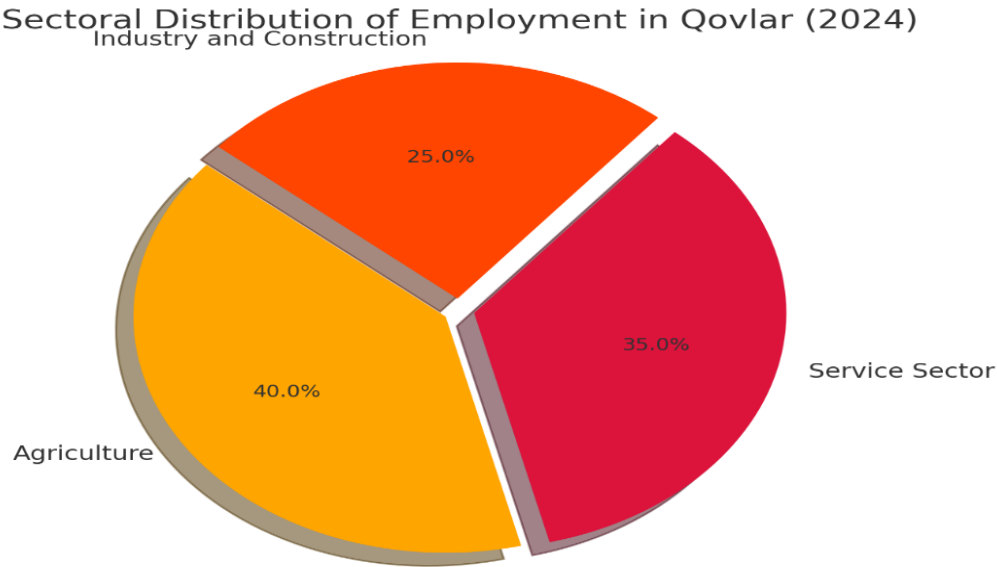
Source: Demographic Indicators of Azerbaijan, Baku: State Statistics Committee, 2024

Chart 1.



In Govlar, the labour force is primarily engaged in agriculture, services, industry, and construction sectors. Approximately 40% of the population is directly involved in agricultural activities. Vegetable and fruit cultivation dominate the crop production sector. Additionally, animal husbandry represents one of the leading areas of the local economy.

Chart 2.



Household farms play a significant role in shaping the labour market and represent one of the main sources of informal employment. The seasonality of labour resources is primarily determined by the cyclical nature of agricultural activities. The majority of registered unemployed individuals in Govlar are seasonal job seekers.

The city of Govlar has largely developed in line with an agrarian economic model within the economic system of the Tovuz district. The agricultural lands surrounding the city are highly fertile, which allows for both the satisfaction of domestic demand and the development of export potential. The development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), the introduction of modern technologies, and the support of farming enterprises have contributed positively to reducing unemployment levels in the region.

Labour resources in Govlar are mainly concentrated in physically demanding sectors. In addition to agriculture, the city is home to processing and industrial enterprises. These include food processing, the production of construction materials, and small-scale industrial facilities. These enterprises not only contribute to the city's economic growth but also play an important role in increasing employment levels among the population.

One of the key quality indicators of labour resources is the level of education. The presence of educational institutions in Govlar has a positive impact on the labour market. Local schools and vocational training centers play an essential role in shaping the city's workforce. Interest in education among the population continues to grow, which will facilitate the attraction of more educated and skilled workers to the city's economy in the future.

In addition to the general education schools operating in Govlar, vocational education institutions located in nearby Tovuz contribute significantly to the acquisition of technical and technological skills among young people. If vocational training is restructured to meet labour market demands, it will help develop a modern and qualified workforce in the region. The level of infrastructure development is a major factor directly influencing the attractiveness of labour resources. In Govlar, key communal services—including gas supply, electricity, drinking water provision, and telecommunications—are fully established. The improvement of the transport infrastructure strengthens the economic integration of Govlar with Tovuz and surrounding settlements. The city also offers basic healthcare services, preschool facilities, and cultural institutions.

In recent years, interest in entrepreneurship has increased. The local population has become actively involved in small business activities, positively influencing the economic environment in Govlar. With state and organizational support, farming and manufacturing enterprises are expanding, leading to higher employment levels and a gradual decrease in unemployment.

One of the main directions for the further development of labour resources in Govlar is the expansion of agriculture and the processing industry. The introduction of modern technologies and the establishment of new production facilities are essential in this regard. With greater investment in these areas, it would be possible to create new jobs and improve working conditions for the population. Accordingly, the implementation of infrastructure projects, support for small entrepreneurship, and the efficient use of labour resources are planned in Govlar. Cooperation between the state and private sectors, as well as the involvement of international donor organizations, could further accelerate regional development.

Conclusion:

The findings and recommendations derived from the study of urban settlement patterns and demographic development trends in Govlar can be summarized as follows:

- Govlar is one of the strategically important settlements in the Tovuz district in terms of labour resources.
- Agriculture, the processing industry, and entrepreneurship play vital roles in the development of this potential. Further strengthening of these sectors in the future will significantly contribute to the city's economic development and the well-being of its population.
- The dynamic population structure, agricultural-based economic potential, and existing infrastructure reinforce the prospects for the city's future development.
- Efficient management of labour resources, the advancement of vocational training systems, []and the support of local entrepreneurship can create a foundation for sustainable socio-economic development in Govlar.
- Considering the region's economic potential, the creation of new industrial zones, the further development of existing industrial areas, and the integration of surrounding villages into the city's infrastructure represent key priorities.
- The development of service sectors based on the city's tourism and recreational resources should be promoted to create new employment opportunities.
- Healthy, modern, safe, and sustainable urban planning practices must be implemented in Govlar.

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