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CURRENT URBAN MIGRATION DYNAMICS IN ALMATY: A SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF INTERNAL MIGRANTS

This study aims to analyze the socio-demographic profile of internal migrants residing in Almaty. The main goal of the study is to identify socio-demographic characteristics of internal migrants, such as gender, education level, age group, nationality and marital status. To achieve this goal, the data provided by the Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency for Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan (BNS APR RK) from 2017 to 2022 and data from the scientific project IRN AR 09058370 "Social integration of internal migrants in the local community of large cities: social networks, social capital and urban space development" under the leadership of S.S. Serikzhanova were used.

The study applied proportional analysis conducted in Statistical Analysis System (SAS), using a frequency table and a summary procedure. The analysis involved examining the distribution of categorical variables to determine the relative frequencies or proportions of each category in the dataset.

The significant finding of the analysis indicates that a substantial majority of internal migrants are female who belong to the Kazakh nationality and are of working age. Furthermore, it reveals that most of these female migrants have a higher education level and are married. The predominant trend among these female migrants is their origin from rural areas.

The study's findings hold practical significance for future research in the field of internal migration, including its dynamics, trends, and the social integration of internal migrants into urban society. Additionally, the results provide valuable insights into the social processes within the city, such as the spatial and socio-demographic transformations.

Key words: internal migration, Kazakhstan, sociodemographic portrait, urban society transformation.

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Алматыдағы қазіргі қалалық көші-қон динамикасы: ішкі мигранттардың әлеуметтік демографиялық талдауы

Бұл зерттеу Алматы қаласында тұратын ішкі мигранттардың әлеуметтік-демографиялық профилін талдауға бағытталған. Зерттеудің негізгі мақсатты ішкі мигранттардың жынысы, білім деңгейі, жас тобы, ұлты және отбасылық жағдайы сияқты әлеуметтік-демографиялық ерекшеліктерін анықтау болып табылады. Бұл мақсатқа жету үшін Қазақстан Республикасы Жоспарлау және реформалар агенттігінің Ұлттық статистика бюросының (ҚР БНЖ ҰСБ) 2017-2022 жылдар аралығындағы деректері пайдаланылды. Және «Ірі қалалардың жергілікті қауымдастығына ішкі мигранттардың әлеуметтік интеграциясы: әлеуметтік желілер, әлеуметтік капитал және қалалық кеңістікті дамыту» ғылыми жобасының деректері пайдаланылды.

Зерттеу жиілік кестесін және жиынтық процедураны пайдаланып Statistical Analysis System (SAS) орындалған пропорционалды талдауды қолданды. Бұл талдау деректер жиынындағы әрбір санаттың салыстырмалы жиіліктерін немесе пропорцияларын анықтау үшін категориялық айнымалылардың таралуын зерттеуді қамтиды.

Талдау нәтижелері еңбекке қабілетті жастағы, ұлты қазақ, жоғары білімі бар, үйленген, ауылдан көшіп келген әйелдердің басым екенін көрсетеді.

Бұл зерттеудің нәтижелері ішкі көші-қон, оның динамикасы мен тенденциялары, сондай-ақ ішкі көшіп-қонушылардың қалалық қоғамға әлеуметтік интеграциясы және Алматыдағы әлеуметтік процестерді, мысалы, кеңістіктік және әлеуметтік-тұрмыстық қатынастарды түсіну саласындағы одан әрі зерттеулер үшін практикалық маңызды болып табылады. -қаланың демографиялық трансформациясы.

Түйін сөздер: ішкі көші-қон, Қазақстан, ішкі мигранттың әлеуметтік-демографиялық портреті, қалалық трансформация.

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**Современная динамика городской миграции в Алматы:
социодемографический анализ внутренних мигрантов**

Данное исследование направлено на анализ социо-демографического профиля внутренних мигрантов, проживающих в городе Алматы. Основной целью исследования являются определение социо-демографических характеристик внутренних мигрантов, таких как пол, уровень образования, возрастная группа, национальность и семейное положение. Для ее достижения были использованы данные, предоставленные Бюро Национальной Статистики Агентства по Планированию и Реформам Республики Казахстан (БНС АПР РК) с 2017 по 2022 гг. и данные научного проекта ИРН АР 09058370 «Социальная интеграция внутренних мигрантов в местное сообщество крупных городов: социальные сети, социальный капитал и освоение городского пространства» под руководством С.С. Серикжановой.

В рамках исследования был применен пропорциональный анализ, проведенный в Statistical Analysis System (SAS), с использованием таблицы частот и процедурой сводки. Данный анализ предполагает изучение распределения категориальных переменных для определения относительных частот или пропорций каждой категории в наборе данных.

Результаты анализа демонстрируют превалирующее количество женщин-мигрантов трудоспособного возраста, казахской национальности, имеющих высшее образование, состоящих в браке, преимущественно мигрирующих из сельской местности.

Результаты данного исследования имеют практическую значимость для дальнейших исследований в области внутренней миграции, ее динамики и тенденции, также социальной интеграции внутренних мигрантов в городское общество и понимание социальных процессов в Алматы, таких как пространственная и социо-демографическая трансформация города.

Ключевые слова: внутренняя миграция, Казахстан, социально-демографический портрет внутреннего мигранта, трансформация городского общества.

Introduction

Historically, Almaty has experienced significant migration flow since its establishment as military fortification in 1854. The influx of migrants led to the expansion of the city's borders and the vast development of its infrastructure. This growth bolstered the city's industrial potential, attracting more economically active individuals from other regions of Kazakhstan. By 1982, Almaty's population had exceeded one million inhabitants, often colloquially referred to as a 'millionaire' city (Fig.1). After the collapse of the Soviet Union, there were significant shifts in migration dynamics and migration patterns. According to Zabirova (2002), the introduction of new capitalist agrarian reforms in 1990s resulted in a noticeable internal migration of Kazakhs from rural to urban areas. This migration trend attributed to the decline of the socio-economic significance of rural communities, prompting individuals to seek better opportunities and living conditions in big cities. (Zhussupova, Kenesov, 2012). Along with rural-urban migration pattern, interregional migration flows had also accelerated after the collapse of Soviet Union. As stated by Yessimova and Valitova (2017), this migration pattern is driven by employment prospects and access to higher education opportunities in big cities.

Almaty, as a major urban area, is a focal point for the large domestic and international investments which helps accumulate economic growth and development of the city. This circumstance attracts internal migrants seeking better prospects in job opportunities and living conditions. Moreover, Almaty's reputation as a prominent educational center plays a pivotal role in attracting young people from rural areas and other regions of the country. The presence of reputable universities and research institutions allows students to access quality education and training, further fueling the influx of young people to the city (Makhmutova, 2012). Serikzhanova's (2012) research confirms this fact that Almaty, as the country's largest city, has attracted a significant number of internal migrants in recent years due to its improved healthcare facilities, higher standard of living, and access to education and employment opportunities.
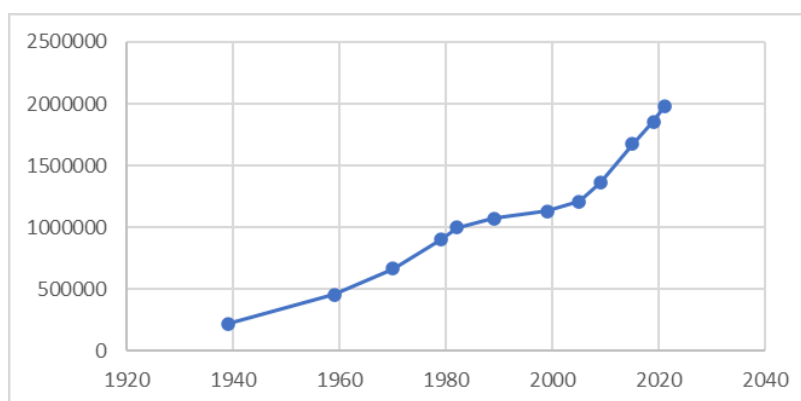
Figure 1 – Population dynamics in Almaty (people). (BNS, 1939-2021)

The factors discussed above focus on the motives and implications of internal migration on migrants themselves. However, it is essential to acknowledge that the influx of migrants also contributes significantly to the social, economic, and cultural development of the accepting city. As Zabirova (2002) suggests, migration functions as impetus for introducing new characteristics and attributes that influence not only the urban spatial structure of the city but also its sociocultural development. Therefore, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the impact of internal migration on the urban area and society, it is crucial to explore not only its conceptual foundations, but also the regions involved and the sociodemographic characteristics of the internal migrants (Serikzhanova, 2022). The sociodemographic attributes of internal migrants, such as age, education level, gender, ethnicity, and marital status play a pivotal role in shaping their necessities and preferences for urban spaces. These factors also influence their interactions with the city's society, shaping the dynamics of urban sociocultural development. To understand the complexity of migration patterns, settlement choices, and the integration process within the city, it is imperative to identify the sociodemographic portrait of modern internal migrants (Kliuev, 2015). The observational inquiry or study will explain on the distribution of migrants across different age groups, educational backgrounds, gender ratios, ethnicities, and marital statuses.

Justification of the choice of article and goals and objectives

The existing body of literature has indeed addressed certain aspects of internal migration to Almaty, delineating the challenges migrants encounter, such as housing issues, job scarcity, and limited access to essential services (Zhussupova & Kenesov, 2012; Makhmutova, 2012). However, a noticeable research gap remains, as comprehensive studies describing the sociodemographic profile of internal migrants in Almaty are scarce. The aim of this article is to contribute valuable knowledge into the sociodemographic characteristics of the migrant population in Almaty. By focusing on key sociodemographic variables, including age, education level, gender, ethnicity, and marital status, the study aims to provide a detailed picture of the internal migrant community in Almaty. Understanding the distribution of migrants across different age groups and their educational backgrounds will be instrumental in comprehending the implications of their arrival on the labor market and the overall economic landscape of the city. Additionally, examining the gender composition and marital status of internal migrants will clarify on how family dynamics and support systems play a role in their settlement and integration process within the urban environment. Moreover, exploring the diverse ethnic backgrounds of internal migrants will offer valuable insights into the cultural diversity they bring to Almaty. This investigation will help discern how this diversity shapes the city's social fabric and enriches its cultural identity, contributing to Almaty's reputation as a cosmopolitan and multicultural urban center. In conclusion, this article's focus on examining the sociodemographic characteristics of internal migrants in Almaty represents a significant contribution to the field of migration studies. By addressing the research gap and providing a comprehensive analysis of the migrant population, the study endeavors to deepen our understanding of the dynamic interactions between migrants and the urban society in Almaty.

The insights gained from this research will be vital for informed policymaking and urban planning, fostering an inclusive and supportive environment that meets the diverse needs of the internal migrant community while promoting the continued development of the city.

Scientific research method

This study exploited two sources of data on internal migration provided by 1) the Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of RK (BNS ASPR) for a period of 5 years (2018-2022). This dataset is focused on the influx of internal migrants to Almaty from other regions of Kazakhstan during the specified time frame. The data chosen includes the factors on marital status, age groups, ethnicities of internal migrants; 2) survey data of the project "Integration of internal migrants in urban society: social networks, social capital and development of urban space" (IIMIUS) (S.Serikzhanova) for the period of 3 years (2017-2020). The survey encompassed 400 respondents in Almaty. This dataset yields the information on educational background and gender ratio of internal migrants.

The study applied proportional analysis conducted in Statistical Analysis System (SAS), using a frequency table and a summary procedure. The analysis involved examining the distribution of categorical variables to determine the relative frequencies or proportions of each category in the dataset.

The study focused on the number of incoming internal migrants to Almaty and their sociodemographic characteristics such as age, marital status, gender, and level of education. However, other relevant variables such as socioeconomic and occupational status of migrants were not included in the analysis due to data constraints. Consequently, the study's ability to comprehensively assess the characteristics of internal migration may be limited.

Results and Discussion

The data provided by IIMIUS reveal that 56.9% of the internal migrants are *female*, while 43.1% are male (Table 1). These data are consistent with the results of other studies disclosing that female migratory rates are increasing which might lead to the feminization of urban migration (Piper, 2008). Historically, gendered internal migration patterns in Kazakhstan have undergone notable shifts over time, and these changes have been accompanied by changes in the gender distribution of internal migrants. In the 1990, internal migration was primarily male dominated, as men were more likely to move to urban areas in search of work opportunities in industries such as manufacturing. However, in recent years, the gender distribution of internal migrants has become more balanced, with both men and women moving to urban areas for various reasons, including employment, education, and better living conditions. According to the United Nations Development Program (2019), the gender distribution of internal migrants was roughly equal in the early 2000s, with men accounting for 49% of internal migrants and women accounting for 51%. This shift in the gender distribution of internal migrants may be attributed to the increasing number of women who have obtained higher education, as well as the expanding job opportunities in the service sector in urban areas. Notably, the trend of gender imbalance in internal migration is not unique to Almaty or Kazakhstan but has been observed in other parts of the world as well. Some studies suggest that the increasing participation of women in the labor force, as well as their increasing access to education, are among the key factors driving this trend (Kofman, 2014:117). Furthermore, the gendered nature of urban labor markets and the types of jobs available in urban areas may also play a role in shaping the gender distribution of internal migrants (Edmonds & Skeldon, 1996).

Based on the data results presented in Table 1, a significant majority of migrants who relocated to Almaty between 2017 and 2020, comprising 63.5%, possess *higher education*. Conversely, smaller portions of migrants have varying educational backgrounds, with 10.4% having vocational education, 11.8% having secondary education, and 9.5% having lower secondary education. These findings align with another study, which highlights that a considerable proportion of internal migrants possess higher educational qualifications and skills that could contribute to their successful integration in their new environment (Zhussupova and Kenesov, 2021). The study underscores the potential advantage of higher education in securing favorable positions for migrants in their new location, while those with lower skill levels may encounter limited opportunities for prestigious roles (Lee, 1966). Consequently, the educational background emerges as a crucial determinant in the integration of internal migrants in Almaty, influencing their employment prospects, social mobility, and access to essential services (UNICEF, 2019).

Table 1– Sociodemographic characteristics of internal migrants (*gender and education level*) in Almaty (BNS, 2017-2020)

Demographic characteristics		Counts (n=170229)	Frequency (%)
Gender	Women	96901	56,9
	Men	73328	43,1
Education level	Higher education	108067	63,5
	Vocational education	24279	14,3
	Secondary education	20131	11,8
	Lower secondary education	17752	10,4
Men	Higher education	44758	61
	Vocational education	10880	14,8
	Secondary education	9567	13
	Lower secondary education	8123	11,1
Women	Higher education	63309	65,3
	Vocational education	13399	13,8
	Secondary education	10564	10,9
	Lower secondary education	9629	9,9

While a high level of education can potentially facilitate integration and reduce stress associated with adapting to a new urban environment, it does not necessarily guarantee employment corresponding to an internal migrant's qualifications and specialty (Xiang & Zhang, 2021). Internal migrants with higher education degrees may encounter difficulties in securing employment due to a lack of available positions in their field or a lack of recognition of their qualifications by employers in urban areas. On the other hand, internal migrants with lower levels of education may face additional barriers to integration due to limited employment opportunities and lower social and economic mobility (Xiang & Zhang, 2021). Furthermore, access to education and the quality of education can vary widely between different regions of Kazakhstan, with internal migrants from rural areas often facing additional challenges in accessing tertiary education and more likely to have lower levels of education (Makhmutova). This can have implications for their ability to integrate into urban areas such as Almaty, where higher education is more prevalent and often required for certain types of employment. The data analysis indicates that migrants with higher education levels are more likely to exhibit spatial mobility, meaning they are more capable of relocating to urban areas like Almaty.

The *age group* distribution of internal migrants arriving in Almaty has experienced a noteworthy shift, characterized by a reversal trend over the period from 2013 to 2018 (Fig.2). During this time, the majority of migrants arriving in Almaty were aged between 17 and 19 years old, signifying those newcomers relocated to the city with the purpose of pursuing tertiary education. However, a significant change occurred by the year 2018, as the majority of arrivals were aged between 23 and 32 years old. This shift indicates that there has been a transition towards a more mature and economically active population of internal migrants coming to Almaty. Unlike the earlier trend, these migrants in the 23 to 32 age range were likely motivated by employment and housing opportunities and governmental housing grants which flourished in 2017.

The data presented in Table 2 (BNS) reveal that the working-age population, specifically those between 16 and 62 (59) years old, constitutes the majority of internal migrants relocating to Almaty. The proportion of youth migrants stands at 26.2%, while elderly migrants account for 5.8%. The data indicate that urban society is currently in a phase known as the demographic window of opportunity, during which the labor force or working-age population surpasses the number of dependents. If this workforce is effectively managed, it has the potential to yield substantial economic gains. With appropriate management strategies, policymakers can harness this demographic advantage to generate significant economic benefits and allocate resources towards nurturing future generations of skilled workers. This approach would enable the workforce

to cope with demographic challenges while also fulfilling the state's social responsibilities effectively (Crombach, Smits, 2022).

The analysis of the *marital status* of internal migrants in Almaty provides valuable insights into the family structure and composition of this specific population group. However, it is essential to note that the data obtained (BNS) does not specify whether internal migrants were married in their place of origin or at their destination in Almaty. Hence, a clear determination of their marital status at the moment of migrating is challenging. The results presented in Table 2 demonstrate that among the internal migrants in Almaty, 40% are identified as married, 35.7% as single, 4.4% as divorced, and 2.1% as widowed. It is worth considering that single, divorced, or widowed individuals may exhibit higher migration rates compared to married individuals due to various factors, such as personal and professional development (Gubhaju & De Jong, 2009) and "fewest ties in the community" (Folger, 1953). However, additional research and more comprehensive data are required to draw definitive conclusion regarding the marital status of this population group and its impact on migration behavior.
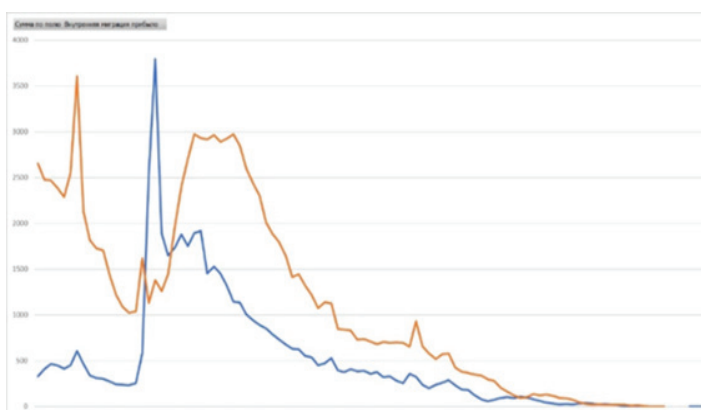

Figure 2 – Dynamics of the age composition of the internal migrant population of Almaty (BNS, 2013-2018)

Table 2 – Socio-demographic characteristics of internal migrants (age, marital status, nationality) in Almaty (BNS, 2017-2022)

Demographic characteristics		Counts (N=429079)	Frequency (%)
Age groups	Working age (16-62(59))	291578	68
	Youth (0-16)	112504	26,2
	Elderly (62(59+))	24997	5,8
Marital status	Married	171811	40
	Never married	153111	35,7
	Divorced	18891	4,4
	Widowed	8823	2,1
Nationality	Kazakhs	359920	83,9
	Other	33095	7,7
	Russians	26307	6,1
	Uyghurs	6135	1,4
	Koreans	2320	0,5
	Uzbeks	1302	0,3

The analysis of the distribution of migrants by *nationality*, as presented in Table 2, indicates that Kazakhs comprise the largest proportion at 83%, followed by Russians at 6.1%, Uighurs at 1.4%, Koreans at 0.5%, and Uzbeks at 0.3%. The remaining 7.7% represents other nationalities. These patterns in nationality distribution can be attributed to significant systemic changes following the collapse of the Soviet Union causing a notable outflow of the Russian-speaking population, particularly urban dwellers, from the country. Simultaneously, capitalist agrarian reforms contributed to a noticeable internal migration of Kazakhs from rural to urban areas. Consequently, the migratory mobility of the population has increased compared to the Soviet period, and this trend continues to be observed in both external and internal migration flows to this day (Zabirova, 2002). This finding is consistent with previous studies on internal migration patterns in Kazakhstan, which have also shown that Kazakhs make up the largest proportion of internal migrants (Makhmutova, 2012).

Over the next five years, around two-thirds of the people migrating to Almaty will primarily come from *Almaty region* (48.3%), *Zhambyl region* (10.5%), and *Turkestan region* (8.5%), as shown in Figure 3. According to Zhussupova and Kenesov, most of this migration occurs between neighboring economic regions. The notable influx of migrants into Almaty is mainly driven by rural areas that suffer from insufficient socioeconomic development and unfavorable conditions in the agricultural sector (Zhussupova, Kenesov, 2012).

As explained by Makhmutova (2012), the high level of unemployment and low incomes in these rural regions act as significant factors motivating citizens to seek better opportunities in urban areas like Almaty (Makhmutova, 2012). Serikzhanova's research in 2022 also supports these findings, emphasizing that internal migrants move to Almaty from rural regions in search of employment, access to education, and an overall improvement in their living conditions.
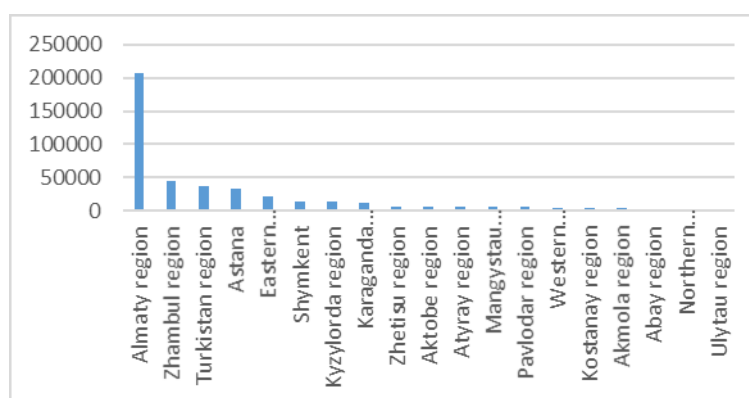

Figure 3 – Migration flows to Almaty (BNS, 2017-2022)

Defining a singular type of internal migrant proves challenging due to the heterogeneous and intricate nature of internal migration. Nonetheless, the provided data enables the identification of common socio-demographic patterns and trends among newcomers in Almaty. Between 2017 and 2022, internal migrants primarily consisted of women, constituting 56.9% of the relocating population, indicating a growing trend of female migratory rates causing the feminization of urban migration. This increasing trend of female migration is projected to persist, resulting in the emergence of job opportunities in the city, potentially leading to an increased demand for industries and services

traditionally associated with female labor force participation. The majority of these migrants belong to the working-age group, accounting for 59% of the total migrant cohort, thereby creating a demographic window of opportunities. This demographic window presents a period with a favorable age distribution of individuals in their economically active years, offering potential advantages for Almaty's economic growth, labor market dynamics, and development. Moreover, the internal migrant population in Almaty is primarily composed of individuals belonging to the Kazakh nationality, comprising 83% of the migrants, with a significant portion originating from rural areas. This

points to a potential increase in the urban population attributed to unfavorable economic, social, and cultural conditions prevalent in rural villages, compelling individuals to seek better prospects in the city. Educational background also plays a significant role in the internal migrant profile, with a majority (63.5%) possessing tertiary education. This underscores the significance of higher education among migrants and suggests a potential association between educational attainment and migration decisions. The presence of highly educated migrants may contribute to Almaty's intellectual capital and spur economic growth.

In summary, while acknowledging the complexities of internal migration, the data reveals common socio-demographic patterns among internal migrants in Almaty. The prominence of women, a predominantly working-age cohort, a substantial representation of Kazakh nationality, and a prevalence of higher education qualifications characterize the migrant population. These insights are essential for policymakers and stakeholders to develop targeted strategies that harness the potential benefits of this diverse migrant demographic and foster sustainable urban development in Almaty.

Conclusion

The research on the sociodemographic portrait of internal migrants in Almaty reveals a diverse and multifaceted migrant population. Almaty's status as an educational focal point draws migrants with diverse educational backgrounds, contributing to a highly educated population. The research explores the gender composition and family dynamics of migrants, providing insights into their settlement and integration. Additionally, the study underscores the cultural diversity brought by migrants from various ethnic backgrounds, shaping the city's social fabric and cultural identity. By understanding these sociodemographic characteristics, policymakers and urban planners can develop targeted strategies to create an inclusive and supportive environment that benefits both Almaty and its migrant community.

To support the well-being and integration of internal migrants in Almaty, future research should prioritize longitudinal studies to understand their settlement experiences and long-term integration challenges. Additionally, research should focus on housing needs, employment opportunities, and access to social services, while promoting cultural integration and social cohesion. Policymakers should incorporate migrant-specific needs into inclusive urban planning, develop affordable housing, and provide language and cultural orientation programs. Employment support, anti-discrimination measures, and data collection for monitoring progress are essential to foster an inclusive and supportive environment, ensuring the successful integration of internal migrants and contributing to the overall development of the city.

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