

EARTH SCIENCES

MAIN DIRECTIONS FOR IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF THE POPULATION IN THE REGIONS (ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE GANJA–DASHKASAN ECONOMIC REGION)

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Abstract

This article provides a comprehensive analysis of the dynamics of changes in the quality of life of the population in the Ganja–Dashkasan economic region since 2004. The study employs key indicators such as employment, social infrastructure, utility provision, and migration. The results of the analysis indicate that, overall, the quality of life in the region has improved; however, structural problems and intra-regional disparities have not been fully eliminated.

Keywords: quality of life, regional development, social infrastructure, employment, migration

Introduction

The Ganja–Dashkasan economic region is located in the western part of the Republic of Azerbaijan and is distinguished by its predominantly mountainous and foothill terrain, abundant mineral resources, and favorable natural-geographical conditions. The region's climatic diversity, water resources, and recreational potential play a significant role in shaping and developing its economic structure.

As a result of the administrative-territorial reforms carried out in 2021, this territory was separated from

the former Gazakh–Dashkasan economic region and established as an independent economic region. The primary objective of this reorganization was to ensure more efficient utilization of natural resources and to accelerate the socio-economic development of the region.

This economic-geographical region includes the administrative districts of Ganja, Dashkasan, Goranboy, Goygol, Naftalan, and Samukh.

Table 1.

Ganja–Dashkasan Economic Region (2025)

Economic Region	Area		Population		Urban Population		
	(thousand sq. km)	Share (%)	(thousand persons)	Share (%)	(thousand persons)	Urbanization (%)	Share (%)
Azerbaijan	86,6	100	10224,9	100	5562,9	54,4	100
Ganja–Dashkasan	4,5	5,2	1300,0	12,7	800,0	61,5	14,4

Source: Population of Azerbaijan. Baku: SSC (State Statistical Committee), 2025.

Although the Ganja–Dashkasan economic region occupies a middle position among the country's economic regions in terms of territorial size, it has a relatively high share in both total population and urban population. This can be explained by the fact that the level of urbanization in the region exceeds the national average (Table 1).

Within the territorial structure of the economic region, the Dashkasan district has the largest area, while the city of Naftalan has the smallest. The region's relief is predominantly mountainous and is particularly notable for its richness in ore mineral resources.

The city of Ganja plays a leading role in the socio-economic development of the economic region. As the second largest city in the country, Ganja is an important industrial, transport, and cultural center. At the same time, areas such as the Goygol district stand out for their natural recreational resources and tourism potential.

Thus, the Ganja–Dashkasan economic region is characterized by the integrated development of industry, agriculture, and tourism, and is considered

one of the key economic-geographical regions with a high level of urbanization.

The relevance of the topic lies in the fact that improving the quality of life of the population in the Ganja–Dashkasan economic region serves as one of the key indicators of socio-economic development and determines the efficient territorial organization of production and social infrastructure within the region. At the same time, increasing employment, raising incomes, and expanding access to social services have a positive impact on public welfare, thereby contributing to demographic stability and sustainable development[1].

In regional development policy, the quality of life of the population is considered one of the main evaluation criteria. This concept is not limited to economic indicators alone; it also encompasses factors such as accessibility of social services, infrastructure provision, employment opportunities, and demographic stability[2].

The Ganja–Dashkasan economic region is one of the important economic zones of Azerbaijan,

characterized by the integrated development of industry, agriculture, and the service sector. Since 2004, the changes that have taken place in this region have led to noticeable improvements in the living standards of the population.

Methodology

In this study, reference was made to the scientific works of local scholars such as Z.N. Eminov, S.I. Rzaeva, and T.M. Huseynova, who have examined the factors affecting quality of life. These researchers have conducted comprehensive analyses of the socio-economic, demographic, and environmental factors influencing the population's well-being.

To identify the directions for improving the quality of life in the Ganja–Dashkasan economic region, the study employed comparative-statistical analysis, dynamic analysis, and a systematic approach. The data sources for the research included official statistical records, regional reports, and analytical observations.

Analysis and Discussion

Since 2004, the quality of life of the population in the Ganja–Dashkasan economic region has gradually taken shape and developed in stages. In the initial phase, living standards were largely determined by the availability of social infrastructure. In the city of Ganja, social facilities were renovated, roads and communication lines were restored, and healthcare and educational institutions were modernized. The construction of new residential complexes for internally displaced persons positively influenced population growth and improved social welfare.

In the districts of Naftalan, Dashkasan, Goranboy, Goygol, and Samukh, measures were also taken to repair roads, upgrade electricity and communication networks, and support agricultural development.

However, limited employment opportunities in rural areas, inadequate gas and water supply, underdeveloped industrial sectors, and ongoing migration remained key challenges. In subsequent years, with increased economic activity, employment opportunities in the region expanded, marking a new qualitative stage in its development. The establishment of industrial enterprises (aluminum, steel, and food industries) as well as the expansion of transport and social infrastructure contributed to a rise in employment. The development of the industrial and service sectors also led to increased incomes for the population. At the same time, improvements in road infrastructure and energy provision positively affected living conditions[3].

The commissioning of large industrial and cultural facilities in the city of Ganja strengthened its role as an economic center. In other districts, the development of agriculture, support for entrepreneurship, and construction of social facilities continued.

After 2014, the modernization of infrastructure and the development of industry and agriculture were further strengthened. In the Dashkasan district, the growth of the mining industry, the creation of new jobs, and the renovation of road infrastructure enhanced the region's economic potential. During this period, an increase in the accessibility of social services was also observed. The expansion and modernization of educational and healthcare institutions positively impacted the social well-being of the population.

However, weak technical support in agriculture, as well as issues with gas supply, irrigation, and employment in some villages, hindered the full realization of the region's economic potential.

In the most recent period (2019–2025), large-scale infrastructure projects were implemented in the region. The road network was renovated, water supply and sewage systems were established, and electricity and gas provision were improved[4].

The implementation of water supply and sewage projects, the construction of new substations, and the development of the mining industry in Dashkasan district have yielded significant results. In the districts of Ganja, Naftalan, and Goygol, employment opportunities have expanded in tourism, agriculture, and small business sectors[5].

At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic and the wartime conditions had a certain impact on the region's socio-economic development. However, with state support, these effects were partially mitigated, and the measures taken had a positive impact on the population's health indicators[6].

Analyses indicate that despite the achievements in the region, the following problems have not been fully resolved:

- Limited employment opportunities and ongoing migration in rural areas;
- Underdevelopment of the industrial sector in certain districts;
- Deficiencies in water supply, sewage, and gas provision;
- Uneven development of the material and technical base of healthcare and educational institutions;
- Limited technical and financial resources in agriculture.

Table 2.

Dynamics of Quality of Life Indicators

Indicator	2004-2008	2009-2013	2014-2018	2019-2025
Employment	Moderate	Increasing	Stable	Increasing
Water Supply	Poor	Partially Improved	Moderate	Good
Gas Supply	Low	Moderate	Increasing	High
Educational Infrastructure	Being Renovated	Increasing	Good	High
Healthcare Services	Limited	Improving	Moderate-Good	Good
Migration	High	Moderate	Moderate	Relatively Decreasing

The analysis of Table 2 shows that positive dynamics are observed across all key indicators. Significant progress has been recorded, particularly in gas supply and educational infrastructure. Developments in water supply have proceeded at a slower pace, mainly due to existing infrastructure problems in rural areas.

Although an increase in employment has been observed, it does not fully meet the overall demand of the population. For this reason, migration remains a relevant issue. While a decreasing trend in migration is noticeable, the process has not come to a complete halt.

Conclusion

The study has shown that the quality of life in the region has gradually improved, with social and engineering infrastructure serving as the main drivers of development. Differences between urban and rural areas persist, and employment and industrial development remain key challenges.

In the future, a comprehensive approach will be required to further enhance the quality of life in the region. In particular, accelerating industrialization, modernizing agriculture, and ensuring the equitable distribution of social services are essential.

The following priority directions should be considered for improving the quality of life of the population in the Ganja–Dashkasan economic region:

- Establishment of processing enterprises in the regions.
- Modernization of agriculture and development of irrigation systems.
- Strengthening of social infrastructure (education, healthcare, and services).
- Creation of new jobs and expansion of employment opportunities.
- Improvement of living conditions in the regions to reduce migration.

➤ Protection of the environment and ensuring sustainable development.

As a result, state programs implemented between 2004 and 2025 have played an important role in the socio-economic development of the region and in improving the living standards of the population. At the same time, it is necessary to implement comprehensive and continuous measures to address the remaining challenges.

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