

Uzbekistan



General Information



Population

35 648 100 (World Bank 2022)

35 079 200 (STAT UZ 2021, Sept)



Immigration

1 162 007 (UN Immigration Stock 2020)

1 105 (STAT UZ 2020)



Emigration

2 027 823 (UN Emigration Stock 2020)

13 648 (STAT UZ 2020)



Working-age population

23 047 260 (World Bank 2022)

22 684 542 (STAT UZ 2021, July)



Unemployment rate

5.3 % (World Bank 2020)

10.5 % (STAT UZ 2020)



GDP

80 391 853 887.4 current prices USD (World Bank 2022)

580 203 200 000 000 current prices UZS (STAT UZ 2020)



Refugees and IDPs

Refugees

13 025 (UNHCR 2023)



Citizenship

By Birth: No

By Descent: Yes

Dual Citizenship: No

Years of Residency: 5



Territory

447 400 km² (CIA World Factbook)

Migration Authorities Responsible Body

Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations

Line Ministries

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Ministry of Internal Affairs

Ministry of Justice

Agencies

Agency for External Labour Migration under the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations

The National Commission for Combatting Trafficking in Persons and Forced labour

The Republican tripartite Commission on social and labour issues

State Customs Committee

State Statistics Committee

Key Policy Documents

1992 (2020) Law on Citizenship

2008 (2020) Anti-trafficking Law

2020 Law on Employment of Population

2018 Law on Private Employment Agencies

2021 Law on Legal Status of Foreign Citizens and stateless persons

1996 (2019) Regulation on the Procedure of Entry, Exit, Stay and Transit of Foreign Citizens and stateless persons

2017 Regulations on procedure for providing political asylum in the Republic of Uzbekistan

The Strategy of Action on five priority areas of development of the Republic Of Uzbekistan In 2017 - 2021

Relevant Publications

Migration Profile Light 2015

Background Note 'Monumental Shifts in Uzbek Labour Migration Policy'

Policy Brief 'Evaluating the Future of Uzbek Labour Migration'

Policy Brief 'Impact of the Situation in Afghanistan on the Central Asian Countries: Implications for Migration'

The Republic of Uzbekistan is a major migrant-sending country. Since the 2000s, external labour migration and sizeable internal migration have replaced outmigration for permanent residence – a defining feature of the 1990s. At present, the volume of permanent migration in both directions is insignificant. In 2020, only **1.105** persons immigrated while **13.648** persons emigrated from the country (**1.300** and **19.700** in the first 9 months of 2021 respectively).

With a fast-growing population of over **35 million in 2021** (58% of whom are of working age), Uzbekistan is the most populous in Central Asia. Since 2010, the population increased by more than 6 million, with a further growth of **8 million expected by 2035**. Each year, some 600,000-700,000 people enter the domestic labour market, which is unable to absorb such considerable labour force. The unemployment rate increased from 9% in 2019 to **10.5% in 2020**. It is even higher for the age group 16-30 (**17.1%**) and among women (**14.7%**). While recent reforms allowed decreasing the national poverty to **11%** in 2019 (**11.5% in 2020**), labour migration remains a necessity as manifested by its massive scale and the considerable remittances resulting from it, amounting to **4 billion US\$** per year or 7% of GDP (58 billion US\$).

In 2019, the Agency for External Migration of Uzbekistan estimated the number of migrant workers at **2.6 - 3 million** (about **1.7 million in 2020**). Some **1.6 million** of them worked in Russia and another **531.000** in Kazakhstan. Due to COVID-19, the latter number has declined to approximately **200.000 persons**. Given the considerable volume of informal employment, the real figure is hard to assess. Russia remains the prime destination for Uzbek migrant workers. In the first nine months of 2021, their number exceeded **3.3 million** – a three-year record - according to Russian official sources. Over 3 million came for employment reasons, with **84.500** channelled through the bilateral labour agreement. While most remain in Russia only temporarily, a growing number has applied for Russian citizenship. The **80.000** applications registered in the first nine months of 2021 have set a new record.

Attempting to diversify the geography of labour migration, Uzbekistan concluded labour agreements with South **Korea (2006)** and **Japan (2019)**, while also negotiating with **Poland, UAE and Saudi Arabia**. Compared to Russia and Kazakhstan, the actual number of Uzbek labour migrants in these countries remains marginal. In 2019, South Korea set a quota of **3.400 Uzbek nationals per year**, with many more coming through other channels. In 2019, the number of Uzbek residency holders in South Korea amounted to **26.000** (8.500 for visiting and employment; nearly 3.400 for unskilled employment). In 2020, **some 62.000** Uzbeks worked in South Korea, many of whom presumably arrived before the pandemic, as their flow declined more than **three-fold in 2020** and has not recovered fully in **2021**. In recent years, Turkey has also become a popular destination for Uzbek labour migrants, recording some **45.000** Uzbek residents in 2019, **30.500 – in 2020**, and **over 66.000** in the beginning of 2021. According to estimates of the Uzbek Ministry of Economic Development and Poverty Reduction, some **43.000** Uzbek labour migrants resided in Turkey in 2020.

Within the EU, the number of Uzbek residence permit holders stood **at around 23.000** at the end of 2020, as in the previous three years. Some 26% were issued for remunerated activities, with the majority recorded in Poland and Czechia. Germany and Sweden issued 8.000 permits - mostly on family grounds.

Analytical Report 'Combating irregular migration and human trafficking in the CIS countries'

Background Note 'Asylum seekers from the Eastern Partnership and Central Asian Countries in the EU'

Background Note 'Migration and Mobility in Eastern Europe and Central Asia: What to expect in times of COVID-19?'

Policy Brief 'The EU Central Asia Strategy and Its Impact on Migration'

Analytical Report 'China's "Belt and Road" Initiative and Its Impact on Migration Flows and Policies in Central Asia'

Policy Brief 'Labour migration from East to West: The example of foreign workers in Austria'

Policy Brief 'Changing Demographics in the Countries of the Prague Process: Implications for Migration'

Meanwhile, Latvia issued permits for studying. The number of Uzbek refugees in the EU did not exceed 1.000 in the past decade, albeit a slight upward trend. In 2021, there were some **3.000** Uzbek refugees and **5.200** asylum seekers worldwide, most of whom were hosted by the US and Sweden. The number of irregular Uzbek nationals in the EU is relatively insignificant, estimated at **900** in 2020, with some **1.500** ordered to leave and **215** refused entry.

In terms of immigration, Uzbekistan is home to over 1.1 million foreign nationals, most of whom originate from Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Azerbaijan. However, the immigrant stock is steadily declining. The coronavirus pandemic considerably affected immigration to Uzbekistan, with some **2 million border** crossings recorded in 2020 as compared to **5.3 million** in the first half of 2019. Overall, 95% of foreigners come to Uzbekistan from the CIS countries. In 2020, **344.000** foreigners received a temporary residence permit, and some 3.000 permanent residence. The same year, 8.141 foreign nationals - mostly from Russia, Kazakhstan and Ukraine - received a work permit. In-migration to Uzbekistan also includes returning Uzbek migrants. In 2020, about 498.000 labour migrants returned to Uzbekistan, finding themselves with no fixed income. In response, the country's labour authorities mobilised a set of short and mid-term measures, including the forthcoming National Employment Strategy 2030, which should consolidate the various efforts undertaken in response to the coronavirus impact.

In December 2021, the country still hosted almost **60.000** stateless persons. However, the country is undertaking significant steps to prevent and reduce statelessness. A **new provision** in the Citizenship law passed in April 2020 allows most stateless persons to obtain Uzbek citizenship. In recent years, Uzbekistan also conferred nationality to some 10.000 stateless people by amending its **birth registration practices**. It introduced universal birth registration, also for children born to undocumented parents, and launched a nationwide campaign to identify and register all cases of unregistered births.

Over the past three years, Uzbekistan hosted only 13 refugees - all from Afghanistan - under the UNHCR mandate. The country has ratified neither the 1951 Refugee Convention nor the related New York Protocol of 1967. Consequently, there are no legal and administrative norms governing the status of refugees. There are currently **13,658 Afghan citizens** in Uzbekistan, with the vast majority - 13,032 - residing temporarily in the country. Given the Taliban's return to power in 2021 and following **pressure** from international rights groups, the Uzbek government **committed** not to deport Afghans whose visas are expiring.

Uzbekistan endorsed the Global Compact for Migration and is a party to various regional migration dialogues. In July 2019, the **Decree** on "Additional measures to further improve the system of combating trafficking in persons and forced labour" transformed the Interdepartmental Commission of the Republic for Combating Human Trafficking into a National Commission under the guidance of the President of the Senate. In August 2020, the country's **2008 law on human trafficking** was amended introducing new concepts, preventive measures, and a procedure to identify victims of human trafficking, including minors. Since 2018, the country has issued over a **dozen decrees and resolutions** to protect the rights and interests of Uzbek citizens and streamline the national system of labour migration. In particular, in October 2018 the country adopted the Law on Private Employment Agencies, which terminated the state monopoly on employment of citizens abroad. Moreover, the country has pledged to open representations of the Agency for External Labour Migration in key destination

cities in Russia, Kazakhstan, South Korea, Turkey and UAE. In December 2020, Uzbekistan became **an observer to the Eurasian Economic Union**.