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AN ANALYSIS OF REGIONAL ECONOMIC IMBALANCES IN UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract. This study examines regional economic disparities in Uzbekistan and their relationship with economic growth. Using official statistical data for 2025, the analysis compares gross regional product (GRP) per capita and real economic growth rates across selected regions. The findings reveal substantial differences in regional economic output, with Navoi Region recording approximately 152.2 million UZS per capita, compared with 26.5 million UZS in the Republic of Karakalpakstan. The ratio between these regions is approximately 5.75, indicating considerable spatial inequality. Differences in regional growth rates further demonstrate that economic expansion is uneven across the country. The study highlights the importance of regional investment, infrastructure development, economic diversification, and employment opportunities. Further research using multi-year data is necessary to examine long-term relationships between economic growth and regional disparities.

Keywords: regional disparities, economic growth, gross regional product, Uzbekistan, regional development, economic inequality.

Introduction

Regional economic disparities represent an important challenge for sustainable economic development, particularly in countries undergoing structural transformation and modernization. Although economic growth can increase national output, its benefits are not always distributed evenly across regions. Differences in industrial concentration, infrastructure, investment opportunities, natural resources, labour productivity, and human capital may cause some territories to develop more rapidly than others. As a result, regional inequalities may persist or widen even when the national economy demonstrates positive growth. Understanding the relationship between economic growth and regional disparities is therefore essential for developing effective regional policies and promoting more balanced territorial development.

The study by Obradović, Lojanica, and Janković (2016), which examines the relationship between economic growth and regional disparities in selected OECD countries, provides a useful conceptual and methodological basis for investigating this issue in Uzbekistan. Their research identifies a significant long-term relationship between economic growth and regional disparities and highlights the importance of coordinated regional development policies. However, the relationship between growth and regional inequality may differ according to a country's economic structure, institutional environment, and level of development. Therefore, the findings from OECD countries should not automatically be generalized to Uzbekistan without considering its specific regional characteristics and development priorities.

Uzbekistan provides a relevant case for examining these issues. In 2025, the country's gross domestic product reached approximately UZS 1,849.7 trillion, representing real growth of 7.7% compared with the previous year. However, economic growth varied across regions. Tashkent city recorded a growth rate of

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11.3%, followed by Syrdarya Region at 9.8%, while Surkhandarya Region recorded 6.6%. These differences indicate that national economic expansion is accompanied by uneven regional growth dynamics.

In addition to differences in growth rates, the distribution of economic output per capita reveals substantial regional disparities. In 2025, gross regional product per capita amounted to approximately UZS 152.2 million in Navoi Region, compared with UZS 26.5 million in the Republic of Karakalpakstan. The difference between these two territories highlights the uneven distribution of productive capacity and economic activity across Uzbekistan. Such disparities raise important questions about whether periods of rapid economic growth contribute to regional convergence or instead reinforce the advantages of already prosperous territories.

Against this background, the main objective of this study is to examine the relationship between economic growth and regional disparities in Uzbekistan using recent regional economic data. The study focuses on differences in gross regional product per capita and regional growth rates, with particular attention to the extent of economic inequality among the country's administrative territories. Building on the conceptual approach of Obradović et al. (2016), the research seeks to assess the implications of uneven regional growth for balanced development and to identify policy priorities that may help reduce territorial inequalities. The findings are expected to contribute to a better understanding of regional development patterns in Uzbekistan and provide an empirical basis for policies aimed at strengthening less-developed regions, improving the spatial distribution of investment, and promoting more inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

Research Methodology

This study employs a quantitative research approach to examine the relationship between economic growth and regional disparities in Uzbekistan. The methodological framework is based on the approach developed by Obradović, Lojanica, and Janković (2016), adapted to the economic and territorial characteristics of Uzbekistan. The analysis focuses on regional differences in gross regional product (GRP) per capita and real GRP growth rates. These indicators are used to assess the distribution of economic activity across administrative regions and to identify differences in regional development dynamics. The empirical analysis relies on official statistical data published by the National Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2025, with particular attention to the comparability and consistency of regional indicators.

The research applies descriptive statistical analysis and comparative analysis to evaluate regional economic disparities. Descriptive statistics are used to summarize the distribution of GRP per capita and regional growth rates, while comparative analysis identifies differences between the highest-performing and lowest-performing regions. The regional disparity ratio is calculated by dividing the highest GRP per capita by the lowest GRP per capita. This indicator provides a straightforward measure of the magnitude of economic differences between regions. In addition, regional real growth rates are compared with the national average to determine which territories are expanding faster or slower than the overall economy.

The methodological framework also distinguishes between nominal economic output and real economic growth. GRP per capita measured at current prices reflects the monetary value of regional production and may be influenced by price changes,

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whereas real growth rates measured at constant prices indicate changes in economic output after accounting for price effects. Therefore, these indicators are interpreted separately and are not treated as directly interchangeable measures. Tables, graphical representations, and numerical comparisons are used to present the findings clearly and facilitate the interpretation of regional differences.

The analysis is designed to identify patterns of regional inequality and discuss their implications for balanced economic development in Uzbekistan. However, because the empirical comparison primarily uses cross-sectional regional data for 2025, the results describe regional differences rather than establish a causal relationship between economic growth and disparities. A more comprehensive assessment of long-term convergence or divergence would require a multi-year regional dataset and, where appropriate, econometric techniques such as panel regression, cointegration analysis, or causality testing. This limitation is taken into account when interpreting the findings and formulating policy implications.

Results and Discussion

The analysis of regional economic indicators reveals significant disparities in economic development across Uzbekistan. In 2025, gross regional product (GRP) per capita reached approximately UZS 152.2 million in Navoi Region, compared with UZS 26.5 million in the Republic of Karakalpakstan and UZS 116.7 million in Tashkent city. The national average was approximately UZS 48.8 million. Thus, GRP per capita in Navoi Region was about 5.75 times higher than in the Republic of Karakalpakstan, indicating substantial differences in regional productive capacity and economic structure.

Regional growth rates also varied considerably. In 2025, Uzbekistan's real GRP growth rate was 7.7%, while Tashkent city recorded 11.3%, Syrdarya Region 9.8%, and Samarkand Region 8.0%. These differences demonstrate that economic expansion occurs at different rates across the country. Regional disparities may be associated with variations in industrial specialization, investment, infrastructure, natural resources, and labour productivity. However, GRP per capita reflects regional production rather than the actual distribution of household income, and therefore should not be considered a direct measure of living standards.

The findings are consistent with the broader discussion by Obradović, Lojanica, and Janković (2016), which highlights the relationship between economic growth and regional disparities. Nevertheless, the present analysis is based on descriptive comparisons of 2025 data and cannot establish a causal relationship between economic growth and regional inequality. Determining whether disparities are narrowing or widening requires data covering several years.

Table 1. Regional disparities in gross regional product and real growth in Uzbekistan, 2025

Region	GRP per capita (thousand UZS)	Real GRP growth (%)	Comparison with national average
Navoi Region	152,238.2	7.7	GRP per capita substantially above average
Tashkent city	116,747.3	11.3	Highest growth among selected regions

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Samarkand Region	Not included in the selected GRP-per-capita comparison	8.0	Growth above national average
Syrdarya Region	Not included in the selected GRP-per-capita comparison	9.8	Growth above national average
Republic of Karakalpakstan	26,489.5	Not specified in the selected growth comparison	GRP per capita below national average
Uzbekistan (national average)	48,816.4	7.7	Reference value

Reducing regional disparities requires balanced investment, infrastructure development, economic diversification, and improved access to education and employment opportunities. Supporting small and medium-sized enterprises and developing higher-value-added industries may also strengthen the economic potential of less-developed regions. Overall, the results highlight the importance of regional development policies that promote more balanced, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth in Uzbekistan.

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that significant regional disparities in economic development persist in Uzbekistan. In 2025, gross regional product (GRP) per capita varied considerably across regions, reaching approximately 152.2 million UZS in Navoi Region and 26.5 million UZS in the Republic of Karakalpakstan. This difference, of around 5.75 times, highlights the uneven distribution of economic output across the country. At the same time, regional economic growth rates differed, with Tashkent city recording 11.3%, Syrdarya Region 9.8%, and Samarkand Region 8.0%, compared with national GDP growth of 7.7%. These results suggest that strong national economic growth does not necessarily lead to uniform development across all regions.

Reducing regional disparities requires a comprehensive development strategy that considers the economic structure and specific potential of each region. Priority measures should include improving transport and industrial infrastructure, encouraging investment in less-developed areas, supporting small and medium-sized enterprises, diversifying regional economies, and expanding access to education and employment opportunities. Although the results provide a useful overview of regional differences in Uzbekistan, the analysis is based on data for a single year and therefore cannot establish a causal relationship between economic growth and regional disparities. Further research using multi-year regional data is needed to assess how economic growth influences regional inequality over time and to identify effective policies for achieving more balanced and sustainable regional development.

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