

МРНТИ 06.61.53  
УДК624.21  
JEL R11, R51, O18

<https://doi.org/10.46914/1562-2959-2024-1-2-328-345>

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## ASSESSING ECONOMIC LANDSCAPES: CITY RANKINGS (2010–2022)

### Abstract

Urban assessment is crucial for understanding the dynamics of city development, identifying areas for improvement, and formulating targeted policies to enhance the quality of life for residents. This study focuses on evaluating Kazakhstan's megacities across nine indicators grouped into financial and economic condition, business development, and living standards. Using comparative analysis and ranking methods, the study assesses budgetary allocations, population dynamics, industrial growth, and the impact of strategic investments on urban development. Drawing on current economic and demographic trends, the study examines the role of cities as drivers of economic growth and highlights the importance of addressing social and economic inequalities. Through a literature review, the study contextualizes the findings within the broader discourse on urbanization and economic development, emphasizing the need for nuanced strategies to address regional disparities. Methodologically, a rating system based on quantitative indicators from 2010 to 2022 is employed, with a heatmap visualization to illustrate city rankings across various indicators. Using aggregated data on key economic indicators, the cities were classified into three categories: high-ranking, mid-ranking and low-ranking. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of urban development in Kazakhstan and provides insights for policy formulation aimed at promoting sustainable and inclusive growth across its megacities. The city ranking analysis depicts a varied economic landscape in Kazakhstani cities. High-ranked cities exhibit robust economic performance with low poverty rates, strong average salaries, and active retail trade, hinting at promising business prospects. Mid-ranked cities show mixed performances, while low-ranked cities face considerable economic challenges, including higher poverty, lower salaries, and potential declines in trade.

**Key words:** regional analysis, urban economy, development, economic differentiation, social development, cities of the country, rating.

### Introduction

Urban assessment involves the study and analysis of various indicators such as living standards, economic activity, infrastructure, education and healthcare. These indicators help to better understand

the specifics of each city, its potential for development and improving the quality of life of residents. Assessment also helps identify problem areas and needs of cities, allowing targeted policies and programs to be developed to address these issues.

In general, urban assessment is of strategic importance for the formation of development policies and management of urban spaces, as it allows us to identify priorities aimed at sustainable and inclusive development, improving economic activity, improving the quality of life and social justice. This approach to assessing cities reveals several key aspects [1, 2].

Firstly, it allows you to highlight priorities for development. Analysis of indicators of financial and economic condition, level of business activity and quality of life of residents helps to identify areas where the most significant improvements and targeted efforts are needed.

Secondly, such an assessment allows us to determine the trends and dynamics of urban development. By comparing the performance of different cities over time, it is possible to identify trends and evolution of their development, as well as analyze the effectiveness of adopted strategies. The third aspect is to develop targeted development strategies. The study allows us to identify the main areas of development for each city, taking into account their unique needs and characteristics. Assessing cities using various indicators helps inform the efficient allocation of resources. Identifying cities with the highest need for support and the greatest potential for development allows resources to be targeted to improve the situation and achieve balance between regions. Assessing cities based on various indicators is an important tool for understanding and improving the socio-economic situation in various regions, as well as for developing strategies for supporting and developing the most vulnerable and promising areas.

Thus, the purpose of this study is to assess cities according to 9 indicators, divided into three groups: financial and economic condition, business development indicators, and living standards of residents.

### **Main provisions**

The purpose of this study is to assess cities according to 9 indicators, divided into three groups: financial and economic condition, business development indicators, and living standards of residents. Comparative analysis and ranking method were used to evaluate the performance of different cities and their development over time. The prerequisites for this study were current economic and demographic changes in key cities of Kazakhstan, which play an important role in the sustainable development of the country. This study is a comprehensive examination of the economic landscapes and developmental trajectories within Kazakhstani cities over the span of 2010 to 2022. It meticulously evaluates various facets of urban development, including budget allocation patterns, demographic shifts, industrial expansion, and the efficacy of strategic investments. By employing sophisticated comparative analysis and ranking methodologies, the research aims to provide nuanced insights into the relative performance and progress of different cities across Kazakhstan. This study is motivated by a recognition of the pivotal role that cities play in driving the sustainable economic growth and societal well-being of the nation. Through a detailed exploration of city-level data and trends, the research seeks to inform policymakers, urban planners, and stakeholders about the opportunities and challenges inherent in Kazakhstan's urban development landscape, thereby facilitating more informed decision-making processes for the country's future.

### **Literature review**

The assessment of cities plays an important role in determining their development and management. The change in approach to urbanization policy reflects an awareness of the previously underestimated potential of cities as engines of economic growth. The economic role of cities represents an important factor in global GDP [3, 4]. Huriot and Bourdeau-Lepage [5] focus on the macroeconomic roles and institutional needs of cities in the global economy, highlighting the divergence between developed and less developed countries. In contrast, the Crisp et al. [6] evaluated the potential of alternative approaches to foster equitable urban development, emphasizing local solutions and the importance of

addressing contemporary social and geographical challenges. The contribution of cities to the region's economy and their ability to stimulate economic growth make them the focus of increased attention.

In recent studies, various scholars have highlighted different aspects of urban development and its impacts. For example, Nijman and Wei [7] and Manduca [8] explored the economic inequalities within urban areas, emphasizing the role of policy interventions in mitigating these disparities.

Nijman and Wei explored the impact of urbanization and economic shifts on urban-scale inequalities, focusing on how the digital and information-based economy has exacerbated disparities in residential segregation and housing. Their findings highlight the need for targeted urban policies to address these issues. In contrast, Manduca centers on regional disparities driven by national income trends, attributing increasing regional inequalities to national income disparities and advocating for national-level policy interventions. Both studies underscore the necessity for policy measures but approach it from different angles – Nijman and Wei emphasize urban policy, while Manduca stresses national income policies. This comparative analysis aligns with my research, which also examines the multifaceted dimensions of inequality and the effectiveness of various policy interventions. In contrast, Karahasan et al. [9] identified that economic inequality between regions in developing countries like China, Brazil, and India has been increasing due to uneven investment distribution [10].

Moreover, high population densities and mixed land use in urban areas have been identified as critical factors needing careful analysis for development strategies. Dehghani, et al. [11] discussed the unique challenges posed by high population densities on infrastructure, housing, and public services. Similarly, the process of urbanization as an engine of economic development does not uniformly reduce poverty among urban residents. Despite notable progress in reducing extreme poverty, urban poverty has declined more slowly than in rural areas, as highlighted by Khan et al. [12] and Sun et al. [13].

For instance, governments in many Asian countries focus on rural areas, and poverty alleviation is aimed primarily at supporting rural populations, leading to inequalities in poverty reduction program effectiveness and widening differences between urban and rural areas [14]. This view is supported by Dahiya [15] and Liu et al. [16], who found that such policies result in significant disparities in poverty alleviation outcomes between urban and rural regions.

Factors driving increased urbanization include investment in infrastructure, development of new industries, improving the business environment, and stimulating innovation. However, employment growth and structural changes in the economy also highlight the problems of the informal sector [17, 18, 19].

Mukhametzhan et al. [20] and Shakibayev et al. [21] examined urban development in Kazakhstan. Mukhametzhan et al. focus on the asymmetry of urban development and its impact on regional socio-economic growth, identifying key factors like trade, SMEs, and tax revenues. They stress the need for anti-crisis regional policies. Shakibayev et al. analyzed economic and social factors affecting urban productivity, finding that economic determinants like SME activity and fixed capital investment significantly impact GRP more than social factors. Their work emphasizes strategic urban development planning based on economic priorities.

In contrast, Bagayeva et al. [22] investigated the influence of transnational corporations (TNCs) on economic growth in emerging economies, specifically Kazakhstan and Russia. They highlighted the dual impact of FDI, noting benefits such as job creation and economic growth alongside challenges like labor exploitation and environmental pollution. Their study underscored the importance of attracting FDI to drive economic development while managing its potential downsides.

The literature review underscores the role cities play in both regional and global economic landscapes. Key studies by Huriot and Bourdeau-Lepage, and Crisp et al., have highlighted the macroeconomic roles of cities and the necessity of adopting local solutions to foster equitable urban development. This aligns with the financial and economic conditions aspect of your study, illustrating the significant influence cities have on economic dynamics and the imperative to manage such influences to optimize economic growth.

In terms of business development, the insights provided by Mukhametzhan et al. and Shakibayev et al. are particularly pertinent. They examine the factors such as SME activity and fixed capital investment that are crucial for urban productivity and socio-economic growth. This directly contributes

to understanding the business development indicators in your study, indicating the importance of strategic urban planning and policy-making to enhance business environments within cities.

Lastly, the aspect of living standards is vividly addressed through the discussions by Nijman and Wei, and Dehghani et al., who have delved into the challenges posed by urban density on infrastructure, housing, and public services. This is further complicated by the disparities in poverty alleviation efforts between urban and rural areas as discussed by Khan et al. and Dahiya.

Therefore, the reviewed literature not only provides a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted roles and challenges associated with urban development but also justifies the need for a detailed assessment based on the specific indicators of financial and economic conditions, business development, and living standards. This not only grounds the study in existing research but also highlights the gaps the research aims to fill, thereby establishing the significance and urgency of the assessment approach.

### Materials and methods

Based on evaluation indicators, a rating was compiled for 17 cities of Kazakhstan and 3 cities of republican significance. The assessment uses data from 2010 to 2022. The assessment indicator is compiled according to three groups of main indicators (figure 1) characterizing the current state of 20 cities in Kazakhstan.

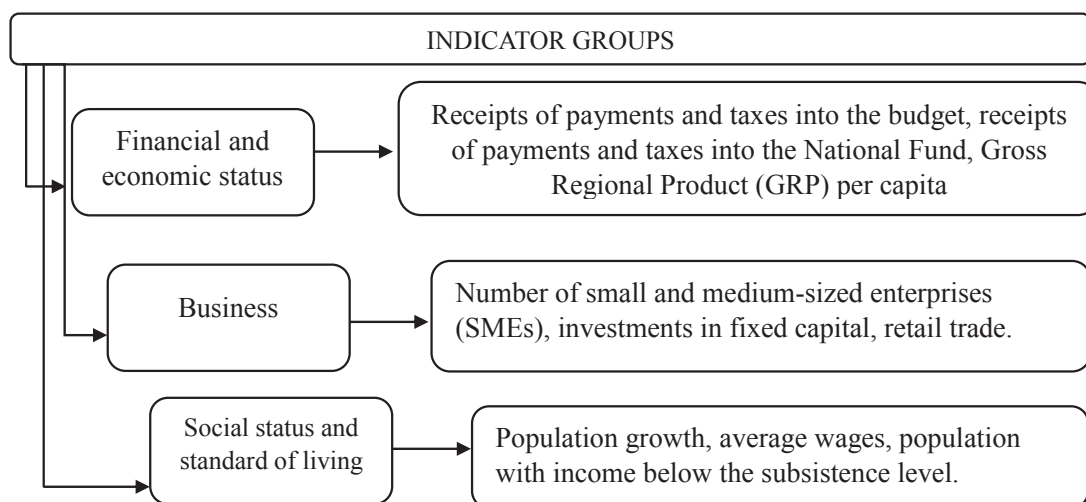


Figure 1 – Assessment indicators

Note: Compiled by authors.

Rating methodology. The rating is based on quantitative indicators, providing an objective comparison between cities based on standardized data. To calculate the method of absolute and relative change for each city over the period from 2010 to 2022 was used [19].

To visually represent the rankings of the cities across different indicators a heatmap will be developed. Heatmaps use color to visually represent data values, and the choice of color scheme can vary depending on the context of the data. In the heatmap we created for the city rankings lighter colors represent lower rankings (better performance), while darker colors indicate higher rankings (poorer performance). Cities that consistently perform well across most indicators will have predominantly lighter shades. Conversely, cities with generally poorer performance will show darker shades. Cities with a high variability in performance across different indicators will show a mix of light and dark shades.

### Results and discussion

According to ranking results there were identified three groups of ranking. Highly Ranked Cities: Turkestan, Kostanay, Almaty, Zhezkazgan, Uralsk, Karaganda, Atyrau. Mid-Ranked Cities: Ust-Kamenogorsk, Semey, Petropavlovsk, Aktau, Kokshetau, Aktobe, Astana, Pavlodar. Low-Ranked Cities: Kyzylorda, Konaev, Taldykorgan, Taraz, Shymkent.

The results of the cities ranking are illustrated in the figure 2 in the heat map indicating the results for each indicator for all cities.

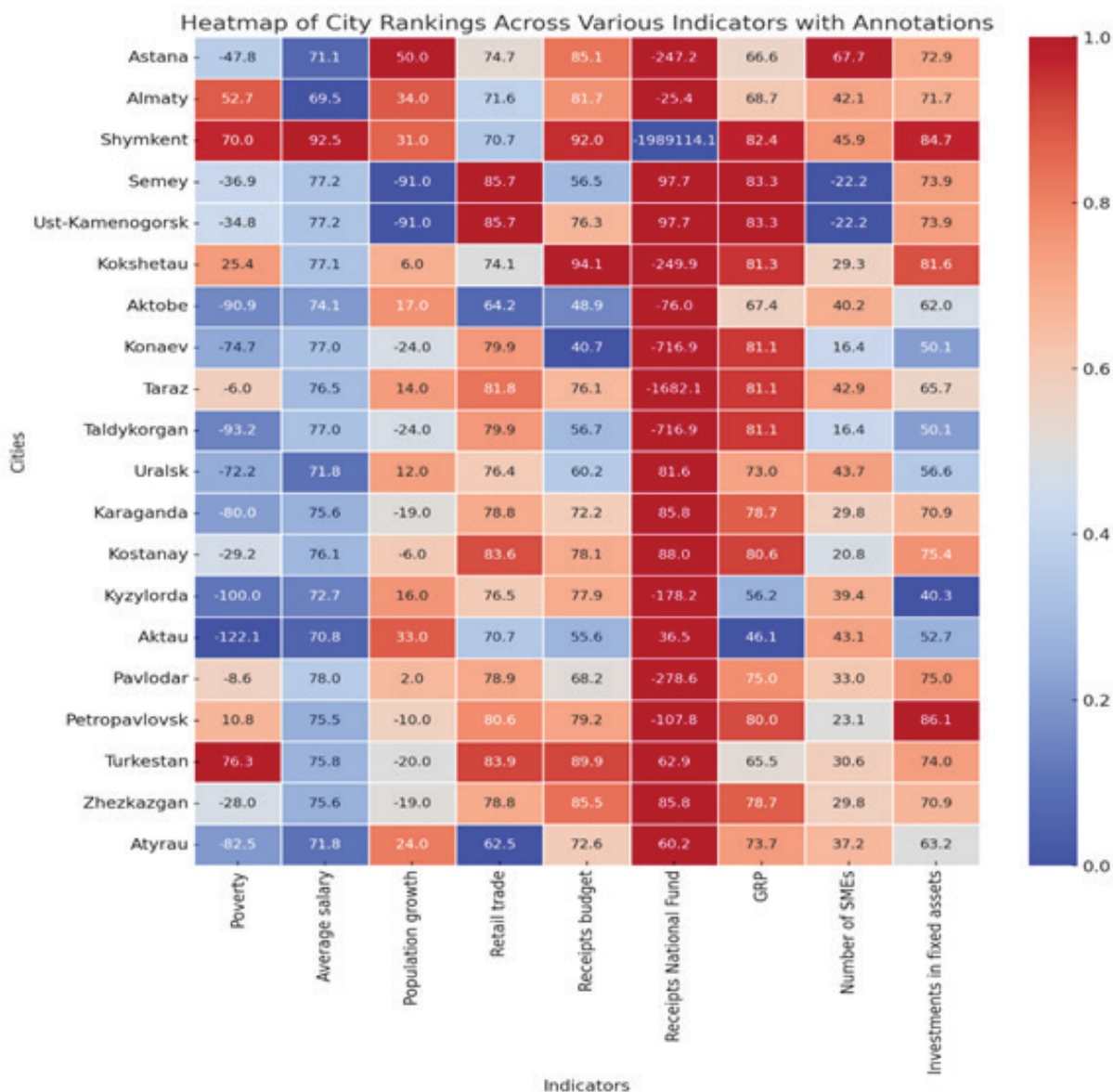


Figure 2 – Heatmap of city rankings in 9 indicators

Note: Compiled by the source [23].

Next, depicted analyses for each indicator are provided separately, giving a deeper view of current socio-economic development in specified cities. The provided dataset in the table 1 encapsulates the fiscal dynamics of cities in Kazakhstan, outlining payments and tax receipts to the budget in billion tenge, for the period 2010–2022. This analysis aims to elucidate the observed trends and patterns within the fiscal landscape of these cities.

Table 1 – Receipts of payments and taxes to the budget, billion tenge, 2010–2022

City	Change, bln.	Starting value, bln.	Ending value, bln.	Percentage change
Astana	1 788,3	312,47	2 100,76	85,1
Almaty	3 384,1	757,06	4 141,16	81,7
Shymkent	406,5	35,13	441,58	92,0
Semey	17,8	13,70	31,50	56,5
Kokshetau	38,4	2,42	40,79	94,1
Aktobe	24,7	25,85	50,58	48,9
Konaev	0,1	0,22	0,37	40,7
Atyrau	43,2	16,28	59,50	72,6
Ust-Kamenogorsk	55,0	17,08	72,11	76,3
Taraz	46,2	14,52	60,73	76,1
Taldykorgan	13,5	10,32	23,81	56,7
Uralsk	21,4	14,18	35,59	60,2
Karaganda	70,1	26,92	97,00	72,2
Kostanay	57,6	16,15	73,76	78,1
Kyzylorda	39,0	11,08	50,09	77,9
Aktau	17,7	14,15	31,86	55,6
Pavlodar	61,6	28,66	90,25	68,2
Petropavlovsk	41,3	10,85	52,15	79,2
Turkestan	119,3	13,35	132,65	89,9
Zhezkazgan	21,8	3,70	25,53	85,5

Note: Complied by the source [23].

Almaty emerges as the city exhibiting the most substantial absolute change in payments and taxes to the budget, recording an impressive increase from 757.06 billion tenge to 4,141.16 billion tenge, reflecting a noteworthy net change of 3,384.1 billion tenge. Similarly, Astana follows suit with a remarkable surge from 312.47 billion tenge to 2,100.76 billion tenge, signifying an impressive rise of 1,788.3 billion tenge. These cities notably contribute to the overall positive fiscal trajectory observed across various regions.

An analysis of percentage changes unveils Kokshetau as the city experiencing the most pronounced percentage shift, registering an impressive 94.1% increase, soaring from 2.42 billion tenge to 40.79 billion tenge. This substantial growth is mirrored in other cities such as Turkestan, Shymkent, and Petropavlovsk, all surpassing an 80% increase in payments and taxes to the budget.

Conversely, cities like Konaev, Aktobe, and Aktau display relatively modest absolute changes and percentage shifts, indicating a relatively stable fiscal environment or more moderate economic developments within these regions. Overall, the majority of the cities in the dataset exhibit positive growth in payments and tax receipts, showcasing an overall positive trend in fiscal contributions to the budget.

The dataset on the receipts of payments and taxes allocated to the National Fund across various cities is provided in table 2 , for the period 2010–2022.

Table 2 – Receipts of payments and taxes to the National Fund, million tenge, 2010–2022

City	Change, bln.	Starting value, bln.	Ending value, bln.	Percentage change
Astana	- 232 979,2	295 091,66	94 237,60	-247,2
Almaty	- 4 247,0	5 612,16	16 724,04	-25,4
Shymkent	- 31 268,9	14 472,57	1,57	-1989114,1
Semey	675,6	3,26	691,36	97,7
Kokshetau	- 3,7	4,45	1,49	-249,9
Aktobe	- 81 824,5	119 733,72	107 631,53	-76,0
Konaev	- 24,5	22,66	3,42	-716,9
Atyrau	653 615,2	298 814,08	1 086 359,03	60,2
Ust-Kamenogorsk	819,6	3,95	838,69	97,7

Continuation of table 2

Taraz	- 41,7	17,35	2,48	-1682,1
Taldykorgan	- 42,1	38,85	5,87	-716,9
Uralsk	418 683,6	37 197,30	513 164,09	81,6
Karaganda	1,1	39,40	1,33	85,8
Kostanay	1,9	3,49	2,17	88,0
Kyzylorda	- 82 956,2	93 878,10	46 547,49	-178,2
Aktau	92 706,6	87 288,99	254 143,57	36,5
Pavlodar	- 8,8	0,42	3,17	-278,6
Petropavlovsk	- 2,4	1,25	-	-107,8
Turkestan	7 427,8	2 026,16	11 805,61	62,9
Zhezkazgan	0,2	6,85	0,23	85,8

Note: Complied by the source [23].

Astana's receipts show an alarming contraction by 247.2%, from a starting value of 295,091.66 million tenge to an ending value of 94,237.60 million tenge. Shymkent presents an outlier with a percentage change of -1,989,114.1%. This figure suggests an almost complete evaporation of receipts, falling to 1.57 million tenge from an initial 14,472.57 million tenge. Kokshetau and Konaev also display sharp declines of -249.9% and -716.9%, respectively, which may signal severe fiscal distress or disruptions in economic activities.

Atyrau exhibits a robust increase of 60.2%, with receipts growing from 298,814.08 million tenge to 1,086,359.03 million tenge. Uralsk demonstrates a considerable positive shift of 81.6%, suggesting enhanced fiscal capacity, potentially linked to regional economic upturns or improved efficiency in revenue collection.

Almaty's decrease of -25.4% may point towards economic downturns or fiscal policy shifts that warrant closer examination. Cities like Karaganda and Zhezkazgan, with percentage changes of 85.8% and 85.8%, respectively, are indicative of a relatively stable fiscal environment with modest growth in receipts.

The data in table 3 showcases significant shifts in the gross regional product (GRP) of various cities, highlighting the absolute changes from initial to final values and providing insights into their economic performance, for the period 2010–2022.

Table 3 – GRP, 2010–2022

City	Change, bln.	Starting value, bln.	Ending value, bln.	Percentage change
Astana	5 246,2	2 635,70	7 881,90	66,6
Almaty city	6 147,5	2 797,30	8 944,80	68,7
Shymkent	2 214,6	474,60	2 689,20	82,4
Semey	976,5	195,76	1 172,25	83,3
Kokshetau	658,4	151,64	810,08	81,3
Aktobe	1 544,4	746,32	2 290,75	67,4
Konaev	277,1	64,55	341,68	81,1
Atyrau	4 542,1	1 620,30	6 162,36	73,7
Ust-Kamenogorsk	1 242,8	249,14	1 491,95	83,3
Taraz	587,5	137,28	724,74	81,1
Taldykorgan	415,7	96,82	512,51	81,1
Uralsk	1 735,3	640,25	2 375,55	73,0
Karaganda	1 846,7	499,57	2 346,26	78,7
Kostanay	1 087,3	262,12	1 349,43	80,6

Continuation of table 3

Kyzylorda	571,5	445,14	1 016,64	56,2
Aktau	690,9	809,31	1 500,18	46,1
Pavlodar	1 823,5	609,22	2 432,72	75,0
Petropavlovsk	1 203,2	300,24	1 503,39	80,0
Turkestan	162,4	85,43	247,85	65,5
Zhezkazgan	359,1	97,14	456,22	78,7
Note: Complied by the source [23].				

Astana experienced a remarkable absolute change of 5,246.2 billion tenge, starting from 2,635.70 billion tenge and reaching 7,881.90 billion tenge. This 66.6% increase signifies a substantial economic upturn within the city. Almaty similarly showcased a notable absolute change of 6,147.5 billion tenge, starting at 2,797.30 billion tenge and concluding at 8,944.80 billion tenge. This growth of 68.7% indicates robust economic expansion within Almaty.

Shymkent demonstrated a significant absolute change of 2,214.6 billion tenge, starting from 474.60 billion tenge and concluding at 2,689.20 billion tenge. With an 82.4% increase, Shymkent showcases substantial economic advancements.

These numbers illustrate substantial economic growth and development within these cities. The notable absolute changes in GRP underscore a flourishing economic landscape, possibly driven by diverse economic activities, successful investment strategies, infrastructure developments, and conducive business environments. This growth positions these cities as key economic drivers, attracting investments and fostering sustained economic progress within their respective regions.

Kyzylorda showed a moderate absolute change of 571.5 billion tenge, starting at 445.14 billion tenge and concluding at 1,016.64 billion tenge, reflecting a growth of 56.2%. Aktau displayed a relatively lower absolute change of 690.9 billion tenge, starting from 809.31 billion tenge and reaching 1,500.18 billion tenge, with a growth rate of 46.1%. This growth indicates a more moderate economic performance compared to other cities.

Karaganda presented a solid absolute change of 1,846.7 billion tenge, starting at 499.57 billion tenge and reaching 2,346.26 billion tenge, marking a growth rate of 78.7%. The results indicated a reasonably robust economic performance within this city.

Kostanay demonstrated a notable absolute change of 1,087.3 billion tenge, starting from 262.12 billion tenge and concluding at 1,349.43 billion tenge, representing a growth of 80.6%. This growth signifies commendable economic expansion within Kostanay.

The provided data in table 4 presents changes in the number of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) across various cities, reflecting shifts in entrepreneurial activities during 2010–2022.

Table 4 – Number of SMEs, 2010–2022

City	Change, bln.	Starting value, bln.	Ending value, bln.	Percentage change
Astana	63 915	30 492	94 407	67,7
Almaty	59 155	81 269	140 424	42,1
Shymkent	12 400	14 604	27 004	45,9
Semey	- 733	4 033	3 299	-22,2
Kokshetau	835	2 019	2 854	29,3
Aktobe	3 898	5 788	9 687	40,2
Konaev	277	1 416	1 692	16,4
Atyrau	1 579	2 670	4 249	37,2
Ust-Kamenogorsk	- 867	4 766	3 899	-22,2
Taraz	2 062	2 748	4 810	42,9
Taldykorgan	400	2 045	2 444	16,4
Uralsk	1 997	2 571	4 568	43,7



Continuation of table 4

Karaganda	3 054	7 185	10 239	29,8
Kostanay	824	3 138	3 962	20,8
Kyzylorda	1 333	2 048	3 381	39,4
Aktau	1 981	2 613	4 594	43,1
Pavlodar	2 204	4 470	6 674	33,0
Petropavlovsk	979	3 268	4 247	23,1
Turkestan	722	1 634	2 356	30,6
Zhezkazgan	509	1 197	1 706	29,8
Note: Complied by the source [23].				

A vibrant entrepreneurial environment and potentially favorable business conditions along with moderate expansion in SMEs demonstrated Astana and Almaty. Astana witnessed a substantial increase of 63,915 SMEs, escalating from 30,492 to 94,407 SMEs, representing a significant 67.7% growth. Almaty demonstrated an addition of 59,155 SMEs, rising from 81,269 to 140,424 SMEs, marking a growth rate of 42.1%. Shymkent demonstrated a positive but slightly more restrained entrepreneurial development compared to other cities with the rise of 12,400 SMEs, advancing from 14,604 to 27,004 SMEs, reflecting a growth of 45.9%.

The data also highlights fluctuations in SMEs within other cities, showcasing both positive and negative trends. Uralsk, Taraz, and Aktau, experienced significant growth rates ranging from 42.9% to 43.7%, suggesting robust entrepreneurial growth. Conversely, Ust-Kamenogorsk and Semey showed declines of 22.2%, indicating a reduction in SMEs within these regions during the specified period.

In table 5 the dataset portrays shifts in investments in fixed assets across various cities, offering insights into regional economic development and capital deployment in the specified cities.

Table 5 – Investments in fixed assets, thousand, 2010–2022

City	Change, bln.	Starting value,bln.	Ending value,bln.	Percentage change
Astana	1 066,0	396,56	1 462,52	72,9
Almaty	1 009,6	398,41	1 407,99	71,7
Shymkent	465,6	84,03	549,62	84,7
Semey	90,3	31,83	122,16	73,9
Ust-Kamenogorsk	98,5	34,72	133,27	73,9
Kokshetau	89,9	20,30	110,19	81,6
Aktobe	291,8	178,60	470,42	62,0
Konaev	27,7	27,59	55,25	50,1
Taraz	90,1	46,98	137,12	65,7
Taldykorgan	36,9	36,79	73,67	50,1
Uralsk	112,6	86,43	199,02	56,6
Karaganda	185,0	75,99	260,97	70,9
Kostanay	100,2	32,63	132,86	75,4
Kyzylorda	49,9	74,06	123,99	40,3
Aktau	115,8	104,17	220,01	52,7
Pavlodar	245,2	81,62	326,83	75,0
Petropavlovsk	120,6	19,46	140,01	86,1
Turkestan	104,6	36,76	141,34	74,0
Zhezkazgan	41,1	16,89	57,99	70,9
Atyrau	569,4	331,62	901,05	63,2
Note: Complied by the source [23].				

Astana and Almaty displayed substantial increments of 1,066.0 billion and 1,009.6 billion tenge, respectively, resulting in 72.9% and 71.7% growth. These metropolises, as economic hubs, exhibit robust investment activities, likely driven by diverse sectors and infrastructure enhancements.

Shymkent and Ust-Kamenogorsk showcased remarkable increases of 465.6 billion and 98.5 billion tenge, respectively, with growth rates of 84.7% and 73.9%. Petropavlovsk demonstrated notable growth, surging by 120.6 billion tenge, representing an 86.1% increase.

Kyzylorda depicted a more moderate growth of 49.9 billion tenge, with a 40.3% increase. However, the results for Kyzylorda signify a comparatively restrained investment pattern compared to other cities. Atyrau despite a substantial increment of 569.4 billion tenge, the growth rate stands at 63.2%, reflecting a notable investment surge but at a relatively lower percentage compared to other cities.

There was observed significant capital infusion, potentially contributing to economic development initiatives potentially directed towards infrastructural or industrial projects in Semey, Aktobe and Kokshetau. Semey displayed a substantial increase of 90.3 billion tenge, representing a growth rate of 73.9%. Kokshetau showcased notable growth of 89.9 billion tenge, with a growth rate of 81.6%. Aktobe demonstrated an increase of 291.8 billion tenge, achieving a growth rate of 62.0%.

Konaev and Taldykorgan exhibited more moderate growth rates at 50.1% for an increase of 27.7 billion tenge and 36.9 billion tenge, respectively, reflecting a relatively restrained but still positive investment trend. Uralsk presented a rise of 112.6 billion tenge, with a growth rate of 56.6%, indicating moderate but progressive investments contributing to the city’s economic landscape. Karaganda, Kostanay, Pavlodar, Turkestan, Zhezkazgan, and Aktau showcased growth rates ranging from 70.9% to 75.4%, with varying absolute increases, underscoring diverse but significant investments impacting their economic trajectories.

The dataset in retail trade across various cities is presented in table 6.

Table 6 – Retail trade, thousand tenge, 2010–2022

City	Change, bln.	Starting value,bln.	Ending value,bln.	Percentage change
Astana	1 217	413	1 629	74,7
Almaty	1 741	691	2 432	71,6
Shymkent	452	188	640	70,7
Semey	277	46	324	85,7
Kokshetau	277	46	324	85,7
Aktobe	62	22	84	74,1
Konaev	233	130	364	64,2
Atyrau	24	6	31	79,9
Ust-Kamenogorsk	94	21	115	81,8
Taraz	33	8	41	79,9
Taldykorgan	189	58	248	76,4
Uralsk	328	88	416	78,8
Karaganda	161	32	192	83,6
Kostanay	114	35	149	76,5
Kyzylorda	102	43	145	70,7
Aktau	263	70	333	78,9
Pavlodar	204	49	253	80,6
Petropavlovsk	17	3	20	83,9
Turkestan	55	15	69	78,8
Zhezkazgan	124	74	198	62,5

Note: Compiled by the source [23].

Astana, Almaty, and Shymkent displayed substantial increases in retail trade, with Astana witnessing a significant increment of 1,217 billion tenge, reaching 1,629 billion tenge (74.7% rise). Almaty and Shymkent also experienced notable surges of 1,741 billion tenge (71.6% growth) and 452

billion tenge (70.7% growth), respectively. These major cities showcase robust economic activity, potentially fueled by diverse economic sectors and higher disposable incomes.

Semey and Kokshetau exhibited parallel growth in retail trade, both witnessing an increase of 277 billion tenge, achieving a similar 85.7% growth rate. This consistent growth might indicate parallel economic expansions in these regions, potentially influenced by similar market factors.

Petropavlovsk and Zhezkazgan presented more moderate increases in retail trade, with Petropavlovsk recording a rise of 17 billion tenge (83.9% growth) and Zhezkazgan experiencing a 124 billion tenge increase (62.5% growth). Konaev demonstrated a substantial rise of 233 billion tenge (64.2% growth), showcasing a noteworthy upsurge in retail trade, albeit at a slightly lower rate compared to larger metropolitan areas.

Overall, these fluctuations reflect varying levels of economic activity across cities, with major urban centers experiencing robust retail growth, while others exhibit more moderate but positive trajectories in retail trade.

Aktobe and Atyrau showed relatively modest increases in retail trade, with Aktobe recording a 62 billion tenge rise (74.1% growth) and Atyrau displaying a 24 billion tenge increase (79.9% growth). Ust-Kamenogorsk and Taraz reflected moderate growth in retail trade, with Ust-Kamenogorsk exhibiting a 94 billion tenge increase (81.8% growth) and Taraz showcasing a 33 billion tenge rise (79.9% growth).

Taldykorgan and Uralsk demonstrated noteworthy increases in retail trade, with Taldykorgan showing a rise of 189 billion tenge (76.4% growth) and Uralsk displaying a 328 billion tenge increase (78.8% growth). These cities portray substantial growth rates, indicating vibrant economic activities contributing to economic vibrancy. Karaganda, Kostanay, Kyzylorda, Aktau, Pavlodar, and Turkestan exhibited robust growth rates ranging from 70.7% to 83.6% in retail trade, showcasing varying absolute increases and highlighting economic expansions within these regions.

The data on population growth across various cities is given in table 7 and reflects a spectrum of demographic shifts and urban dynamics over the specified period (2010–2022).

Table 7 – Population growth, thousand, 2010–2022

City	Change, bln.	Starting value,bln.	Ending value,bln.	Percentage change
Astana	647	649	1 296	50
Almaty	711	1 391	2 101	34
Shymkent	359	804	1 162	31
Semey	- 146	308	161	- 91
Ust-Kamenogorsk	- 173	363	191	- 91
Kokshetau	10	140	149	6
Aktobe	75	374	449	17
Konaev	- 32	165	133	- 24
Taraz	56	331	387	14
Taldykorgan	- 43	220	177	- 24
Uralsk	29	223	253	12
Karaganda	- 76	485	409	- 19
Kostanay	- 13	239	226	- 6
Kyzylorda	40	207	247	16
Aktau	68	141	209	33
Pavlodar	5	328	333	2
Petropavlovsk	- 20	225	205	- 10
Turkestan	- 59	352	292	- 20
Zhezkazgan	- 13	81	68	- 19
Atyrau	48	156	204	24

Note: Compiled by the source [23].

Astana, Almaty, and Shymkent experienced significant increases in population. Astana witnessed a rise of 647 thousand individuals, Almaty surged by 711 thousand, and Shymkent saw a growth of 359 thousand residents. However, despite these substantial numeric increases, they recorded relatively lower percentage changes of 50%, 34%, and 31%, respectively. This suggests a considerable base population that experienced notable numeric growth but at a relatively slower rate compared to smaller cities.

Declines in population size were observed in the following cities. Semey and Ust-Kamenogorsk faced substantial negative population growth rates of -91%. Semey encountered a decline of 146 thousand individuals, while Ust-Kamenogorsk experienced a reduction of 173 thousand residents. Aktau, Atyrau, and Kyzylorda showcased moderate yet positive growth rates, suggesting sustained but not explosive urban expansion. Conversely, cities including Karaganda, Zhezkazgan, Petropavlovsk, Turkestan, and others faced population declines, ranging from -6% to -24%.

The data on average salaries across cities is given in the table 8 and demonstrates varying increases, highlighting shifts in income levels over the specified period (2010–2022).

Table 8 – Average salary, thousand tenge, 2010–2022

City	Change, bln.	Starting value, bln.	Ending value, bln.	Percentage change
Astana	291	118	409	71,1
Almaty	247	108	355	69,5
Shymkent	217	18	235	92,5
Semey	49	14	63	77,2
Ust-Kamenogorsk	58	17	75	77,2
Kokshetau	37	11	48	77,1
Aktobe	100	35	134	74,1
Konaev	18	5	24	77,0
Taraz	57	18	75	76,5
Taldykorgan	28	8	37	77,0
Uralsk	73	29	102	71,8
Karaganda	77	25	102	75,6
Kostanay	52	16	68	76,1
Kyzylorda	58	22	80	72,7
Aktau	91	38	129	70,8
Pavlodar	94	27	120	78,0
Petropavlovsk	78	25	104	75,5
Turkestan	24	8	32	75,8
Zhezkazgan	15	5	20	75,6
Atyrau	113	44	157	71,8

Note: Compiled by the source [23].

Significant income improvements are observed in Shymkent, Ust-Kamenogorsk, Kokshetau, Semey, Taldykorgan and Pavlodar. Shymkent and Ust-Kamenogorsk lead with a substantial 92.5% and 77.2% growth rate, respectively, in average salaries. Kokshetau, Semey, and Taldykorgan demonstrated a 77.1%, 77.2%, and 77.0% increase in average salaries, respectively. Pavlodar exhibited a notable 78.0% growth in average salaries.

Other cities showed a positive growth rate ranging from 69.5% to 76.5%. While slightly lower than the aforementioned cities, these figures still indicate considerable increases in average salaries, showcasing overall improvements in income levels across various regions.

The data on the population below the subsistence level is presented in table 9 and showed varied socioeconomic realities across cities in Kazakhstan, revealing stark differences in economic conditions and welfare, for the period 2010–2022.

Table 9 – Population with income below the subsistence level, percentage, 2010–2022

City	Change, bln.	Starting value,bln.	Ending value,bln.	Percentage change
Astana	- 1,10	3,40	2,30	-47,8
Almaty	2,90	2,60	5,50	52,7
Shymkent	2,66	1,14	3,80	70,0
Semey	- 0,50	1,85	1,35	-36,9
Ust-Kamenogorsk	- 0,56	2,18	1,62	-34,8
Kokshetau	0,28	0,84	1,12	25,4
Aktobe	- 1,40	2,94	1,54	-90,9
Konaev	- 0,25	0,59	0,34	-74,7
Taraz	- 0,10	1,70	1,60	-6,0
Taldykorgan	- 0,38	0,79	0,41	-93,2
Uralsk	- 1,04	2,48	1,44	-72,2
Karaganda	- 1,02	2,30	1,28	-80,0
Kostanay	- 0,41	1,81	1,40	-29,2
Kyzylorda	- 1,74	3,48	1,74	-100,0
Aktau	- 1,77	3,22	1,45	-122,1
Pavlodar	- 0,14	1,76	1,62	-8,6
Petropavlovsk	0,25	2,05	2,30	10,8
Turkestan	1,24	0,38	1,62	76,3
Zhezkazgan	- 0,08	0,38	0,30	-28,0
Atyrau	- 0,80	1,77	0,97	-82,5

Note: Complied by the source [23].

Potential improvements in economic conditions, reflected in a smaller proportion of the population struggling with meeting basic needs were observed Astana, Semey, Ust-Kamenogorsk, Taraz, Kostanay, Petropavlovsk, Kokshetau, and Zhezkazgan. The results showcased reductions in the percentage of the population below the subsistence level. These declines range from -6% to -93.2%.

Conversely, several cities, notably Aktau, Kyzylorda, Atyrau, Aktobe, Uralsk, Karaganda, and Konaev, experienced significant rises in the percentage of the population below the subsistence level. The increases range from 52.7% to 122.1%, highlighting economic challenges leading to a larger share of the population facing financial hardships or struggling to meet basic living standards.

It must be mentioned that Almaty, Shymkent, and Turkestan exhibited notable positive changes in this indicator, with percentages rising between 10.8% and 70%. These increases suggest potential economic strains or shifts in social conditions leading to a larger portion of the population falling below the subsistence level within these regions.

Table 10 – City ranking, 2010–2022

Rank	City	Total Percentage Change	Economic Interpretation
1	Turkestan	538.9	Strong economic performance across multiple areas. Favorable business environment and investment opportunities.
2	Kostanay	467.4	Strong economic performance across multiple areas. Favorable business environment and investment opportunities.
3	Almaty	466.6	Strong economic performance across multiple areas. Favorable business environment and investment opportunities.
4	Zhezkazgan	458.1	Strong economic performance across multiple areas. Favorable business environment and investment opportunities.
5	Uralsk	403.1	Strong economic performance across multiple areas. Favorable business environment and investment opportunities.
6	Karaganda	392.8	Strong economic performance across multiple areas. Favorable business environment and investment opportunities.

Continuation of table 10

7	Atyrau	382.7	Strong economic performance across multiple areas. Favorable business environment and investment opportunities.
8	Ust-Kamenogorsk	346.1	Mixed economic performance. Stable but not rapidly growing economy. Transitional phase or specific sectoral challenges.
9	Semey	324.2	Mixed economic performance. Stable but not rapidly growing economy. Transitional phase or specific sectoral challenges.
10	Petropavlovsk	317.5	Mixed economic performance. Stable but not rapidly growing economy. Transitional phase or specific sectoral challenges.
11	Aktau	286.4	Mixed economic performance. Stable but not rapidly growing economy. Transitional phase or specific sectoral challenges.
12	Kokshetau	219.0	Mixed economic performance. Stable but not rapidly growing economy. Transitional phase or specific sectoral challenges.
13	Aktobe	206.9	Mixed economic performance. Stable but not rapidly growing economy. Transitional phase or specific sectoral challenges.
14	Astana	193.1	Mixed economic performance. Stable but not rapidly growing economy. Transitional phase or specific sectoral challenges.
15	Pavlodar	122.9	Mixed economic performance. Stable but not rapidly growing economy. Transitional phase or specific sectoral challenges.
16	Kyzylorda	100.8	Significant economic challenges. Potential issues in poverty, salaries, and business environment. Needs targeted interventions.
17	Konaev	-470.4	Significant economic challenges. Potential issues in poverty, salaries, and business environment. Needs targeted interventions.
18	Taldykorgan	-472.9	Significant economic challenges. Potential issues in poverty, salaries, and business environment. Needs targeted interventions.
19	Taraz	-1250.0	Significant economic challenges. Potential issues in poverty, salaries, and business environment. Needs targeted interventions.
20	Shymkent	-1988544.9	Data anomalies or severe economic challenges. Possible economic crisis or major downturn. Requires further investigation.
Note: Compiled based on the calculations.			

**Highly Ranked Cities.** These cities likely exhibit strong economic performance across multiple areas, such as low poverty rates, high average salaries, and robust retail trade. The positive changes in indicators like investments in fixed assets and growth in the number of SMEs suggest a favorable business environment, possibly indicating good investment opportunities and entrepreneurial activity. High rankings in receipts of payments and taxes to the budget and the National Fund may reflect a strong economic base and effective fiscal management.

**Mid-Ranked Cities.** These cities show a mixed performance across the indicators. While they may excel in certain areas, they might be lagging in others. The average salary, population growth, and retail trade figures could be moderate, indicating a stable but not rapidly growing economy. Thus, these cities may be experiencing transitional phases or might have specific challenges in certain sectors that are offset by strengths in others.

**Low-Ranked Cities.** These cities are likely facing significant economic challenges. Negative values in key indicators suggest issues like higher poverty rates, lower average salaries, and possibly declining retail trade. Negative figures in investments and SME growth could indicate a less favorable business environment, potentially due to factors like regulatory challenges, limited access to capital, or broader economic difficulties. The extremely large negative value for Shymkent could be explained with lack of data.

## Conclusion

A study of the economic indicators of Kazakhstan's cities revealed significant differences in their economic and social development. The classification of cities into high-, medium- and low-ranking is based on aggregated data on key indicators such as poverty levels, average wages, population growth,

retail trade and others. This division allows us to more deeply understand the level of economic development at the level of individual cities and regions.

The study emphasized that, despite the general improvement in the economic situation in some regions, the problem of poverty remains relevant. The differences in economic and social conditions in different cities are significant. Individual cities, such as Astana and Almaty, have demonstrated significant success in the fight against poverty, which is associated with effective innovative economic strategies and a developed social support system.

On the other hand, in cities such as Uralsk and Kostanay, there is an increase in the number of people living in low-income conditions. This highlights the need for more detailed analysis of the reasons behind such trends and the development of targeted strategies to alleviate poverty.

The study results reflect the heterogeneity of economic and social development in different regions. This highlights the importance of a tailored approach to economic planning and social policy. While some cities are experiencing remarkable economic growth and declining poverty rates, others are facing increasing social problems.

The study confirms that the economic and social development of Kazakhstan's cities is heterogeneous, which requires an integrated and differentiated approach in the development and implementation of economic strategies and social programs. The successes of some cities can serve as a model for other regions, while problem areas require special attention and urgent action to alleviate poverty and stimulate economic growth.

Thus, the results of the study are an important contribution to the understanding of regional economic dynamics and can serve as a basis for the development of more effective regional development strategies.

**Funding information.** The article was prepared within the framework of the grant funding project of the Science Committee of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan «Strategy for the development of the regional potential of Kazakhstan: assessment of socio-cultural and economic potentials, development of a road map, model and development scenarios» BR18574240.

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## **ОЦЕНКА ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКИХ ЛАНДШАФТОВ: РЕЙТИНГИ ГОРОДОВ (2010–2022 ГГ.)**

### **Аннотация**

Оценка состояния городов имеет решающее значение для понимания динамики развития городов, определения областей для улучшения и формулирования целенаправленной политики по повышению качества жизни жителей. Данное исследование сосредоточено на оценке мегаполисов Казахстана по девяти показате-



лям, сгруппированным по финансовому и экономическому состоянию, развитию бизнеса и уровню жизни. С использованием методов сравнительного анализа и ранжирования в исследовании оцениваются бюджетные ассигнования, динамика численности населения, промышленный рост и влияние стратегических инвестиций на развитие городов. Опираясь на текущие экономические и демографические тенденции, авторы рассматривают роль городов как движущих сил экономического роста и подчеркивается важность устранения социального и экономического неравенства. Посредством обзора литературы исследование контекстуализирует полученные результаты в рамках более широкого дискурса об урбанизации и экономическом развитии, подчеркивая необходимость разработки детализированных стратегий для устранения региональных различий. Методологически используется рейтинговая система, основанная на количественных показателях за период с 2010 по 2022 гг., с визуализацией тепловой карты для иллюстрации рейтинга городов по различным показателям. Согласно агрегированным данным по ключевым экономическим показателям города были разделены на три категории: с высоким рейтингом, со средним рейтингом и с низким рейтингом. Исследование способствует более глубокому пониманию городского развития в Казахстане и дает представление о разработке политики, направленной на содействие устойчивому и инклюзивному росту в мегаполисах. Анализ рейтинга городов показывает разнообразный экономический ландшафт в городах Казахстана. Города с высоким рейтингом демонстрируют устойчивые экономические показатели с низким уровнем бедности, высокими средними зарплатами и активной розничной торговлей, что указывает на многообещающие перспективы для бизнеса. Города со средним рейтингом демонстрируют неоднозначные показатели, в то время как города с низким рейтингом сталкиваются со значительными экономическими проблемами, включая рост бедности, снижение зарплат и потенциальный спад в торговле.

**Ключевые слова:** региональный анализ, городская экономика, развитие, экономическая дифференциация, социальное развитие, города страны, рейтинг.

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## **ЭКОНОМИКАЛЫҚ ЛАНДШАФТТАРДЫ БАҒАЛАУ: ҚАЛА РЕЙТИНГІ (2010–2022 ЖЖ.)**

### **Андатпа**

Қалаларды бағалау – қаланың даму динамикасын түсіну, жақсарту бағыттарын анықтау және тұрғындардың өмір сүру сапасын жақсарту бойынша мақсатты саясатты қалыптастыру үшін өте маңызды. Бұл зерттеу Қазақстанның мегаполистерін қаржылық-экономикалық жай-күй, бизнестің дамуы және өмір сүру деңгейі бойынша топтастырылған тоғыз көрсеткіш бойынша бағалауға бағытталған. Салыстырмалы талдау және саралау әдістерін қолдана отырып, зерттеу бюджеттік қаражатты, халықтың динамикасын, өнеркәсіптік өсуді және стратегиялық инвестициялардың қала құрылысына әсерін бағалайды. Қазіргі экономикалық және демографиялық тенденцияларға сүйене отырып, зерттеу қалалардың экономикалық өсудің қозғаушы

күші ретіндегі рөлін зерттейді және әлеуметтік және экономикалық теңсіздіктерді жоюдың маңыздылығын көрсетеді. Әдебиеттерге шолу жасай отырып, зерттеу урбанизация және экономикалық даму туралы кеңірек дискурстағы нәтижелерді контексттейді, бұл аймақтық айырмашылықтарды жою үшін егжей-тегжейлі стратегиялардың қажеттілігін көрсетеді. Әдістемелік тұрғыдан алғанда, 2010 жылдан 2022 жылға дейінгі сандық көрсеткіштерге негізделген рейтингтік жүйе жұмыс істейді, жылу картасының визуализациясы әртүрлі көрсеткіштер бойынша қала рейтингтерін көрсету үшін қолданылады. Негізгі экономикалық көрсеткіштер бойынша жинақталған деректерді пайдалана отырып, қалалар үш санатқа жіктелді: жоғары дәрежелі, орта дәрежелі және төмен дәрежелі. Зерттеу Қазақстанның қала құрылысын тереңірек түсінуге ықпал етеді және оның мегаполистерінің тұрақты және инклюзивті өсуіне ықпал етуге бағытталған саясатты тұжырымдау үшін ақпарат береді. Қала рейтингін талдау Қазақстан қалаларындағы әртүрлі экономикалық ландшафтты көрсетеді. Жоғары рейтингке ие қалалар кедейліктің төмен деңгейімен, жоғары орташа жалақымен және белсенді бөлшек саудамен жоғары экономикалық көрсеткіштерді көрсетеді, бұл бизнестің жарқын болашағын меңзейді. Орташа рейтингке ие қалалар әртүрлі көрсеткіштерді көрсетеді, ал төмен рейтингке ие қалалар кедейліктің жоғарылауы, жалақының төмендеуі және сауданың төмендеуі сияқты экономикалық қиындықтарға тап болады.

**Тірек сөздер:** аймақтық талдау, қала экономикасы, даму, экономикалық дифференциация, әлеуметтік даму, ел қалалары, рейтинг.