



**THE IMPACT OF
CLIMATE CHANGE
ON THE RIGHTS OF OLDER PERSONS
IN TURKEY**

**ÖZGÜR ARUN
BANU KARADEMİR ARUN
SEDA KOCABIYIK**

ASSOCIATION FOR AGING STUDIES PUBLICATION



SENEX
REPORT

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preface





Office of the United Nations High Commissioner (OHCHR) was requesting information from member countries on the effects of climate change on the rights of older people. I only learned about it following the call of the OHCHR in July 2020. At first, I thought "there is a strong civil society working on the effects of climate change in Turkey, they will respond to this call". When I shared this call with both Banu and Seda, we wondered how civil society organizations would deal with this issue and wanted to read the studies on how the climate crisis would affect the people in Turkey and which social segments would be affected. However, our initial contacts with whom we considered experts on the subject rather surprised us. Because when we asked about the effects of the climate crisis on the rights of the older people, we did not expect the answer "what does it have to do with them?"

"What does the climate change have to do with the rights of older people? This issue, at best, concerns children the most!" It was precisely these answers that motivated

and prompted us to do this study and respond to the call of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. It is also a social responsibility to understand the effects of the climate crisis on children, women, persons with disabilities, older people, immigrants and all groups vulnerable. Senex's interest in aging studies stems from this.

We completed the present study in December 2020. We submitted it to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in a timely manner. And afterwards? Once again, we were surprised. We did not expect to be the only civil society organization from Turkey responding to the UN call! We hope that this is only the beginning; we hope that in the future, the number of high-quality studies on older people, old age and aging will increase even more.

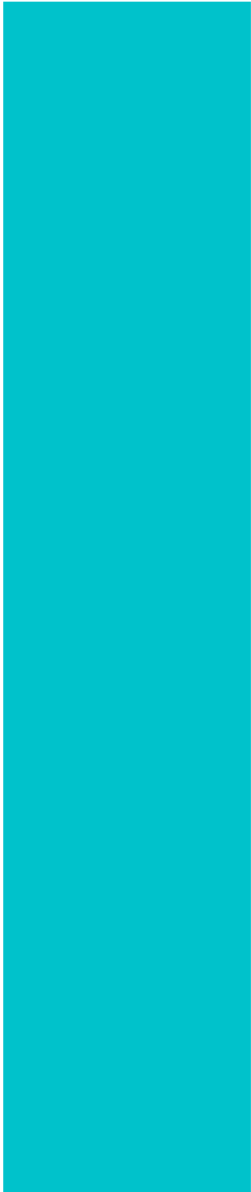
I would like to mention the people and institutions that supported us. First of all, I would like to thank Etkiniz EU Programme for the extensive support. The valuable experts working with Etkiniz were always there for us whenever needed. Many thanks

to them. Adem Arkadaş-Thibert made his support available throughout our study. I am grateful for his interest and support. Ayşe Gündüz Hoşgör and İlhami Alkan Olsson shared their knowledge for ripening our study. I would like to thank them for their support that enabled us to keep our focus. My dear colleague Jason Holdsworth read the entire text. Our work ripened with his suggestions and inimitable criticisms. I do not know how to express my gratitude to Jason. It falls to me to thank Banu and Seda, who were always there since the first day I shared the idea of submitting this study in response to the call of the OHCHR, for their belief and support.

I would like to thank all colleagues and friends who provided contributions. These valuable contributions offered for the creation of this book gave meaning to our work, opened our horizons, and we learned new information. I hope it will be useful for you, too.

Özgür Arun
February 2021

introduction



English > About Us > UN Human Rights: Our organization

UN Human Rights: Our organization

UN Human Rights is part of the United Nations Secretariat, with a staff of headquarters in Geneva, as well as an office in New York. It has field pre country/stand-alone offices. Furthermore, UN Human Rights supports the missions or political offices and deploys human rights advisers to work wi

The Geneva-based headquarters has three substan

- Thematic Engagement, Special Procedures and Right to Development policy and provides guidance, tools, advice and capacity-strengthenin issues, including for human rights mainstreaming purposes. It also pr Council's special procedures.
- Human Rights Council and Treaty Mechanisms Division (CTMD), whic support to the Human Rights Council (HRC), the Council's Universal P the human rights treaty bodies.
- Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division (FOTCD), whic implementing the Office's work in the field.

Dedicated services and sections, which report directly to the Deputy High management, planning, coordination and outreach functions.

Integrating Human Rights throughout the UN in Ne

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in New York (OHC integration of human rights norms and standards in the decision-making governmental and inter-agency bodies based at the United Nations head

The Assistant Secretary-General assists the High Commissioner in advanc policy-making bodies, permanent missions of Member States, United Nati governmental organizations, professional groups and the media.

Leadership

The High Commissioner for Human Rights is the principal human rights of missioner heads OHCHR and spearheads the United Nations' human

NY is headed by an Assistant Secretary-General representing in h ights.

OHCHR webpage
<https://www.ohchr.org>

1 <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/RES/44/7>

2 <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/HRAndClimateChange/Pages/RightsOlderPersons.aspx>

3 https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/ClimateChange/RightsOlderPersons/QuestionnaireRightsOlderPersons_EN.pdf

Climate change poses a threat to life on earth. Humankind is both the cause and victim of the destruction of nature.

Nonetheless, it is the most vulnerable groups, namely older people, women, children, people with disabilities, the poor and ethnic and religious minorities who are faced with the most adverse effects of climate change.

Therefore, the United Nations Human Rights Council, in Resolution no. 44/7,¹ has asked the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to conduct, with input and participation of states and relevant stakeholders, a study on the promotion and protection of the rights of older persons in the context of climate change.

Consequently, OHCHR has launched an appeal to assess violations of the rights of older persons, one of the most

vulnerable groups to experience adverse effects of climate change, including particularly older persons with disabilities and older women.² This appeal aims to:

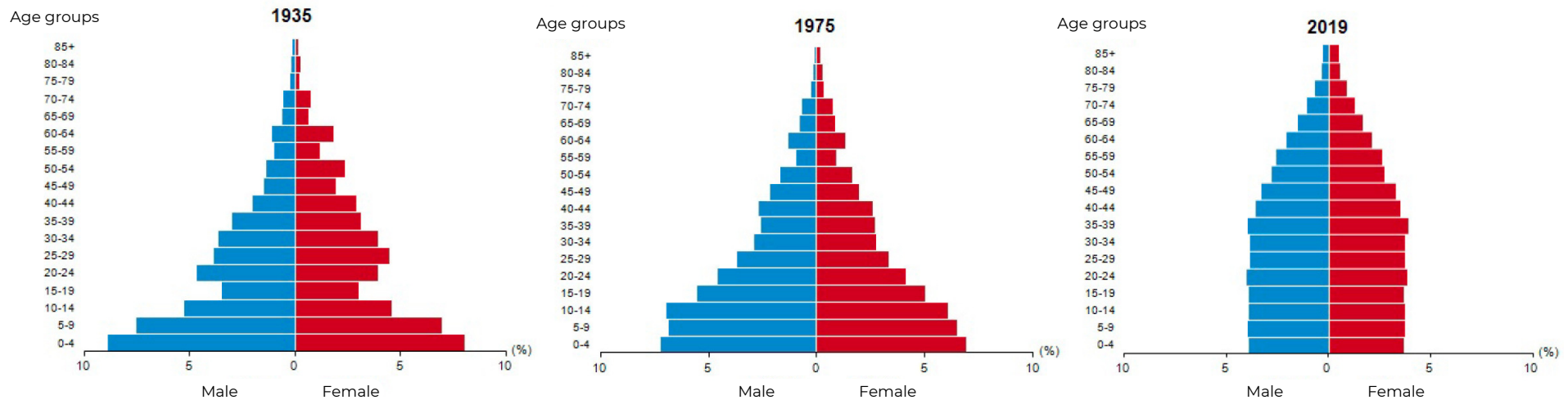
- identify rights violations by country, and
- share the best practices on the elimination of rights violations and lessons learned from such practices.

In response to OHCHR's appeal, Senex: Association for Aging Studies has prepared an analytical report titled "Senex Report: The Impact of Climate Change on the Rights of Older Persons in Turkey". Senex Report on Turkey addresses questions posed under the seven headings of the OHCHR report regarding rights violations of older persons in the context of climate change.³



**population
aging in
Turkey:
evidence**





Graphic 1. Population Pyramid of Turkey, 1935-2019

Source. TurkStat, 2019.

“Turkey is an aging society.”

Turkey is losing its relatively young population at a rate more rapid than most of the other societies in the world. Turkey’s population has undergone a transformation during the modernization quest set in motion with the proclamation of the Republic, to the extent that the population of older persons surged from 3.5% in 1935 to 10% by 2020. Turkey’s population has seen a rapid influx of migration from rural to urban areas in the last century.

Birth rates have declined while life expectancy at birth has increased. Today, Turkey is an aging society.

Population aging is not a problem. Nonetheless, for countries like Turkey the main problem is becoming older prior to becoming wealthy. The aging rate in Turkey is so fast that the demographic transformation adversely affects the social and economic development processes. Turkey’s

“Population aging is not a problem,”

“The main problem for Turkey is becoming older prior to becoming wealthy,”

struggle to maintain a sustainable balance while engaging and keeping the active population employed, coupled with the rapid transformation of the population structure during the development process puts extra pressure on the environment. Problems exist in the fulfillment of fundamental human rights, including access to clean water, sustainable food supply, nutritional sustenance, health services, employment, participation in decision-making mechanisms and the right to representation. There is a need to implement inclusive policies that achieve social and economic development in a sustainable balance, which in turn, reduces pressure on the environment. Inclusive policies may help rectify societal inequalities based on gender, class, ethnicity, age, and geographical location. However, to enable social, economic, and

environmental development to proceed in a sustainable balance, all institutions in a society should embrace a commitment to inclusive and egalitarian services.



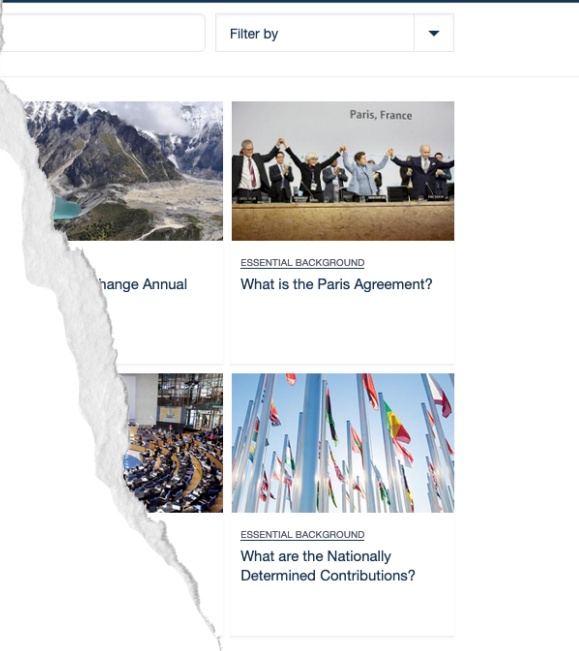
Photograph 1. Gökbük Aging Study, Baseline Survey, Gökbük Village / Finike, Antalya, July 12, 2014.

Source: Senex | Association for Aging Studies



**climate
change &
older
persons**

**why older
persons matter
for climate
change?**



UNFCCC webpage
<https://unfccc.int/>

⁴ <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/RES/44/7>

⁵ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/HRAndClimateChange/Pages/RightsOlderPersons.aspx>

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change⁴ (UNFCCC), the first international convention on climate change ratified by 196 states and the European Union (EU), entered into force on March 21, 1994. Turkey became a Party to the Convention on March 24, 2004.⁵ State Parties to the Convention have an obligation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, collaborate on research and technology and protect greenhouse gas sinks (for instance forests, oceans, and lakes).

However, all countries, regardless of whether they are bound by international obligations, are affected by climate change. Therefore, climate change is a global problem that cannot be ignored. Turkey is also tackling adverse effects caused directly or indirectly by climate change. Impacts

of climate change take a heavy toll on older persons, particularly older women and older persons with disabilities, all of whom are among the most vulnerable groups in society.

“In particular, older persons living in rural areas are directly affected by the causes of climate change and the climate crisis.”

Agricultural activities and sustainable food production are among the production areas most affected by climate change. Older populations in rural areas are employed in the agriculture sector. Most older people are trying to make a living through small-scale production of commodities in the agricultural sector. They engage in household production in the absence

“How will older persons, who do not have inclusion in comprehensive social security due to the nature of employment in the agriculture sector, be able to meet their care needs in urban areas?”

of economic power to use refined technologies and the technical know-how and competence required by such technologies. Agricultural activity, undertaken either for livelihood or household consumption, is the main provider of basic food needs. In addition, the products cannot turn into an economic value due to limited storage capacities. The quality of the land used for household production and livelihood is affected by climate change. Production engagement as such is maintained in a very fragile balance.

Indeed, hydroelectric power plants, thermal power plants, dam constructions and mining directly threaten the fragile balance of agricultural activity in rural areas. For example, one third of the beekeeping activity in the Aegean region has

terminated since 1990 (Öztürk, 2009). The rural population which has rapidly aged, especially after the internal migration of the 1980s, currently appears to be forced into abandoning agricultural activities due to climate change. The population making a living from agriculture is relocating as once-income-generating agricultural activities have either lost their profitability or have been terminated. The disintegration of rural areas causes older people who have moved to urban areas to become dependent on either another person or an institution. How will older persons, who do not have inclusion in comprehensive social security due to the nature of employment in the agriculture sector, be able to meet their care needs in urban areas? How will older persons who have fallen into poverty and moved to the city meet their basic food needs?

0

3

**the impact
of climate
change on
the rights
of older
persons**

1
What are the adverse effects of climate change on the full and effective enjoyment of the human rights of older persons?

6 https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/ClimateChange/RightsOlderPersons/QuestionnaireRightsOlderPersons_EN.pdf

Sustainable Development Goals Indicators and the 2030 Agenda reveal that development is only possible as long as it is inclusive of all age groups. Empowering older persons in all areas to ensure their participation in economic, social, and political life is the key requirement to tackling inequalities. To this end, it is essential to understand to what extent these have been affected by climate change. In this section, **Senex: Association for Aging Studies** opens up the discussion on how older persons are affected by climate change, in response to questions⁶ posed under the seven headings of the OHCHR questionnaire.

Turkey is rich in natural resources. Yet, the destructive desire for development, adamantly embraced with respect to using natural resources, undermines the right to access clean air, water, and

“Access to clean air, water and food is a basic requirement to live a decent and dignified life free from poverty and social exclusion.”

food. Access to clean air, water and food is a basic requirement to live a decent and dignified life free from poverty and social exclusion. Yet, in Turkey, particularly agricultural land, forestland and watercourses are destroyed by thermal power plants, hydropower plants and mining.

Destruction of agricultural land significantly affects sustainable food production. Damage to forestland or streamside ecosystems or poor management thereof further exacerbate the effects of climate change.

“Turkey is home to many agricultural lands, streamside systems and forestlands that have been damaged in the last three decades.”

The health of streamside and forestland ecosystems are necessary for bringing about emissions reductions and in the fight against climate change. In fact, the forestlands in Turkey are estimated to have a potential of reducing emissions by a hundred million tons per year (Tohum Derneği, 2020).

As streamside ecosystems are found within agricultural lands, they hold the potential to effectively improve water quality. They also significantly contribute to ecological diversity. Therefore, any damage to agricultural land, streamside systems and forestlands would imply the loss of components of the ecology system.

Turkey is home to many agricultural lands, streamside systems and forestlands that have been damaged in the last three decades. The following

case studies serve as examples: Residents of Bergama have waged a year’s long campaign against a gold mining project involving cyanide leaching. To this day, peasants pursue their rights against the first gold mine established in the middle of 17 villages in Bergama in 1989.

Photograph 2. Gökbük Aging Study, Field Visit, Gökbük Village / Finike, Antalya, April 24, 2014.
Source: Senex | Association for Aging Studies





7 See BBC news report at;
<https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-50045879>

8 The network of thermal power plants in Turkey is available at;
<https://graphcommons.com/graphs/5d293d74-f1bd-46fe-b673-a597fcd0b21d?auto=true>

9 <https://www.ttb.org.tr/eweb/yatagan/2.html>

10 The HES network in Turkey is available at;
<https://graphcommons.com/graphs/93d05f5b6d7a-4fe7-9559-4177d67092e7?auto=true>

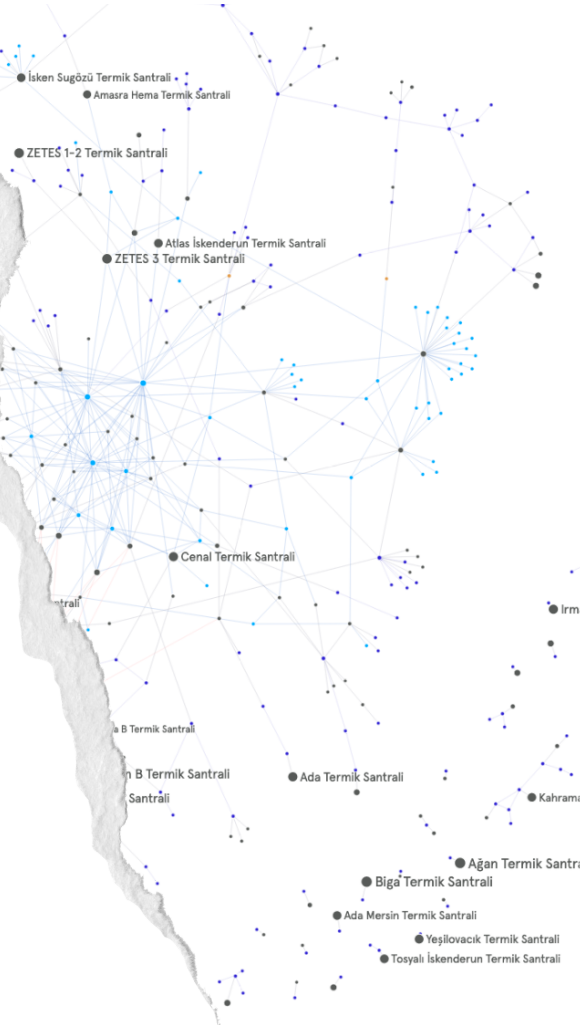
11 https://www.wwf.org.tr/ne_yapiyoruz/a_yak_izinin_azaltilmasi/su_yenile_nebilir_enerjinin_surdurulebilirligi/

Meanwhile, the mining corporation is the main reason for the social segregation in Bergama caused by conflicts and disagreements among local residents over gold mining activities. A similar project, hazardous to forestland and streamside ecosystems, is underway in Kirazlı Village near Kaz Mountains. Thousands of trees are cut down for the sake of mining, inflicting severe damage to the ecosystem.⁷

Turkey meets a certain amount of its energy demand from coal-fired thermal power stations.⁸ Thermal power stations run on lignite from fossil sources. Lignite coal consumption is hazardous to nature. Use of lignite coal results in acid rains and water effluents that are harmful to human health and detrimental to nature and agricultural production.⁹ The Yatağan Thermal

Power Plant in the Aegean Region has had a detrimental impact on the environment, damaging the production of olives, pistachios, figs, almond trees, vineyards, and vegetables growing around Yatağan and Milas.

In Turkey, due to their technical qualities, hydroelectric power plants (HPP) have become the preferred power source in recent years to meet the increasing energy demand.¹⁰ HPPs are considered to be a cleaner and renewable source of energy compared to fossil fuels.¹¹ However, in reality, HPPs have a damaging impact on forests in that they require vast land resources for construction; thereby detrimentally affecting the biodiversity near rivers, riverbeds, and its surroundings. The fact that HPPs are a renewable source of energy does not mean that they are sustainable. Local residents of Yusufeli-



The network of thermal power plants in Turkey;
<https://graphcommons.com/graphs/5d293d74-f1bd-46fe-b673-a597fcd0b21d?auto=true>

Demirdöven Village in Artvin and Korgan-Balamir Village in Ordu have deep concerns about plans for two HPP projects and their damaging impact on the environment. Loss of public spaces and expropriation without public consultations in fact means dispossession.

“Loss of public spaces and expropriation without public consultations in fact means dispossession”

Indeed, new dams, power plants, airports or any other structure constructed by destroying forestland, streamside systems and agricultural land does not mean that the public will own a property again. As a matter of fact, narratives about nature written by older women and men in the Eastern Black Sea region reveal how

the rights of all generations are violated. Research titled “Bizim Dereyi Kim Çaldı” [“Who Stole Our Stream”] (Akbaş, Bozok & Bozok, 2016) relays to us losses inflicted by dispossession that include lifestyle and social memory losses. The stigmatization and exclusion of people who act against the loss of natural areas or resources in pursuit of their rights is a common phenomenon.

“The stigmatization and exclusion of people who act against the loss of natural areas or resources in pursuit of their rights is a common phenomenon”

Inability to participate in decision-making mechanisms and problems faced with access to justice lead to the public exclusion of people who seek their rights due to a perception that they are “against the state”.

“Older people are also displaced as a result of this process; they lose their livelihoods and social security without effective access to justice and become exposed to discrimination”

Stigmatizing people who pursue their rights in the face of dispossession and environmental hazards as “dangerous”, “a menace against national security” or “unreliable” is a discriminatory rhetoric.

Older people are also displaced as a result of this process; they lose their livelihoods and social security without effective access to justice and become exposed to discrimination.

Photograph 3. Selim Aksan, istock/selimaksan



2

Could you please describe any specific policy, legislation, practice, or strategy that addresses the nexus between climate change and the rights of older persons.

In particular, could you please share any information available related to policies that ensure the participation of older persons in the design, planning, implementation and monitoring of climate change mitigation and adaptation measures; learning from the knowledge and experience of older persons; as well as supporting the independence and autonomy of older persons? Could you please note and identify any relevant mechanisms for ensuring accountability for these commitments, including their means of implementation?

12 https://www.sbb.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/ON_BIRINCI_KALKINA-PLANI_2019-2023.pdf

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the Ministry of Environment and Urbanisation and the Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services could lead the efforts to develop a specific policy, practice or strategy by forming a nexus between older people in Turkey and climate change. However, these institutions are not known to have developed any such specific policy, practice or strategy indicating the nexus between older people and climate change. In order to establish whether there are any such practices in place, the Development Plan of Turkey, a policy document containing Turkey's strategic plans, was examined.

Development Plans are updated every five years in Turkey. The 11th Development Plan was prepared in 2019.¹² The 11th Development Plan covering the years between 2019-2023

is the latest strategic document. The 11th Development Plan does not specify a practice addressing the nexus between older people and climate change, nor does it develop any perspective on the matter. On the other hand, among the few civil society organizations in Turkey that work on aging, old age and older people, no policy or practice regarding old age in the context of climate change that particularly centers on older persons was identified.

“Among the few civil society organizations in Turkey that work on aging, old age and older people, no policy or practice regarding old age in the context of climate change that particularly centers on older persons was identified.”

3

Are there any relevant data that captures how the adverse effects of climate change have affected older persons, taking into account multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination (i.e., discrimination based on a combination of multiple grounds, including disability, gender, race, color, sex, language, religion, nationality, and migration status)-including in older age cohorts? Could you please share a summary of such data?

13 <https://www.heryasta.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/avivaSA-kitap-mobil-27-03.20.pdf>

14 <http://www.senex.org.tr/yayinlar>

15 AAS received support from European Union programs in 2020 and completed its third term. In 2020, Senex Association published the results of the study including its first findings in a book.

It is not possible to refer to a specific study on the discrimination faced by older people in the context of climate change. The body of literature on old age usually focuses on the dichotomy between illness and wellness (Arun, 2018). There appears to be few qualified studies addressing the societal dimensions of discrimination faced by older persons.

The first of these studies was conducted by YADA Foundation. YADA Foundation, in its 2018 study titled “Elderliness, Envisagement and Practices in Turkey”,¹³ examines the perspectives of middle age and older populations on old age, as well as their experiences, plans, investments, and potentials. This study also includes questions on age discrimination.

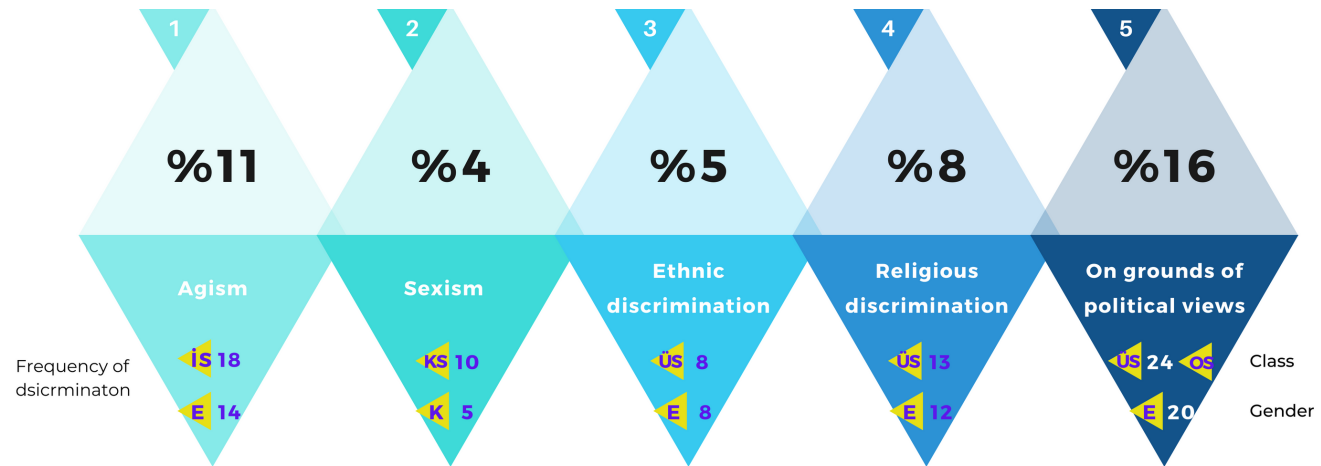
Findings of the study demonstrate that 6.5% of older persons in Turkey face age

“The body of literature on old age usually focuses on the dichotomy between illness and wellness,”

discrimination. Another study is Antalya Aging Study (AAS)¹⁴ conducted to describe the living conditions of people aged 55 and over in the province of Antalya. AAS is a longitudinal study that has been repeated three times respectively in 2013, 2016 and 2019/20.¹⁵



“Among older people, 11% of older persons stated that they were discriminated against on grounds of age, 4% on grounds of gender, 5% on grounds of ethnic identity, 8% on grounds of belief and 16% on grounds of political views”



Graphic 2. Antalya Aging Study, 2020

Source. Arun, 2020.

The main purpose of the study is to examine the population over 55 years of age living in the city, addressing their aging process, relations with the city, their views on rights and freedoms as well as their perceptions of the future and expectations. Research findings may provide assistance and guidance on improving services for local governments based on data, evaluating current services, monitoring the participation of older persons in the city and determining problems

with respect to rights and freedoms. In this regard, chapter six of the research report addresses “age perception and discrimination”. Among participants, 11% of older persons stated that they were discriminated against on grounds of age, 4% on grounds of gender, 5% on grounds of ethnic identity, 8% on grounds of belief and 16% on grounds of political views. Upper class older women stated that they faced discrimination mostly on grounds of gender while upper class older men

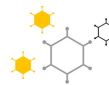
PERCEPTION OF AGING AND RIGHTS OF OLDER PERSONS IN TURKEY DURING CORONA CRISIS

Özgür Arun
Akdeniz University

Method

The survey titled "Perception of Aging and Rights of Older Persons in Turkey during Corona Crisis" conducted with 1652 participants in 22 statistical regions. The data was collected by telephone interviews (CATI-Computer Assisted Telephone Interview).

The most comprehensive survey in Turkey about aging in the time of Covid 19 pandemic...



SUPPORT

The research supported by Lund University Raoul Wallenberg Institute is one of the most comprehensive research in the time of Covid-19 pandemic in Turkey.

**RAOUL
WALLENBERG
INSTITUTE**

SAMPLE SIZE

Considering the health status of the participants and legal restrictions, a different data collection technique was used. In this research the data is collected by telephone interviews (CATI-Computer Assisted Telephone Interview) with the sample size representing the population of Turkey above 18 year old.

Türkiye'de Korona Krizi kapsamında Yaşlıların Ağrı ve Yaşı Hakkında Anketimiz 22 İstatistik Bölgeye 1652 kişi ve 222 1652 Kişinin katıldığı gerçekleştirildi. Veriler, telefon (CATI-Computer Assisted Telephone Interview) yöntemiyle toplanmıştır.

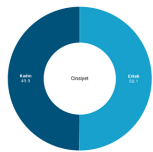


● İstanbul ● Antalya ● İzmir ● Ankara ● Diyarbakir ● Bursa
● Van ● Trabzon ● Gaziantep ● Kayseri ● Trabzon ● Erzurum

GENDER & AGE

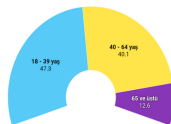
Gender

Two-stage sampling technique is used during the interviews. In the stage one, gender-based weighting is applied with the cluster sampling technique.



Age

In the stage two, the age strata are determined. The interviews are completed considering the age distribution.



stated that they were discriminated against mostly on grounds of political views. Older people in poverty claimed that they generally suffered from agism. Bias and discrimination against and unfair treatment towards older people was found to become prevalent as they become unable to generate wealth.

In April and May of 2020, another study conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic is "Perception of Aging and Rights of Older Persons in Turkey during Corona Crisis".

According to this study, supported by Raoul Wallenberg Institute Turkey Program, agism in Turkey has risen to 8%. Aiming to foster a conception of multiple discrimination, based on data, the study reports rights violations suffered by older people.

“Bias and discrimination against and unfair treatment towards older people was found to become prevalent as they become unable to generate wealth”

All these current findings on perception of aging, ageism and rights of older people notwithstanding, no specific national data on the adverse effects of climate change on older people were found.

“During the Covid-19 pandemic, agism in Turkey has risen to 8%”

4

Are there any mechanisms and tools that are in place to measure and monitor the impacts of climate change on the full and effective enjoyment of the human rights of older persons? Please describe in detail.

It is not possible to refer to a mechanism or a tool in place in the Republic of Turkey to measure and monitor the impacts of climate change on the full and effective enjoyment of the human rights of older persons.

Turkey made amendments to the Law on municipalities twice in 2005 and 2012 to effectively respond to inequalities at the local level. The main purpose of these amendments was to provide effective services to four vulnerable groups at risk of poverty, including older persons. However, due to the limited finance and human resources of local governments, it was not possible to effectively respond to the inequalities at the local level. Delegation of power from the central to the local governments has led to a fragmentation of services, which in turn triggered new inequalities (Arun &

“**In the next 10-15 years, fragmentation of services will be a highly critical challenge to take on in the response to deepened poverty at the local level in Turkey**”

Holdsworth, 2020). In the next 10-15 years, fragmentation of services will be a highly critical challenge to take on in the response to deepened poverty at the local level in Turkey.

It is essential to strengthen the capacity of local governments in order to overcome these challenges.

Furthermore, it is an absolute necessity to provide support to local governments so that they may develop budgeting responsive to gender, age, and class.

“To ensure the full and effective enjoyment of the human rights of older persons, a welcome initiative would be to promote digital literacy among older persons as well as their ICT access and competency”

A good practice for providing access to services in Turkey is digitalization studies.¹⁶ The platform in place offers access to available services with a citizenship number and password. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) is an important step to ensure integration of fragmented services. Moreover, ICT could be activated to reduce regional inequalities. Nevertheless, it is not feasible for groups who do not have digital tools and thus lack the competency of utilizing them to access the services provided in a digital domain.

Older women and men at risk of poverty have rather limited ICT access and competency. If ICT is effectively utilized to reduce inequalities, then efforts should simultaneously be made to achieve digital transformation,

taking into account conventional inequalities. To ensure the full and effective enjoyment of the human rights of older persons, a welcome initiative would be, as is the case for other generations, to promote digital literacy among older persons as well as their ICT access and competency.

Indeed, it has been possible in Turkey to provide online education for children during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Ministry of National Education quickly developed online education platforms¹⁷ and ensured their widespread and effective use (Education Information Network-EIN).

For instance, EIN support centers were established nationwide to ensure that children without access to internet at home can still get an online education and do not fall behind; students can

¹⁶ <https://turkiye.gov.tr>

¹⁷ <http://www.eba.gov.tr>

“Training and information networks set up in provinces and districts for older persons without access to internet at home could contribute to spreading digital literacy.”

continue their education free of charge at 1,429 support centers nationwide.¹⁸ In a similar vein, an initiative could be developed to ensure that older persons effectively enjoy such rights.

Training and information networks set up in provinces and districts for older persons without access to internet at home could contribute to spreading digital literacy.

Photograph 4. Özgür Arun, Source: Senex | Association for Aging Studies



18

<https://www.meb.gov.tr/eba-destek-noktalari-uzaktan-egitime-erisimin-onundeki-engelleri-kaldiriyor/haber/21553/tr>

5

What are the examples of good practices and challenges in the promotion, protection, and fulfillment of the human rights of older persons in the context of the adverse effects of climate change, including any age-appropriate or sensitive support services that are provided?

Four local governments in Turkey (Antalya-Muratpaşa; İstanbul-Kadıköy, İstanbul-Beşiktaş, Mersin Metropolitan Municipalities) have become members of the World Health Organization “Age-friendly Environment Network”. These four local governments have started to work on creating an age-sensitive and age-friendly environment. Muratpaşa Municipality is working to ensure different generations participation in decision making mechanisms by setting up councils for children, young people, and older people.¹⁹ Currently, it is not possible to assert that older people are present in decision-making processes in Turkey except for some limited cases at the local level.

Still, it is important to consider the rights and vulnerabilities of older people even when they cannot be a

part of decision-making processes (HelpAge, 2015). Historically speaking, baby boomers are the first generation to have experienced the phenomenon of consumer society and also the first to witness the first carbon footprint. Baby boomers’ contribution is of paramount importance as they are part of the society that created the potential causes of climate change in the first place (Haq et al., 2010) and they are also prominent supporters of the steps taken to achieve climate justice. Consequently, it is critical that the baby boomer generation participate in the decision-making processes.

Still, in the context of climate change, it is important to ensure participation of all generations in decision-making processes in order to identify problems and achieve climate justice.

Sustainability of decision outcomes

19 <https://www.muratpasa-bld.gov.tr/haber/60848/3/yasli-meclisi-secimlerini-yapti>

“ Still, in the context of climate change, it is important to ensure participation of all generations in decision-making processes in order to identify problems and achieve climate justice ”

requires inclusive decision-making processes. On the other hand, developments that unfolded in the aftermath of the Covid-19 outbreak indicate two main challenges for achieving climate justice in Turkey. Firstly, local governments lack awareness on providing rights-based services. In the aftermath of it's imposing an indefinite and immoderate stay-at-home order²⁰ on people age 65 and over, local governments have failed to develop any strategies on how to provide services to older persons. Consequently, older persons have had problems in accessing clean air, clean water, adequate food, and educational and health services. Some local governments have banned older persons from using public transportation. Some local governments have disassembled park benches to prevent older persons from sitting on them as a resting place. Older persons have been deprived of their rights in access or use

the city. In a time of crisis, local governments have not known how to provide services to older persons. A second challenge in future years will be regarding the right to access information. Access to qualified information in an emergency is a main priority in the provision of rights-based services in times of crisis. Yet, older persons in Turkey have not only been locked in their homes, they have not had access to qualified information (Binark, Arun, Özsoy, Kandemir & Şahinkaya, 2020). Information disorder and infodemic during the lockdown periods have prevented many older persons from accessing their fundamental rights.

“ Older persons in Turkey have not only been locked in their homes, they have not had access to qualified information ”

20 See the Ministry of Interior Circular at: <https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/65-yas-ve-ustu-ile-kronik-rahatsizligi-olanlara-sokaga-cikma-yasagi-genelgesi>

6

What are examples and good practices that highlight international and multi-lateral cooperation and approaches that are implemented in close consultations with the active involvement of older persons, including through their representative organizations?

7

What additional action could be useful to support climate action that promotes the full and effective enjoyment of the rights of older persons?



There are not any examples to give in response to this heading that shows that older persons enjoy their rights effectively and widely.

It is of paramount importance in Turkey that older persons participate in decision-making mechanisms and make their authentic voices heard, particularly in local governments. In addition, extensive training initiatives may be planned in collaboration with the Union of Municipalities of Turkey (UMT) to raise awareness of local governments on age discrimination. UMT may disseminate awareness

training materials on age friendly environments and services in order to build the capacity of local governments.

“**Extensive training initiatives may be planned in collaboration with the Union of Municipalities of Turkey (UMT) to raise awareness of local governments on age discrimination**”

TEMA Foundation is a civilian initiative in Turkey working on the topic of environment and climate. TEMA Foundation is the first Turkish civil society organization to be accredited to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as an observer. This accreditation allows the Foundation to follow local developments regarding

“Nonetheless, Turkish civil society work on climate change has not yet established a connection between climate change and older persons or their rights,”

climate change and hold sway on processes. Nonetheless, Turkish civil society work on climate change has not yet established a connection between climate change and older persons or their rights. Similarly, civil society organizations working on aging in Turkey have not developed a concrete insight on the matter. Support could be

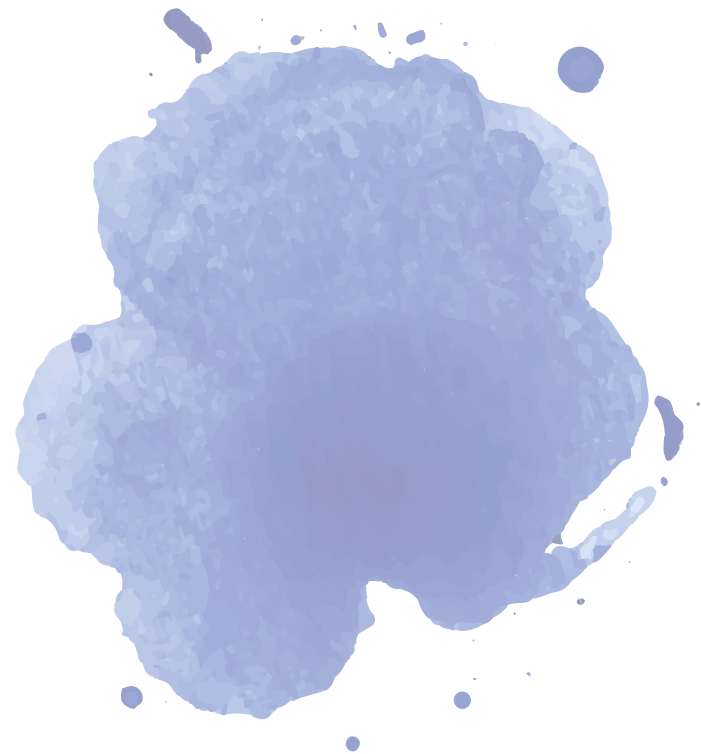
offered to facilitate social dialogue between both civil society initiatives. Civil society organizations focusing on aging could be supported to obtain UNFCCC accreditation. Thus, it may be possible to foster a social dialogue between civil society initiatives focusing on aging and those working on climate change and thereby establish a common network.

Photograph 5. Meeting Generations Program, Gökbük Aging Study, Gökbük Village / Finike, Antalya, September 19, 2014.
Source: Senex | Association for Aging Studies





about authors





Özgür Arun

Arun was born in a small village in Anatolia, Turkey in 1977 and educated at Middle East Technical University (SOC'01). After graduating from METU in 2001, he moved to Berlin, Germany, continuing his research through 2002. After returning he filled an academic position at the Department of Sociology, Middle East Technical University (2004- 2011), during which time he completed an MA and PhD. Arun is currently a full-time faculty member in the Department of Gerontology and he has recently been appointed Assoc. Director of the Mediterranean Civilisation Research Institute at Akdeniz University. He has conducted research on higher education, rural development, income and welfare, youth and unemployment, child labour, and disability. His most recent research and writings are on aging, intergenerational relationships, culture, class and taste. Arun is on the Editorial Board of *The Gerontologist*. Recently, he is the recipient of the 2017 "Rising Star" award by the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE). He is co-founder of Senex | Association for Aging Studies.



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Born in Ankara in 1979, she completed her primary and secondary education at Arı Private College and her high school education at Ayrancı High School. She holds an undergraduate degree in Sociology from Middle East Technical University and a Master of Science Degree from the Industrial Design Department of the same university. During university education, she engaged in many courses related to art, art history and sculpture, which are her areas of special interest. She still works as a lecturer at the Public Relations Department of Communication Faculty at Akdeniz University. She is co-founder of Senex | Association for Aging Studies.



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Born in Edirne in 1991. She graduated from Kırklareli Atatürk Anatolian High School. She received a bachelor's degree from the Gerontology Department and Master's degree from the Women's Studies and Gender Department at Akdeniz University. She continues her doctorate education at Akdeniz University in the field of Women's Studies and Gender. After receiving her bachelor's degree, she worked as a volunteer and supporter in different nongovernmental organizations, especially in the field of human rights. In 2018, in the field of NGO and Social Service, she was selected as a recipient among The Role Model Women Leaders of the Future project, organized by Koç University and the Consulate General of the Netherlands, and received one years training. She carries out rights-oriented studies in the fields of aging, gender studies and discrimination. She is a member of Senex | Association for Aging Studies.



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THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON THE RIGHTS OF OLDER PERSONS IN TURKEY

ÖZGÜR ARUN
BANU KARADEMİR ARUN
SEDA KOCABIYIK

Sustainable Development Goals Indicators and the 2030 Agenda reveal that development is only possible as long as it is inclusive of all age groups.

Empowering older persons in all areas to ensure their participation in economic, social, and political life is the key requirement to tackle inequalities. To this end, it is essential to understand to what extent these have been affected by climate change.

Climate change poses a threat to life on earth. Humankind is both the cause and victim of the destruction of nature. Nonetheless, it is the most vulnerable groups, namely older people, women, children, people with disabilities, the poor and ethnic and religious minorities who are faced with the most adverse effects of climate change.

Senex Report on Turkey opens up the discussion on how older persons are affected by climate change,



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