

# AGEING IN AND OUT OF PLACE: INEQUALITIES AT LATER LIFE

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FROM JAN 2021 ...

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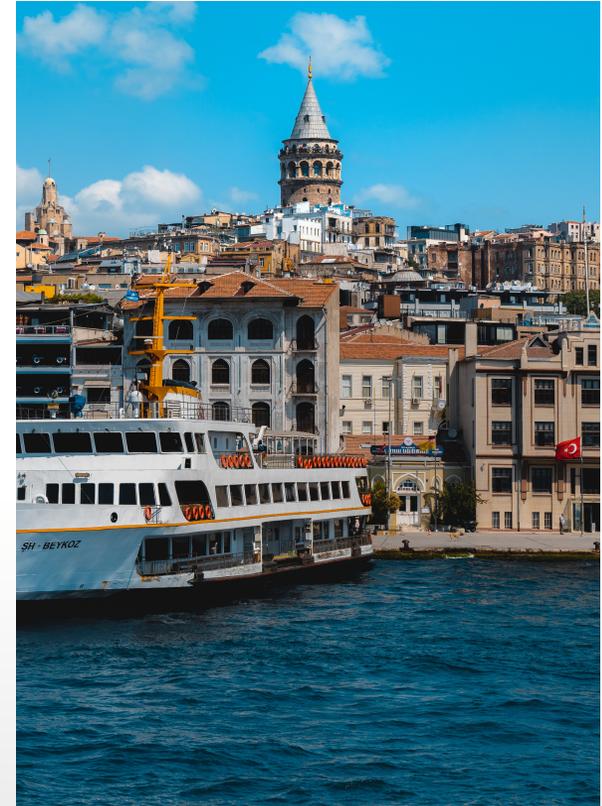
# GROWING OLDER IN AND OUT OF PLACE

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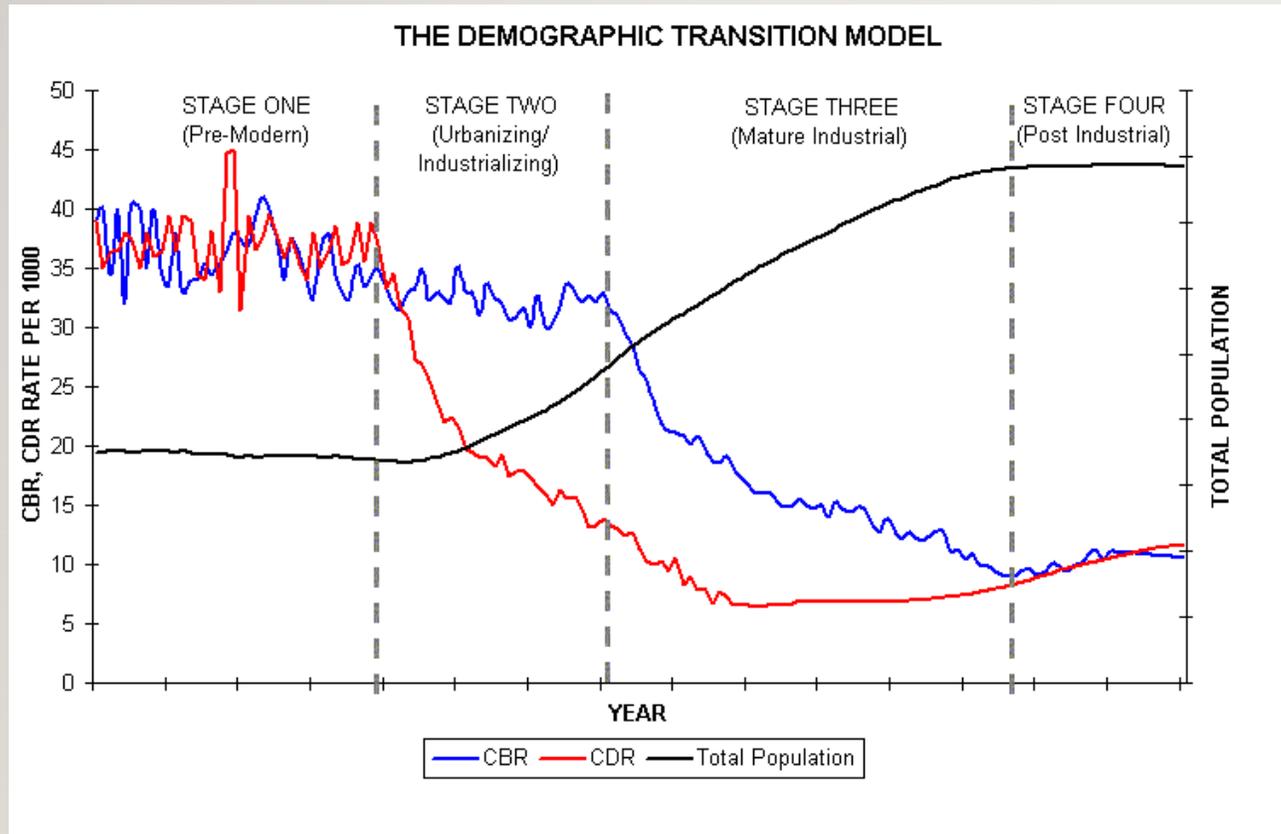
In Turkey (with similarities to other countries in the Middle East)

As migrants in the UK (with similarities to Turkish migrants in other European countries)

2nd Dec 2020



### 3 BACKGROUND: THE DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITIONS



- The 'first' demographic transition theory is supposed to be universal,
  - all populations in the world sooner or later will experience a shift from high to low death and birth rates.
- Currently some countries have concluded the transition (e.g. Europe),
- In other countries, this shift is in full swing (e.g. Turkey)

## 4 POPULATION AGEING

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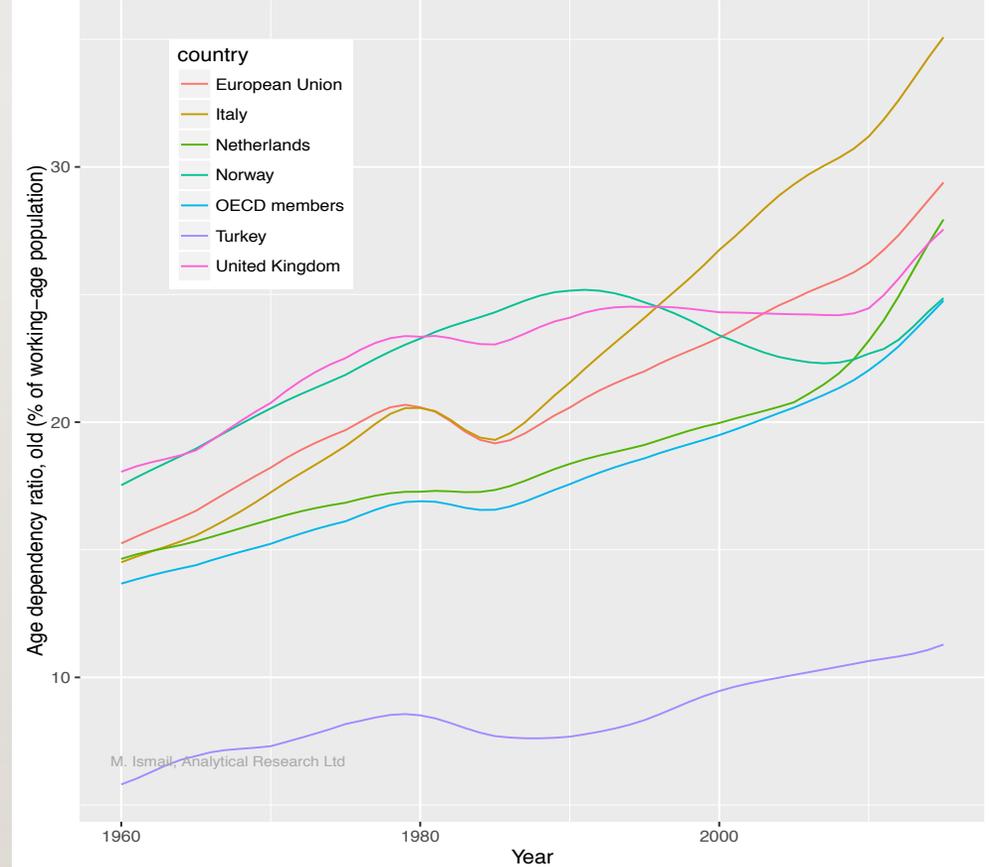
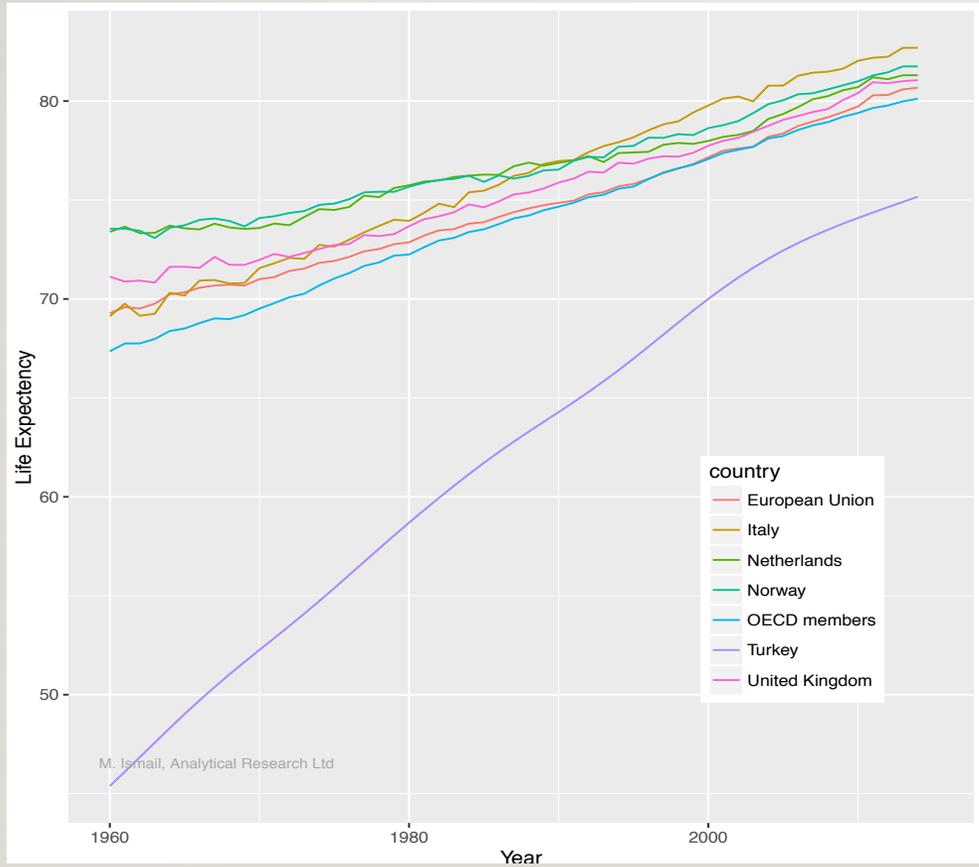
- Population ageing indicators
  - Demographically speaking
  - Differences in measurements
    - Age Index, age dependency ratio, percentage over 65+, prospective ageing etc.
- Perceptions of ageing
- Expectations from old age
- Differentials by societal & individual factors

## 5 THE PROCESS OF POPULATION AGEING

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- Impacts not only the individuals but the whole population structure
- The tempo, or speed, of the population ageing process is different across the region
- Some identified as having 'fast', others as 'medium' and 'slow' tempos
  - In the Middle East for example, within the 'fast' or rapidly ageing group are Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Tunisia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Morocco, Algeria, Bahrain, Libya and Lebanon
- Many countries are also experiencing epidemiological and health transitions, with non-communicable diseases replacing communicable diseases as the leading causes of morbidity and mortality

# 6 LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH AND AGE DEPENDENCY RATIO TURKEY WITHIN EUROPE



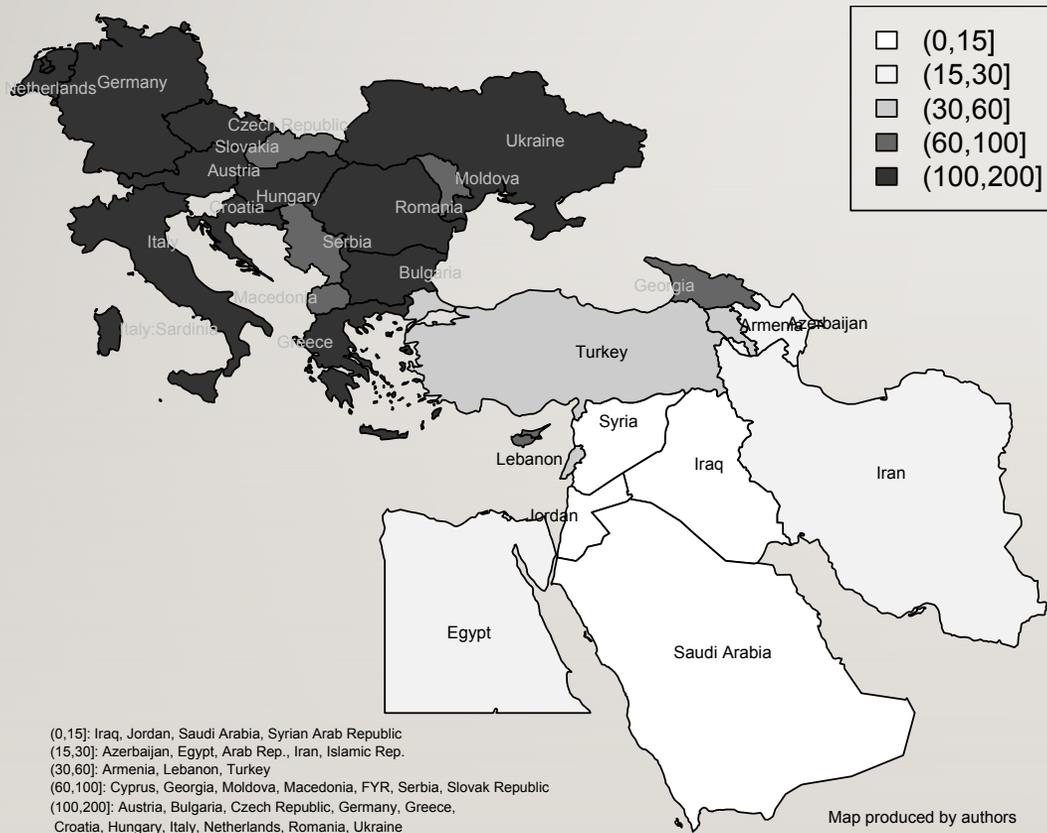
## 7 AGEING INDICATORS - TURKEY

Country/ Region	Population aged 65 years or over (thousands)		Percentage aged 65 years or over		Old-age dependency ratio		Prospective old- age dependency ratio		Economic old-age dependency ratio	
	2019	2030	2019	2030	2019	2030	2019	2030	2019	2030
Central Asia	3 791	6 717	5.2	8.0	9.1	14.4	9.8	13.7	9.7	14.9
North Africa	13 659	21 215	5.6	7.4	10.6	13.8	9.9	11.3	11.5	14.7
Western Asia	15 716	25 237	5.7	7.9	9.9	13.5	7.8	9.2	10.8	14.5
<b>Turkey</b>	<b>7 280</b>	<b>11 003</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>14.8</b>	<b>20.8</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>12.1</b>	<b>14.2</b>	<b>19.4</b>
Upper-MICs	275 611	409 445	10.4	14.8	16.7	24.6	12.6	16.5	18.0	27.1
Eastern Europe	48 187	58 346	16.4	20.5	26.5	35.6	20.6	26.1	30.9	41.1
Europe	140 410	170 273	18.8	23.0	31.3	40.6	19.2	22.6	41.5	54.1

Source: UN World Population Ageing 2019: Highlights

# 8 AGEING IN TURKEY AND ITS NEIGHBOURS

## Aging index



- Turkey sits in the middle between Europe and the Middle East
  - Still younger than Western Europe
  - Both in terms of geography as well as ageing
  - Gender differences
    - Living alone at old age more prevalent among women
    - Loneliness at old age
    - Obesity and co-morbidity
- Regional differences (within Turkey)

## 9 AGEING IN CONTEXT – TURKEY & THE MIDDLE EAST

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- Cultural and religious norms
  - Valuing and protecting older people
- Intergenerational exchange
  - Informal support mechanisms- two directional
  - Provision of care, and finance, to grand-children;
  - Support to older parents
- Societal perception and expectations
  - Gender, education and class



# 10 SOME IMPLICATIONS

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## INDIVIDUALS & FAMILIES

- Older people's wellbeing, co-morbidities and (ill)health
- Inclusion and participation
- Isolation and loneliness
- The sandwich generation (gender perspective – filial obligations)

## SOCIETY & STATE

- Unsustainable aged care model
  - Services; Financing; Accessibility
  - Other competing policy priorities
- Infrastructure and the environment
- Creating opportunities
  - older people as a resource vs. a burden
- Ageism and age-discrimination



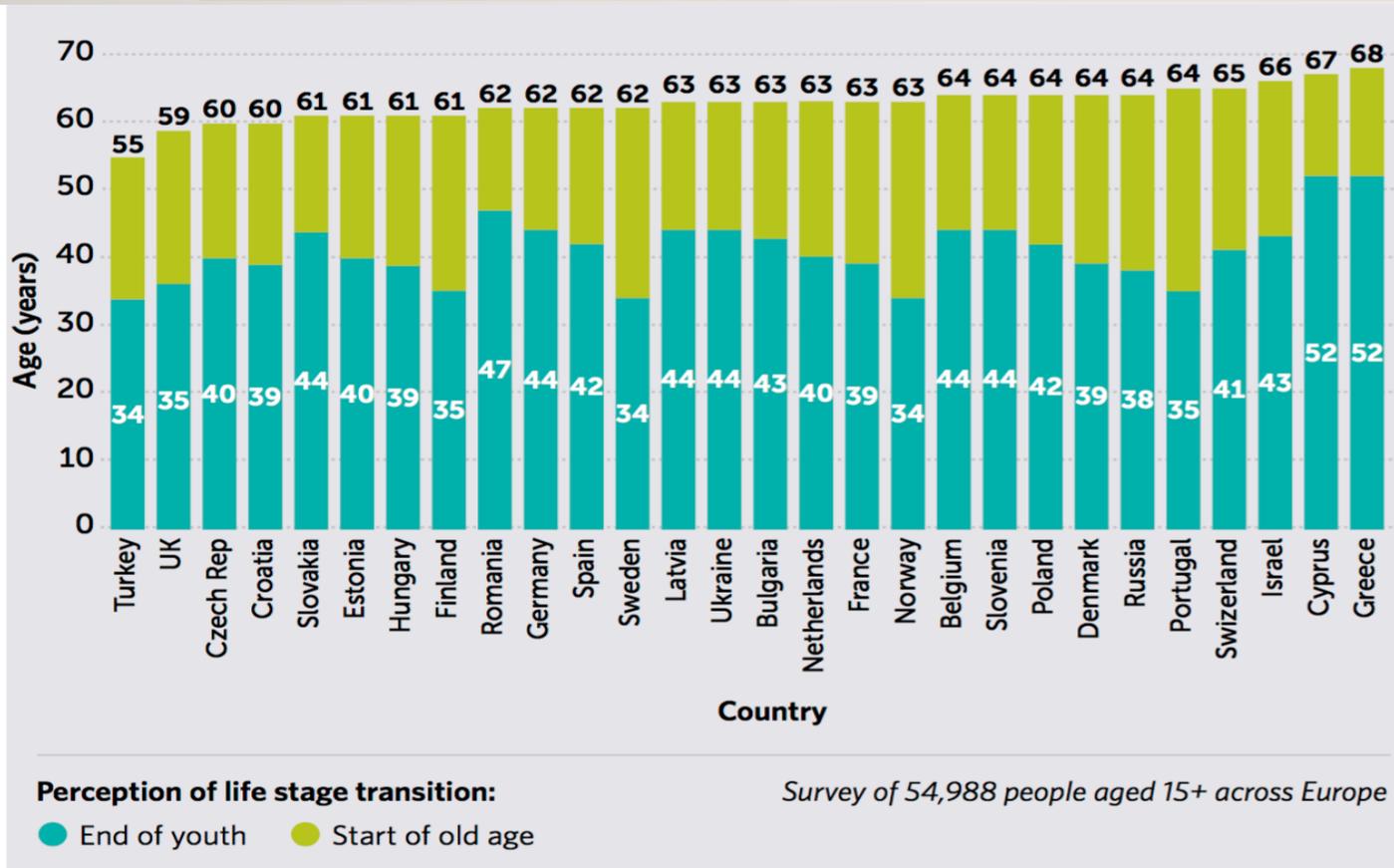
# || “OLD” AGE: INEQUALITIES AT OLD AGE

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The simple statement of ‘growing older’ brings both connotations of experiences (a symbol of wisdom) and disadvantages (dependency and burden).

# 12 PERCEPTION OF AGEING- VARIES ACROSS COUNTRIES



- Ageing is a social and cultural - as well as biological – construct
- Subjective ageing
  - How one feels about their own age
  - Links to expectations from one-self (social & economic activities etc.)
- How society and groups perceive age & ageing
  - Stigma & ageism

## 13 THE TURKISH PERSPECTIVE

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- A recent study by AvivaSA
  - A survey of 2,400 people in 12 cities in Turkey; half aged 65+
- Only 25% of those surveyed had 'positive' views on ageing
- Most 'fearful' of ageing were those in the middle age groups (35-49)
  - This fear decreased among older age groups
- The majority perceived those over 52 years old as 'not as young' and those above 64 as 'old'
- Older people more concerned about the future of their off-spring and grand-children

# 14 MORE THAN AN INDIVIDUALISED PERCEPTION

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- Very limited opportunities for older people to actively participate
  - Whether socially (outside of the small family sphere); economically or politically
- Gender may play a role but it is more general
- Age-based discrimination
- Normalisation and acceptance of lack of opportunities to participate
  - Adopting this as own 'belief' or 'choice' for not being productive at old age
  - Avoidance-oriented behavior & assuming a stigmatized identity
    - Wide spread associations of weakness and inactivity among the old



# 15 SOME POSITIVE POINTERS

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- Older people 'treasured' and valued by family & society
  - Empowering or controlling?
- Evidence of increased awareness
  - More focus on 'healthy ageing'
    - WHO/UN decade of healthy ageing and SDGs
  - Some, limited discussion on economic and social participation of older people
    - Hindered by pressures of youth unemployment
  - Attention to ageing and long term care services and support mechanisms
- Recent policy developments—Turkish ageing and dementia strategies/plans



# 16 MOBILITY AND AGEING IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT



## 17 OLDER TURKISH MIGRANTS IN THE UK

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- Turkey has been a country of emigration with large numbers of its citizens migrating to Western Europe. In Europe, migrants from Turkey form one of the largest groups.
- While they are not a major migrant group in the UK, UK is popularly preferred by the refugees from Turkey.
- During conflicts in Eastern and South-Eastern Region of Turkey particularly, 1980-1990, many had taken refuge in the UK
  - Three main groups live in the UK: migrants from mainland Turkey, Cypriot Turkish and Alevi refugees
- Most migrated to the capital and remain living in certain parts of London, despite off-spring moving out

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## MIGRANTS' LIFE JOURNEYS ARE COMPLEX

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## THE JOURNEY

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Evren, 72 years, Turkish  
migrant, woman – London  
2014

My husband had a business in Istanbul. But he went bankrupt and we were stuck in a difficult situation. I had heard from my friend that the tailors earn good money in London. But I was illiterate; I had never gone to primary school however I learnt it [making dresses] by myself. Moreover I do not know English. My friend suggested to come here and to work here. And I took my little daughter and came to London. Next day I began to work in a garment workshop. I did not have to speak English because everyone there spoke Turkish. My friend had arranged a room for us.



## 20 MIGRATION JOURNEY

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- Highly influenced (initiated) by self and closest networks → Family
  - *'I had heard from my **friend** that the tailors earn good money in London.'*
- Maintained by the community
  - 'Safety net' of earlier migrant groups in the host country
  - *'I began to work in a [Turkish] garment workshop. I did not have to speak English because everyone here [in the UK] spoke Turkish'*

## 2 | NEITHER HERE NOR THERE BUT SOMEWHERE IN BETWEEN

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- Strong family bonds
  - (dis)connection to home and host countries
  - Collective and solidarity living
- Older people identity
  - shaped by a long and intertwined processes and structures.
- Enclave economies, first generation migrants
  - *“We lived here [UK] for a long time but we had worked entirely with Turkish people as tailors. We do not know much about the English community” (Woman, 75)*
- As they grew older they became increasingly disconnected from the English community
  - Potentially from current Turkish society too



## 22 REACHING A 'CERTAIN' AGE CAN BE DISRUPTIVE

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- Higher risk of disease and co-morbidity
- Onset of disease
  - Sudden need to communicate with outside agencies
  - Limited language and societal understanding
- Ceasing 'economic' engagement
  - Usually informal with no pensions or old age benefits
  - Starting the break down of an important social safety net – and livelihood
- Care preferences
  - Impact of cumulative social isolation

## 23 HOW THE EXPERIENCE OF AGEING IS FORMED – MIGRANT COMMUNITIES

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- Displaced both in time and across countries
  - Linking their own ageing to views held at a much younger age and relate to a different generation back in Turkey
- Continued reliance on a closed network
- Being located at the intersection of ageism, sexism and racism
- Place, time and identity

## 24 SOCIAL ISOLATION

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- A feeling of limited opportunities of 'suitable' activities that are culturally, linguistic and age sensitive/appropriate
  - Activities revolved around family obligations
  - Heavy involvement in the culture centre (especially among men)
- A combination of realities, perceptions and preferences – links to meaning of ageing and expectations of one-self
- A continuation of limited involvement in the community during younger ages
  - Influenced by their own journeys and how they were perceived (included) by others and wider structural marginalization



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## GENDER INFLUENCE

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Lütfi, a 66-year-old man who arrived to the UK 30 years ago.

- Lütfi has made a clear effort to access a wide range of activities. He originally came looking for work but had never ‘formally’ worked but managed to provide paid ‘help’ to friends. He brought his wife and had four children who all lived near by his home in London. Lütfi was one of the most active participants despite his poor command of the English language; he had a gym membership through his local council and swam regularly, at least twice a week. When we asked him where he would prefer to spend the next ten years of his life, he quickly said ‘*in the UK*’, when prompted why, he said ‘*this is my ‘homeland’ now, here is my wife and children and I am happy here*’.

## 26 THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF AGEING – OLDER TURKISH MIGRANTS IN THE UK

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- The identity as older people
  - Fluid with time and circumstances: belonging to the UK as older people in need of care and support ... yet referring to their strong socially constructed networks rather than the wider British society
- Large gaps between actual health needs and perceived care needs
  - Awareness of health ageing
- Perceptions and expectations of old age relating to multiple geographies, cultures and generations
- Gender and class effects
  - *'men go the the Cafe or Turkish Community but we [women] are not included in any Centre'*
  - Lütfi case study

## 27 PERCEPTION OF AGEING – AN EXAMPLE FROM THE NETHERLANDS

- Shaped by migration history, health and education
- Evidence of more negative associations with ageing among Turkish migrant older people than natives
  - However, positive associations also exist
- Poorer health and lower income associated with more negative outcomes and perceptions at old age
  - Cumulative impacts of inequalities across the life course

indicators	Turkish	Dutch
Perceived consequences of ageing		
Positive	3.60	3.40
Negative	3.86	3.40
Feeling in control over		
+ve ageing effects	3.46	3.71
-ve ageing effects	3.86	2.41
Negative emotional representations	2.86	2.45

## 28 IMPLICATIONS ON HEALTH AND WELLBEING

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- Social isolation and dependency on off-spring and close social networks
  - Few opportunities to participate in the wider community, through volunteering, for example
- Accessing health services
  - Language and cultural barriers
    - Confidence in translations 'not good enough'; *'most of the translators from Cyprians and they don't speak in Turkish very well'*
  - Care-access concerns specific to gender, class, culture and ethnicity
- Expectations vs. realities
  - *'They [my family] don't give me any respect and as a person, I feel very alone in my home. Never go out, always at home and in front of TV'. (Frieda, 83 years, Turkish migrants, London)*
- 'Otherness'
  - How they are perceived by others and how they perceive others

# 29 INEQUALITIES AT LATER LIFE- OLDER TURKISH MIGRANTS IN THE UK

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## RECOGNITION

- Self-recognition
- Cultural visibility & class
- Assumptions - otherness

## (MIS)REPRESENTATION

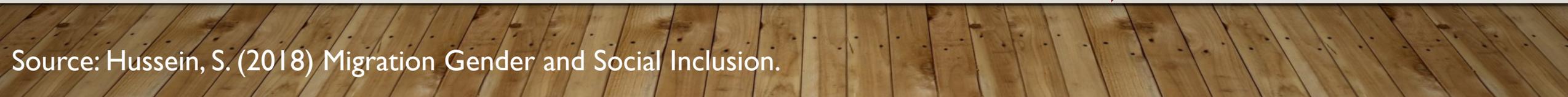
- Inclusion (exclusion) – the environment
- Participation
- Media representation



## HEALTH AND SOCIAL INEQUALITIES

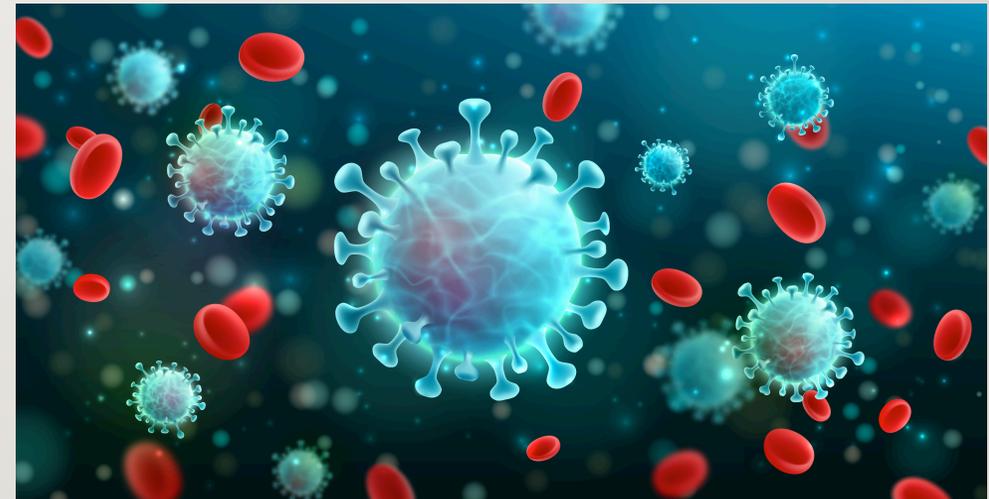
negative

**TIGHT MINORITY SOCIAL NETWORKS**



# 30 COVID-19 AND OLDER PEOPLE

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# 3 | COVID-19: OLDER PEOPLE IN TURKEY & THE MIDDLE EAST

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- Higher risks of complications from COVID-19 (across the globe)
- Absence of comprehensive/universal health care coverage
- Social and cultural norms surrounding caring for older people
  - Increased burden on informal carers/family (financial, physical and emotional burden)
- Further isolation & reduced activities
  - Risks of deconditioning and maintaining cognitive and physical abilities
- Digital/technology divide
  - Inequalities in accessing health/medical care
- The intersection of gender, age and socio-economic status

## 32 COVID-19: OLDER MIGRANTS IN THE UK

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- Migrant older people at higher risks of infection and complications
  - A range of vulnerabilities: poverty, health in-equalities, health and care access
  - High concentrations of jobs where social distancing is difficult and close living arrangements
- Further impacts on health and well-being
  - Access to health services; deterioration of conditions etc.
  - Further isolation: inability to access main sources of social activities (culture centres; religion establishments etc.); limited international travel to home country
  - Higher burden of informal care provision
- Technology and the wellbeing of older people
  - Advantages and barriers

## 33 CONCLUDING REMARKS

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- Similarities and differences at home and host countries
- Perceptions of ageing
  - A paradigm shift is needed: protection/valuing vs. empowering and enabling
  - Gender, social class and education
- Inequalities at later life
  - cumulative effects of exclusion
  - Own perception and existing opportunities
- Impacts of ageism and age-discrimination
  - Further effects of racism and otherness in host communities
- Social capital
  - A double edge sword for some migrant communities
- The middle-age group as a 'bridging' cohort
  - As main informal career/support group
  - On their own right, while growing older

# 34 MOVING FORWARD

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## TURKEY

- Old age perceptions and expectations
- The role of younger generations
  - Support and empowerment
- Policy and practice development & expansion

## HOST COMMUNITIES

- Pro-active involvement of
  - Older migrants
  - Second generation migrants
  - Wider society
- Structural racism and exclusion

Representation (image; media; expectations)

Creating opportunities: Feasible and accessible 'society for all'

Cross- communications and learning



# 35 THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA RESEARCH ON AGEING HEALTHY (MENARAH) NETWORK

**MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA RESEARCH ON AGEING HEALTHY**

MENARAH (*meaning lighthouse in Arabic*) brings together those interested in healthy ageing research and policy across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. We aim to raise awareness of ageing within the specific economic and socio-cultural structures of the MENA region. The MENARAH network seeks to conduct research and knowledge mobilisation activities to inform the formulation of policies and practice specific to healthy ageing and the wellbeing of older people and their informal carers in the region.

Population Ageing in the Middle East: Developing...

**Middle East & North Africa**  
**MENARAH**  
Research on Ageing Healthy

**OUR CONTRIBUTORS**

- Prof. Shereen Hussein [View Posts →](#)
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- Prof. Sherif EL-Khamisy [View Posts →](#)
- Prof. Marvin Formosa [View Posts →](#)
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- Mohamed Ismail [View Posts →](#)

**RECENT POSTS**

- Focuses on healthy ageing in its broadest meaning
- Aims to
  - Conduct research and knowledge mobilisation activities
  - Raise awareness and connect different actors
  - Inform policy and practice
- A network of researchers, NGOs, policymakers and many more
- Launched Sep. 2020; funded by the GCRF

## 36 RELEVANT REFERENCES

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37

# THANK YOU FOR LISTENING

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2nd Dec 2020



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