



SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSFORMATION IN TURKEY

TÜRKİYE'DEKİ DEMOGRAFİK DÖNÜŞÜMÜN TOPLUMSAL SONUÇLARI

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the demographic transformation in Turkey from the perspective of demographic transition theory. Although the effects of demographic changes are not noticeable today, they contain extremely important and noteworthy processes in terms of producing large and cumulative results affecting the future of societies in the medium and long term. For this reason, the stages of demographic transformation in Turkey were first addressed and the social problems caused by these demographic transformations were examined in the light of statistical data. In this context, it was determined that four basic problem areas emerged as a result of the demographic transformation. These problem areas are aging and old age, changes in marriage practices and family institutions, transformations in the field of youth policies and adaptation problems in the axis of migration and urbanization. Changes in all these basic problem areas particularly affect the family institution and other social areas through the family institution, and together with the phenomenon of migration and the change in urban life, this demographic transformation offers various opportunities and threats in the medium and long term.

Keywords: Demographic Transformation, Social Problem, Demographic Transition Theory.

ÖZET

Bu çalışmada Türkiye'deki demografik dönüşüm demografik geçiş teorisi perspektifinden ele alınmaktadır. Demografik değişimler her ne kadar etkileri bugünden fark edilmese de orta ve uzun vadede toplumların geleceğini etkileyen büyük ve kümülatif sonuçlar doğurması bakımından son derece önemli ve dikkat edilmesi gereken süreçleri içinde barındırmaktadır. Bu sebeple öncelikle Türkiye'deki demografik dönüşümün aşamaları ele alınmış ve bu demografik dönüşümlerin sebep olduğu sosyal sorunlar istatistik veriler ışığında incelenmiştir. Bu kapsamda demografik dönüşümün sonucu olarak dört temel sorun alanının ortaya çıktığı tespit edilmiştir. Bu sorun alanları yaşlanma ve yaşlılık, evlilik pratikleri ve aile kurumundaki değişimler, gençlik politikaları alanındaki dönüşümler ve göç ve kentleşme eksenindeki uyum problemleridir. Bütün bu temel sorun alanlarındaki değişimler bilhassa aile kurumunu ve aile kurumu üzerinden diğer sosyal alanları etkilemekte ve göç olgusu ve kentsel yaşamın değişimiyle birlikte bu demografik dönüşüm orta ve uzun vadede çeşitli fırsat ve tehditler sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Demografik Dönüşüm, Sosyal Sorun, Demografik Geçiş Teorisi.



1. INTRODUCTION

The population factor is one of the most important elements affecting the social structure. Both the quantitative status of the population, namely its size and density, and its qualitative status, namely its distribution according to age groups, education level, employment rates and similar factors, determine the structure of a society. Routine population changes that occur in the medium and long term, as well as population movements that cause dramatic population increases or decreases such as wars or mass migration, have greatly affected social structures. The change in the human population on earth has been the subject of both demography and population sociology in terms of its historical and sociological consequences. Demographic change has progressed with the improvement of the climatic conditions on earth, various inventions and technological developments, and in this parallel, the concentration of the human population has become possible.

Although there have been various local events affecting population mobility throughout history, it is generally accepted that there have been major demographic revolutions that have determined the world population. The first demographic revolution refers to the major change that occurred approximately 500,000 years ago and led to an increase in the number of people on earth with the invention of fire and the innovations that humans brought about in processing food. It is estimated that the population was around a few million in 10,000 BC, when population projections can be made for the past. The second major demographic revolution is the population increase that occurred at the end of the Paleolithic Age, when the soil's capacity to feed humanity increased thanks to the improvement in climatic conditions. The changes experienced during this period enabled the proliferation of plant and animal species, and people began to have access to a greater number and variety of plant and animal foods. It is estimated that the world population was only around five or six million at the end of this period. The third and fourth demographic revolutions are the results of two major revolutions in human history that increased surplus product and wealth: Agricultural and Industrial Revolutions (Quoted by: Daniş, 2018:25-28; Jacquard, 1987).

With the Agricultural Revolution, thanks to the domestication and development of plant and animal species, humans were able to store surplus food products and a settled life became possible. With the production of especially nutritious grains and the possibility of raising animals in herds, the human population increased dramatically and reached 200 million around the beginning of the Christian era. Of course, the developing agricultural economy during this period also needed a large number of people to work in agriculture and animal husbandry, and farm families had many children. During the Middle Ages, this population gradually increased as a result of the agricultural-based settlement and agricultural economy, despite factors such as war, epidemics, and difficult living conditions. It is estimated that the world population reached approximately 800 million around the eighteenth century, when the Industrial Revolution began in Europe. Thus, in a period of approximately 12,000 years from 10,000 BC to 1800, the Agricultural Revolution led to a population leap from five to six million to 800 million, which is called the Third Demographic Revolution (McEvedy and Jones, 1979: 13-15). The Fourth Demographic Revolution took place thanks to the Industrial Revolution that rose from this period onwards and the policies of modern nation-states with strong central structures. The technological changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution and developments in medicine (the invention of vaccines and antibiotics, etc.) have resulted in improvements in basic indicators such as infant mortality rate, maternal mortality rate, crude mortality rate, crude

birth rate, and average life expectancy from the nineteenth century to the present. In addition, nutritional opportunities that have reached much higher levels have reduced mortality rates and increased average life expectancy (Quoted by: Daniş, 2018:25-28; Jacquard, 1987). The nineteenth century was a period of population explosion in European and the Americas and the rise of great metropolises. The populations of countries such as the United Kingdom, Prussia and the United States witnessed major jumps, such as two-fold and three-fold, in the 50 to 100-year periods from 1750 to 1800 and from there to the 1850s. Cities such as London, Paris, New York, Manchester, Edinburgh and Berlin are the most concrete examples of this population explosion (Hobsbawm, 1996: 169).

As can be seen, every demographic revolution has resulted in human societies being able to produce more and store surplus value, and as a result, attaining a more differentiated and complex social structure, and this has become one of the most important parameters of social change. In the words of Italian demographer Livi-Bacci, "population can also be seen roughly as an index of welfare. The 1 million population of the Paleolithic Age, the 10 million of the Neolithic Age, the 100 million of the Bronze Age, the billion population of the Industrial Revolution Era, or the 10 billion population that we can reach in the middle of the twenty-first century definitely represent more than a simple demographic growth" (Livi-Bacci, 2017:1). Apparently, there have been periods throughout history when the population showed extremely large changes due to various factors, and these periods carry very different meanings beyond mere population growth. In order to reveal these different meanings, many sciences such as demography, which studies the structure, characteristics and movements of the population, and sociology, which studies its human, social, economic and political results, as well as economics, political science and geography, have tried to examine social problems related to population-related developments. Undoubtedly, all these developments have deeply affected many areas such as marriage, family, youth, aging and old age, migration and urbanization, which are of primary concern to the structure of the population today. Population movements are fundamentally shaped by the effects of deaths, births and migrations. Therefore, basic variables related to marriage (age at first marriage, fertility rate etc.), changes related to the family (transition to nuclear family, decrease in average household number etc.), trends related to urbanization (internal and external migrations, urban concentrations, rise of urban and coastal rent, rural-urban balance etc.), population pressure and integration problem created by internal and external migrations, transformation of youth and old age categories and emergence of new problem areas are the most basic components that stand out in this sense.

This study examines the reflections of the demographic changes mentioned above in Turkey and their social consequences. First, the demographic transition theory and how this theory has been experienced in Turkey are discussed. Then, four social consequences of the demographic transition are discussed: the problem of aging and old age policies, changes in marriage practices and institutions of family, youth policies and migration, urbanization and adaptation problems. In this context, some of the basic questions addressed are as follows:

- What are the problems that the demographic transformation has brought about in the field of aging?
- What kind of changes does it cause in marriage practices and institutions of family?
- How has the demographic transformation been reflected in youth policies?

- What is the relationship between the demographic transformation and the internal migration process in terms of migration and urbanization and the irregular external migration phenomenon that has been directed to Turkey from abroad in the last 13 years?

This study is methodologically based on the analysis and interpretation of quantitative data and especially official statistical data on demographics in line with the research questions mentioned above. It is original in that it addresses the reflections of demographic transformation in Turkey in social areas from a holistic perspective in different dimensions based on statistical data.

2. DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION IN TURKEY

With the developments such as the industrial revolution that triggered the fourth demographic revolution and the formation of modern nation-states, significant concerns about the rapid increase in population arose, and demographers working in this field have developed various theories. These theories discuss the welfare problem that the results of the great population explosion that occurred between the second half of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century would fundamentally create in economic terms in human history and the sociological consequences related to it. For example, according to Malthus, “population, when uncontrolled, increases in a geometrical ratio. The means of subsistence increase only in an arithmetical ratio. For those who are somewhat acquainted with numbers, this situation will show the immensity of the first force (population growth) compared to the second (means of subsistence). According to this law of our nature, which requires food for human life, the effects of these two unequal forces must be kept in balance. This means a strong and constantly operating control over the population due to the difficulty of subsistence” (Malthus, 1798: 16). After making this determination, Malthus recommends human-made population controls, excluding factors such as war, epidemics and famine, which historically control and balance the population in long-term and naturally reduce it. In this context, he suggests measures such as reducing early marriages and reducing fertility rates. In essence, scholars like Malthus establish their theory according to the law of diminishing returns in economics and act with liberal concerns such as preventing poor people from having too many children, not providing social assistance to the poor and preventing the general welfare of the nation from falling. This view is based on a very basic assumption that scarce resources will be insufficient against the unlimited growth of life (and especially the human population) and therefore precautions must be taken.

Neo-Malthusian theories, which have been the source of population control and population planning from the nineteenth century to the present, have also taken population as a dependent variable based on agricultural production, argued that population will increase as welfare increases, and emphasized the limitedness of resources. On the contrary, in some theories developed against Malthus' theory, there have been demographers who have claimed that population growth increases agricultural production and therefore leads to an increase in welfare (Boserup, 1993:86). These types of theories have also argued that policies encouraging population growth should be implemented in order to ensure continuous development. In the twentieth century, a more general and comprehensive theory was developed to make sense of global demographic changes in different countries and regions and different economies, a population theory later called demographic transition theory. Demographic transition theory, just like modernization theory, focuses on developed economies such as Europe and the USA, but argues that similar transitions will occur first in developing economies and then in underdeveloped economies all over the world. Accordingly, in the first stage of the demographic transition, there is a stage where industrialization has not yet matured, and in this stage, both

fertility and mortality rates are high, and therefore the population follows a relatively stable course. In the second stage, thanks to the development process experienced with both industrialization and scientific developments and the development of the modern state, the death rate has decreased, while the decrease in the birth rate is not yet so obvious. As a result, a serious population increase is experienced in this stage. In the third and last stage of the demographic transition, both death and birth rates have decreased, and first the population growth rate has decreased and finally the population growth has turned negative, and therefore the population has started to age (Thompson, 1929: 959; Notestein; 1953:15).

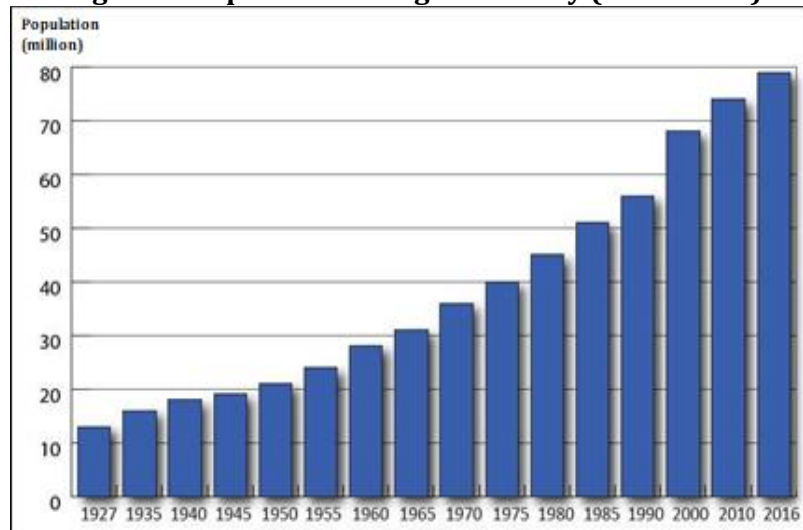
Turkey, which has been experiencing the process of integration into the new political axis shaped by the French Revolution and the new economic axis shaped by the Industrial Revolution since the end of the eighteenth century, has also experienced a similar demographic change process first under the influence of the Ottoman modernization process and then the formation of the modern nation-state. In fact, the intensive migrations from the Balkans and the Caucasus to Anatolia throughout the nineteenth century created a vitality that prepared the ground for the dynamic population growth that would occur in the twentieth century (Karpat, 2003:121). In the process of the Ottoman State's integration into the European-centered capitalist economy, large cities such as Istanbul, Izmir and Bursa, which constituted the important pillars of this economic integration, stood out demographically. After the foundation of Turkish Republic, such cities continued to maintain and increase their demographic density. The process that continued from the nineteenth century of the Ottoman Empire until the end of the Second World War and the 1950s, which marked Turkey's transition to multi-party democracy, can be considered the first stage of the demographic transition. In this phase, due to the high birth and death rates in Turkey and the balancing experienced with incoming and outgoing migrations, a relatively stable population structure emerged and no significant or dramatic increases were experienced. However, the long-lasting wars and epidemics that continued from the beginning of the 1900s to 1923 caused great decimation in the population, and this situation brought about the emphasis on pro-natalist policies encouraging births from the early years of the Republic. Because the imbalance between the male and female populations as a result of the war, the spread of various epidemics, malnutrition and the extremely inadequate services in terms of maternal and child health caused both a serious decrease in fertility rates and high mortality rates of mothers and newborns (Toprak, 2017:27-29). For all these reasons, one of the biggest goals of the early Republican period was to solve the child problem and thus ensure an increase in the population. For this purpose, measures such as lowering the minimum marriage age to 17 for men and 15 for women and banning abortion and birth control were even taken (Özbay, 2015: 275).

In the period after the 1950s, the results of the policies implemented in the early Republican period began to be seen and a period that could be called the "baby boom" or "youth bulge" was experienced. In this process that continued until the mid-1980s, the second stage of the demographic transition took place and while there was a significant decrease in the death rates in Turkey, the birth rates continued to increase after World War II. The increased access to health and social security services, which increased in quality as a result of the increasing social mobility and urbanization after the 1950s, made a significant contribution to this. As a result of this demographic growth, while the proportion of the young population in the total population was 15.1% in the 1930s, this rate increased to 20.2% in 1985. However, two important changes occurred in this second stage of the demographic transition that extended from the 1950s to 1985 and with these changes, the state's policies abandoned their pro-natalist tendency and began to evolve into policies that restricted fertility and thus controlled the population and

reduced the population growth rate. Namely, with the law enacted in 1965, it was possible to introduce and spread birth control practices and to encourage family planning, especially in the villages (Özbay, 2015: 313-317). After the 1980s, it is seen that anti-natalist policies became more evident. Because during this period, the law facilitating abortion came into force and family planning studies were spread in a wide range from schools to barracks and the results of this were obtained.

With the effect of these two important steps in the second stage, it can be said that the demographic transition has entered its final stage after 1985. In this stage, it is seen that the fertility rate and, accordingly, the population growth rate have started to decrease. After the 1980s, as a result of the urbanization process that has been accelerating since the 1950s, a cultural mentality transformation has also begun to take place, the number of parents who see having fewer children as normal has increased, and thus the fertility-reducing effects of urbanization have begun to have a more widespread effect. Thus, Turkey's population pyramid has also begun to change, and Turkey has begun to evolve towards a more aging social structure, where average life expectancy is high, birth and death rates are falling, as in developed countries (Aysan, 2019: 148-149).

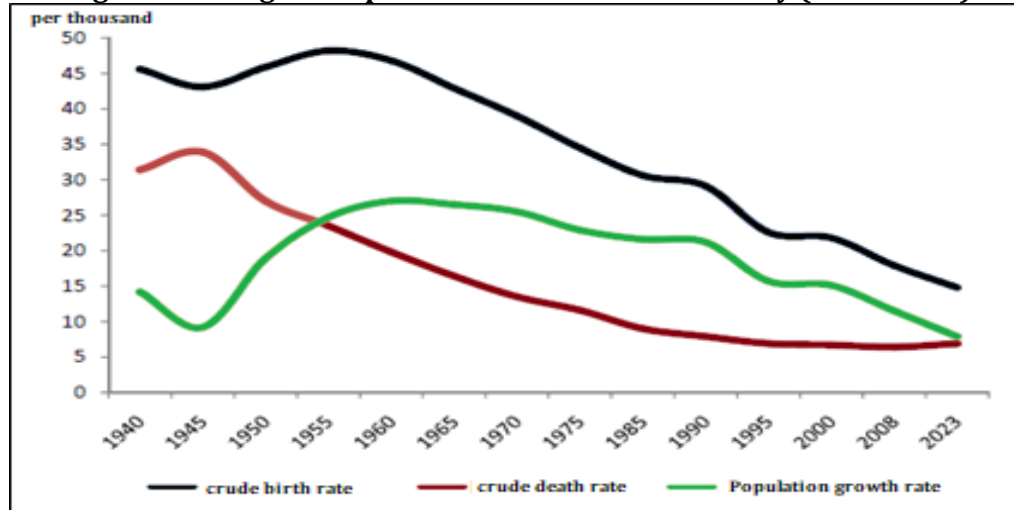
Figure 1. Population Change in Turkey (1927-2016)



Source: TURKSTAT (Turkish Statistical Institute)

As seen in Figure 1, while population growth in Turkey is still continuing, as seen in Figure 2, the population growth rate is decreasing (1.1 per thousand in 2023). This shows that although Turkey is in the third stage of demographic transition, the population is still increasing, but not as rapidly as in previous periods.

Figure 2. Change in Population Growth Rate in Turkey (1940-2023)



Source: Fişek and Shorter, 1968; Shorter and Macura, 1982; Toros, 1985.

The demographic transformation experienced in Turkey in the twentieth century has followed a similar course to developed countries as predicted by the demographic transition theory. Turkey, following other developed countries in the last century, has entered a phase where both death and birth rates are low, as in this demographic transition theory. As a result, there has been a serious change in two basic statistics, namely life expectancy at birth and infant mortality rate. As of 2023, life expectancy at birth was 80.0 for women, 74.7 for men, and 77.3 on average. The infant mortality rate was 10.0 per thousand as of 2023 (TURKSTAT). These two data show us that the Turkish population is now increasingly aging. The aging problem is one of the important problem areas brought about by the demographic transformation. The second issue is the change in marriage practices and family in Turkey as a result of the demographic transformation. The increase in the age of first marriage, the change in household structures, the decrease in the fertility rate and the increase in divorce rates are the most important data that determine the basic demographic trends in this area. The third problem area is the transformation of the structure of the young population in Turkey. The change in the rate of the young population, the education and schooling rates of the youth, the employment status of the youth, the differences in education and employment according to gender are the most important headings in this area. Finally, the fourth heading is the migration to Turkey from outside and the problems created by this migration, as well as the migration and urbanization problems that emerged with the transformation caused by internal migration.

3. DIFFERENT DIMENSIONS OF DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE

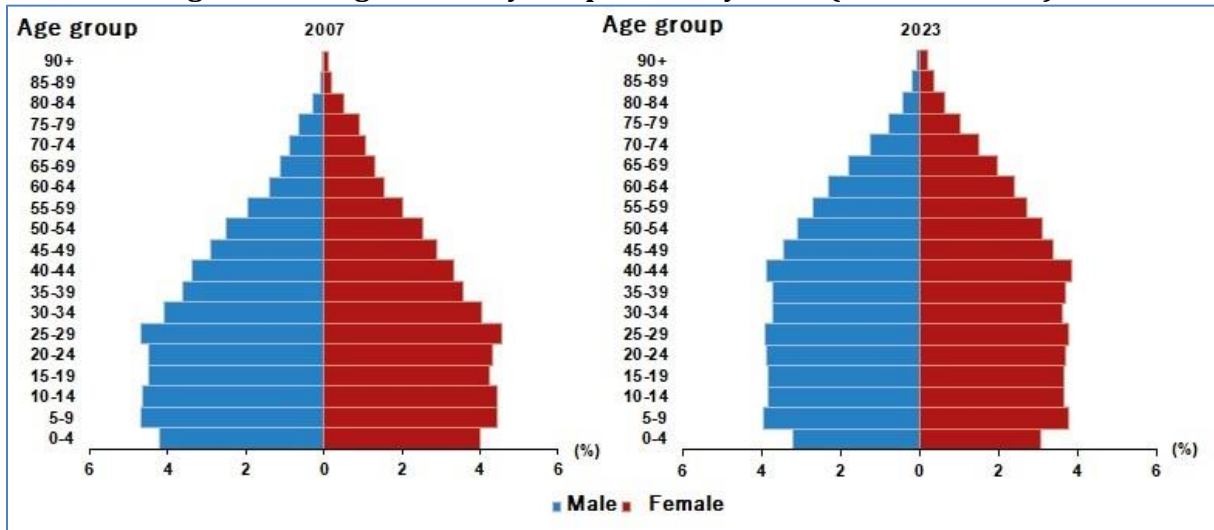
The demographic transition that Turkey has experienced in the last hundred years has provided serious opportunities in the above-mentioned issues, while at the same time it has led to important problem areas and challenges. If Turkey takes advantage of the opportunities that this demographic change has created in the 21st century and effectively resolves the problems, this could pave the way for a positive transformation in social, economic, political and cultural areas.

3.1. Problems Caused by Aging

Aging, in statistical terms, means the increase in the population aged 65 and over, and the median age in a country. In Turkey, in recent years, the decrease in the fertility rate and population growth rate, the decrease in mortality rates and the increase in average life expectancy have both increased the median age and the population rate aged 65 and over. As

can be seen in Figure 3, as a result of all these changes, Turkey's population pyramid has undergone a significant change and has acquired a structure where births and deaths have slowed down, similar to the population pyramids of developed countries.

Figure 3. Change in Turkey's Population Pyramid (2007 and 2023)



Source: TURKSTAT

In the last stage of Turkey's demographic change, with both the fertility rate and mortality rates decreasing, the fact that Turkey now has an aging population which has emerged in the process extending from the 1960s to the 2020s. If the elderly population (65 years and older) is more than 7%, those societies are called elderly societies, and if it is more than 10%, they are called very elderly societies. When we look at Turkey's data, the elderly population rate, which was 8% as of 2014, is 10.2% as of 2023. According to population projections, the elderly population rate will be 11% in 2025, 12.9% in 2030, 16.3% in 2040, 22.6% in 2060, and 25.6% in 2080. The current status of this rate, which was 3.9% in 1935, and expectations about its future course show how high Turkey's aging rate will be (TURKSTAT). According to these statistics, Turkey, which now has an aging population, will gradually become an older or the oldest of the old (with an increasing population of 80+) society when this trend continues (Beyaz, 2024:81; Arun, 2016: 30-31). Another important data on aging, the median age, is the average age when the entire population are listed. While the median age in Turkey was 32.7 in 2020, it increased to 34,0 in 2023. This is a very high increase compared to previous years. Because this figure was 22.21 in 1990 and 24.83 in 2000. When examined by gender, the median age increased to 33.2 for men and 34.7 for women in 2023 (TURKSTAT).

Considering these data and future projections, it is likely that Turkey will face a demographic crisis in the medium term. Because, as the development perspective shows us, societies that fail to take advantage of the period when the population in the active working age (15-64 years) is at its peak, that is, when the demographic window of opportunity is open, and that age without developing, are forced to face important socio-economic problems. This situation closely concerns the fields of social policy, economics, sociology and social services in terms of the necessity of creating active aging policies and implementing social service interventions in this direction (Aysan, 2019:156-157). In this context, the elderly dependency rate, which expresses the number of elderly people per person in the active working age, increased from 14.1% in 2020 to 15.0% in 2023. Considering that this data was 7.06% in 1990 and 8.83% in 2000, it is understood that a dramatic increase has occurred in the last twenty years (TURKSTAT, 2012).

When these rates are considered in terms of social security and health systems, they reveal the need to be prepared for this major change in this area because the increasing pressure on the elderly dependency ratio on the active working population will create an additional burden on the social security system. This situation also shows that active aging policies should be addressed more comprehensively in terms of care, health, and employment.

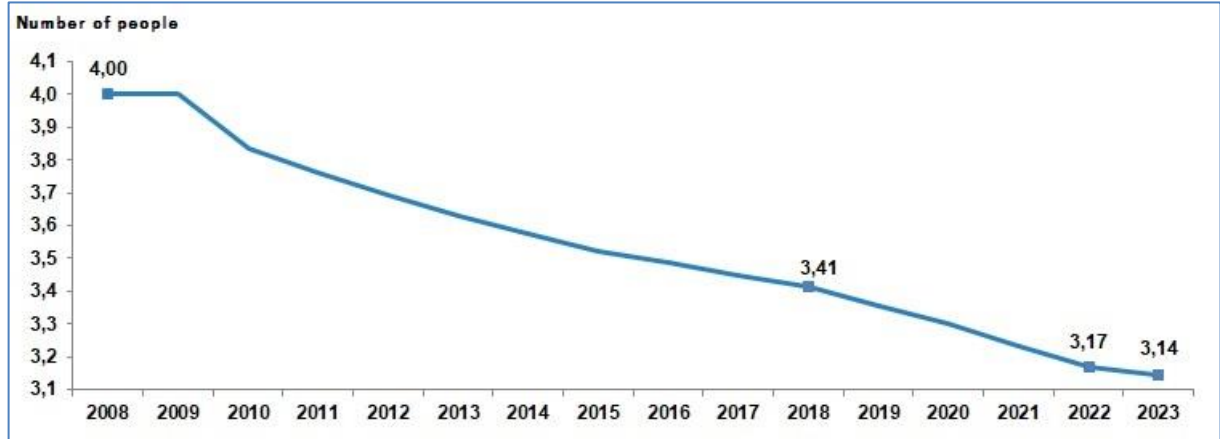
On the other hand, instead of a homogeneous elderly population as a single piece, we can talk about an elderly population with very different characteristics. This situation shows that we should not overlook the fact that there is a segment of the elderly population where inequalities are widespread. When we look at the structure of inequalities, intergenerational inequalities are an important axis. In Turkey, there is a large gap between the elderly population in terms of education level and income level and the young population. For example, while the rate of illiteracy in the total population is 12.3%, it is 37.8% for the elderly. This shows that there is a large inter-generational gap in terms of education and that this situation of being deprived of education is reflected as a disadvantage in employment and deprivation of income. Indeed, it is understood that employment rates and income levels have decreased in the elderly population, and the rate of elderly women who have no income is 48.1%. Another axis of inequality other than intergenerational inequality is gender (Aysan & Yüce, 2023; Arun, 2016:387-40). While the illiteracy rate is 17.2% for elderly men, this figure goes up to 55.3% for women. While the rate of elderly women with no income is 48.1%, the rate of elderly men with no income is only 6.1%. This situation shows that gender inequality is evident in older generations. Another issue that is noteworthy in the context of the elderly population is the inadequacies and problems in accessing health and care services, especially in rural areas. When such access deficiencies are added to the problems of the elderly population, who have difficulties in taking care of themselves and monitoring their health status, a serious disadvantage in terms of care emerges. As a result, it is an important need to develop care and active aging models for the different problems of elderly individuals from different socio-economic strata, taking into account gender-based inequalities, regional inequalities and inequalities in terms of education level. In fact, it can be said that the Covid-19 pandemic is an exemplary experience in terms of age discrimination and the emergence of the specific problems of the elderly population, both in the case of Turkey, where the elderly population is increasing, and especially in the context of EU countries, where the elderly population is dense. By benefiting from these experiences, it is necessary to approach the problems of aging in terms of health and social security, care and employment, and to develop a policy that is sensitive to inequalities, especially by taking into account the demographic structure of today's middle-aged generations. It is necessary to continue the health services, institutional care services, home care services and old age pension practices for the elderly, which are carried out by the General Directorate of Disabled and Elderly Services affiliated to the Ministry of Family and Social Services, and the Ministry of Health, as foreseen in the relevant plans and programs, to expand these services on a rural-urban axis and to facilitate their access, and to diversify service delivery models that will improve the adaptation of the elderly to socio-economic and cultural life (ASPB, 2013). These policies will ensure that the vision of lifelong health and healthy aging is implemented and the goal of active aging is supported (SB, 2021).

3.2. Changes in Marriage Practices and Institution of Family

Another problem related to demographic transformation is the transformations that marriage and family institutions undergo. While the increasing age at first marriage, decreasing crude

marriage rate, increasing divorce rates and the resulting decrease in the number of children and household size in Turkey feed the aging of the population, this situation also transforms family structures. These changes related to marriage and family practices increase the rate of single-parent families, single-woman and single-man families and broken families (Koç, 2014:30-31). It is also seen that these rates are significantly higher in urban areas compared to rural areas and differ along the east-west axis of Turkey. The data that most strikingly shows the change in family structure in Turkey is the average household size. Because this data is the greatest indicator of the quantitative and qualitative change of the family.

Figure 4. Change in Average Household Size (2008-2023)



Source: TURKSTAT

Figure 4 shows that the average household size decreased from 4.00 to 3.14 from 2008 to 2023. This situation becomes even more significant when considered together with the fertility rate. As of 2023, the total fertility rate was 1.51. In 2001, this rate was 2.38 (TURKSTAT). In this case, it is seen that both the renewal level of the population has decreased and the number of children families have decreased. When considered together with the macro processes such as urbanization, industrialization, secularization and modernization that Turkey has been experiencing since the 1950s, this means a serious change in the Turkish family structure. In a society that does not essentially have a Western-style isolated nuclear family structure, where extended family and kinship ties and solidarity networks continue even if they do not live under the same roof (Dikeçligil, 2012: 37), this change, which means that nuclear families are gradually shrinking, will ultimately result in increased individualization. In fact, when looking at the long term of the last fifty years, one of the important factors that brought about the decrease in the fertility rate and household size is the increase in the age at first marriage. The increase in the level of education and therefore the time spent in education in Turkey, the change in the employment structure along with industrialization and urbanization, and the increase in women's employment have resulted in a continuous increase in the age at first marriage. According to marriage statistics, the average age at first marriage for women who officially got married in 2023 was 25.7, while the average age at first marriage for men was 28.3. Apart from these average ages, it is seen that differences between regions and education levels still continue, and these ages are generally lower in the east of Turkey and in the less educated segments of society, while they are higher in the educated and urban segments. In addition, child marriages, another problem related to the age at first marriage, continue to exist as a social problem even though they have decreased (Kıran, 2017:4-5). On the other hand, another striking data regarding the transformation in the family is that 15.4% of women had a higher level of education than their spouses in 2020. Considering the educational disparity between men and

women in previous generations, this differentiation in terms of education level is extremely striking.

In addition to the quantitative change in the average household size, it is seen that the structure of households has also changed. For example, while the rate of single-parent households was 7.6% in 2014, the rate of single-parent households in total households has become 10.6% as of 2023. The increase in this rate has occurred as a result of the increase in divorce rates. Indeed, when we look at the divorce rates in Turkey, we see that the crude divorce rate, which was 1.41 per thousand in 2001, has increased to 2.01 per thousand as of 2023 (TURKSTAT). However, as in other indicators related to marriage, regional differences are also noticeable in divorce. For example, while the rates in Izmir, the province with the highest divorce rate in Turkey (2.95 per thousand), are higher than the EU average, this rate is much lower in the eastern provinces (0.25 per thousand in Hakkari, 0.33 per thousand in Siirt and Muş). As can be understood from this, regional differences in marriage and family indicators and their changes in Turkey are prominent (TURKSTAT, Çavlin, 2014;207; Kıran and Bölükbaşı, 2021:167). On the other hand, the rate of single-person households increased from 13.9 in 2014 to 19.7 in 2023. These households consist of different categories such as those who have never married and live alone, those who have married and divorced and live alone, and elderly people who have lost their spouses and live alone. This situation shows that the practice of living alone is increasing in both young people, middle-aged people and the elderly, and shows that there is a transition from a collective structure in the family structure to a more individualistic structure.

As a result, the age at first marriage has increased in Turkey today, the education and age differences between women and men in marriage have decreased, fertility rates have decreased, the average number of household members has decreased, the number of children has decreased and divorce rates have increased. As a result of these changes, many different new models have emerged in addition to the nuclear family and extended family models, such as single-parent families, single-person households, and households where more than one person lives without a nuclear family relationship. The family institution, which is accepted as the core of society both sociologically and constitutionally and is protected by the constitution, has been affected by demographic changes and transformed as a result of macro processes such as migration, urbanization and industrialization that accelerated after the 1950s, and the family structure has diversified and pluralized along axes such as urbanity-peasantry, education levels and income levels. This situation reveals the necessity of pluralization of social policies produced by the state. For this reason, in the production of family-oriented policies and the implementation of social service models, a perspective that takes into account that there is no longer a single type of nuclear family structure and that alternative family forms also exist is necessary. In order to minimize the social and economic costs that the disintegration of the family institution will create, it is important to take measures to meet the needs of different family models and thus to protect family integrity as much as possible.

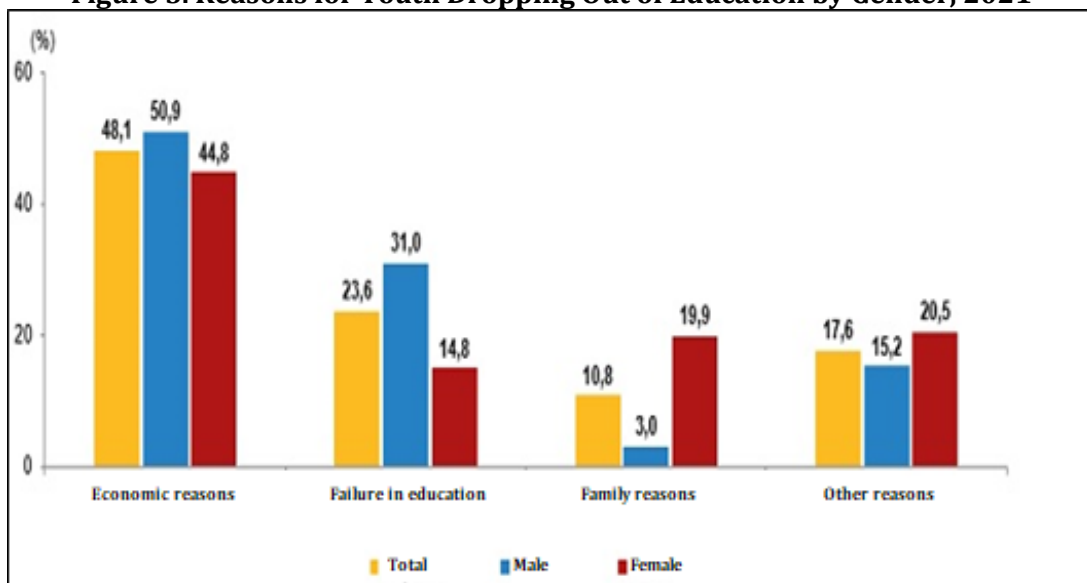
3.3. Youth Policies

Transformations related to the young population are also an important part of demographic change. The young population segment plays an important role in correctly evaluating the demographic opportunity window that the country will capture in the short and medium term. The concept of the demographic opportunity window, which has a very decisive role in a country's realization of its development goal without aging, defines the years when the active working age population (population between the ages of 15-64) is at its highest (Beyaz,

2024:67). While the proportion of the young population in the total population was 15.1% in the 1930s, this rate, despite temporary changes, has always been around 20% in the 50-year period from 1950 to 2000. However, this rate decreased to 15.1% from 2000 to 2023 and will further decrease to 11% by 2080 according to population projections (TURKSTAT). Therefore, in the formation of employment policies for this productive population, especially the young population between the ages of 15-29, whose rate will gradually decrease, it is necessary to take into account the short and medium-term differentiation trends of sectoral changes. Because it is important to predict the economic structure and occupations in which the youth between the ages of 15-29, some of whom are in secondary and higher education and some of whom are in the labor market, will be distributed in the following years. In this respect, education policies that increase the sensitivity of education to employment are of great importance. The rise in youth unemployment rates is a very serious problem as a result of the education model in Turkey, which is not sufficiently sensitive to employment-oriented differentiation in secondary and higher education and therefore pushes a large part of the young population out of employment by directing them only to academic higher education. Indeed, as of 2023, the rate of young people who are neither in education nor in employment is 22.5%. This rather high rate shows that both sufficient employment opportunities cannot be created for young people and the desired efficiency cannot be obtained from the education process. On the other hand, it is seen that this rate is much higher (29.8%) among young women.

In light of this data, it is understood that gender-based differentiation is still very evident in the issue of employment among young people. Again, as of 2023, the unemployment rate among young men was 14.3%, while the unemployment rate among young women was 23.2%. Although this rate is high for both men and women, it is seen that unemployment is much more widespread and obvious among young women. Undoubtedly, the fact that this high number of young people are neither in education nor in employment and the high unemployment rates make it necessary to evaluate the root causes of education-related problems. One of these is that young people are forced to leave their education unfinished. In Figure-5, the reasons for young people leaving their education unfinished are evaluated according to gender.

Figure 5. Reasons for Youth Dropping Out of Education by Gender, 2021



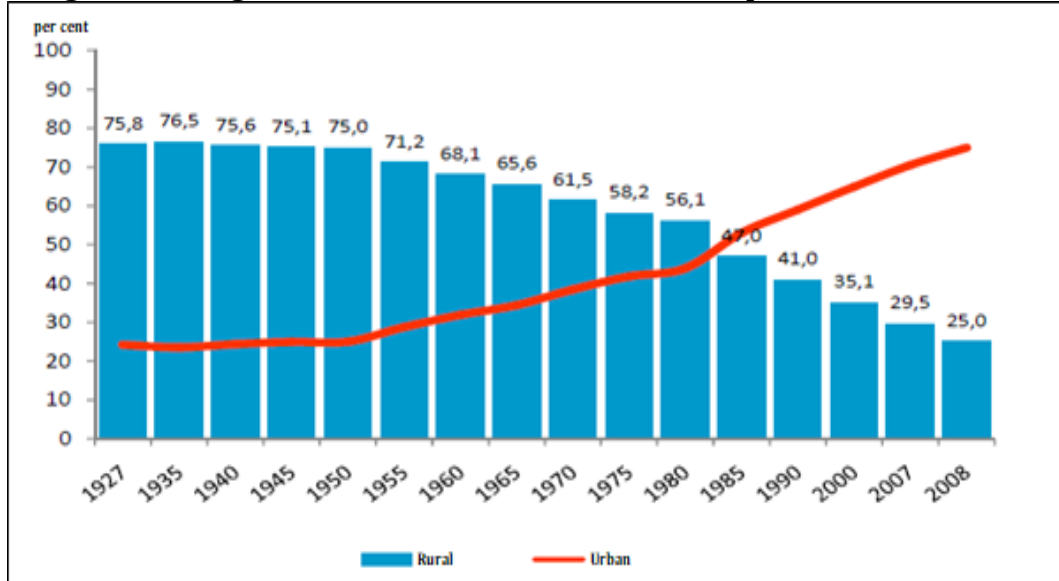
Source: TURKSTAT

Accordingly, the most fundamental reason for dropping out of education for both men and women is economic, and this reason explains half of the problem. Therefore, the fact that nearly half of the young people who drop out of education do so due to economic reasons makes it difficult or even impossible for them to obtain a qualified education and, as a result, a higher-qualified employment opportunity. This situation points to a serious problem in education and employment policies for young people, and the need to develop an education model that is sensitive to employment. For this reason, social policy and social service models for youth in the coming years must definitely have a perspective that takes the employment axis into account. In this respect, it is an urgent need to spread employment-oriented youth care and service models, examples and pilot applications of which have been carried out in the social service presentations of some metropolitan municipalities, to the national level. On the other hand, the young category is not uniform, just like the elderly population. It is important for disabled young people to take a more active part in working life, and to take into account the rural-urban distinctions and regional-based geographical differences and inequalities in the young population (Tezcan, 2013: 148-149).

The National Youth and Sports Policy Document, announced to the public by the Ministry of Youth and Sports in 2013, evaluated youth policies under 13 headings and sports policies under 7 headings. In this document, youth policies in particular range from education and employment-oriented targets to policies aiming to increase the participation and mobility of young people (GSB, 2013). However, in order for the relevant targets to be implemented realistically, the demographic findings summarized above should be taken into consideration. Undoubtedly, the relevant ministry is the coordinating institution in the implementation of the said policies, and other stakeholder ministries and institutions (e.g. Ministry of Family and Social Services, National Agency, Ministry of National Education, Ministry of Labor and Social Security, etc.) also have a major role in this. As of 2024, the Ministry of Youth and Sports continues its work on updating the National Youth and Sports Policy Document.

3.4. Migration, Urbanization and Adaptation Problems

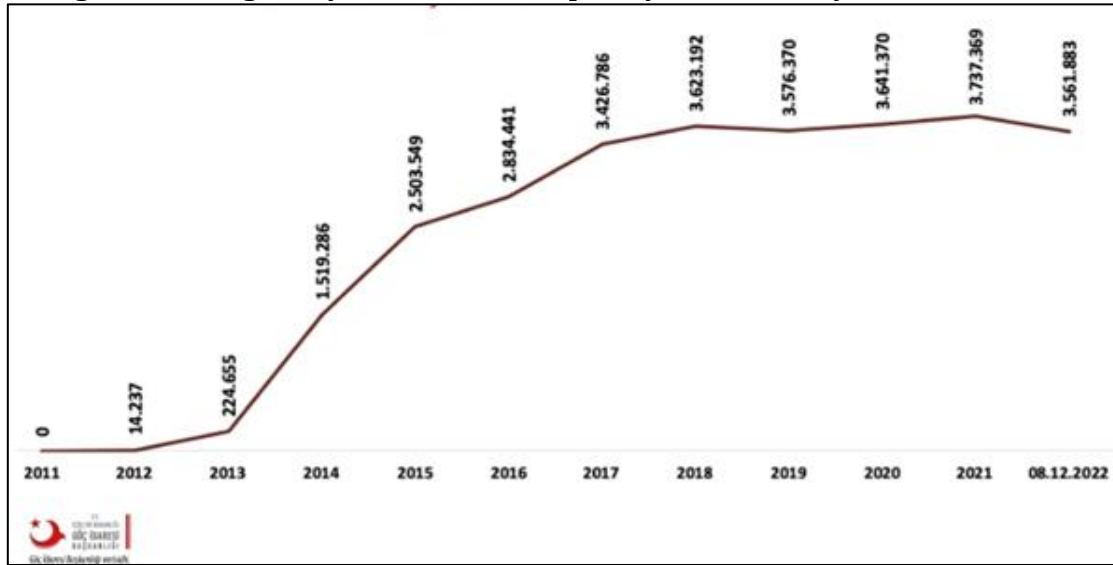
One of the main problem areas caused by demographic change is migration and the urbanization and adaptation problems experienced due to migration. When it comes to migration in Turkey, first the internal migration from villages to cities, from small cities to large cities, from east to west and from inland to coastal areas, which accelerated and intensified after the 1950s (Türk and Bölükbaşı, 2021:182), and then the international migration, which has intensified especially in the last decade, come to the fore. Both of these forms of migration have had a determining effect on Turkey's urbanization practices and socio-economic and cultural integration and adaptation problems in the medium and long term, and will continue to do so in the future. In this respect, the future consequences of demographic transformations caused by migration should be evaluated in different dimensions. When we look at the change in urban and rural populations in Turkey, as indicated in Figure-6, it is seen that the situation has reversed since the 1920s, when the rural population constituted 75% of the total population. As of 2023, the rate of people living in provincial and district centers (urban population) has increased to 93.0% (TURKSTAT).

Figure 6. Changes in the Share of Urban and Rural Populations, 1935–2008

Source: (Koç et al., 2008)

However, the quantitative success of urbanization does not mean that qualitative urbanization has also been achieved. Because urbanization refers to a process in which the population coming from rural areas truly adapts to the city and is integrated by the city in both socio-economic and cultural terms. When viewed in this sense, Turkey's urbanization process is outside the urbanization practice in Western countries, which are parallel to industrialization and urbanize more healthily in the long term. It is more similar to the rapid urbanization process of non-Western developing countries. As a result of rapid urbanization, unplanned urbanization, shantytowns, the formation of shantytown culture, and the degeneration of urban culture have led to results such as. Therefore, Turkey's urbanization process has been insufficient in terms of creating a real urban culture, urban consciousness, and urban identity. Studies on demographic movements towards the city also emphasize the acculturation dimension of urbanization. Accordingly, demographic movements that begin with migration are not just a simple change of geography and space, but also a change of social and cultural environment. Therefore, the results of acculturation should be addressed as one of the most fundamental components of internal migration in Turkey (Kıran and Aker, 2019: 67). When viewed from this perspective, instead of marginalization and ghettoization, which reflect the negative manifestations of acculturation, local governments in cities should take a more active role in order to strengthen the adaptation dimension. This situation is valid not only for internal migration but also for migration from outside. As shown in Figure 7, Turkey has accepted more than three and a half million Syrians as refugees under temporary protection in the last ten years.

Figure 7: Change in Syrians under Temporary Protection by Year, 2012-2022



Source: Directorate of Immigration Administration

When we add those of other nationalities who are in Turkey with a residence permit, we come to the fact that we have had to cope with a new wave of migration of over 5 million in a very short period of 10 years. In this case, the migration burden that Turkey's big cities have been carrying since the 1950s has increased even more and the socio-economic and cultural problems caused by these demographic movements have become even more complicated. When we look at irregular and illegal migration from outside, it is seen that there are foreign immigrants in all cities, especially in big cities such as Istanbul, Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa, Hatay, Adana, Mersin, Bursa, İzmir, Konya and Ankara, at a level that will affect the demographic structure of that city. Among these immigrants, those coming from countries such as Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq and Iran are prominent. In order to minimize the negative impact of these migrations on the demographic structure of cities in the medium and long term, it is essential to prevent concentration in certain places and sectors, and to prevent spatial separations and sectoral concentrations that will lead to both economic and socio-cultural ghettoization. In addition, the status of refugees under this temporary protection should be clarified, and the new generations of children and young people should be more effectively included in language education and general school education processes, and adults should similarly meet certain educational qualifications. Clarifying the status of refugees will be an important step in the formation of consistent and long-term integration policies.

The increasing presence of the immigrant population in the last decade can be mentioned as having many positive and negative effects on the host country in terms of demographics. According to the current data of the General Directorate of Migration Management, as of 2024, the immigrant population in Turkey will constitute 6% of the country's population (Uzun, 2024: 3). According to a study conducted on Syrians, who constitute the largest share of this immigrant group, the fertility rate among Syrians in Turkey was 5.3% as of 2018, which is well above the Turkish average of the same year (1.99%) (Akyon et al, 2023). This fertility rate shows that irregular immigrants make a great contribution to the renewal of the population, but if it is not evaluated correctly in terms of education and integration, it can be stated that this population will create a great burden in socio-economic terms. While it is observed that the immigrant population, which is largely included in the low-skilled labor group in terms of demographics, functions as cheap labor in the labor force, on the other hand, the brain drain from Turkey to

abroad is increasing more. The population subject to brain drain is generally the young and educated population group. According to current data, the brain drain rate of university graduates, which was 1.6% in 2015, has increased to 2% by 2023 (TURKSTAT). This situation poses a major demographic risk in terms of the quality of the population.

4. CONCLUSION

Demographic changes, although their effects are not noticeable today, contain extremely important and noteworthy processes in terms of creating large and cumulative results affecting the future of societies in the medium and long term. Therefore, demography and other social sciences conduct research on this subject in order to shape future development plans and contribute to the healthier development of the structure of society. In this study, we tried to address the demographic transformation of Turkey, which is partly similar to demographic changes in the world and partly the scene of its own demographic movements, in general terms, and to shed light on what kind of opportunities and threats this transformation will present in the next century.

In this context, we first evaluated the problems brought about by aging. It is clear that Turkey is an increasingly aging society. In this context, the inequalities within the older generations, the differences between generations and genders, the results in terms of care, social security and active aging should be taken into account in policy making. According to the findings that emerged within this scope, Turkey should focus on implementation programs in the fields of elderly health, healthy aging and active aging in the upcoming period. Secondly, the changes experienced in the institution of marriage and family have important consequences that change the social structure. The most important of these is that the family and household structures have changed as a whole. Based on the findings, we have determined that in addition to the nuclear family and extended family forms that people are accustomed to in Turkey, single-parent families, single-person households and childless families have also begun to emerge. In light of this finding, we have demonstrated that the social policies to be put forward regarding the family from now on will not have a positive effect on family integration if they are made according to a single type of family concept and therefore social policies and social service provision should be formed by taking into account the pluralism of the family. In this context, another important topic is the problems experienced by the young segment of the population and the policies aimed at this. Just as the rate of the elderly population is increasing, it is obvious that the rate of the young population is also decreasing. Therefore, we should emphasize once again that the young population, which is experiencing serious problems in terms of education and employment in Turkey and is increasingly becoming a scarce and valuable resource, should be better evaluated as human capital. Considering the high rate of young people who are neither in education nor in employment, it is obvious that policies to be produced for young people in both areas will make education more sensitive to employment, reduce dropout rates, and increase the mobility and participation of young people. The effectiveness of youth policies will make significant contributions to the productivity of society in the upcoming periods when the active working age population is at its highest level, i.e. when the demographic opportunity window has not yet closed. Finally, urbanization and adaptation problems that emerge with migration are one of the most important parts of demographic mobility and transformation. As a result of the rapid urbanization that Turkey has been experiencing for approximately seventy years and the rapid irregular immigrant intake it has experienced in the last ten years, a significant set of problems has emerged in both urbanization and adaptation. This situation can

only be overcome with integration policies that will minimize marginalization and ghettoization tendencies in socio-cultural and economic terms.

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