

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS OF ELDERLY POPULATION IN TURKEY: FINDINGS OF HOUSEHOLD PROJECTION

Sebnem Canpolat

Hacettepe University,
Institute of Population Studies,
06100 Ankara, Turkey

Phone (90) 312 410 04 19, Fax: (90) 312 424 06 13

e-mails: sebnemcanpolat@gmail.com and sebnemcanpolat@tuik.gov.tr

Abstract

Turkey is undergoing demographic transformation as in many other parts of the world. Even though the proportion of the elderly is small, and other indicators of ageing indicate that the age structure of Turkey is still relatively young when compared to the populations of developed countries, the increase in the elderly population in “absolute numbers” is significant and the number of older adult is equal to total population of some small European countries.

The aim of this paper is to investigate the current co-residence pattern of the aged population and to determine what kind of household composition the old aged individuals shall live in during 2010-2050 period in Turkey. The primary data used in this study are the 1998, 2003 and 2008 Turkey Demographic and Health Surveys. The headship rate projection method was used to determine the co-residence pattern of the elderly population.

In order to assess in detail the family types the elderly live in and to perform the projections, 3 main classifications are used in this study:

1. Simple Family Households: This type is a nuclear family type in the classification done by Timur (1972). In the scope of simple family, the combinations of wife-husband, parents and children were included: a. Conjugal (husband and wife), b. Nuclear family (Husband, wife and their unmarried child(ren))

2. Complex Family Households : This type of household includes extended family and multiple family households. a. Extended Family Household is the household type that is formed by the participation of one or more relatives other than children to the conjugal family, consisting of a husband and wife. b. Multiple Family Households are identified as a household type consisting of two or more conjugal family units living together. The first conjugal family unit includes household head and is called “primary unit” and other conjugal units are called “secondary” unit.

3. Dissolved Family Households : In dissolved family households, one spouse is missing due to separation, divorce, death etc. or non – family households. This type of household includes: a. Single person (solitaries), b. Single parent - co resident with children and other relatives or people not evidently related. (For example, head + son/dau + grandchild, head + son/dau + parent, head + son/dau in law + other relative + adopted/foster child, etc). c. Other means that household head lives together with relatives and other people in the household not evidently related. This structure does not include children.

The household types will also be classified according to whether they include elderly individuals (65+). Moreover, with the help of the projections prepared by utilizing the data concerning the defined household types, this study will attempt to forecast what type of household composition the elderly population will be in the future.

In the majority of developing countries, like Turkey, the family is trusted in meeting the needs of the elderly and also in their care. However, the families in Turkey are changing, the traditional complex family structures are eroding, and the average household size is decreasing. Changes that occur in the population dynamics affect the family and household structures in the society. According to the result of the study, at least one elderly member lives in one of five households in Turkey. It appears that the elderly member live mostly within the conjugal family households. Other common family types are simple nuclear and single person family households. The households sheltering at least one elderly continuously increase in 2010-2050 period. Five out of ten members who live in single person family households are elderly and a significant part of this population is formed by females. Irrelevant of what type of household they live in, the family members play an important role in the care of their elderly members in Turkey.

According to the projection results, with this change that shall occur in the household compositions in Turkey, a decrease is expected to occur in the average household sizes. Theoretically the composition of the households in a country is similar to the size of household is that country. In Turkey, the increase in conjugal and dissolved family households and the decrease in the number of complex family households seem to be compatible with the decrease in both fertility and household size. In a study carried out by Bongaarts (2001) it is determined that the countries that have relatively more elderly population tend to have smaller household structures. According to the “Convergence Theory”, the households tend to be less extended, more nuclear and have smaller average sizes as societies are industrialized and urbanization rates increase (Bongaarts, 2001). The same trend was also experienced during the industrialization process of the European and North American societies. During the period between 1850 and 2000, the average household size was dropped from 4-6 to 2-3 members in 150 years interval. In said countries, the nuclear family household type is dominant. Demographic indicators show that the population in Turkey has also entered into the phase of ageing, and after 2030 it shall have an aged population and the expectation of smaller household sizes in the changing population and household structures seem to be consistent with the studies that are carried out on this subject.