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A MORE EQUAL ISTANBUL:  
**Fair Access to  
Urban Services**



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## INTRODUCTION

*Cities are complex systems formed by nearly infinite interactions among physical infrastructures, ecosystems, and individuals.*

Evolving technologies, norms, security threats, climatic factors, and political contexts continuously challenge this system. Climate change and rapid urbanization have rendered these challenges more intricate and unpredictable than ever before. Beyond environmental and human impacts, populations, economic activities, and social and cultural interactions are increasingly concentrated in urban areas. This concentration has led to significant sustainability issues in housing, infrastructure, basic services, food security, health, education, employment, safety, and natural resources, among others (United Nations, 2017). The persistence of poverty in various forms, growing inequalities, environmental degradation, social and economic exclusion, and, often, spatial segregation as an undeniable reality of cities and human settlements are among the most critical barriers to sustainable development worldwide<sup>1</sup>.

Under these circumstances, the idea of creating fair cities has gained increasing prominence. A fair city is a concept that emphasizes equity and fairness in urban areas. In this context, it refers to designing and managing cities to ensure equal access to public and green spaces, education and healthcare services, urban amenities such as public transportation, and opportunities and resources for all residents, regardless of their diverse characteristics (e.g., age, gender, race, socio-economic status, etc.). Ensuring public participation in planning processes is another essential component of building fair cities. A participatory approach democratizes urban planning and ensures that the voices of the most marginalized individuals are heard and considered in decision-making processes. Although studies on this concept have intensified in recent years, the processes leading to its emergence date back much further. In this regard, both the European Union and the United Nations have undertaken numerous concurrent and complementary initiatives and agreements<sup>2</sup>.

### Fair Cities in Global Agreements and Commitments

In response to the complexity of urban structures and the need to ensure equality and sustainability within societies, the concept of the “right to the city” began to emerge as a topic of discussion in the 1950s. The foundations of urban rights are rooted in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) 1950 by the Council of Europe. These rights encompass fair treatment under the principle of non-discrimination (UDHR Article 2 and ECHR Article 14) and include the right to life and housing.

<sup>1, 2</sup> United Nations (2017). New Urban Agenda.  
<https://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda>



In the European Union (EU), “equality” is a fundamental norm protected by a comprehensive legal framework, directives, strategies, and action plans that address discrimination based on age, disability, gender, religion and belief, race, and ethnicity. This legal framework has been transposed into all EU Member States through EU law to legally safeguard the principle of equality. The legal systems of the EU and its Member States include provisions to elevate the principle of equality in practice to encompass fairness and justice. The Union is founded on values that respect human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These norms and values serve as a shared foundation for Member States, fostering a society characterized by pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity, and gender equality.

The norms of equality and non-discrimination, which are foundational values of the European Union, are explicitly stated in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union. According to this article, equality as a fundamental value of the European Union promotes a shared concern for human dignity, the participation of all individuals in economic, social, and cultural life, and ensures that the voices of all groups are heard in decisions affecting them. It also motivates the inclusion of diversity. On an international level, the emphasis on the gender equality dimension of this right was first articulated in 1992 in Article 20 of the European Urban Charter. This article affirmed that local governments would not engage in gender-based discrimination in service delivery.

The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 marked a shift in global values, emphasizing the idea that humanity should strive to achieve universally applicable development objectives that leave no one behind<sup>3</sup>. Consequently, global and national leaders, along with city administrators, began to assess how they could align their actions in urban areas more closely with this vision of sustainable development and how they could become more equitable and inclusive. The table below outlines all the goals related to promoting equality in urban areas. According to the table, creating fair cities requires a holistic approach, addressing issues such as poverty, nutrition, health, education, gender equality, employment, sustainable cities, climate, and justice together.

<sup>3</sup> UN (2015). Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. <https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/publications/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf>



Table 1. Connection Between Fair Cities and Sustainable Development Goals

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS	EXPLANATION
 <p><b>1</b> NO POVERTY</p>	<p>Ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources (Page 15, target 1.4).</p>
 <p><b>2</b> ZERO HUNGER</p>	<p>End hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round (Page 15, targets 2.1, 2.2).</p>
 <p><b>3</b> GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING</p>	<p>Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all (Page 16, targets 3.8).</p>
 <p><b>4</b> QUALITY EDUCATION</p>	<p>Ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education (Page 17, targets 4.1, 4.3, 4.5).</p>
 <p><b>5</b> GENDER EQUALITY</p>	<p>Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life (Page 18, target 5.5).</p>
 <p><b>10</b> REDUCED INEQUALITIES</p>	<p>Empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status (Page 21, targets 10.2, 10.3, 10.4).</p>
 <p><b>8</b> DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH</p>	<p>By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value (Page 19, target 8.5).</p>
 <p><b>11</b> SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES</p>	<p>By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries (Page 21-22, targets 11.1, 11.2, 11.3, 11.b).</p>
 <p><b>13</b> CLIMATE ACTION</p>	<p>Promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management in least developed countries and including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalized communities (Page 23, targets 13.3, 13.b).</p>
 <p><b>16</b> PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS</p>	<p>Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all (Page 25, targets 16.3, 16.9).</p>



Following the publication of the Sustainable Development Goals, the New Urban Agenda was adopted within the framework of Housing and Sustainable Urban Development at the United Nations Conference (Habitat III) held in Quito, Ecuador, on October 20, 2016, and was endorsed on December 23, 2016. The New Urban Agenda contributes to the integrated implementation and localization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, helping achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and targets, including Goal 11, which aims to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable<sup>4</sup>.

The New Urban Agenda presents a vision for cities that “*promotes the equal use and enjoyment of cities and human settlements, seeking to promote inclusivity and ensure that all inhabitants, of present and future generations, without discrimination of any kind, are able to inhabit and produce just, safe, healthy, accessible, affordable, resilient and sustainable cities and human settlements to foster prosperity and quality of life for all.*”

Cities envisioned under the New Urban Agenda should encompass the following characteristics:

1. *Fulfil their social function, including the social and ecological function of land, with a view to progressively achieving the full realization of the right to adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, without discrimination, universal access to safe and affordable drinking water and sanitation, as well as equal access for all to public goods and quality services in areas such as food security and nutrition, health, education, infrastructure, mobility and transportation, energy, air quality and livelihoods;*
2. *Are participatory, promote civic engagement, engender a sense of belonging and ownership among all their inhabitants, prioritize safe, inclusive, accessible, green and quality public spaces that are friendly for families, enhance social and intergenerational interactions, cultural expressions and political participation, as appropriate, and foster social cohesion, inclusion and safety in peaceful and pluralistic societies, where the needs of all inhabitants are met, recognizing the specific needs of those in vulnerable situations;*
3. *Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls by ensuring women’s full and effective participation and equal rights in all fields and in leadership at all levels of decision making, by ensuring decent work and equal pay for equal work, or work of equal value, for all women and by preventing and eliminating all forms of discrimination, violence and harassment against women and girls in private and public spaces<sup>5</sup>.*

Alongside the Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda, another important document is the Pact of Amsterdam, published on May 30, 2016, under the Urban Agenda for the EU. This pact represents the commitment of EU member states, cities, and European institutions to strengthen the role of urban areas in addressing the EU’s key challenges. The Urban Agenda for the EU aims to enhance the quality of life in urban areas by promoting better regulation, better financing, and better information sharing among cities in Europe.

<sup>4, 5</sup> United Nations (2017). New Urban Agenda.  
<https://habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda>





It acknowledges the diversity and polycentric structure of Europe's urban areas and emphasizes the importance of cooperation between urban areas and their surrounding regions. The agenda focuses on key priority areas such as air quality, housing, and urban poverty, and fosters partnerships that bring together various stakeholders to address common challenges. The Pact of Amsterdam, published in 2016, identified 14 key themes, including air quality, circular economy, climate adaptation, culture and cultural heritage, digital transition, energy transition, housing, inclusion of migrants and refugees, innovative and responsible public procurement, jobs and skills in the local economy, sustainable use of land and nature-based solutions, urban mobility, and urban poverty<sup>6</sup>.

In November 2021, with the adoption of the Ljubljana Agreement, green cities, sustainable tourism, food, and cities of equality were added to the priority themes list of the current Urban Agenda for the EU. The theme of Cities of Equality, which focuses on ensuring that no one is deprived of a better quality of life due to their place of birth, origin, beliefs, or disability status, aligns strongly with the EU's main priorities, particularly the European Commission's Work Programme 2023, the Union of Equality initiative, and the 2021-2027 Cohesion Policy<sup>7</sup>.

In light of these documents and developments, the “Stronger Civil Society for Equal Cities” project aims to identify the barriers to equal and fair access to basic urban services in Istanbul and propose solutions through the “**A More Equal Istanbul: Fair Access to Urban Services**” report.

For this purpose,

In the first chapter, national and Istanbul-level reports, strategy documents, policy papers, development and regional plans, and datasets from relevant ministries were examined. The current status of issues such as population and demographic structure, education, labor and employment, health, housing, transportation, and accessibility in Istanbul was presented, and areas with existing problems and potential were discussed.

In the second chapter, the analysis of the development levels of the 39 districts in Istanbul was shared.

The third chapter of the report focuses on the needs assessment survey of four selected pilot districts, after determining the development levels of the districts. Issues and potential areas of focus were identified.

The final chapter includes evaluations supported by national and international best practice examples, taking into account the needs of different user groups such as women, children, people with disabilities, the elderly, and youth, as well as the local values and issues of the districts on issues such as employment, housing, transportation, education, health, and the environment for both Istanbul as a whole and the four pilot districts.

<sup>6, 7</sup> European Commission (2016). [https://commission.europa.eu/eu-regional-and-urban-development/topics/cities-and-urban-development/urban-agenda-eu\\_en#urban-agenda-for-the-eu](https://commission.europa.eu/eu-regional-and-urban-development/topics/cities-and-urban-development/urban-agenda-eu_en#urban-agenda-for-the-eu)



# 1. CURRENT SITUATION OF FAIR ACCESS TO URBAN SERVICES IN ISTANBUL

**This chapter evaluates Istanbul's status on its path to becoming a fair city in comparison with data from across Türkiye.** Existing data are analyzed under key headings such as population and demographic structure, education, health, labor and employment, housing, and transportation and mobility. The analysis highlights Istanbul's equality status in these areas and the challenges faced in ensuring fair access to services.

## Population and Demographic Structure

Istanbul comprises a total of 39 districts, with 25 located on the European side and 14 on the Asian side.

According to the Address-Based Population Registration System (ABPRS), Türkiye's population of 85,372,377 consists of 50.1% men and 49.9% women. As of 2023, 15,655,924 people, or 18.3% of Türkiye's total population, reside in Istanbul. The population density in Istanbul has steadily increased (except in 2020), reaching 3,049 people per square kilometer in 2021. In contrast, the population density in Türkiye overall was 110 people per square kilometer in the same year. This means Istanbul's population density is 27 times higher than the national average<sup>9</sup>. This extreme density significantly amplifies the demand for fundamental services such as infrastructure, transportation, and housing. It also presents substantial challenges for sustainable urban development. The increasing population density influences the city's socio-economic structure, leading to issues such as decreased quality of life and environmental degradation.

Looking at the age distribution of Istanbul's population, 29% are aged 0-14, 23% are aged 15-29, 37% fall within the 15-64 age range, and 11% are 65 years or older. The data indicate that, in addition to having a dynamic young population, Istanbul also has a relatively lower proportion of elderly people (65 and above), highlighting significant potential for youth-oriented opportunities in areas such as the labor force and education.

The population of children under the age of 18 living in Istanbul is 3,925,457, comprising approximately 25% of the city's total population. Of this child population, 25% are aged 0-4, 30% are aged 5-9, 28% are aged 10-14, and 17% are aged 15-17<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> TurkStat (2023). Address-Based Population Registration System Results.

<sup>9</sup> ISTKA (2023). Istanbul Regional Plan.

<https://www.istka.org.tr/media/pdf/IhJXDIGCQgy2XrQidN66xhpen6njbES807bnxQcTSGjpAf3mbdTR.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> TurkStat (2022).



Since gender-disaggregated data for different age groups is only available at the national level, it is assumed that approximately 51% of children in each age group in Istanbul are boys and 49% are girls. Among young people aged 15–29, 36% are aged 25–29, 37% are aged 20–24, and the remaining 31% are aged 15–19<sup>11</sup>. This demographic structure necessitates the efficient planning of services such as education, healthcare, housing, and transportation to meet the needs of the child and youth population in Istanbul.

Furthermore, the significant size of the child and youth population creates a greater demand for access to social services, caregiving and educational opportunities, and activity spaces for both this group and the population caring for them. This demand emerges as a critical factor to be considered in shaping the city’s social policies.

According to the 2022 migration statistics published by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat), Istanbul ranks among the top cities in terms of receiving international migration. This highlights the necessity of considering the needs of migrant children. Developing service models that address the needs of refugee, asylum-seeking, and migrant children, particularly in the preschool age group, and enhancing the capacity, accessibility, and quality of existing services are of critical importance.

The “Elderly Statistics” report by the Turkish Statistical Institute indicates that 7,953,555 elderly individuals (aged 65 and above) constitute 9.5% of Türkiye’s total population. Among this group, 3,513,892 are men, and 4,439,663 are women. Istanbul is one of the cities with the largest elderly population in Türkiye, with a total of 1,183,330 elderly residents, of whom 507,629 are men and 675,701 are women.

The elderly population in Istanbul constitutes 7.5% of the total population. Among the elderly residents in Istanbul, the proportion of women aged 65 and over (8.5%) is higher than that of men. Within this demographic, 404,962 individuals are aged 75 and above, 94,145 are aged 85 and above, and 192,974 live alone<sup>13</sup>. The ten districts with the highest concentration of residents aged 65 and over are Kadıköy, Adalar, Şile, Beşiktaş, Bakırköy, Çatalca, Şişli, Fatih, and Üsküdar. This demographic profile increases the demand for healthcare, caregiving, and social services for the elderly. It underscores the need to strengthen social policies and services specifically designed for elderly residents, considering their age group, to enhance the quality of life in the city.

In Istanbul, where the average household size is 3.27, this figure varies across districts. On the European side, from the periphery to the city center—such as Arnavutköy (4.18), Başakşehir (3.85), Sultangazi (4.16), Esenler (3.8), Bağcılar (4), and Zeytinburnu (3.78)—generally have larger household sizes. Similarly, Sultanbeyli (4.22) stands out on the Asian side for its larger households. In contrast, Kadıköy (2.46) and Beşiktaş (2.52) have the smallest household sizes in the city<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> TurkStat (2020).

<sup>12</sup> TurkStat (2021).

<sup>13</sup> TurkStat (2021). Address-Based Population Registration System .

<sup>14</sup> IPA (2021). Housing Problem Research.

<https://ipa.istanbul/yayinlarimiz/genel/konut-sorunu-arastirmasi-istanbulda-mevcut-durum-ve-oneriler/>



## Education

An analysis of statistics (2020<sup>15</sup>, 2021<sup>16</sup>, 2022<sup>17</sup>) from the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) reveals that the enrollment rate in formal preschool education for children aged 3–5 remains below 50% for both genders, both across Türkiye and specifically in Istanbul. The low preschool participation rates, particularly in metropolitan areas like Istanbul, highlight significant infrastructure and policy needs in this field. This situation indicates that children are not sufficiently benefiting from early education, which is critical for their cognitive, social, and emotional development.

Furthermore, the Ministry of National Education's data from the 2019/2020, 2020/2021, and 2021/2022 academic years show that full enrollment rates have not been achieved at the primary, secondary, and high school levels either nationwide or in Istanbul.

There are a total of 3,242,185 students in Istanbul. Of these students, 2,459,169 are enrolled in public schools, 435,986 in private schools, and 347,030 in open education institutions. Students in Istanbul make up 16% of all students attending public institutions in Türkiye. In Istanbul, 8.7% of students are in preschool education, 28% in primary school, 29% in secondary school, 23.5% in high school, and 11% in open education institutions. Of the students in preschool, 69% are enrolled in public schools; 91% of primary school students, 89% of secondary school students, and 79% of high school students also attend public schools. The share of students in private educational institutions is 15%, with 31% of preschool students, 9% of primary school students, 11% of secondary school students, and 21% of high school students attending private institutions<sup>18</sup>.

As can be seen from these figures, Istanbul's education system is predominantly composed of public schools. However, the fact that 31% of preschool education is provided by private institutions indicates the significant role the private sector plays in early childhood education. This could point to an inadequacy in the infrastructure of public institutions for preschool education. Although the total share of private educational institutions is 15%, this percentage rises to 21% in secondary education, showing that the presence of private institutions increases at higher education levels. Additionally, the 11% of students enrolled in open education institutions may indicate that their access or flexibility needs are not being met by public or private schools. To increase educational access equality, the capacity of public schools should be expanded, and more investment should be made in preschool education.

<sup>15</sup> MoNE (2020). National Education Statistics Formal Education 2019–2020.

[https://sgb.meb.gov.tr/meb\\_iys\\_dosyalar/2020\\_09/04144812\\_meb\\_istatistikleri\\_orgun\\_egitim\\_2019\\_2020.pdf](https://sgb.meb.gov.tr/meb_iys_dosyalar/2020_09/04144812_meb_istatistikleri_orgun_egitim_2019_2020.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> MoNE (2021). National Education Statistics Formal Education 2020–2021.

[https://sgb.meb.gov.tr/meb\\_iys\\_dosyalar/2021\\_09/10141326\\_meb\\_istatistikleri\\_orgun\\_egitim\\_2020\\_2021.pdf](https://sgb.meb.gov.tr/meb_iys_dosyalar/2021_09/10141326_meb_istatistikleri_orgun_egitim_2020_2021.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> MoNE (2022). National Education Statistics Formal Education 2021–2022.

[https://sgb.meb.gov.tr/meb\\_iys\\_dosyalar/2022\\_09/15142558\\_meb\\_istatistikleri\\_orgun\\_egitim\\_2021\\_2022.pdf](https://sgb.meb.gov.tr/meb_iys_dosyalar/2022_09/15142558_meb_istatistikleri_orgun_egitim_2021_2022.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> IPA (2020). Istanbul Education Statistics.

<https://ipa.istanbul/istanbul-egitim-istatistikleri-2020/>



Istanbul, one of Türkiye's higher education centers, with a high concentration of universities and students, demonstrates the city's central role in education. The fact that 29% of Türkiye's universities and 16% of university students are located in Istanbul highlights the city's prominence in terms of both educational opportunities and academic diversity compared to other cities<sup>19</sup>.

## Labor Force and Employment

Istanbul's labor force consists of 6,595,000 people, accounting for 21% of Türkiye's total labor force of 32,716,000. The labor force participation rate is 54%. While the participation rate for women is 36%, the participation rate for men is 72.5%<sup>20</sup>.

With 5.7 million employed people, Istanbul accounts for 20% of Türkiye's total employment, which stands at 28.8 million. Between 2013 and 2021, Istanbul's population increased by 1.6 million, while the number of employed individuals also grew by 1.1 million. This demonstrates the city's capacity to create employment<sup>21</sup>.

As of 2021, the unemployment rate in Türkiye is 12%, while in Istanbul, it stands at 12.3%. The total unemployed population in Istanbul is 814,000, with women constituting 15.3% of this rate<sup>22</sup>.

When looking at the distribution of the unemployed by age group, it is seen that 22.6% of the unemployed in Türkiye are in the 15-24 age group, while 10% are in the 25 and older group. In Istanbul, these rates are 21% for the 15-24 age group and 11% for those aged 25 and older. These rates indicate that youth unemployment is a significant issue both in Türkiye as a whole and in Istanbul.

The high youth unemployment rate and the low labor force participation rate of women in Istanbul are key areas for intervention in terms of social policies and services. In the fight against youth unemployment, vocational training and entrepreneurship support programs targeting the labor market should be developed, while expanding caregiving services and implementing policies that promote gender equality are essential to increase women's participation in the labor force. Furthermore, internship and on-the-job training programs for youth should be encouraged, and equal pay for equal work policies along with flexible working models should be introduced for women. These policies will not only make Istanbul's employment creation capacity more effective but also contribute to sustainable development.





## Health

Despite being a central hub for healthcare services in Türkiye, Istanbul has notable gaps in certain areas. As of 2020, 15% of the total hospitals in Türkiye are located within Istanbul's borders. The 232 hospitals in the city have a total bed capacity of 46,382, which accounts for 18.5% of Türkiye's total hospital bed capacity. While the number of specialist doctors, dentists, and pharmacists per 100,000 people is above the national average in Istanbul, the number of nurses and midwives falls below the national average. Despite having a higher hospital bed capacity and a greater number of specialists compared to the national average, there is a significant shortage of nurses and midwives<sup>25</sup>. This highlights the need to improve services in areas crucial for women's and children's health, particularly in pregnancy, childbirth, and postnatal care.

According to the Health Statistics Yearbook 2020, there are 26,594 family medicine units across Türkiye, with 4,964 located in Istanbul. The population per family medicine unit in Istanbul is 3,115, which is lower than the national average of 3,144. Despite the high population density, Istanbul performs better than the national average in terms of family medicine units per capita. However, the uneven distribution of healthcare infrastructure and the pressure from the city's dense population can lead to regional disparities in healthcare services<sup>26</sup>.

In Istanbul, the neonatal mortality rate (4.1 per 1,000) and the infant mortality rate (6.3 per 1,000) are lower than the national averages (5.5 per 1,000 and 8.5 per 1,000, respectively). The lower neonatal and infant mortality rates in Istanbul is a positive indicator of the fact that births generally take place in hospital settings in Istanbul and the quality of health services, preventive health services and the employment of nurses and midwives can be reviewed to further improve these rates<sup>27</sup>.



<sup>25, 26, 27</sup> ISTKA (2023). Istanbul Regional Plan.

<https://www.istka.org.tr/media/pdf/1hJXDIGCQgy2XrQidN66xhpen6njbES807bnxQcTSGjpAf3mbdTR.pdf>



The latest research estimating the distribution of persons with disabilities by province in Türkiye is the “2011 Population and Housing Census.” Data on children with disabilities generally includes figures for Türkiye as a whole. However, the data reflecting Türkiye as a whole should also be taken into account for Istanbul. According to the National Disability Database (2022)<sup>28</sup> created by the Ministry of Family and Social Services, as of 2020, the number of children with disabilities in Istanbul is as follows: Ages 0–4: 33,185 children (19,304 boys, 13,881 girls); ages 5–9: 91,059 children (56,267 boys, 34,792 girls); ages 10–14: 74,525 children (48,282 girls); ages 15–19: 134,078 children (79,897 boys, 54,181 girls).

The distribution of the children with disabilities population in Türkiye by age groups and gender highlights the importance of planning for special education and healthcare services from an early age. The lower number of children with disabilities in the 0–4 age group, compared to other age groups, emphasizes the significance of early diagnosis and intervention processes. A noticeable increase is observed in the 5–9 age group, with the disability rate being higher among boys than girls. These data indicate the need for the development of preventive, protective, and interventionist social policies and services tailored to both gender and age-specific disabilities.

## Housing and Shelter

According to the Spatial Address Registration System 2021 data, there are a total of 1,448,341 building units in Istanbul. Among these, 6,384,524 independent units serve as residential spaces, while 1,176,474 independent units function as workplaces<sup>29</sup>.

The average construction density across Istanbul is 1.50 (Floor Area Ratio – FAR), ranging between 1.50 and 3.00 in urban centers. The highest construction density recorded is 6.00. The Anatolian side of the city generally features lower density, with FAR values not exceeding 3.00. In particular, the northern areas of the Anatolian side, including Çekmeköy, Sancaktepe, and Sultanbeyli, exhibit relatively low construction densities on the city scale. On the European side, locations with central urban functions tend to have construction densities exceeding 3.00<sup>30</sup>. The density of construction in Istanbul shows significant differences in different regions within the city. High-density areas exacerbate issues such as congestion and traffic, particularly in certain neighborhoods. These differences call for differentiated planning strategies in areas such as transportation infrastructure, access to social services, and environmental impact across Istanbul’s districts.

<sup>28</sup> National Disability Database, <https://kts2.saglik.gov.tr>

<sup>29,30</sup> IPA (2021). Housing Problem Research.

<https://ipa.istanbul/yayinlarimiz/genel/konut-sorunu-arastirmasi-istanbulda-mevcut-durum-ve-oneriler>





Within the scope of the “Istanbul Province Probable Earthquake Loss Estimation Update Project,” a total of 1,107,035 buildings have been categorized by their year of construction. Based on the distribution by construction year and district, it is observed that 246,047 buildings were constructed before 1980. These older buildings are predominantly located in districts such as Fatih (31,899), Kadıköy (12,816), Beyoğlu (17,052), Üsküdar (13,864), Sarıyer (11,898), Gaziosmanpaşa (12,786), and Beykoz (15,981). In contrast, newer districts such as Başakşehir (814), Esenyurt (499), Çekmeköy (529), and Sultanbeyli (458) have significantly fewer buildings constructed before 1980 (IMM, 2019). These pre-1980 structures are likely more vulnerable to earthquake risks, emphasizing the critical need for retrofitting and renovation efforts in these areas. This distribution highlights the necessity of reevaluating Istanbul’s urban transformation and construction strategies. Urgent measures must be taken to reinforce buildings, especially in high-risk districts.

A significant number of households in Istanbul allocate more than 30% of their disposable income to housing-related expenses such as housing, heating, energy, and water<sup>31</sup>. According to Türkiye’s Price Level Index study, Istanbul ranks as the most expensive city across all categories, with an index score of 114.8. The housing category stands out as the costliest, with a score of 150.01, making it the most expensive expenditure group. It is evident that low-income households in Istanbul spend more than half of their monthly income on essential needs like food and accommodation<sup>32</sup>. Beyond meeting the fundamental need for housing, real estate is also perceived as a significant investment tool. However, the conditions of the real estate market cause the low-income groups with limited purchasing power, to not be covered by housing policies.

The high cost of housing compared to other expenditure categories, coupled with the perception of real estate as an investment tool, makes it difficult for low-income groups to access housing. This situation exacerbates social inequality and underscores the need to reevaluate housing policies to be more inclusive and supportive of low-income households. In this context, it is crucial to consider affordability standards for low-income groups in the development of urban renewal and construction strategies, as well as in the formulation of social policies and services addressing real estate market conditions.

**31** Enstitü İstanbul (Institute Istanbul) (2020). “New Normal” Process Report: Forecasts, Policies and Recommendations Guide.

**32v** Vision 2050 Office (2020). Istanbul Urban Analysis Report.

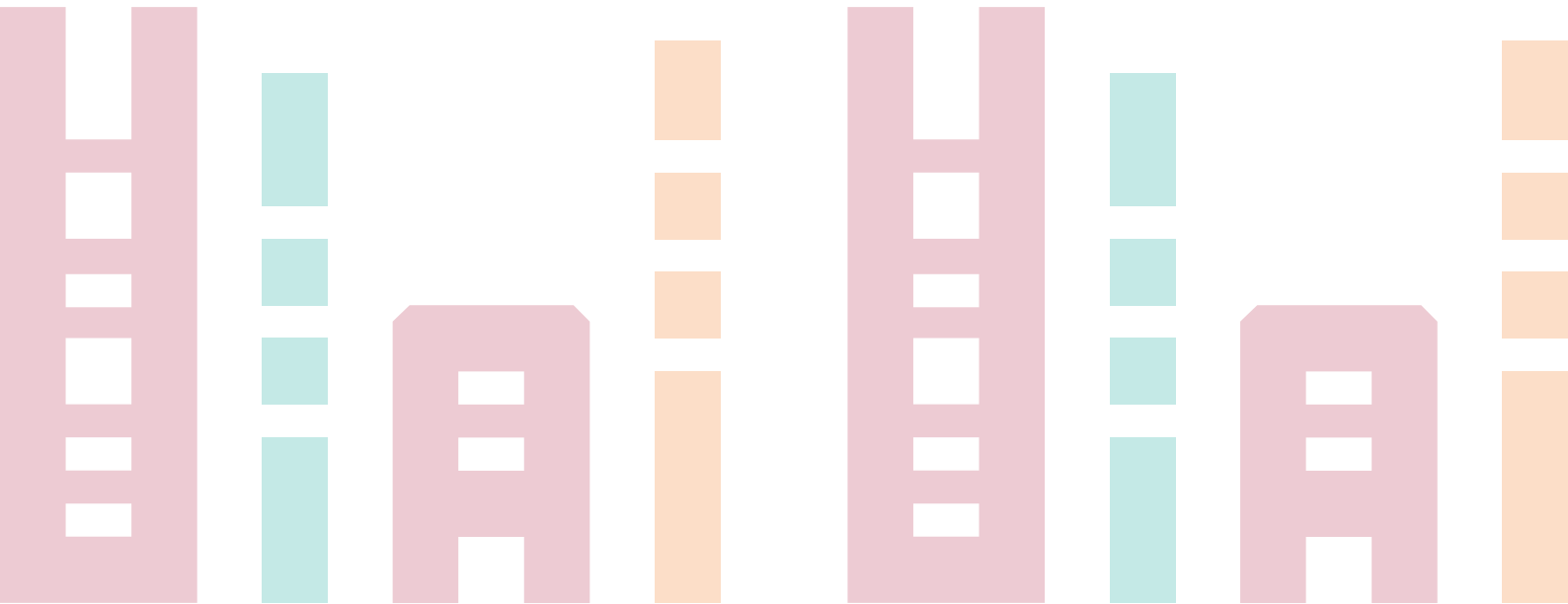
## Transportation and Mobility

Since the 1970s, large-scale transportation projects such as Bosphorus bridges, ring roads, highways, and airports have significantly shaped the macroform of Istanbul. However, public transportation infrastructure and active mobility options, such as walking and cycling, have not kept pace with the growing population and the increasing number of motor vehicles. This imbalance fails to adequately meet the mobility and accessibility needs of the city's residents.

Traffic congestion remains one of the primary issues affecting the quality of life in Istanbul. According to the INRIX Global Traffic Scorecard, drivers in Istanbul lost an average of 91 hours annually due to traffic congestion in 2023. Istanbul ranks first in traffic congestion in Türkiye and sixth globally among over 900 cities, following New York, Mexico City, London, Paris, and Chicago<sup>33</sup>.

According to 2022 data, in Istanbul, the number of automobiles per 1,000 people (automobile ownership) is 200. In comparison, the national average in Türkiye is 216, while the European Union (27 countries) average stands significantly higher at 641<sup>34</sup>.

Table 2 indicates that individual motorized vehicles account for 16% of Istanbul's modal split. While this proportion is notably low compared to European cities, it does not necessarily imply the existence of a more integrated transportation system in Istanbul. Several factors, including traffic congestion, the availability of alternatives to private vehicles, urban layout, income levels, ingrained habits, fuel costs, the coverage and pricing of public transportation, and more, influence the modal split.



<sup>33</sup> The Highest Traffic Delay Times by City, <https://inrix.com/scorecard/>

<sup>34</sup> Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (2022). Istanbul Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan. <https://surdurulebilirulasim.istanbul/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/SUMP-REPORT-rs.pdf>



Table 2. Modal Split of Private Motorized Vehicles in Istanbul and Selected Cities

City	Private motorized vehicle ownership (per 1,000 people)	Modal split of private motorized vehicles (%)
Istanbul	227	16
Berlin	337	30
Copenhagen	224	26
Paris	370	25
Warsaw	648	32
Helsinki	330	39
Nairobi	169	13
Beijing	500	28
Delhi	109	9
New York	450	57
Hong Kong	341	7
Amsterdam	370	20

\*References are provided at the end of the page<sup>35</sup>.

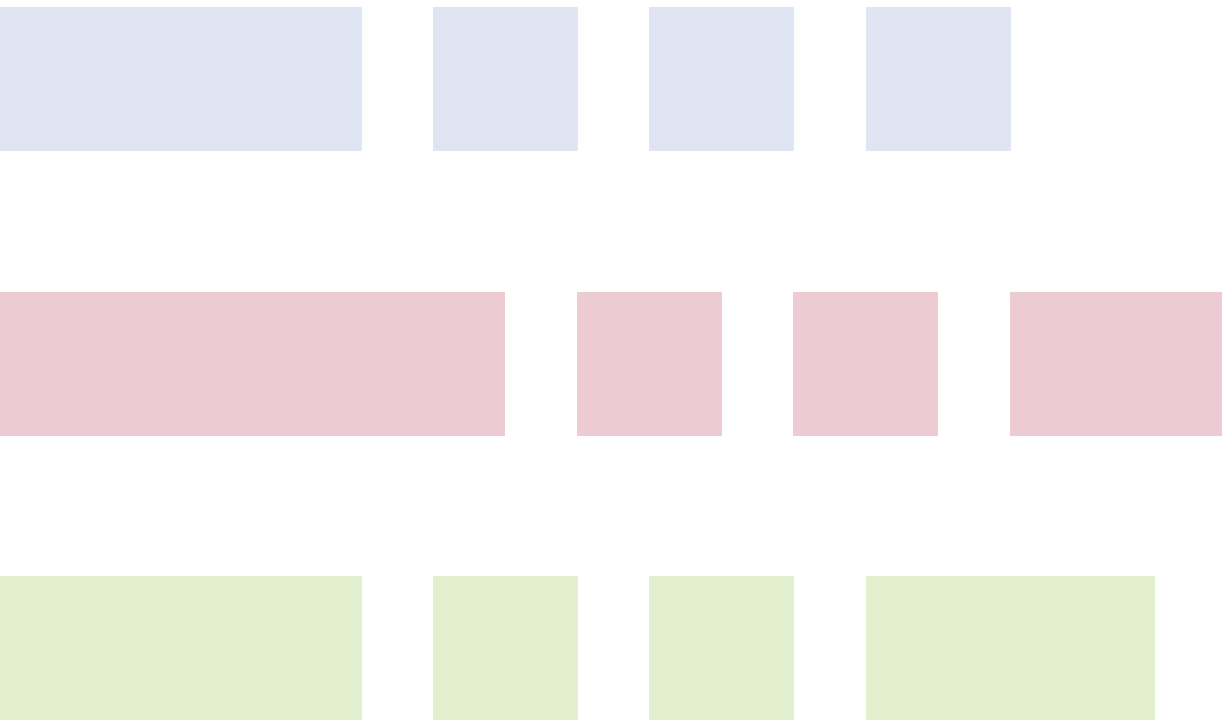
In terms of other modes of transportation, approximately 75% of public transport trips in Istanbul are conducted using rubber-tired vehicles such as buses, minibuses, and shared taxis. Despite having a coastline exceeding 500 kilometers and significant potential for water transportation, the share of water transportation in Istanbul's daily public transportation journeys remains around only 2.5<sup>36</sup>.

- 35** Statista (2019). Share of respondents that own a car in Hong Kong. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1028640/hong-kong-car-ownership-among-consumers/>  
 Statistics Denmark, <https://www.dst.dk/en>.  
 The Paris Urbanism Agency (Apur) (2015). The evolution of car ownership between 1999 and 2015. <https://www.apur.org/en/geo-data/evolution-ownership-between-1999-and-2015>  
 NYCEDC (2022). New Yorkers and Their Cars.  
 Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (2022). Istanbul Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan. <https://surdurulebilirulasim.istanbul/>  
 Deloitte, Deloitte City Mobility Index: Amsterdam. [https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/insights/us/articles/4331-Deloitte-City-Mobility-Index/city-mobility-index\\_AMSTERDAM\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/insights/us/articles/4331-Deloitte-City-Mobility-Index/city-mobility-index_AMSTERDAM_FINAL.pdf)  
 TurkStat (2021). The Number of Road Motor Vehicles by Province.
- 36** Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (2022). Istanbul Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan. <https://surdurulebilirulasim.istanbul/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/SUMP-REPORT-rs.pdf>



When evaluating the walkability in Istanbul, despite the city's hilly topography, its morphological features such as the dense and mixed land use, along with generally short street lengths, offer some opportunities for walking. However, issues such as inadequate infrastructure standards, streets cluttered with trash bins, streetlights, signs, and obstacles, as well as sidewalks occupied by vehicles and businesses, make movement unsafe and unpleasant for pedestrians, particularly for the elderly, persons with disabilities, and those responsible for their care. Furthermore, there is a significant lack of awareness among residents regarding the access issues faced by people with disabilities or the elderly, as well as the benefits of walking. Despite the high percentage of trips (40%) made by walking, Istanbul cannot be considered a walkable and accessible city due to the insufficient infrastructure that does not meet universal accessibility standards. In this context, it is clear that a more systematic, universally accessible, and holistic approach to pedestrian mobility is needed in Istanbul.

As of 2021, Istanbul has 374 km of bike lanes and a bike-sharing system in place. Bicycles play an important role in first- and last-mile trips, and there is a need to create feeder routes that connect public transportation stops to residential, commercial, and educational areas. Micromobility vehicles, such as electric bikes and scooters, are rapidly gaining popularity, and their share in the city's transportation mix is increasing. These developments present significant opportunities to strengthen a sustainable and integrated transportation system in Istanbul<sup>37</sup>.



<sup>37</sup> Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (2022). Istanbul Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan. <https://surdurulebilirulasim.istanbul/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/SUMP-REPORT-rs.pdf>



## Chapter Assessment

### *Istanbul, with its dense population and rapidly growing urban structure, faces significant challenges on economic, social, and environmental fronts.*

Urban inequalities deepen across various intersections such as age, gender, and disability, while socio-economic and spatial segregation adversely affect the city's overall fabric. Capacity and accessibility issues in education and healthcare services pose critical barriers to social development, compounded by the lack of child-friendly social spaces and gender inequalities. Regional disparities in child health and education infrastructure limit access to equal opportunities, while economic and social pressures on families continue to rise. This situation underscores the urgent need to develop sustainable and inclusive urban policies and services in Istanbul.

### *Excessive traffic congestion, inadequate public transportation infrastructure, unplanned urban transformation, and environmental impacts negatively affect the city's quality of life.*

Addressing these issues requires comprehensive urban planning, infrastructure investments, and social policies, alongside prioritizing sustainable and universally accessible transportation options such as walking, cycling, and public transportation. Additionally, child-, disability-, and women-friendly urban practices will play a critical role in reducing inequalities and fostering social cohesion. Overcoming Istanbul's multidimensional challenges necessitates a long-term and strategic approach.

The following chapter will present an analysis considering the diverse characteristics, varying levels of development, and livability across Istanbul's 39 districts. Based on this analysis, a research study is conducted focusing specifically on the districts identified as the most disadvantaged in terms of urban service delivery in Istanbul.



## 2. ASSESSMENT OF ISTANBUL DISTRICTS BASED ON DEVELOPMENT LEVELS

Istanbul, home to approximately 20% of Türkiye's population, comprises 39 districts with diverse socio-economic and spatial characteristics. The coexistence of Türkiye's most developed and livable districts with areas and neighborhoods deeply affected by urban poverty further exacerbates social segregation. Changes in social and economic conditions, as well as external factors such as migration, inflation, and the pandemic, have particularly restricted vulnerable groups' access to social, cultural, educational, and healthcare opportunities. In recent years, efforts to strengthen decentralisation structure have led to an increase in district-specific data across Türkiye and Istanbul, facilitating a growing number of research studies leveraging these datasets.

To enable comparative analyses among Istanbul's 39 districts, studies such as the Socio-Economic Development Index of Districts (SEGE), the Human Development Index – Districts 2021 (İGE-İ), and the Quality of Life Index: Istanbul 2010–2015–2020 have been evaluated in a comparative manner.

Since the 1960s, SEGE studies have been conducted to identify the development levels and trends of districts, provinces, and regions. To date, six SEGE studies have been carried out at the district level. The most recent district-level SEGE study for 2022 utilized 56 variables under eight main categories: demography, employment and social security, education, health, finance, competitiveness, innovation, and quality of life. The variables used in the study covered a wide range of topics, including birth, death, marriage, migration, employment, income, sectoral distribution, education levels, healthcare facilities, commerce and banking, investments, energy consumption, patents and trademarks, waste, and shopping mall data. However, under the quality of life variables—expected to provide more references to the use of space—variables such as access, walkability, transportation, green areas, accessible public spaces, cultural activities, and sports activities were not included due to the limitations posed by the availability of comparable datasets.

Another key study comparing districts, the Human Development Index – Districts 2021 (İGE-İ) report, serves as an important reference for understanding the development levels of districts. The data underpinning the research were grouped into nine main categories: Governance and Transparency, Social Inclusion, Economic Status, Education, Health, Social Life, Environmental Performance, Gender Equality, and Transportation and Accessibility. A total of 81 variables were utilized under these nine categories.



This study differs from SEGE by placing greater emphasis on social variables rather than economic ones. The main categories include Governance, Social Inclusion, Social Life, Environmental Performance, Transportation and Accessibility, and Gender Equality. The diversification of these main categories is also reflected in the variables. Under the Social Inclusion category, individuals were assessed through subcategories such as children, women, youth, and persons with disabilities. The Social Life category used variables such as the presence of museums, theatres, cultural venues, and sports facilities. Additionally, the Transportation and Accessibility category included the presence of highways, public transportation, and bicycle lanes as key variables. In the Gender Equality category, data on women’s education, marriage, fertility, and employment are also included.

The “Quality of Life Index: Istanbul 2020” study was conducted to highlight the transformation of Istanbul’s districts in terms of quality of life. Analyses based on the same methods and parameters were performed in 2010, 2015, and 2020. The study included variables under three main categories. In the Human and Social Capital category, there are 45 variables grouped under subcategories such as demographic structure, social life and environment, education, and health. In the Economic Structure category, there are 33 variables under economic capacity and commercial potential. In the Infrastructure and Transportation category, there are 16 variables under transportation/accessibility and infrastructure. In total, 94 variables were utilized for this research.

Within the scope of the Quality of Life Index research, a significantly greater number of social variables were included compared to those in SEGE. However, unlike İGE-İ, topics such as social inclusion and gender equality were not evaluated.

It has been observed that all three district analyses—SEGE, İGE-İ, and the Quality of Life Index—utilized variables that are distinct yet intersect at many points, in line with the content and objectives of each study. The İGE-İ study stands out as being more inclusive compared to SEGE and the Quality of Life Index, as it evaluates individuals with subcategories such as children, women, youth, and people with disabilities, and incorporates variables under headings like Governance and Gender Equality. Although the analyses employ different variables within their respective scopes, similar results were achieved in district development rankings. Below are the rankings of the eight least developed districts identified in each study.



Table 3. The 8 Least Socio-Economically Developed Districts in Istanbul According to Various Studies

The 8 Least Socio-Economically Developed Districts According to the SEGE		The 8 Least Socio-Economically Developed Districts According to the İGE-İ		The 8 Least Socio-Economically Developed Districts According to the Quality of Life Index	
Districts	Ranking Among Istanbul Districts	Districts	Ranking Among Istanbul Districts	Districts	Ranking Among Istanbul Districts
Esenler	32	Sultangazi	32	Şile	32
Silivri	33	Silivri	33	Esenyurt	33
Sancaktepe	34	Adalar	34	Bağcılar	34
Sultangazi	35	Arnavutköy	35	Gaziosmanpaşa	35
Arnavutköy	36	Esenyurt	36	Esenler	36
Çatalca	37	Çatalca	37	Sultanbeyli	37
Şile	38	Sultanbeyli	38	Sultangazi	38
Sultanbeyli	39	Şile	39	Arnavutköy	39

\* References are provided at the end of the page<sup>38</sup>

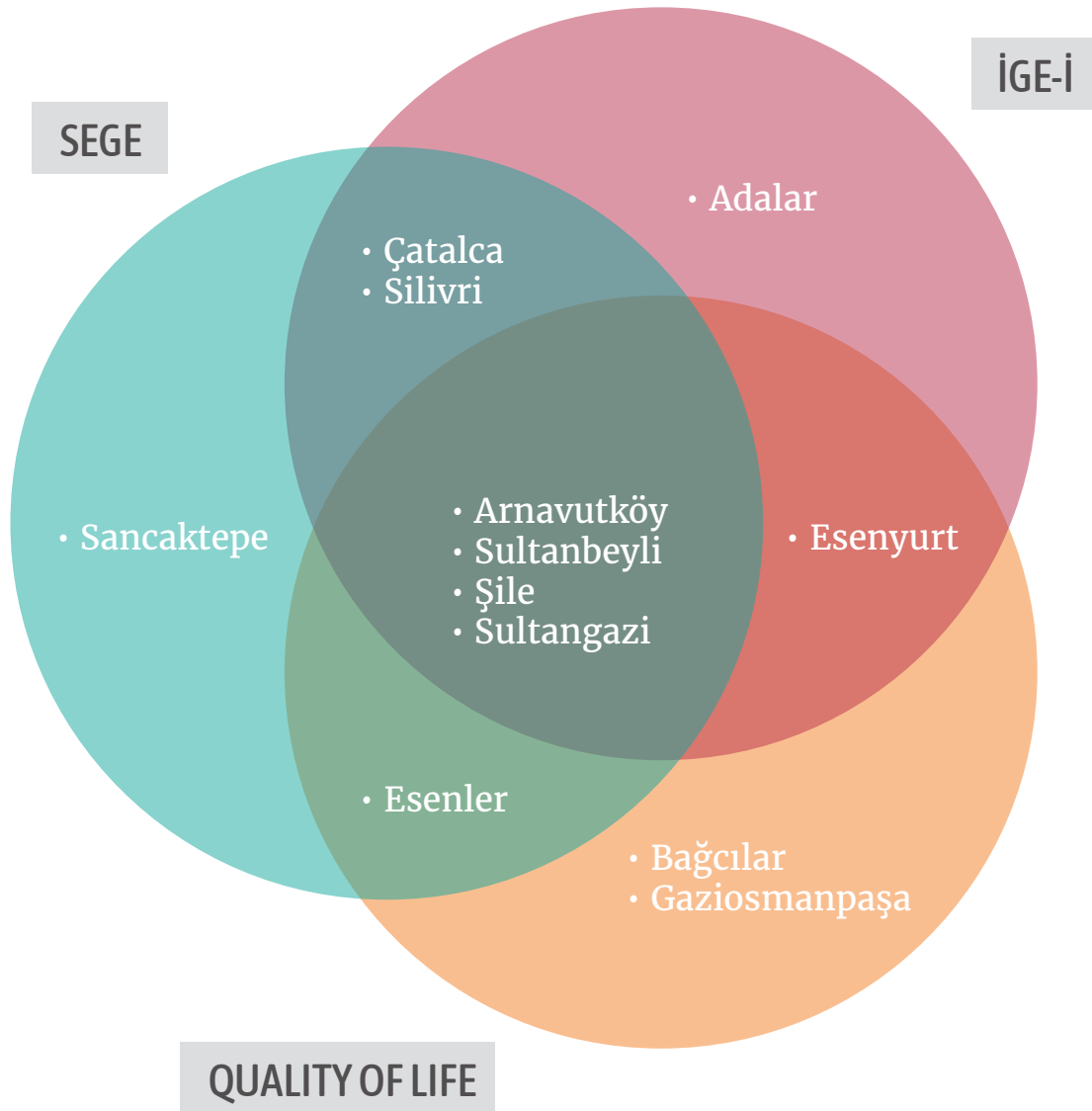
When the rankings from these three studies are compared, the diagram shown in Figure 1 emerges. According to all three studies, the least developed districts in Istanbul are Arnavutköy, Sultanbeyli, Şile, and Sultangazi. Apart from these districts, Çatalca, Silivri, Esenler, Bağcılar, Gaziosmanpaşa, Sancaktepe, Esenyurt, and Adalar are also among the other less developed districts in terms of urban service delivery.



<sup>38</sup> Ministry of Industry and Technology (2022). Socio-Economic Development Index of Districts SEGE-2022. İGE-İ (2021). Human Development Index – Districts. <https://ingev.org/raporlar/IGE-Ilceler-Rapor-2021.pdf>  
Şeker.M. vd (2020). Quality of Life Index: Istanbul 2020. <https://iupress.istanbul.edu.tr/tr/journal/ije/article/quality-of-life-index-istanbul-2020>



Figure 1. Overlap of Disadvantaged Districts in Istanbul According to Various Studies



Reference: Figure created by the author.

As part of the project research area, Arnavutköy, Sultanbeyli, Adalar, and Esenler districts have been selected for deep dive research in order to evaluate the different levels of disadvantage and various problem areas.



### 3. NEEDS ANALYSIS FOR THE DISTRICTS OF ADALAR, ARNAVUTKÖY, ESENLER, AND SULTANBEYLİ

To conduct the needs analysis, surveys, deep dive interviews, and focus group discussions were carried out in the districts of Adalar, Arnavutköy, Esenler, and Sultanbeyli. These methods revealed the socio-economic status, living conditions, and participation-based current state and unique characteristics of the four pilot districts<sup>39</sup>.

Qualitative data were collected through deep dive interviews with representatives of NGOs operating at the national and Istanbul levels, academics, local government officials, NGOs active in the four selected districts, public sector representatives, and opinion leaders, as well as through focus group discussions with district residents. In the survey study, questions were designed to address topics such as socio-demographic information, housing – disaster – risk, transportation and accessibility, health, education and social services, safety and access, urban belonging, socialization – green spaces, civic participation – active citizenship, and relationships with local governments. The analyses were conducted based on a total of 1,989 surveys: 493 in Adalar, 500 in Arnavutköy, 502 in Esenler, and 494 in Sultanbeyli.

*Figure 2. Districts Where the Research Was Conducted*

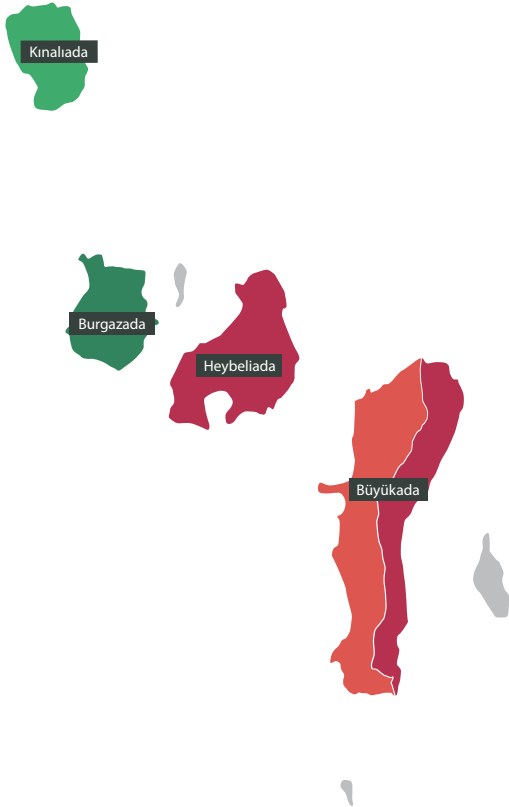


A concise assessment of the research results conducted to inform local policy development is presented in the section below.

<sup>39</sup> WRI Türkiye (2024). Main Needs Analysis Report of the Stronger Civil Society for Equal Cities Project.

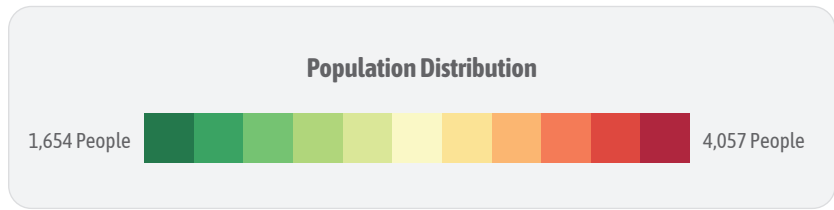


## ADALAR DISTRICT



Total Population	16,325
Male Population	50,34%
Female Population	49,66%
Age 0-14	11%
Age 15-64	66%
Age 65+	23%
Population Density	1,484.09/Population km <sup>2</sup>

Table 4. Profile of Adalar District<sup>40</sup>



The survey results from Adalar provide various insights into the socio-economic structure of the resident population, social life, transportation issues, and relations with local government. Of the surveys conducted, 47% were carried out on Büyükada, with the remainder distributed across Kınalıada, Heybeliada, and Burgazada.

In Adalar, the full-time labor force participation rate is higher among men compared to women. While men predominantly work full-time, women's employment patterns exhibit greater diversity. Among women, responses such as engaging in household tasks, part-time work, and entrepreneurship are more prominent. According to the surveys, 34% of respondents reported having caregiving responsibilities. Of those cared for, 33% are children under the age of 18, while only 1% are elderly household members. Considering that caregiving responsibilities are often undertaken by women, their lower participation in the labor force may be linked to these caregiving obligations.

40 <https://www.endeksa.com/tr/analiz/turkiye/istanbul/adalar/demografi>

The proportion of individuals who have attended courses, internships, or certification programs for vocational or learning purposes is 10%. When analyzed by gender, age group, parenting status, and education level, vocational training participation is more prevalent among the 18–29 age group (24%) and women (12%). Additionally, 31% of surveyed women believe that vocational courses should be further developed. Parents and those with an educational background of middle school or below appear to benefit less from vocational or learning programs.

47% of participants expressed that the high cost of living is a significant issue in Adalar. 69% of respondents indicated that their income is on par with their expenses, while 11% reported that their income does not cover their expenses, indicating an economic hardship. Regarding housing costs, 3% of participants stated that housing expenses account for more than half of their household income, 27% mentioned that housing costs make up half of their income, and 42% indicated that their housing expenses represent one-third of their household income. Thus, it can be concluded that for a significant portion of participants, housing costs occupy a major portion of their budget, reflecting a high housing burden.

As rising rents increase the cost of living in Istanbul, homeownership becomes a key factor in enhancing resilience to rising living costs. In Adalar, regarding homeownership and housing costs, 57% of participants own the homes they live in, while 39% are renters. The percentage of homeowners increases with age, reaching 82% in the 50–65 age group. When examining the gender breakdown, homeownership rates are found to be similar. However, an important question arises regarding whether homeownership among younger individuals and women is achieved through marriage or family members. Notably, the rising homeownership rate in the 50–65 age group presents a significant advantage for older adults in terms of economic security, especially for those who may be more economically vulnerable.

53% of participants live in homes that are between 0–24 years old. Regarding the earthquake resistance of their homes, 55% of participants believe their homes are safe, despite not having conducted any tests. 13% of those who tested their homes found them to be unsafe, while 11% of those who did not test their homes believe they are unsafe. These findings indicate that earthquake preparedness is lacking due to zoning issues. 35% of participants feel that earthquake preparedness, information dissemination, and educational activities are insufficient. Furthermore, there is a lack of knowledge about how to access safe areas after a disaster. While 47% of women do not know the locations of gathering points they could use in case of an emergency, the same applies to 31% of men. This difference could be seen as a reflection of gender inequality in disaster preparedness.

Transportation is identified as the most significant issue in Adalar, with the district's geographical conditions being a key determinant. As Adalar is connected to the mainland via sea routes, ferries are the only option for reaching the mainland. Additionally, once residents reach the mainland, they tend to prefer walking or using bicycles/electric bikes both on the mainland and within the island itself.



The ongoing debate regarding transportation in Adalar has been further intensified following the removal of horse-drawn carriages, the introduction of electric vehicles, and the recent use of buses, which gained attention in the public discourse as the “azmanbüs” (monstrous buses). Findings from the interviews indicate that perspectives on the issue vary depending on the specific needs of the community. During the focus group discussion, concerns were raised about the buses not being suitable for the streets of Büyükkada. However, the benefits of the buses, such as facilitating mobility for the elderly and sick, providing specific advantages to residents, and offering free services for those over 65, were positively received. The primary concerns behind the negative reactions revolve around fears of urbanization on the Island and the potential loss of its unique characteristics.

According to the general assessment covering all age groups, genders, and education levels, public transportation is perceived as both expensive and inadequate. The greatest shortcomings for the elderly and people with disabilities are related to access to and use of public transportation vehicles. Parents and women are the groups that rate the availability of bus stops and stations the lowest. In general, there is a belief that bicycles are relatively safe from theft in the district, and residents report that bicycles and scooters can be used in their local environment.

In Adalar, pedestrian mobility is particularly concentrated around parks, green spaces, and workplaces. The general opinion is that the district is walkable according to criteria such as aesthetics, accessibility, sufficiency, comfort, and safety. However, there are concerns about the maintenance of sidewalks and roads. Additionally, sidewalks and pedestrian paths are not suitable for the needs of the elderly and people with disabilities. Accessibility and safety of rehabilitation services, parks, and open spaces are highlighted as significant issues for these groups. Moreover, security and accessibility concerns in parks and play areas for children have also been noted. It has also been observed that there is a lack of proper signage and guidance for tourists.

In Adalar, it has been expressed that cultural and artistic activities are insufficient, and those that do exist are primarily held during the summer. The reasons for this include the fact that the Adalar’s development has been designed with a tourism-centric approach, neglecting the needs of the resident population.



In focus groups and deep dive interviews, it has been expressed that young people in Adalar have very limited opportunities for socializing, and those that do exist are mainly focused on summer tourism. It is noted that compared to their peers in Istanbul, young people in Adalar are at a disadvantage in terms of social opportunities and are deprived of many activities. The recently opened cultural center by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality in Büyükada is seen as a positive development. However, it has been noted that the lack of similar structures on the other islands creates limited social opportunities for young people. The young people living on islands other than Büyükada face even more difficulties in accessing social and cultural activities. In Adalar, 41% of respondents who expressed a desire to live in another district if given the opportunity are in the 18–29 age group. This situation can be explained not only by the lack of socialization opportunities for young people in Adalar but also by the limited employment opportunities for them. The absence of social and cultural activities highlights a significant gap, not only for children’s social development but also for those responsible for childcare—mainly women—in terms of their participation in public life and employment. Additionally, 28% of women surveyed believe that social and cultural activities should be developed specifically for women. Furthermore, 49% of women indicate that one of the biggest deficiencies in the district is the lack of legal and social support for women who face violence.

The observations made by the residents of Adalar regarding the need to increase the local government’s service capacity are accompanied by a high level of awareness about the inadequacy of the budget allocated to the municipality, which is based on population size. Therefore, it is emphasized that the budget should be determined according to the specific needs of Adalar, rather than relying solely on the winter population. It is also pointed out that both the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IMM) and relevant ministries should take on larger roles in providing services. Due to population density-based planning, Adalar lacks adequate fire services, and the Adalar is unprepared for permanent fire measures concerning its forest assets and old buildings. Additionally, fundamental needs such as waste management and water have become even greater issues during weekends and summer months, depending on the number of tourists visiting Adalar. It is also highlighted that Adalar lacks the necessary infrastructure to support its tourism potential. Coastal/beach pollution and noise pollution are among the other significant concerns mentioned.

Another noteworthy point is the agricultural activities that once played an important role in Adalar, particularly in the past. Participants have reminded that there were two large gardens in Burgazada and that there were periods of flower cultivation in Büyükada. It has also been noted that beekeeping activities have recently begun in Heybeliada. It is believed that Adalar has a rich potential for agriculture and local production, which could be revitalized.



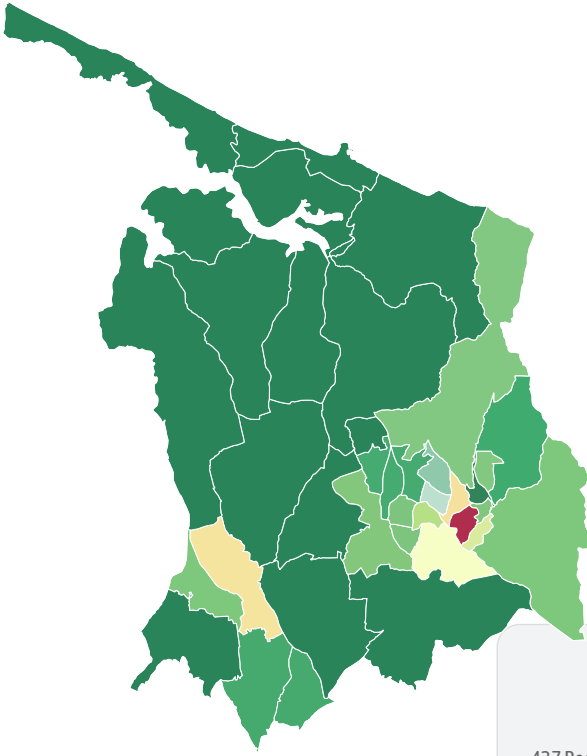
The main issue regarding education is the disadvantage created by the small student population. Access to educational services for children is found to be insufficient. In addition to access to educational services, the inadequate number of kindergartens and preschools, as well as the perceived lack of quality, are significant concerns. High school students are required to go to Heybeliada, often referred to as “School Island,” or to the mainland for their education. At the primary and secondary school levels in Heybeliada, combined classrooms are used for teaching. The transportation difficulties faced by public servants, such as teachers assigned to Adalar, the stagnation of life during the winter months, and the high cost and insufficient housing supply in Adalar lead to a loss of motivation for workers. As a result, students frequently experience teacher turnover.

Like in education, the Adalar district is also disadvantaged in terms of healthcare due to its geographical characteristics. While the presence of a unit of Kartal Lütü Kırđar Training and Research Hospital in Büyükada is considered an advantage, other islands only have a family health center and 112 emergency service. The inadequacy of healthcare services, particularly at night, has been highlighted as a significant issue. The lack of doctors available to respond to emergencies during the night is a source of concern for residents. Surgery, limited access to specialists, childbirth, emergency interventions, and various tests, all of which require dependency on the mainland, are viewed negatively by residents of Adalar. Access to healthcare services for children is also restricted. Furthermore, 49% of women express that there is a lack of a women’s health center in the district.

Despite the fact that Adalar Municipality encompasses several islands, it has an administrative structure centered in Büyükada, which results in unequal services and opportunities between the islands. While Büyükada is considered the center of the other islands and thus has an advantage in terms of access to services, Heybeliada is seen as a leading island in terms of education. In addition to the view that Burgazada is a more livable island, Kınalıada is noted as the most difficult island to live on during the winter. The inequalities between the islands are determined by complex factors such as population density, the budget issue related to population, access to local government, and geographical location.

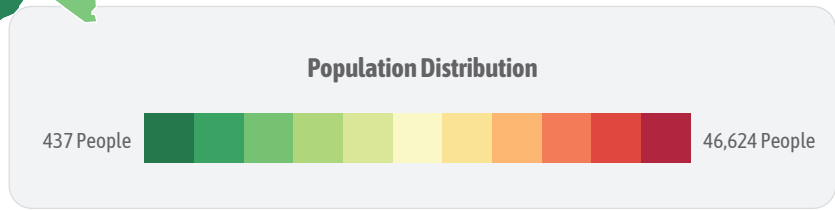


## ARNAVUTKÖY DISTRICT



Total Population	336,062
Male Population	51%
Female Population	49%
Age 0-14	27%
Age 15-64	68%
Age 65+	5%
Population Density	732.16/Population km <sup>2</sup>

Table 5. Profile of Arnavutköy District<sup>41</sup>



The analysis conducted in Arnavutköy provides various findings regarding the socio-economic structure of the resident population, social life, transportation issues, and relationships with local governance.

In Arnavutköy, it has been observed that men participate in the labor force at a higher rate, while a significant proportion of women do not engage in income-generating activities and are primarily occupied with household tasks. Among the district's residents, 63% of men and 47% of women are employed full-time with wages. However, it has been noted that job security among workers is low, and the prevalence of low-wage and informal employment is common. Additionally, the participation rate in vocational courses, internships, or certification programs is remarkably low. The need for professional skill development appears to be higher among young and middle-aged groups due to reasons such as joining the labor force or changing careers. In focus group discussions, non-working women and mothers residing in the district expressed a keen interest in vocational courses. They indicated a strong desire to contribute financially to their households but also pointed out that after gaining skills through these courses, they often lack the necessary financing or marketing tools, leading them to “return home with their certificates.”

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.endeksa.com/tr/analiz/turkiye/istanbul/arnavutkoy/demografi>



According to survey and interview results conducted in Arnavutköy, one-third of households reported experiencing financial difficulties. Half of the participants stated that their income equals their expenses. This indicates that more than half of the participants are unable to save or make expenditures beyond their basic needs. When analyzed by age groups, 48% of individuals aged 50–65 stated that their income is less than their expenses. This suggests that this working-age group may fall within the category of the working poor.

From the perspective of housing expenses, 30% of participants reported spending half of their income on housing. In other words, renters represent a significant group allocating a substantial portion of their income to housing costs. Additionally, there is a high rate of homeownership in the district, with 63% of participants stating that they live in their own homes.

The district is perceived to be at high risk of earthquakes, and interviews highlighted concerns about old and unsafe housing. While there is confidence in the district's ground stability, issues related to illegal construction remain a significant challenge. Families in low-income groups expressed feeling helpless about continuing to live in such risky housing conditions. It was also widely noted that educational and awareness-raising activities regarding these risks are insufficient. Additionally, water flooding was frequently mentioned as a pressing issue related to infrastructure. Weaknesses in road, internet, and electricity infrastructure were also cited as problems requiring urgent attention.

Transportation and transportation-related issues are among the most prominent challenges facing the district. Deep dive interviews revealed that the lack of transportation links with neighboring districts places Arnavutköy at a disadvantage in terms of connectivity. While the newly opened metro line in the district is viewed positively, it was also noted that its lack of connections to neighboring districts limits its effectiveness. Despite a general satisfaction with public transportation options, transportation costs were identified as a financial burden. Only 21% of participants agreed with the statement, "Public transportation is affordable." When evaluating walkability in the district, it was noted that parks/green spaces and healthcare facilities are the destinations participants walk to most frequently. However, 41% of respondents identified the lack of accessible sidewalks and pedestrian pathways tailored to the needs of elderly and persons with disabilities as a primary area for improvement. This issue poses significant barriers to accessing all urban amenities and services. Similarly, the accessibility and usability of public transportation vehicles and public buildings were highlighted as areas needing improvement by approximately 40% of respondents. A lack of awareness regarding the needs of elderly and persons with disabilities was also observed.



Infrastructure and urban cleanliness were also highlighted as notable issues. The district spans a large and dispersed area, with peripheral neighborhoods continuing to engage in livestock farming, small-scale agriculture, and greenhouse cultivation. During field visits, signs of environmental pollution, potentially arising from the differing production and consumption activities in these peripheral areas, were observed, even if not in the district center. As a result, the district faces the risk of inequitable distribution of services between the center and the peripheries. The difference between the district center and its neighborhoods is quite large due to the expansive area of the district and socio-economic differences.

The lack of social opportunities was identified as another issue. Cafés and restaurants are the most preferred places for socializing, cited by 76% of participants. These are followed by shopping malls, green spaces, and forests. Despite its coastal location, the notably low use of beaches in the district stands out as a key observation. It was also noted that different hometown communities maintain a strong cultural presence in the district. While there may not be a high level of cohesion among these groups, they appear to have established a sense of unity within their own circles. Hometown associations play a prominent role in facilitating socialization and solidarity activities.

Qualitative evaluations of the district reveal significant concerns regarding safety. The lack of safe and accessible spaces for children exacerbates these concerns. Key areas identified for improvement include secure and accessible play areas, access to educational institutions, quality kindergartens/preschools, and pedestrian paths designed to meet children's needs. Dark streets and inadequately secured parks are also cited as contributing factors to safety concerns. Participants described the social fabric of the district as intertwined with violence, frequently mentioning tensions and conflicts. The general perception of safety is summarized as, "Anything can happen here at any moment." Some interviewees stated that the district is generally unsafe, and that violence is prevalent, with this environment negatively affecting children. Educators and parents noted instances of violence and peer bullying among children. It can be said that the lack of appropriate facilities and spaces for the socialization of young people and children in the district further increases the concerns of women in this regard.

Domestic violence being prevalent indicates the existence of violence against women. Women participating in the interviews stated that women experiencing violence cannot take action due to a lack of economic independence. Another finding is that women are unaware of any mechanism other than the police to seek support in cases of violence and lack awareness of where to apply.



Regarding healthcare in the district, 78% of participants stated that they benefit from public health services within the district boundaries. The high percentage of responses indicating “not used” for care services for the elderly and children may suggest that the caregiving burden on women is significant. Another important issue is the need for women’s health centers.

Qualitative findings indicate that class sizes in schools are high, with capacity shortages particularly pronounced at the middle and high school levels. The number of kindergartens is very limited. While there is significant demand for public kindergartens, the lack of sufficient quotas makes the service inadequate. The perspective on education in the district is not positive. The perception that “education doesn’t lead to success,” combined with disadvantaged living conditions, results in a lower prioritization of education. Additionally, some of the challenges children face in accessing education are linked to child poverty. The presence of children unable to afford meals due to economic constraints has been highlighted as a significant issue by both residents and educators.

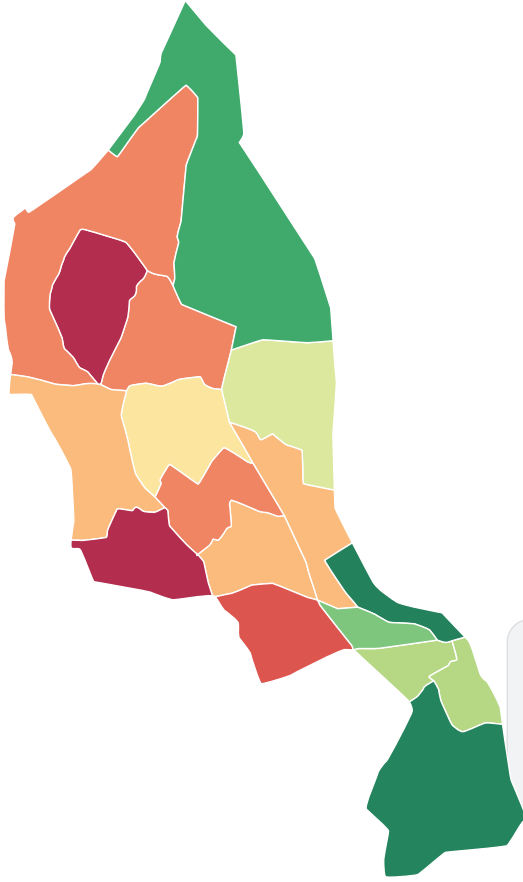
It has been observed that high school students lack a strong desire to continue their education. Issues such as school dropouts and students transitioning to open high school programs are prevalent among high school-aged youth. Children who switch to open high schools often begin working in sectors like textiles. The district also faces challenges related to drug use, with reports indicating that young people have easy access to drugs. This situation is thought to contribute to school dropouts. However, it was noted that measures have been taken to address this issue, and the situation is reportedly better compared to the past.

Another finding from stakeholder interviews, deep dive interviews, and focus group discussions with district residents is the presence of illiterate women in the district. It has been noted that the average age of illiterate women is not very high. Among these women are Turkish citizens and non-citizens whose native language is not Turkish, as well as women who have not had access to education.

Men, young people, and participants with higher education levels exhibit a greater tendency to visit other districts for socialization. In contrast, women and individuals aged 30–49 are less likely to change districts for social purposes. This is likely due to various factors such as societal norms and established social networks. Women believe that social and cultural activities are lacking in the district, which may indicate their reduced presence in public life and a higher risk of social isolation. Additionally, observations during field visits suggest that women feel safe spending time alone, with friends, or with their children in municipal facilities.

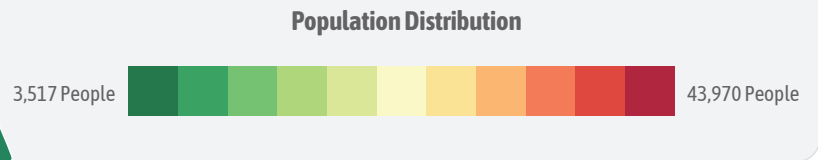


## 📍 ESENLER DISTRICT



Total Population	<b>427,901</b>
Male Population	<b>51 %</b>
Female Population	<b>49%</b>
Age 0-14	<b>22%</b>
Age 15-64	<b>73%</b>
Age 65+	<b>5%</b>
Population Density	<b>13,371.91/Population km<sup>2</sup></b>

*Table 6. Profile of Esenler District<sup>42</sup>*



The research findings from Esenler provide various insights into the socio-economic structure of the resident population, social life, transportation issues, and relationships with local governance.

The low proportion of elderly residents and the prevalence of large families are key characteristics shaping the district's demographic profile. Therefore, Esenler can be described as having a “young” district profile.

In Esenler, the prevalence of the informal economy, particularly through the textile sector, is striking. While this structure generates significant economic activity through informal means, it also entails risks regarding social security and workplace safety. Surveys and interviews reveal that migrant labor plays a critical role in sustaining this system. While this dynamic supports the region's economic vitality, it simultaneously brings forth important challenges concerning workers' rights and working conditions.

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.endeksa.com/tr/analiz/turkiye/istanbul/esenler/demografi>



When looking at the income–expense balance in the district, approximately half of the survey participants reported that their income is equal to their expenses. One-third of the participants stated that their income does not cover their expenses. 38% of the respondents indicated that housing expenses account for half of their income, while 33% said that housing costs represent one-third of their household income. The proportion of housing expenses within monthly household income in Esenler points to the housing burden and poverty risk.

It is understood that the ease of transportation is an important factor that connects people to the region despite the other issues in the district. In addition, population density, building density, and vehicle density are among the key issues in the district's agenda. The intense influx of refugees, population growth, and the increase in vehicle ownership have led to the emergence of parking issues, which are seen as the most significant problem by the participants. From the interviews, it is evident that the parking problem directly affects pedestrian transportation and accessibility, that regulations for accessibility for persons with disabilities are ineffective in practice, and that unplanned urbanization prevents the creation of a pedestrian-friendly environment. These issues emerge as factors that directly impact the quality of life in the district.

Unplanned urbanization, inadequate infrastructure, and urban transformation are also among the problem areas. In Esenler, the biggest risk is perceived to be earthquakes. The residents' evaluations regarding the insufficiency of assembly areas and lack of information indicate that the district could face serious problems in the event of a potential disaster. Despite the existence of urban transformation projects, the unresolved issues regarding building quality and planning are causing concern among the residents. Additionally, there are examples of Esenler residents leaving the district due to the inability to afford the costs of urban transformation.

The most utilized services within the district are healthcare services, education services, and cultural, artistic, and sports activities. The service with the highest participation in activities provided by the local government is cultural, artistic, and sports activities. 91% of the participants living and/or working in Esenler stated that they benefit from healthcare services provided by the government within the district.

The quality and perception of education in Esenler emerge as one of the district's most significant issues. Access to education and preschool/kindergarten services is identified as a major issue. Approximately half of the participants expressed a need for better access to schools and other educational institutions, as well as a sufficient number of qualified kindergartens/preschools, indicating a need to improve children's access to education. Additionally, the overcrowded classrooms in public schools, with 50–55 students per class, directly affect the quality of education. To ensure better educational opportunities, parents prefer to move to other districts or send their children to schools/courses in distant areas. Furthermore, concerns about young children's socialization in Esenler have been highlighted in deep dive interviews with families.



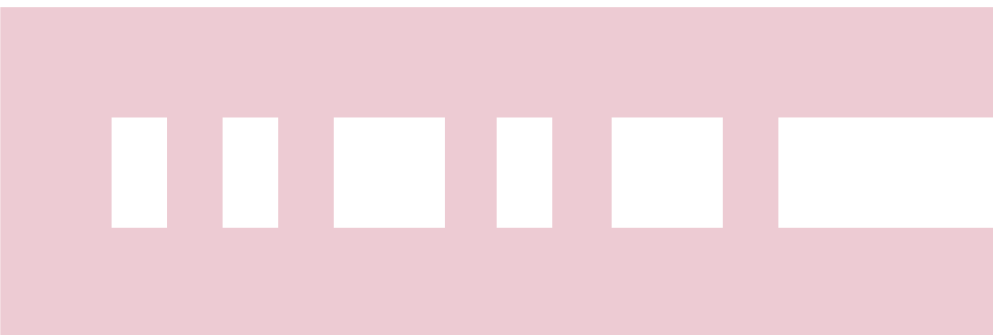
In Esenler, elderly citizens and citizens with disabilities face serious challenges due to deficiencies in urban infrastructure. The lack of parks and open spaces, as well as sidewalks and pedestrian paths that are not suitable for the needs of the elderly and persons with disabilities, are factors that make daily life more difficult for them. Additionally, the inadequate physical conditions of rehabilitation centers in the district restrict access to education and rehabilitation services, particularly for citizens with disabilities.

In Esenler, women's social life and societal participation are limited. The insufficient social spaces in the district and the lack of venues suitable for women to socialize directly affect their quality of life. According to the survey results, women consider the lack of access to parks, open spaces, and safety as the most significant issues in the district. Safety concerns in public spaces are a major issue not only for women but also for children. 60% of the responses regarding children's needs point to the lack of access to safe parks and playgrounds as the biggest deficiency. Other significant gaps include social and cultural activities and safe, easy access to public transportation.

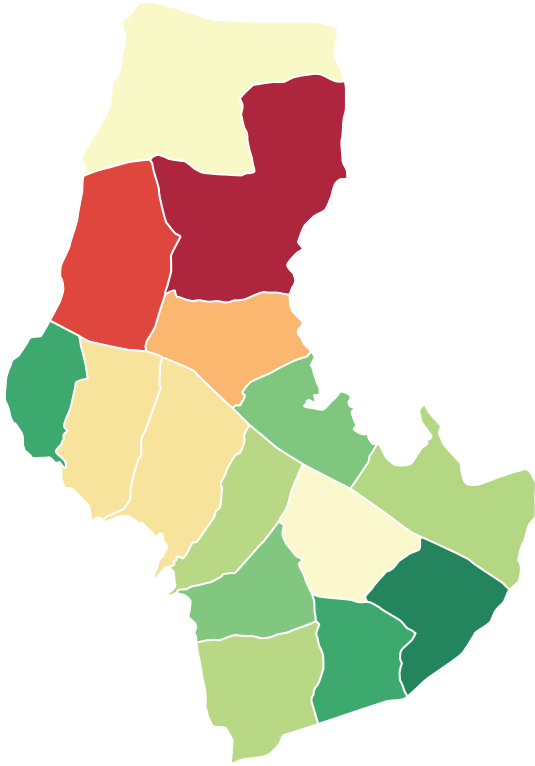
In Esenler, urban residents complain about the lack of spaces where they can spend time safely. The security concerns in Esenler are linked to substance use, drug addiction, gang activities, and violence. It has been noted that security concerns increase, particularly during the night. Walking on the streets at night is considered "dangerous" for women and young people.

Socialization opportunities within the district are limited. Esenler's social spaces fail to meet the needs and expectations of its residents. The fact that most young people spend time in neighborhood areas, outside their homes, or in central locations like local squares, and that shopping malls have become popular socialization spots, highlights the shortage of quality social and cultural spaces.

It has been observed that a significant portion of Esenler's residents are dissatisfied with their current living conditions and are seeking alternative living spaces. The high desire for young, educated residents to leave the district is an important indicator for the future socio-demographic structure of the area. The type of living spaces residents long for are less crowded, with more green areas, strong social ties, and modern urban planning.

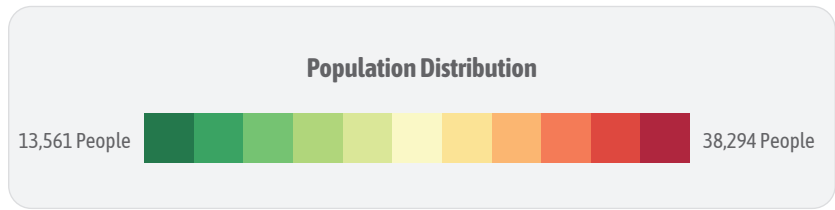


## 📍 SULTANBEYLİ DISTRICT



Total Population	<b>360,702</b>
Male Population	<b>51%</b>
Female Population	<b>49%</b>
Age 0-14	<b>27%</b>
Age 15-64	<b>69%</b>
Age 65+	<b>4%</b>
Population Density	<b>14,428/Population km<sup>2</sup></b>

Table 7. Profile of Sultanbeyli District<sup>43</sup>



Sultanbeyli is colloquially referred to as the “hotel district”. While small businesses operate within the district, most of its labor force commutes to jobs outside its boundaries. Residents describe Sultanbeyli as having been initially established as an affordable residential area close to industrial zones, which later expanded in an unplanned manner. Employment in the district is characterized by low-skilled and low-wage jobs, contributing to the overall low-income level of the area. Some participants reported taking on additional jobs to supplement their income. Women constitute an employment group that is not reflected in official statistics due to their efforts to earn a living through piecework at home.

In Sultanbeyli, 47% of respondents are full-time wage earners, while 13% are self-employed small-scale entrepreneurs. Among full-time employees, 58% are men, and 36% are women. Additionally, 46% of female respondents indicated that they are engaged in household duties. In the district, 36% of respondents stated that they are responsible for caring for children under the age of 18, while 1% reported having caregiving responsibilities for elderly household members or those who are ill and/or with disabilities. Considering that caregiving services are typically provided by women, it can be inferred that the lack of adequate caregiving support is one of the factors preventing women from participating in the labor force.

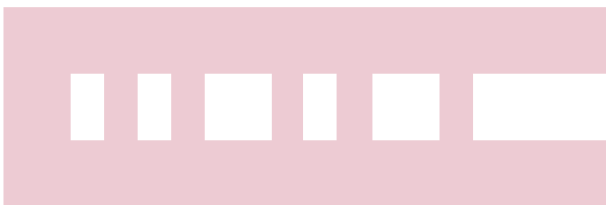
<sup>43</sup> <https://www.endeksa.com/tr/analiz/turkiye/istanbul/sultanbeyli/demografi>



The percentage of participants who have attended courses, internships, or certification programs for the purpose of acquiring or learning a profession is 6%. When analyzed across categories such as gender, age group, parental status, and educational background, participation in vocational training appears to be more common among the 18-29 age group (7%) and women (7%). Additionally, 61% of female respondents expressed a lack of vocational courses tailored specifically for women.

Regarding income-expense balance, 32% of participants stated that their income equals their expenses. The percentage of participants who reported that their income does not cover their expenses is 46%, while 22% indicated that their income exceeds their expenses. Focusing on housing expenses, which represent the largest expenditure, 13% of participants noted that housing costs account for half of their income, while 68% stated that these expenses constitute one-third of their household income. In terms of homeownership, 60% of respondents reported owning their residence, whereas 38% stated they were renters. Compared to other districts in Istanbul, housing in Sultanbeyli appears to be more accessible. However, insights gathered from interviews suggest that rising rental prices may lead to housing supply issues in the future.

It is observed that poverty is widely felt across Sultanbeyli, significantly impacting the district's social life in various ways. According to the SEGE 2022 report, Sultanbeyli ranks as the poorest district in Istanbul, a finding corroborated by field data. The socio-economic dynamics of the "poorest district" provide valuable insights into the root causes of poverty. Sultanbeyli has served as a gateway to Istanbul in terms of internal migration and is commonly referred to as such by its residents. Some residents of the district have moved from other parts of Istanbul, driven by the motivation to acquire affordable housing in Sultanbeyli. Additionally, those considering leaving Istanbul for economic reasons often settle temporarily in Sultanbeyli during the reverse migration process, owing to its relatively lower costs.

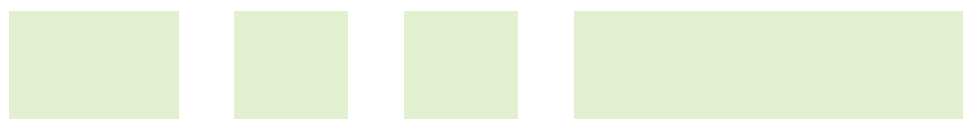




Earthquakes are perceived as the most significant risk by residents of Sultanbeyli. When participants were asked about the earthquake resilience of their homes, 45% reported that no structural testing had been conducted and believed their homes to be unsafe. Only 2% had undergone testing and confirmed their homes as unsafe. Meanwhile, 39% had not conducted tests but believed their homes were safe, and 14% had tested and confirmed their homes to be earthquake resistant. Only 12% of participants stated that they knew the locations of assembly areas designated for use after a disaster, indicating a lack of awareness about safe zones in the aftermath of a disaster. Additionally, 68% of respondents expressed that preparation, awareness, and training activities in the district were insufficient. Apart from earthquakes, issues such as flooding, waterlogging, and fire were highlighted as risks, Sultanbeyli being considered to be at medium or high risk for these hazards.

Issues such as conflicts arising from insufficient cultural integration and the prioritization of refugees in accessing urban services have made living in the same district as refugees a primary “problem” for many residents. As of January 2020, Sultanbeyli hosts 29,183 Syrian refugees, making it the 9th district in Istanbul with the highest refugee population and the 5th in terms of the refugee-to-population ratio. The distribution of refugees is homogenous across all neighborhoods, except for two high-income areas, and negative sentiments toward refugees were clearly expressed in the field findings. Tensions between Turkish citizens and refugees result in increased social isolation among refugees and greater challenges in achieving integration. Refugee children are among those most affected, often facing peer bullying and, due to the impact of poverty, dropping out of education.

Transportation is the second most significant issue identified by the residents of Sultanbeyli. Due to urban planning problems, the municipality has had to concentrate public services such as education, healthcare, and green spaces in just two neighborhoods out of the 17 in the district. This has led to an access issue for the residents in reaching basic urban services. While participants did not point out a major problem with inter-district transportation, the main issue was identified as transportation between neighborhoods. Across various demographics such as age, gender, marital status, disability, and education, all survey participants agreed that public transportation is expensive. People with disabilities, in particular, have rated public transportation options, the number of stops and stations, and information and signage as the lowest.



The walkability level in Sultanbeyli is reported to be low. The farthest places typically visited on foot are concentrated around the marketplace, district square, healthcare facilities, parks and green spaces, markets, and employment opportunities. In the walkability assessment of Sultanbeyli, the “security” aspect was generally rated low across all subcategories. Participants in the 50–65 age group and people with disabilities gave the lowest ratings for security and comfort, while men and participants with medium to high education levels rated these aspects significantly higher than individuals with disabilities.

Issues related to access to healthcare and rehabilitation services, public buildings, parks and open spaces, and shopping areas are reported to be at high levels. In responses regarding the needs of children, 65% of participants expressed that the greatest deficiency is access to safe parks and playgrounds. The idea of high access problems in education, healthcare, and preschool/kindergarten services also stands out. It has also been observed that elderly residents in Sultanbeyli face difficulties with accessibility.

In addition to all these, the local population considers air pollution to be one of the major environmental issues. Coal usage is pointed out as a factor contributing to the increase in air pollution in the district. Participants have also expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of tap water. 46% of the participants find waste and garbage management inadequate. These conditions of the district are seen as risk factors for groups with limited mobility, such as people with disabilities, the elderly, and women with caregiving responsibilities.

Security is among the issues listed. The insufficient street lighting and the desolation of the streets are frequently mentioned, especially by women. Additionally, tensions and conflicts between local youth and refugees threaten social harmony and exacerbate security issues. When all these factors come together, they cause residents, particularly women and the elderly, to feel a constant sense of unease in their daily lives. Moreover, the prevalence of drug use and the presence of individuals referred to as “tinerci” (glue sniffers) and “serseri” (thugs) create a source of concern and unrest for the local population. This situation, especially in the evenings, undermines the sense of security in public spaces.

Almost all of the participants living and/or working in Sultanbeyli benefit from healthcare services provided by the government within the district boundaries. However, 64% of the women who participated in the survey believe that the most significant deficiency in the district is the lack of women’s health centers. Additionally, 52% of women state that legal and social support for women who experience violence is also lacking in the district.

The most frequently utilized services within the district boundaries are, in order, education services, and cultural, artistic, and sports activities. The service with the highest participation rate in activities provided by the local government is cultural, artistic, and sports activities, with a rate of 33%. 54% of the female participants have expressed that social and cultural events are lacking in the district.



75% of participants in the 18–29 age group prefer socializing in cafes and restaurants, while this rate drops to 25% in the 50–65 age group. Among those without children, 77% socialize in cafes, whereas among parents, this rate decreases to 41%. Shopping malls are more commonly used for socializing purposes. Despite being a district surrounded by forests, Sultanbeyli has very limited usable green space.

The percentage of participants who stated they go to another district to socialize is 43%. Those who prefer to socialize outside the district are mainly young people, those without children, and participants with a higher education level. There is also a stronger desire among young people and those with higher education to live in a district outside Sultanbeyli.

The group that does not leave or cannot leave Sultanbeyli for socializing consists of individuals aged 50–65, parents, participants with middle school or lower education levels, and people with disabilities. When examining evaluations in the same areas, one notable result is that the 50–65 age group tends to rate issues like interpersonal relationships and cultural opportunities highly, while they rate the district's economic opportunities at the lowest level. It can be inferred that strong hometown community ties play a significant role in the perception of strong interpersonal relationships in this age group. Accessibility issues in transportation also present a significant barrier for people with disabilities in socializing outside the district.

In the evaluations regarding women's opportunities for socializing, it is understood that there are multiple barriers to women's socialization. These include societal views toward women, the limited socialization opportunities in the district, and economic issues. The responsibility for overcoming these barriers and addressing the challenges is placed on the municipality.



## 4. SOLUTION RECOMMENDATIONS SUPPORTED BY GLOBAL AND LOCAL BEST PRACTICES

This chapter presents recommendations supported by best practice examples related to various topics, including employment, participation in social and public life, education, healthcare, climate, the natural and built environment and resilience, housing and shelter, transportation, and accessibility. These topics are aligned with the themes explored in the general research and the needs analysis chapter of the report.

### Employment

- The low education levels in disadvantaged areas limit individuals' access to skilled jobs. This is especially a common issue among young people and women. The inadequacy of vocational programs or their mismatch with the demands of local employers can hinder the transition to formal employment. As observed in districts like Arnavutköy, Sultanbeyli, and Esenler in Istanbul, areas with a high concentration of low-income and low-education families may face greater difficulty in providing young people with access to vocational training or raising awareness about available opportunities.

*In the mentioned regions, vocational training centers should be established that are easily accessible to young people. These centers should offer training programs aligned with the professions required by local employers. The training centers can be structured to develop a skilled labor force, particularly in areas such as technology, digital skills, and regional employment potential.*

*To increase participation in vocational training, free education programs can be organized. Incentives such as small scholarships or covering transportation costs can boost participation. Free shuttle services can be provided to make it easier for individuals to reach training centers, or online training options can be developed through digital platforms. In this context, it is essential to consider the cultural and gender-based barriers that young women face in entering the labor force, as well as the development of support services, such as childcare, which can significantly impact increasing women's overall participation in employment.*

- The need for action and awareness-raising regarding support mechanisms and skill development programs to facilitate women's participation in employment is clearly evident from both the citywide research conducted in Istanbul and the surveys and focus group discussions carried out at the district level.

*In all districts, increasing participation in vocational training for those with lower education levels can be considered a strategy to reduce inequalities in the labor market. Additionally, the existence of such programs is crucial in enhancing women's participation in the labor force and supporting their economic independence. However, it is essential that these programs are designed in a way that does not reinforce traditional gender roles, for example, by avoiding directing women solely to specific occupational fields, in order to prevent deepening inequality in employment.*



## Childcare Voucher Support

A pilot program initiated in Bern, Switzerland, grants parents the right to receive childcare vouchers from municipalities in cases such as ongoing education of the parent or sibling or illness. The voucher's value varies depending on the child's situation, the parents' income, and assets. For families experiencing economic hardship, the voucher almost entirely covers standard childcare costs. To encourage parents, particularly women, to re-enter the labor force, families with above-average incomes are also eligible for vouchers, albeit with lower amounts as income increases. Nearly every kindergarten or daycare center in Bern accepts these vouchers under a formal agreement. These institutions are prohibited from charging varying fees and must provide their services at fixed rates. Vouchers for children up to 12 months old are 50% higher than those for older children due to the greater time and cost associated with infant care. Parents can apply for the vouchers via a standardized web application. The vouchers can be used anywhere within municipal boundaries, offering parents flexibility in selecting a suitable childcare provider. Experiences thus far demonstrate that the system has enabled many parents to access childcare they couldn't afford otherwise and has supported women's participation in the labor force<sup>44</sup>.

- While the proportions vary, findings from all districts highlight that inadequate elder and childcare services provided by central and local governments place an overwhelming caregiving burden on women. This burden negatively impacts women's participation in employment.

*Therefore, when designing policies and practices to promote women's employment, it is essential to consider family-related responsibilities as a potential barrier. Equally important is addressing and challenging societal values that reinforce gender discrimination.*

<sup>44</sup> European Union (2021) Toolkit for inclusive early childhood education and care. Providing high quality education and care to all young children. <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/4c526047-6f3c-11eb-aeb5-01aa75ed71a1>



## Home Care Service

A new model implemented in Riga, Latvia, has expanded the scope of home care services by integrating various services such as transportation to day care centers, provision of technical assistance, and visits from care personnel. This innovative service model, where the organizations are coordinated by the Riga Municipality's Social Welfare Department, aims to support elderly individuals in living independently at home for longer periods. Within this framework, home visits—conducted without any limitations on frequency or duration—allow for a needs assessment for both the elderly person and their surrounding environment. This enables the development of a tailored care plan based on the individual and their living conditions. This integrated care model grants the elderly the freedom to choose the services they wish to utilize and incorporates a range of digital technologies, such as automatic lighting, smart monitoring systems, and fall prevention systems, into the service offerings. Under this system, elderly individuals meet 85% of their residential care needs, with the remaining portion covered by the municipality<sup>45</sup>.

- Substance addiction, which is prevalent in disadvantaged areas and supported by research findings, should be considered a barrier to employment, and necessary measures should be taken to address this issue.

*Efforts should focus on enabling individuals to recover from addiction and reintegrate into the labor force, breaking the cycle of unemployment and substance addiction. However, such initiatives require a comprehensive and long-term approach. Collaborations between local governments, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector can yield more effective results. In this context, various measures can be implemented, such as offering training programs to enhance the skills of individuals undergoing treatment in order to ensure their re-entry into the labor force, introducing stricter legal regulations and monitoring to reduce substance use across society, and providing tax incentives and other benefits to employers who hire individuals recovering from addiction.*

- Migrants often work in low-wage jobs without social security. Employers may prefer hiring migrant workers informally to reduce costs. The inability of migrants to speak the local language limits their access to better job opportunities, forcing them into low-paying, unskilled jobs. This situation negatively impacts both migrants and the overall labor market by lowering wages and safety standards required by the market. The disadvantages of informal employment are particularly pronounced for women and children.

<sup>45</sup> The European Social Network, 2021 Integrated Care and Support – Promoting Partnerships across Services, Improving Lives.



To address these issues, free language courses should be organized to help migrants learn the local language. Processes for obtaining work and residence permits should be expedited and made more affordable. Strict inspections can be conducted to prevent employers from engaging in informal labor practices. Additionally, measures should be taken to make the precarious, piecework jobs of women more visible and to ensure their inclusion in the social security system.

## Participation in Social and Public Life

- Research indicates that adequate urban services to address barriers to women's participation in public life are lacking. In particular, interviewees from the districts of Arnavutköy, Esenler, and Sultanbeyli noted that conservative perspectives often hinder women's socialization. They emphasized that activities organized by municipalities or ministries could help women overcome these barriers. Women tend to participate more easily in public spaces such as schools, healthcare facilities, and municipally supported venues. Municipal facilities offer safe spaces where women can spend time alone, with friends, or with their children. These areas serve as environments where women can engage freely without being questioned, aligning with their gender and caregiving roles. This context provides an opportunity for developing alternative and empowering services. Such services are crucial in helping women break free from traditional societal pressures.

*Events organized by municipalities or ministries can help women overcome these barriers. Women who seek financial and moral support from these institutions, as well as those who attend to ensure their children's involvement in cultural and sports activities, can also participate in empowerment and awareness-raising activities related to their rights. They can become more informed about available rights and services in the fight against violence.*

*There is a need to provide women with social, cultural, artistic, and professional activities, courses, and counseling services through integrated and structured projects in the areas where women lead their daily lives. It is essential for local governments and non-governmental organizations to develop projects that increase women's social participation.*

*The lower mobility and public participation of women contribute to inequalities in the use of city resources and opportunities. Therefore, in addition to developing services that meet women's needs in their current locations, it is important to ensure that they benefit from different services, such as city tours, which can help them explore Istanbul.*

*In order to increase women's mobility throughout the city in terms of urban belonging, integration and urbanization, and to transform this by seeing it as a matter of empowerment, security and access to urban services, policies and practices that will prioritize access to public transportation systems and safety in public transportation use should also be developed.*



## How Vienna Designed a City for Women?

The concept of designing a functional city for both women and men began in Vienna. Since the early 1990s, a time when no one was talking about the gendered impacts of infrastructure design, the city has adopted a gender perspective in much of its urban planning. Vienna has implemented over 60 pilot projects, and now other cities are following this example.

The first and most crucial step in understanding how women's urban needs differ from men's is gender-sensitive data collection. In 1991, Vienna decided to assess the percentage of male and female residents using specific types of transportation. The analysis revealed significant differences in transportation usage. While men primarily used cars and bicycles, women were more likely to be pedestrians and public transport users.

In the same year, a photo exhibition titled "Who Owns Public Spaces? – Women's Daily Life in the City" was held. The exhibition helped bring about a broad shift in the mindset of many involved in urban planning. In 1999, the Women's Office was established, and a large survey was conducted to ask residents how and why they moved through the city. While men's typical route was a simple commute between home and work, women's daily routines were more varied. Women's daily trips included visits to schools, doctors, shops, and elderly family members.

The survey also led to a re-evaluation of the city's long-term urban planning approach. Authorities began focusing on accessibility, safety, and mobility, starting with Mariahilf, the pilot area designated for gender equality. The city improved street lighting to make walking safer at night, widened sidewalks by more than one kilometer, and introduced pedestrian-friendly traffic lights. At an intersection, an elevated walkway with a ramp was built to make passage safer for stroller and wheelchair users. In Mariahilf, 26 new street lighting projects were implemented, and additional seating areas were added at nine different locations.

One of more than 60 pilot projects using gender equality in urban design has been highly successful in addressing unequal access to the city's parks. A study conducted by two feminist sociologists revealed that young girls began disappearing from parks after the age of nine. In one pilot area, pedestrian paths were added for accessibility, and football fields, as well as volleyball and badminton courts, were constructed. Almost immediately, a shift in usage patterns was observed; conflicts decreased, and the presence of women in public spaces increased. Integrating a gender perspective into parks has now become a common practice among Vienna's urban planners<sup>46</sup>.

<sup>46</sup> <https://apolitical.co/solution-articles/en/vienna-designed-city-women>





- The widespread occurrence of domestic violence in the Arnavutköy district has been identified as one of the indicators of violence against women. Furthermore, women are unaware of any mechanisms other than the police where they can seek support if they experience violence, and they lack awareness of where to turn for help. Women who experience violence are unable to take action due to their lack of economic freedom.

*Efforts to protect women from violence and help them gain economic and social freedom require strong cooperation between local authorities, civil society organizations, and the state. In this regard, accessible support centers should be established where women can turn in cases of violence. Legal counseling, psychological support, and temporary shelter options provided under the “Women and Family Services Departments/Units” within municipalities can be considered in this context. Additionally, community-based support mechanisms should be established at the neighborhood level. Training programs for men on gender equality and preventing domestic violence can be organized. Developing employment opportunities also emerges as a crucial aspect in women’s empowerment.*

- Research shows that the responsibility for elderly and childcare falls primarily on women, which is a factor that alienates women from both social and professional life.

*To socialize the burden of care on women, opening kindergartens, daycare centers, and preschools in districts is one of the fundamental steps toward achieving gender equality. Free, inclusive, and accessible infant care services for children aged 0-3, as well as daytime and 24/7 care services for children aged 4-5, and daycare/recreational services, are essential.*

*In addition, it can be stated that social services and support systems that facilitate living in both one’s own home and care institutions as people age are crucial. In this context, developing service models such as residential and day care services, as well as nursing homes, is of significant importance. At this point, while services that will support individuals’s independent living as they age are needed, it is also vital for them to be informed about these services. This knowledge allows them to plan for the future by eliminating uncertainty and gain access to necessary services when needed.*

*Moreover, developing services such as professional support from day care institutions and home care specialists is also considered important. In this context, it will be crucial to establish short-term care centers that meet the needs of elderly individuals and alleviate the burden on caregivers, especially in situations where caregivers need a temporary break from their duties.*

- Children and young people face risks not only in education but also in areas such as safety, socialization, health, and personal development. They are unable to access urban services that meet their expectations and needs, and thus, cannot fully realize their potential.



*Creating safe play areas and parks, providing economic support, and developing social programs for youth should be prioritized. Additionally, building structures where children can engage in positive activities during their time spent on the streets would also be beneficial.*

*Young people expand their living spaces by exploring spatial identities in urban areas and within special facilities designed for them. They typically explore spaces by “hanging out” or “roaming” within an urban environment. This spatial behavior is often perceived as unpredictable and confusing by policymakers. However, with careful observation, clear patterns can be observed in how young people use spaces. Rather than the design and appearance of the space, location, proximity, and the relationships between spaces are often more important factors. What matters most to young people is not the specific design of a single area, but the diversity and complementarity of public meeting places. To meet the needs of young people and their different subcultures, a consistent and varied network must be developed.*



## ☰ A City Planning and Design Project for and with Young Teenagers

Young teenagers are often overlooked or neglected in planning and design processes. In collaboration with Kind & Samenleving (Childhood & Society Research Center), the city of Antwerp came together to create a “youth space network plan” for the Wilrijk District. The development of this plan involved working closely with young people aged 12–15.

By analyzing the existing situation, all the places important to young people in the Wilrijk District were mapped. Young people were involved in the process through workshops, interviews, and other methods. Based on this extensive analysis, “nodes” in the spatial network were identified, including corner meeting places, play and sports areas, city squares, parks, and water features. In addition, public transportation stations, bus stops, bike lanes, bridges, bike tunnels, transportation transfer points, and “hopping spots” were also included as part of these nodes. The locations where these elements came together were highlighted as “centers” in the spatial network of young people.

Further design research was conducted on these areas, and design solutions and ideas were then presented to the target audience. Young people were invited to assess different design outcomes. In the Wilrijk District, the structure of the historic castle belt surrounding the city of Antwerp emerged as critical nodes within the youth space network.

The young participants identified several dangerous intersections as key concerns. However, they also proposed routes with the potential to increase their independent mobility. Finally, the large square in the area, “De Bist,” emerged as a location to be transformed into a more youth-friendly space.

The strategic plan was approved by the Wilrijk District Council in June 2022. The proposed principles and design solutions now provide guidance for spatial development in neighborhoods, the district, and the city, with a focus on youth. Both short-term and long-term actions are currently being implemented and becoming increasingly visible. “Youth-friendly planning” has now become an integral part of urban development in the Wilrijk District<sup>47</sup>.

*In addition to all of this, local support networks should be established in disadvantaged districts to enhance social solidarity. Municipalities and civil society organizations can collaborate to create various support programs for women, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities. These networks can provide services in areas such as gender equality, elderly care, education for people with disabilities, and social participation. Furthermore, regular monitoring and development of these networks will ensure a sustainable solution.*

<sup>47</sup> <https://apolitical.co/solution-articles/en/an-insight-into-a-city-planning-and-design-project-with-and-for-young-teenagers>



## Health

- As research indicates, women's level of education, roles in working life, family structure, upbringing, and lack of knowledge about accessing healthcare services can hinder their ability to benefit from and demand these services. Due to gender inequality, women may hesitate to share their health issues, seek information, or, in some cases, ignore the problem and delay treatment. This situation can cause even a simple physiological health issue to evolve into a more serious problem with psychological dimensions over time.

*To eliminate the negative effects of gender inequality on access to healthcare and the adverse outcomes it generates, provincial health directorates, metropolitan, and district municipalities should establish relevant healthcare facilities. Awareness should be raised, and women should be informed both individually and at the neighborhood level about the types of support available and where to access it.*

*Free or low-cost healthcare services should be expanded, with a particular focus on increasing access to preventive healthcare services. To address transportation challenges faced by women, mobile healthcare units can be introduced.*

*Health screenings and informational events can be scaled up at the local level. Preventive healthcare services such as pregnancy follow-ups, postpartum support, early childhood development programs, and newborn and early-age health screenings (e.g., hearing and physical disability assessments) should be prioritized, especially in regions with high poverty rates.*



## Strengthening Municipal Services for Women's Health with Sweden and UNFPA's Support

*The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Sweden have expanded their partnership to invest in women's rights and health at the local level and to contribute to Türkiye's demographic resilience. The "Municipalities for Women's Health" project, initiated under the partnership between the Swedish Government and UNFPA, was launched for a three-year period through an agreement signed on May 28, 2024, by the Ambassador of Sweden in Türkiye, Malena Mård, and UNFPA Representative in Türkiye, Mariam A. Khan.*

The project aims to strengthen women's health in Türkiye by collaborating with municipalities to provide accessible and high-quality information and services to women and girls of reproductive age (15-49), particularly those who are poor and vulnerable. Within this scope, structural capacity development programs will be implemented to support municipalities in enhancing their capacity to improve inclusive and empowering local services for women. These programs will encompass areas such as human resources, training, guidelines, and standard operating procedures for relevant municipal staff, as well as outreach services and consultancy. Additionally, the dissemination of knowledge products and experiences to other municipalities is also envisaged<sup>48</sup>.

- It is essential to provide equitable services to all segments of society in a large and densely populated city like Istanbul, particularly to prevent postnatal disabilities and address situations where parents are unable to fulfill caregiving responsibilities for various reasons.

*It is crucial to implement protective and preventive measures against disabilities related to or arising after childbirth and to introduce the necessary regulations in Istanbul. Additionally, systems must be established to provide services in cases where parents cannot fulfill caregiving responsibilities due to illness or family-related issues. In this context, establishing systems such as childcare centers, flexible working hours, and home care services would address a significant need in large cities like Istanbul.*

<sup>48</sup> [https://turkiye.unfpa.org/tr/isvec\\_ve\\_UNFPA](https://turkiye.unfpa.org/tr/isvec_ve_UNFPA)



- The elderly population in Türkiye, particularly in Istanbul, is growing rapidly. The increasing number of individuals aged 65 and above leads to a rise in age-related diseases and disability rates. In Istanbul's disadvantaged districts, this age group often faces lower income levels and limited access to services, increasing the demand for healthcare and caregiving services. Health issues among individuals aged 65 and older tend to become more complex and are often associated with various disabilities. Low-income groups and vulnerable populations, including the elderly, individuals with disabilities, and migrants, frequently encounter significant barriers to accessing healthcare services. This highlights the pressing need for specialized service models tailored to address disabilities and illness-related challenges.

*Personalized care and support systems must be established for the elderly and individuals with disabilities. These systems can include home care services, psychological support, family education programs, and rehabilitation services. It is also essential to develop social support programs and volunteer networks to alleviate the caregiving burden on families. Such services will enable individuals to maintain their independent living.*

*In Istanbul's disadvantaged areas, mobile health clinics can be set up to improve access to healthcare services. Elderly individuals and those with disabilities often face challenges in accessing healthcare. Mobile clinics, home care services, and mobile health screenings for the elderly can address these issues. Additionally, providing healthcare services at the neighborhood level can prevent individuals from having to travel long distances to hospitals.*



## Beşiktaş Municipality's Home Care and Social Support Service

Beşiktaş Municipality provides Home Care and Social Support Services to individuals over the age of 65, as well as those who require care due to disabilities or chronic illnesses. The aim of this service is to improve the quality of life of individuals, support their families, and contribute to the creation of a healthy societal structure.

This service meets the health and personal care needs of citizens who require specialized medical care due to aging or physical disabilities in their living environments. The service is organized by doctors, nurses, and caregivers and includes the following components:

- **Medical Services:** Home visits by doctors and nurses, prescription writing, medical assessments, consultations, emergency care, and patient transport ambulance services.
- **Nursing Services:** Injections, wound and burn dressing, catheter applications, blood and serum transfusions, sample collection for laboratory tests, temperature monitoring, urinary catheter insertion/removal, preparation of care plans, providing information and education about the patient's condition.
- **Home Care Services:** Nurses or caregivers provide personalized care as per the care plan, including monitoring fluid balance, repositioning, mobility assistance (helping to stand, walk, or sit), adjusting eating positions, helping with meals, and personal hygiene for individuals who cannot perform daily activities (such as bathing, hair and beard trimming, etc.).

These comprehensive services aim to meet individuals' health needs within their living spaces, making life easier for both the individuals and their families<sup>49</sup>.

49 <https://besiktas.bel.tr/Sayfa/1172/evde-bakim-hizmeti>



- Children's unhealthy eating habits lead to obesity and malnutrition. Families' low-income levels restrict access to healthy food. Additionally, in disadvantaged districts, children's vaccinations may be incomplete, which can contribute to the spread of various infectious diseases.

*Local governments and NGOs should collaborate to make healthy foods more accessible at affordable prices. Regarding vaccinations, strengthening vaccination programs, informing families about vaccines, and providing free health screenings are necessary. A health program aimed at strengthening children's immune systems can prevent these issues in the long term.*

- The high elderly population, the complexity of health issues, and the delays in emergency medical interventions exacerbate the effects of the hospital shortage in the Adalar district, where the research was conducted. This issue is particularly pronounced for the population living in areas far from the central locations of Adalar.

*To address the health access issue in Adalar, mobile health units can be used to support family medicine services. These units can ensure that the public quickly accesses the necessary treatment for emergency interventions. Developing home care services and implementing social assistance programs for the elderly are also short-term solutions. Additionally, public health screenings and vaccination services can be provided through these mobile units.*

*The most long-term solution for the Adalar district is the establishment of a local hospital. Unlike other districts in Istanbul, Adalar is disadvantaged due to the lack of any hospital infrastructure.*

## Education

- Child poverty is one of the most significant factors hindering children's access to basic rights (health, education, housing). Income inequality and limited access to social services in disadvantaged districts further exacerbate this issue.

*To address this, a comprehensive data collection and analysis process can be initiated in each district to measure child poverty. Social policies can be developed to provide support such as educational materials and school meals. Mechanisms that increase social assistance at the local level for children and families can be established.*

- School dropouts are also a significant issue due to child poverty and difficulties in accessing opportunities. Particularly, girls are at a higher risk of dropping out of school due to economic difficulties, pressure for early marriage, or societal gender norms. Similarly, it is well known that children with disabilities are more at risk in social life.

*Programs can be created where role model women guide girls at risk of dropping out of school across Istanbul and its districts. Financial support can be provided through scholarships to ensure continued education for girls, covering transportation, nutrition, and other related needs.*





- Another key issue identified in the general assessments and district analyses is child poverty. One of the most significant findings from these studies is that poor children face nutrition problems. Proper nutrition is one of the physical needs required for children to benefit equally from education or to continue their schooling.

*Addressing child poverty and nutrition issues is crucial not only for children's health and education but also for the long-term development and prosperity of society. Concrete solutions, particularly in disadvantaged areas, will improve the quality of life for these children and lay the foundations for a more equitable society. These efforts can be implemented through inter-institutional cooperation at both the local and national levels. Local governments and relevant NGOs can provide regular support packages containing basic food products to poor families, and low-cost food banking systems can be established through donations from local markets and producers.*

## SchoolFood4Change (SF4C) Project

In the European Union, there are numerous projects and initiatives aimed at providing free or subsidized school meals, particularly for disadvantaged children. One prominent example is the SchoolFood4Change (SF4C) project, which aims to create sustainable and healthy food systems in schools.

The SchoolFood4Change (SF4C) project started in 2020 and is financed by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program. This EU-supported initiative is being implemented in 12 countries, with the goal of providing nutritious meals to children and educating them about sustainable nutrition. The project works with over 3,000 schools and reaches approximately 600,000 students. The initiative combines several components, including nutrition education, sustainable food procurement, and promoting healthy school food cultures within local communities. These efforts align with broader EU objectives such as the Farm to Fork Strategy, which aims to promote sustainability and better nutrition. SF4C also emphasizes the importance of policy changes to ensure that healthy and sustainable meals are accessible to all students and advocates for policy reforms at the EU level<sup>50</sup>.

<sup>50</sup> [https://schoolfood4change.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/SF4C\\_Project-summary.pdf](https://schoolfood4change.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/SF4C_Project-summary.pdf)



- As indicated by the district analyses, one of the most pressing issues, particularly for young people, is substance use disorders and addiction. These issues lead to serious individual and societal consequences among young people. Effective strategies for addressing these problems must be approached holistically, encompassing prevention, intervention, and treatment phases.

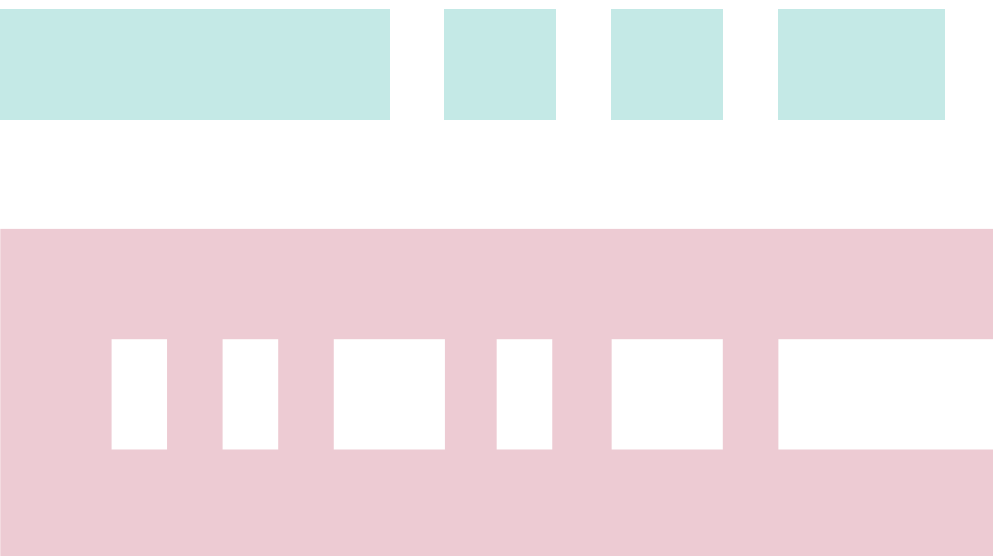
*In this context, special programs targeting children from socioeconomically disadvantaged families should be established at the district and neighborhood levels. These programs should include one-on-one mentoring, group therapy, or vocational training activities that focus on the needs of young people. More intensive prevention efforts could be directed towards migrant and low-income communities, who are particularly more vulnerable to substance use.*

*To reduce the risk of addiction, safe spaces should be created where social and cultural activities for young people can be organized. Free courses in areas such as sports, arts, and science should be offered to help young people spend their free time productively.*

*Conducting more deep dive research and analysis, especially in the districts of Arnavutköy, Esenler, and Sultanbeyli, will be important for the feasibility of policies to be developed in the future.*

- **Children from migrant families, in particular, may experience psychological traumas such as domestic violence, poverty, and difficult living conditions. This can negatively affect the mental health of children and cause conflicts in social life.**

*Psychosocial support services should be provided for children. Mental health education programs, counseling services for families and volunteer support groups in schools can be established. Interventions aimed at improving the mental health and social integration of immigrant children enhance both their individual well-being and the overall peace of the community. All these solutions can be implemented through collaboration between public institutions, non-governmental organizations, and the local community. In this way, the effects of trauma can be reduced, and migrant children can integrate into society in a healthier way.*



## 🌳 Climate, Natural and Built Environment, and Resilience

- According to research, a large portion of the population in the districts does not live in earthquake-resistant housing, nor have they conducted any assessments regarding this issue. In the event of a potential earthquake, residential buildings and urban infrastructure systems may suffer significant damage.

*Detailed disaster risk maps should be created for areas with a high earthquake risk in each district. Newly constructed buildings must be ensured to comply with the current Earthquake Regulation, and programs should be launched for the reinforcement of existing buildings. Strengthening projects should be implemented for old buildings, weak structures, and areas with risky ground conditions.*

*In areas with earthquake risk, urban transformation projects should be implemented to replace old and vulnerable structures with modern and resilient buildings. This process should be carried out according to the principles of land ownership and in-situ transformation, without displacing residents.*

- **In the interviews conducted across Istanbul and in four districts, it was found that the public was unaware of the locations of disaster assembly areas, and they felt that preparedness, information, and training activities were insufficient.**

*This situation highlights the need for a comprehensive disaster management plan in terms of both physical infrastructure and community preparedness. Disaster management policies should be addressed with a focus on gender equality.*

*In raising awareness and providing information about disasters and post-disaster actions, priority should be given to vulnerable groups such as women, the elderly, children, and individuals with disabilities. Programs should be planned in a way that includes these groups and considers their lower education levels. For ensuring the participation of working and parental groups, it is important to schedule training and awareness activities according to the needs of these groups.*

*In order to raise awareness about disasters in the community, regular training and drills should be organized. These trainings should cover basic topics such as the locations of assembly areas, actions to be taken during a disaster, and first aid. Schools, municipalities, and NGOs can collaborate to organize large-scale seminars.*

- **One of the major issues in the Adalar district is that the municipal budget is determined based on the winter population, yet the district is required to provide urban services for the significantly larger population during the summer months.**

*It is necessary to adjust the municipal budget not according to the winter population, but according to the specific needs of Adalar. Alternatively, the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and relevant ministries should play a larger role in providing services.*



## More Voice for “All” Youth

Since 2017, Gaia Municipality in Portugal has been bringing together young people aged 13–30 and representatives of civil society organizations working in the youth sector from 15 different regions of the city, in a process spread over one year before preparing a strategic action plan. Prioritizing areas such as employment, education, health and well-being, creativity and culture, social inclusion, participation, volunteering, and youth work, action plans and participatory budgets are developed together. The process, in which approximately 500 people directly participate, is facilitated by the Youth Council of Gaia Municipality and youth workers employed by the municipality. The activities included in the action plan are also monitored by young people and youth organizations<sup>51</sup>.

## Gender-Responsive Budgeting

Since 2015, the Ixelles Municipality of Brussels has been implementing gender-responsive budgeting methods to reduce gender inequalities and ensure that public resources are used according to the differentiated needs based on gender. This method involves categorizing the municipal budget and identifying areas where resource use may have different impacts on different genders, leading to the redesign of public services in this direction.

Gender-responsive budgeting aims to plan public services and projects in a way that equally addresses the needs of both genders. For instance, increasing employment opportunities in sectors where women are underrepresented and achieving a balanced distribution in sectors with fewer men have become possible through this approach.

In this context, Ixelles Municipality has made gender equality an integral part of local government policies. This practice not only allows the municipality to achieve its equality goals but also enables more efficient use of public resources. The gender-responsive budgeting approach offers an innovative example of local governance in line with sustainable development goals<sup>52</sup>.

<sup>51</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docgener/guides/youth\\_just\\_transition\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/guides/youth_just_transition_en.pdf)

<sup>52</sup> Dünya Kentlerinden İlham Veren Proje Uygulamaları  
[https://www.sodemsen.org.tr/YuklenenDosyalar/Dokumanlar/DunyadanOrnekler\\_Kitap\\_Baskiya\\_Rev2.pdf?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.sodemsen.org.tr/YuklenenDosyalar/Dokumanlar/DunyadanOrnekler_Kitap_Baskiya_Rev2.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com)



- Due to planning based on population density, it has been determined that Adalar lacks adequate firefighting services, and its forest resources and old buildings are unprepared for permanent fire prevention measures. In the case of the Adalar district, it is evident that disaster preparations should not be from a mainland perspective. In the event of a disaster, Adalar's connection to the mainland will be cut off, making the district vulnerable to emergency interventions.

*It is understood that disaster preparedness in Adalar should be based on the potential population rather than the local population. Adalar-specific independent emergency intervention and evacuation plans should be developed in case the connection to the mainland is severed. These plans should include basic infrastructure requirements such as firefighting equipment, shelters, and transportation routes in Adalar. Fire safety measures should be increased in all homes, workplaces, and public buildings in Adalar, and regular fire drills should be conducted for local residents and employees. Fire safety regulations, in particular, should be implemented in old buildings.*

*Adalar-specific firefighting and emergency intervention teams should be established, and these teams should receive training on dealing with disasters such as fires, floods, and earthquakes. Specialized firefighting vehicles and helicopter landing points for transportation between the islands should be planned.*

*It is essential to involve the local population in disaster preparedness. Disaster training programs and volunteer firefighting teams can be established. This will not only increase community resilience but also accelerate the emergency response processes.*

- In Sultanbeyli, it has been highlighted that all urban services, such as schools, hospitals, and transportation, are located in two neighborhoods, and other neighborhoods face difficulties in accessing these services.

*The zoning rights transfer, approved by Sultanbeyli Municipality and Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality in November 2024, can be used as a complementary tool with urban transformation. The funds obtained through the zoning rights transfer can be spent on infrastructure and service projects in underdeveloped neighborhoods.*

- In Arnavutköy, unlike other districts where meetings were held, it has been observed that in the peripheral neighborhoods, which were previously considered villages but gained the status of neighborhoods with the enactment of Law No. 6360 in 2012, activities such as livestock farming, small-scale agriculture, and greenhouse farming, as well as rural life, continue.
- In Adalar, former gardening activities and current efforts to revive beekeeping activities represent a significant value for rural development.

*To ensure the continuation of agricultural and livestock activities in peripheral neighborhoods, local governments can coordinate rural development programs.*



Cooperatives can be encouraged to enhance collaboration among producers in the district. Through cooperatives, the procurement of raw materials and the marketing of products in the domestic market can be facilitated. With the support of the municipality, local markets or digital platforms where producers can sell their goods could be established. Agricultural and livestock regions can be transformed into ecotourism destinations, and projects can be developed in this regard.

## Housing and Shelter

- Throughout Istanbul and specifically in the districts studied, rapid population growth has increased the demand for housing, making access to affordable housing for low-income individuals more challenging. Research findings reveal that Sultanbeyli stands out among the districts due to its relatively reasonable rental and housing prices compared to other districts. As a result, it has become a primary destination for those migrating to Istanbul. However, with the general rise in demand and inflation, housing costs in Sultanbeyli, like in other districts, have begun to constitute a significant portion of residents' expenses. This situation further deepens poverty.

*The construction of livable and affordable housing for low-income groups must be prioritized. Solving the housing issue in districts requires collaboration among public institutions, the private sector, and civil society organizations. Housing policies should not only focus on building physical structures but also aim for social and economic sustainability, which is a crucial step to prevent deepening poverty. Cooperative housing projects, jointly owned by low-income families, can be supported in this regard. Preserving existing green spaces and increasing public areas such as parks and gardens should also be ensured to provide healthy housing and shelter opportunities.*

*Offering housing options suitable for different income groups can help prevent social segregation. Special support programs should be implemented for migrants and low-income families.*

*Implementing land and property taxation measures can be an effective method to increase the land value revenue of districts and finance social housing projects. Additional taxes can be levied on lands that gain value due to zoning changes or public investments. These taxes can be directly allocated to finance social housing initiatives. To ensure that tax revenues and earnings from land value appreciation are spent on social housing projects, a transparent financial monitoring mechanism should be established.*



## → “Socially Just Land Use” in Munich, Germany

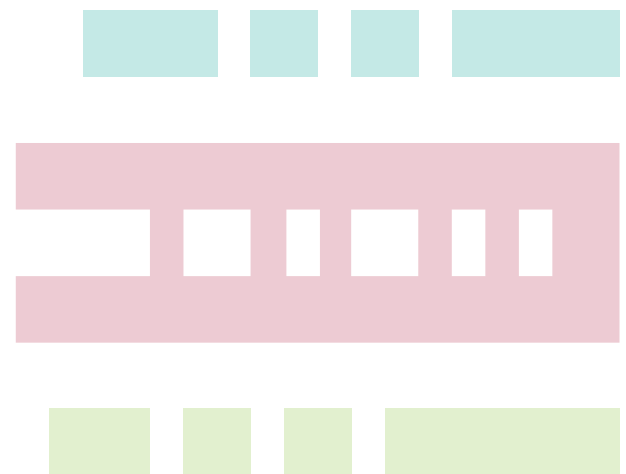
The city of Munich implements comprehensive land use policies to increase the supply of affordable housing. Through the “Socially Just Land Use” (SoBoN) program, 30% of land is allocated for social housing and 10% for subsidized rental housing (rising to 60% on city-owned land). Developers are also required to contribute to infrastructure costs.

To strengthen the rental housing market, the city supports cooperatives, joint ventures, and rental unions. Land usage is divided into 50% social housing, 40% concept-based rental housing, and 10% collective building initiatives. Rental housing projects mandate developers to provide housing at fixed, below-market rates for low- and middle-income groups, with these terms binding for 80 years.

Instead of selling its land, Munich now grants land use rights to maintain control over urban development. In the future, city land will be exclusively allocated for rental housing projects<sup>53</sup>.

- It has been observed that there is a perception suggesting the population living in the Adalar district generally belongs to a high-income group. However, this perception does not fully reflect reality. The low-income residents of Adalar are predominantly older individuals who have more limited access to social amenities compared to those on the mainland.

*This highlights the necessity of conducting tailored needs assessments and providing specialized services for this segment of the population. Developing affordable social housing and usage projects specifically designed for low-income elderly residents in Adalar could be a viable solution.*



<sup>53</sup> <https://www.housing2030.org/project/sozialgerechte-bodennutzung-socially-just-land-use-in-the-city-of-munich-germany/>



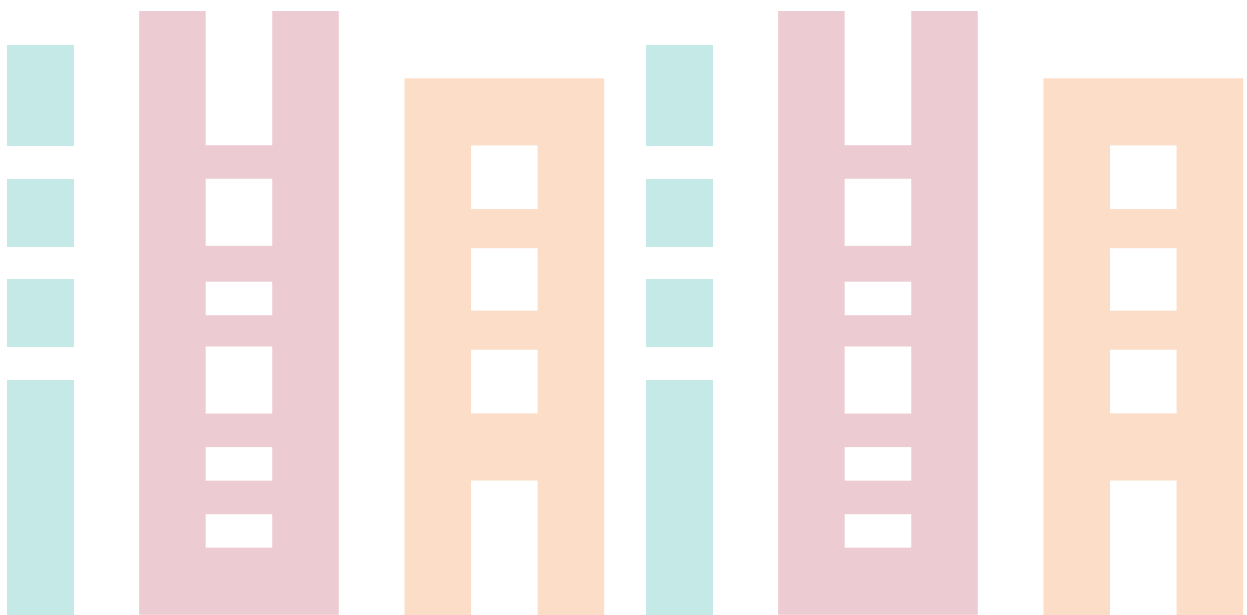
## Courtyard Project for the Elderly in the Netherlands

In the village of Veenoord in the Netherlands, the social housing association Woonservice aimed to build housing specifically for elderly residents. While the municipality had developed a standard land allocation plan, Woonservice sought to create a more collective housing concept. Their goal was to reduce loneliness among the elderly by fostering interaction among the residents. To this end, Specht designed a courtyard consisting of 21 elderly housing units, a shared bicycle storage area, and a communal living space.

The houses were built on the site of a former primary school, which was well-integrated into the landscape and surrounded by trees. This location allowed for the development of a unique building and living arrangement, different from the traditional detached and row houses in the village. The courtyard was designed as a standalone block within a green landscape, comprising two building volumes arranged around a central courtyard.

The structures were shaped to preserve the existing trees. Residents could easily meet and interact in the courtyard and organize shared activities in the communal living room at the corner of the block. This living room was also made available for use by the broader neighborhood.

With this innovative housing model, elderly individuals were encouraged to move from larger family homes to smaller, single-story senior homes. This approach created opportunities for young families seeking larger family homes in the village<sup>54</sup>.



54 <https://www.archdaily.com/1014480/elzenhof-veenoord-courtyard-for-elderly-specht-architects-and-planners>





## **i** Transportation and Accessibility

- Women often have different needs than men regarding public transportation, pedestrian pathways, and environmental safety. Ignoring these differences can exacerbate the challenges women face in their daily urban lives.

*In order to provide safe, accessible, and inclusive spaces that meet women's needs in urban life, it is crucial to incorporate gender awareness into data collection and analysis processes. Analyzing data from a gender perspective offers a valuable opportunity to improve urban policies and eliminate the barriers women encounter. Such analyses also help balance resource allocation, ensuring that urban services benefit all social groups equitably.*

### Stockholm's Gender-Equal Snow-Clearing Policy

In 2015, Stockholm adopted a gender-equal approach to snow-clearing, prioritizing the accessibility of pedestrian pathways predominantly used by women. Analyses revealed that in Sweden, injuries from slipping on icy paths were three times more frequent than injuries from car accidents, disproportionately affecting women. The associated costs of these injuries, including hospital treatments and lost productivity, were found to be four times the expenses of winter road maintenance.

In response to these findings, Stockholm authorities reorganized snow-clearing priorities: Sidewalks, bicycle paths, bus stops, and routes leading to childcare centers were cleared first, reflecting their importance as the initial stop for many working parents. Workplaces such as hospitals and municipal facilities, where women predominantly work, were prioritized second. Paths leading to schools for pedestrians and cyclists were third on the list. The broader road network was addressed only after these key areas had been cleared.

This prioritization did not incur additional costs for the municipality. On the contrary, it ensured a more equitable allocation of resources, making the city more accessible for everyone. By focusing on areas frequently used by pedestrians and public transportation users, Stockholm improved urban mobility and accessibility for all its residents<sup>55</sup>.

<sup>55</sup> <https://www.thelocal.se/20161112/stockholm-transport-heads-defends-gender-equal-snow-clearing>



- **The absence of a hospital in the Adalar district makes access to hospitals in neighboring districts a significant issue, particularly in emergencies.**

*Accelerating transportation to the Adalar could facilitate easier access for patients to healthcare services on the mainland. Increasing the frequency of water transportation and making additional trips during the winter months could be an important solution to this problem.*

*Lowering the prices of water transportation services between the Adalar and the mainland and increasing the availability of discounted tickets for elderly and low-income groups are measures that can be implemented to address transportation issues in daily commuting.*

- **Esenler district, one of the fastest-growing and densely populated districts of Istanbul, faces a parking problem due to increasing urbanization pressure and the road infrastructure's inability to accommodate the population load. As revealed in research, this issue is one of the primary concerns for the district's residents.**

*Expanding the public transportation network and increasing pedestrian-accessible areas could reduce car usage. Additionally, the development of Park and Ride systems could encourage people to use public transportation.*

*A mandatory parking requirement for newly constructed buildings and incentives to improve parking spaces in existing buildings could be considered to address the parking issue.*

- **The most significant transportation issue in Sultanbeyli district is the lack of connectivity between neighborhoods. While reaching a different district from Sultanbeyli is relatively easy, transportation between neighborhoods within the district is much more challenging.**

*To address the transportation challenges between neighborhoods, shuttle bus routes can be established. These routes would connect different neighborhoods and make it easier to access central points, particularly. For the shuttle system to be effective, the frequency of trips needs to be increased. During busy hours, especially in the morning and evening, more frequent services can be provided. For short distances between neighborhoods, walking infrastructure can be improved, and electric scooter and bike-sharing systems can be developed.*

- **In the Adalar district, there are security and accessibility issues in parks and play areas where children can spend time safely outdoors. This highlights an important gap in the social development of children.**

*When designing parks and play areas, the opinions of the local community, especially parents and children, should be taken into account. Through a participatory process, areas that best meet the needs of children can be created.*



## How Two Cities in Belgium Transformed Their Pavements into Playgrounds?

In both Ghent and its larger northeastern neighbor, Antwerp, urban planners have been working for over a decade to make the streets more child-friendly. City authorities have re-designed the streets which connect playgrounds, youth clubs, schools and homes to make not just the destinations but the roads between them a space for the children to play in.

The concept of “speelweefselplan” — loosely translated as a “play layer”, or “playspace-web” — first emerged in Ghent in 1997. At that time, Ghent’s urban planner, Marianne Labre, began developing a comprehensive playground policy.

To create a city’s speelweefselplan, urban planners map the places children go to and the roads they use to get there. A basic intervention would be to widen the pavement or put in crossing points. But planners also weave “play stimuli” into the fabric of the streets themselves.

To understand how children traverse the city, the planners must consult them directly. In Antwerp, starting in 2006, Wim Segher’s team has used a website to ask children what they want from their playgrounds. This process allows children to draw their own routes, which are done at schools, youth clubs, and playgrounds. Children are given a map of their neighborhood and asked to draw the routes they take to school, the youth club, or sports club, highlighting any dangerous spots they encounter along the way.

Before architects even draft a new area or a street modification, they are shown the results of the consultation, so that children’s ideas directly influence any plans. In Antwerp, the city wants all new developments to include 10 square meters of play space per child, mimicking the standard in London, UK. Each child currently has only around 3.6 square meters of play space. As the city grows, Seghers and his team plan to build new play areas and expand existing ones to improve the ratio<sup>56</sup>.

56 <https://apolitical.co/solution-articles/en/how-two-belgian-cities-turned-their-pavements-into-playgrounds>



- In disadvantaged districts of Istanbul, there is a pressing need for transportation solutions to facilitate the lives of individuals with disabilities and the elderly.

*These measures may include infrastructure improvements such as disability-friendly public transportation vehicles, elevators, and ramps to ease mobility for these groups. Ensuring that public buildings and social services are accessible should also be a priority.*

*Expanding social taxi services for the elderly and individuals with disabilities could provide a viable solution, particularly in areas where public transportation is not accessible, helping individuals leave their homes with ease.*

*To ensure safer and more comfortable pedestrian mobility, accessible infrastructure such as low-gradient ramps, smooth surfaces, and visual markers should be developed. For individuals with disabilities, traffic lights equipped with auditory and visual signals and safe pedestrian crossings should be implemented along roadsides.*

*To make transportation more accessible for individuals with disabilities, raising awareness of disability across all segments of society is crucial. In this regard, training programs for public transportation personnel on effective communication with individuals with disabilities can be introduced.*

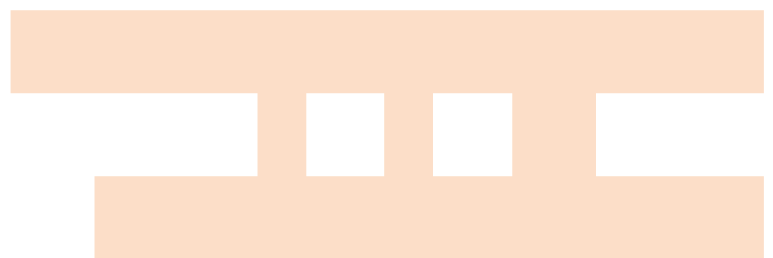
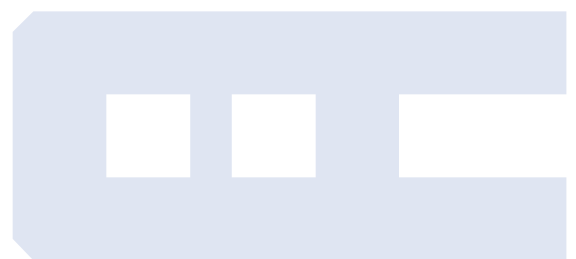


## OVERALL ASSESSMENT

This report emphasizes the importance of an urban approach that provides equal opportunities and access to all residents, regardless of age, gender, or socio-economic status, within the framework of the “fair city” concept. Efforts to make Istanbul a fairer and more inclusive city have focused on analyzing the current state of fundamental areas such as employment, housing, education, healthcare, and transportation, revealing the challenges faced by disadvantaged groups. Field studies conducted in the districts of Adalar, Arnavutköy, Esenler, and Sultanbeyli have demonstrated that various vulnerabilities are distinctly prominent in these areas.

These vulnerabilities hinder disadvantaged groups from accessing mechanisms that can voice their needs, thereby weakening citizen participation and civil society organization. Including disadvantaged groups in participatory processes is crucial for accurately identifying their needs and developing effective solutions. However, for these processes to become functional, public institutions must enhance their capacity and develop rights-based and socially inclusive strategies.

On the path to creating a fair city, a multidimensional approach to social inclusion must be adopted. Overcoming barriers to accessing urban services should be supported by innovative, cost-effective, gender-equality-focused, and sustainable solutions in areas such as healthcare, education, housing, mobility, and social participation. It is essential for public institutions and local governments to establish mechanisms that enhance citizen participation, contribute to the empowerment of civil society, and implement inclusive policies. Embracing the principles of equity and justice, which form the foundation of the Fair City concept, is strongly recommended as a guiding framework for Istanbul’s urban future.



## About World Resources Institute

World Resources Institute (WRI) is a global research organization with offices in Brazil, China, Colombia, India, Indonesia, Mexico, and the United States, and regional offices for Africa and Europe. With a team of over 1,900 staff, it works with partners to develop practical solutions that improve people's lives and ensure nature can thrive.

Learn more: <https://WRI.org>

## About WRI Türkiye

WRI Ross Center for Sustainable Cities is WRI's program dedicated to shaping a future where cities work better for everyone. Together with partners around the world, it helps create resilient, inclusive, low-carbon places that are better for people and the planet. The network of more than 500 experts working from Brazil, China, Colombia, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Kenya, the Netherlands, Mexico, Türkiye, and the United States combines research excellence with on-the-ground impact to make cities around the world better places to live.

Learn more: <https://wri.org/cities>

Since 2005, WRI Türkiye has been implementing projects in collaboration with local and central governments on sustainable transportation, urban development, and energy efficiency in buildings across 17 cities in Türkiye, six in Africa, and two in Europe. It contributes to the goal of creating sustainable cities through implementation projects, capacity-building efforts, strategic documents, and national and international partnerships.

Learn more: <https://wriehirler.org>

## About the European Union

The European Union (EU) is an economic and political union of 27 European countries. It is founded on values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. The EU acts globally to promote sustainable development for societies, the environment, and economies, ensuring these benefits are accessible to all.

Learn more: [https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/turkiye\\_tr](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/turkiye_tr)





# EQUAL CITIES



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