



ROLES REIMAGINED

STORIES OF CHALLENGES AND SELF-RELIANCE
FROM OLDER PEOPLE IN NORTHWEST SYRIA



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We have ensured the accurate attribution of all the older people quoted in this report, respecting their names and identities to effectively amplify their voices. Prior to their inclusion, we obtained explicit and full consent from each individual.

ABBREVIATIONS

AAP: Accountability to Affected Populations
COVID-19: Coronavirus 2019
CSO: Civil Society Organization
FGD: Focus Group Discussion
FSL: Food Security and Livelihoods
HRP: Humanitarian Response Plan
IDI: In-depth Interview
IDP: Internally Displaced Persons
ILO: International Labour Organisation
INGO: International Non-Government Organisation

KII: Key Informant Interview
MHPSS: Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

MPCA: Multipurpose Cash Assistance
NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation
SDG: Sustainable Development Goal
UN: United Nations
WRO: Women's Rights Organisation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY FINDINGS

This joint report by HelpAge International and Action For Humanity is the result of an extensive consultation with almost 120 older people in northwest Syria. It uncovers nuanced perceptions of shifts in the roles and perceptions of older people, emphasising the profound impact of conflict, economic challenges, and increased caregiving responsibilities. Key themes explored include evolving familial attitudes, gender-specific dynamics, changing community perceptions, and a notable transformation in traditional support systems.

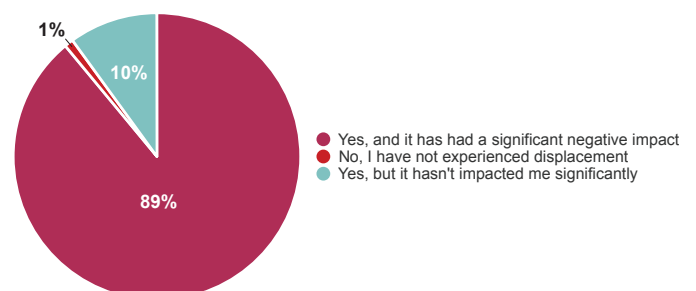
The Syrian conflict, which began in 2011, is having long lasting consequences on the region's social, developmental, and economic structures.¹ The subsequent COVID-19 pandemic² and the devastating earthquake in southeast Türkiye in February 2023 further exposed the inadequacies of these systems, heightening hardships for the population.³ The protracted crisis led to a loss of income sources, jobs, and a surge in prices, contributing to heightened poverty and adverse impacts on social and economic indicators.⁴

In northwest Syria, home to approximately 4.5 million people, with 1.9 million residing in displacement camps,⁵ a bleak picture is being painted by extreme poverty affecting 91% of families by the end of 2023,⁶ food shortages at 40%,⁷ and an overall unemployment rate of 89%.

The crises have weakened basic service delivery, damaged infrastructure, and left people struggling to afford necessities, with average household expenditure exceeding income by 60%.⁸ Older people have been particularly impacted but are among the most marginalised in their communities and in humanitarian response programming.⁹ The marginalisation of older people is exacerbated by the insufficiencies in Syria's social protection infrastructure.^{10 11}

This research sheds light on the diverse realities faced by the nearly 417,000 older people in northwest Syria.¹² Ongoing conflict, repeated displacement, lack of shelter access, and health issues contribute to a decline in mental health and well-being, alongside an increase in chronic illnesses. The study highlights gaps in essential services for older people, particularly in IDP camps, with many facing isolation, multiple disabilities, and a lack of support.¹³ The study's survey results reveal that 89% of respondents experienced a significant negative impact on their lives due to displacement, conflict, or the earthquake.

Older people's experience of displacement due to the conflict or earthquake





Mahmoud Muhammad
Qazeckli Fakkik, 58, from
Jindires, Syria
© HelpAge

The report further explores evolving familial attitudes, indicating a transformation in the roles of older people within families, with 83% acknowledging changes over the last 12 years. Despite this apparent increase in respect and appreciation during crises, community perceptions, especially among the oldest age group (80+), signal diminished respect. Economic struggles, displacement, and generational differences contribute to evolving societal attitudes, potentially diminishing recognition of older people's valuable contributions. The study also uncovers a shift in traditional support systems, with some older family members living alone or in retirement homes, reflecting changing economic roles and societal expectations. There is a notable increase in older people taking on caregiving responsibilities, which poses economic challenges. Frustration with humanitarian assistance prompts a call for a shift towards early-recovery projects, and narratives of social isolation emerge, exacerbated by digital exclusion during crises. Gender-specific dynamics reveal nuanced shifts, with men perceiving a more pronounced rise in respect, often attributed to external factors, while women's roles centre on family dynamics and health challenges.

During crises, older people take part in coordination efforts, actively supporting relief activities by offering primary assistance and leveraging their knowledge for effective crisis response. The formation of 'senior committees' in northwest Syria demonstrates adaptability and self-reliance as older people actively address challenges through initiatives such as care coordination, psychosocial support, and advocacy for older people's rights. Additionally, older people contribute to peer support and community building, fostering a supportive and cohesive environment amidst displacement.

- The findings demonstrate the need for specific actions and policies that support older people in northwest Syria and recognize their positive contributions. They focus on:
- Acknowledging older people's roles as caregivers, community leaders, and peacebuilders.
- Actively engaging older people in decision-making processes, community initiatives, and humanitarian responses, addressing and overcoming barriers to their engagement.
- Developing community awareness programs challenging stereotypes and biases, fostering a more inclusive understanding of older people's contributions.
- Ensuring the respect of rights, improving access to services, and creating economic opportunities tailored to the skills and experiences of older people.
- Investing in capacity-strengthening activities, promoting research on the situation of older people, and integrating age, gender, and disability expertise into humanitarian programs.
- Encouraging collaboration among humanitarian actors, authorities, and donors to collectively address the specific needs and contributions of older people.
- Collaborating with older people, including with community-based committees of older people, for effective design, implementation, and evaluation of humanitarian response activities.
- Ensuring quality funding practices by promoting flexible, transparent, predictable, and multi-year financing aligned with Grand Bargain commitments, while also aiding the transition from reactive humanitarian responses to early recovery strategies, prioritising the restoration of essential services and fostering self-reliance.

KEY FINDINGS

SNAPSHOT OF KEY FINDINGS

- **Evolving familial attitudes and community perceptions:**

The study unveils a perceived transformation in the roles of older people within families, with 83% acknowledging changes over the last 12 years. This shift is coupled with a perceived increase in respect and appreciation, attributed to the vital roles older members play during crises. However, a striking contrast emerges in community perceptions, especially within the oldest age group (80+), revealing perceptions of a decline in respect within the broader community. Economic struggles, displacement, and generational differences contribute to evolving societal attitudes, potentially diminishing the recognition of older people's valuable contributions. Stigma in the workforce and the loss of traditional leadership roles compound the challenges faced by older people, highlighting the separation of familial dynamics and broader societal attitudes in northwest Syria.

- **Challenges with humanitarian assistance:**

Older people express frustration with the nature and delivery of humanitarian assistance, calling for a shift towards early-recovery projects that foster longer-term self-reliance. The study highlights the need for a more sustainable approach to humanitarian assistance and service delivery, addressing the challenges faced by older people.

- **Coordination efforts in crises:**

During crises, older people demonstrate remarkable coordination. They actively support relief efforts by offering primary support for families, including family reunification and securing basic needs. The invaluable knowledge and experiences of older people contribute to effective crisis response, emphasising the importance of recognising and leveraging their capabilities in such situations.

● **Shifts in traditional support systems:**

Despite the apparent increase in perceptions of respect and appreciation for some older family members, particularly during crises, the study also reveals a shift in the traditional support systems for other older people. While families traditionally cared for older people upon reaching retirement age, there is a growing trend of older people living alone or being placed in retirement homes. Economic hardships, family separation or abandonment, and changing roles contribute to this shift, reflecting the evolving landscape of care in northwest Syria.

● **Shifts in norms around caregiving:**

Changes in family structures result in a notable increase in older people responsible for their well-being or caring for family members, where caring would have previously been the responsibility of the family. Economic challenges arise as some older people struggle to meet the financial needs associated with caregiving responsibilities, affecting their overall economic well-being. A noteworthy shift is observed with an increase in older men taking on caregiving responsibilities alongside the continued significant role of older women in caregiving.

● **Isolation and exclusion:**

Narratives of social isolation emerge, with older people reporting feelings of being a burden, helplessness, and difficulty communicating. Technological progress, while advancing communication overall, leaves some older people digitally excluded. This digital exclusion has a significant impact on their connectivity, especially during crises like earthquakes and the COVID-19 pandemic.

● **Gender-specific dynamics:**

Survey findings illuminate nuanced gender dynamics in the changing roles of older people in northwest Syria. While older women (58%) report increased respect, older men (70%) perceive a more pronounced rise. Additionally, older men in this study tend to attribute role shifts to external factors like conflict and displacement, aligning with traditional expectations, while older women's roles centre on family dynamics and health challenges. The pervasive issue of food insecurity in northwest Syria is having a particularly detrimental influence on the roles of older people, particularly older women.

● **The formation of senior committees:**

In northwest Syria, older people have formed 'senior committees' to address challenges like displacement and neglect. Originally designed for voluntary work and communication with community leaders, these committees have evolved to meet changing community needs. Their initiatives include care coordination, psychosocial support, and advocacy for older people's rights, showcasing adaptability and self-reliance in shaping their roles for the community's welfare.

● **Peer support and community building:**

Amidst displacement, older people play an active role in fostering peer support mechanisms and community building. Initiatives such as social gatherings, art exhibitions, and community-building activities led by older women in care homes contribute to a supportive and cohesive environment. Additionally, older community members collaboratively contribute financial assistance, forming collective efforts to address the needs of older people.



Adnan Ismail (65) from Deir Ezzor, Syria © HelpAge

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH AND RESPONDENTS CHARACTERISTICS

The study employs a mixed methods approach
The analysis draws on data collected through:

- 100 surveys conducted among older people in northwest Syria.
- 17 in-depth interviews (IDIs) and four focus group discussions (FGDs) with older people in northwest Syria; and 15 key informant interviews (KIIs) with different stakeholders who provide advocacy, healthcare and support services, or humanitarian assistance to older people in northwest Syria.
- One consultation session with a group of X older people on the narrative, findings and recommendations to ensure the report is reflective of the lived experiences of the subjects of the study.

The research spans the governorates of Aleppo and Idlib. Demographics indicate that 74% of participants are men and 26% are women. This fact highlights one of the challenges in achieving balanced gender distribution. Notably, the study recognises the inclination of older women to remain within the domestic sphere. In terms of living arrangements, 40% cohabit with a spouse/partner and children, 24% with a spouse/partner only, 22% with extended family, 9% with children only, and 5% live alone. Moreover, 19% report having one or more disabilities. Interviews are conducted in Arabic by Syrian researchers.

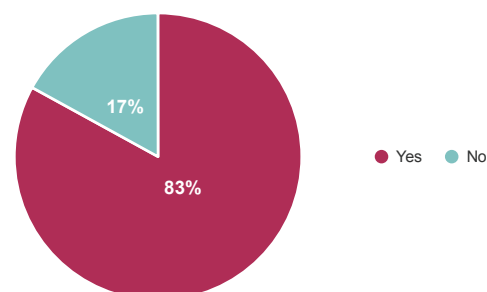
The intensification of airstrikes since October 2023 posed limitations on our research efforts. To mitigate these challenges, we have been adopting alternative measures, such as leveraging available online interviews where possible, and collaborating closely with local partners and country teams to gain valuable insights.

For more details of the methodology please refer to the end of the report.

● Evolving roles and responsibilities of older people in northwest Syria

In the challenging context in northwest Syria, defined by displacement and conflict, most older people in the survey perceive a significant shift in their roles and responsibilities, with 83% acknowledging change over the last 12 years.

● Older people's perceptions on changes in their roles and responsibilities over the last 13 years



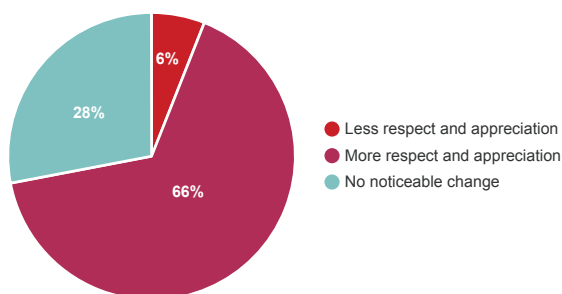
● Contrasting views on older people's perceptions of their respect and value within their families and within the wider community in northwest Syria

In an examination of family dynamics, older people who participated in this study provided a nuanced perspective on perceived respect. A majority note an increase in respect by their families, attributing this positive shift to the acknowledgment of their roles as caregivers, custodians of knowledge, and stabilising figures, especially during crises like earthquakes. However, other perspectives emerge, with some older people expressing a feeling of being less listened to within the family. ¹⁴

● **Examining changes in respect within the family**

Perceptions from KIIs and FGDs, along with survey findings, illustrate a nuanced change in family attitudes towards older people over the past 13 years, with 83% acknowledging substantial changes. This shift is accompanied by a perceived increase in respect and appreciation within the family unit for some older people, a sentiment attributed to the important roles older members play during crises. Notably, older people themselves particularly emphasise that their roles within their families have changed from active providers to providers of valuable advice.

● **Perceptions of attitudinal changes toward older people within their family over the past 13 years**



“BEFORE THE WAR, THE ROLES OF THE OLDER PEOPLE WERE EFFECTIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE. DURING THE WAR, THEIR ROLES SHIFTED TO WISDOM AND GUIDANCE (TO SOME EXTENT).

Older woman, 64, Idleb, northwest Syria

● **A shift in traditional support systems for some older people in northwest Syria**

Upon further exploration of these nuances, the KIIs and the FGD revealed that some older people perceive shifts in the traditional support system for older people. Prior to the conflict, families would care for older people upon reaching retirement age, which, according to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), is set at 60 for men and 55 for women.^{15 16}

It is important to recognise that these details represent the broader context in Syria, and the dynamics in Northwest Syria may differ significantly. Survey findings from participants in this study show that retirement from formal employment is most likely to occur in the 65-69 age group, with 50% of people in this age range reporting retirement. Now, however, older people are more likely than before the conflict to live alone or be placed in retirement homes.

“IN THE PAST, OLDER PEOPLE WOULD REACH RETIREMENT AGE AND THE FAMILY WOULD TAKE CARE OF THEM. HOWEVER, AT PRESENT, THE RESPONSIBILITY REMAINS WITH THEM AND HAS SOMETIMES INCREASED.

Older man, 60-64, northwest Syria

“MY FAMILY HAS ABANDONED ME, AND THEY NO LONGER SEEK ADVICE OR MY OPINION ON THEIR ISSUES AND PROBLEMS.

Older woman, 75-79, northwest Syria



“MY ELDEST SON HAS BECOME THE ONE WITH THE MAIN ROLE. IT USED TO BE THE CASE THAT OLDER PEOPLE WOULD BE EVERYTHING TO EVERYONE IN MY FAMILY, BUT I AM NOTHING.

Older man, 60-64, Idleb

“MY ELDEST SON HAS BECOME THE ONE WITH THE MAIN ROLE. IT USED TO BE THE CASE THAT OLDER PEOPLE WOULD BE EVERYTHING TO EVERYONE IN MY FAMILY, BUT I AM NOTHING.

Older man, 60-64, Idleb

“MY ELDEST SON HAS BECOME THE ONE WITH SIGNIFICANT RESPONSIBILITIES DESPITE HIS YOUNG AGE, AND I HAVE BECOME JUST AN OLDER WOMAN WITH NO ROLE IN THE FAMILY.

Older woman, 60-64, northwest Syria

“MY LIFE HAS CHANGED, AND MY ROLE IN THE FAMILY HAS BEEN ELIMINATED. I HAVE BECOME JUST AN OLDER WOMAN WITH NO ABILITY TO TAKE CARE OF MYSELF; I USED TO BE A CAREGIVER AND EDUCATOR IN THE PAST.

Older woman, 70-74, in northwest Syria

This point was highlighted by the director of a retirement home for older people; while there is still societal reluctance in northwest Syria towards the idea of relocating older people to retirement homes, there is a growing trend where more older people are, nonetheless, being transferred to these facilities.

“ALTHOUGH SOCIETY STILL REJECTS THE IDEA OF TRANSFERRING OLDER PEOPLE TO RETIREMENT HOMES ON THE WHOLE, AN INCREASING NUMBER OF OLDER PEOPLE ARE BEING TRANSFERRED TO THEM. THE EXISTENCE OF RETIREMENT HOMES SIGNIFICANTLY CONTRIBUTES TO PROVIDING CARE AND A SAFE SPACE FOR OLDER PEOPLE WHERE THEIR FAMILIES ARE NO LONGER WILLING OR ABLE TO.

Director of a retirement home for older people, man, 55-59, northwest Syria

● Examining changes in respect within the community

However, a striking contrast emerges in community perceptions, especially within the oldest age group (80+), revealing perceptions of a decline in respect within the broader community. Economic struggles and displacement have contributed to evolving societal attitudes, potentially diminishing the recognition of older people's contributions. Stigma in the workforce and the loss of traditional leadership roles further compound the challenges faced by older people, highlighting the distinction between familial dynamics and broader societal attitudes in northwest Syria.

“OVER THE PAST 12 YEARS, OUR ROLE AS OLDER AND INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE IN SOCIETY HAS DECLINED, AS WE PREVIOUSLY HAD A POSITIVE IMPACT ON SOCIETY IN TERMS OF OUR EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES, SOCIAL EVENTS, OR OUR PARTICIPATION IN JOYS AND SORROWS.

Older man, 65-69, northwest Syria

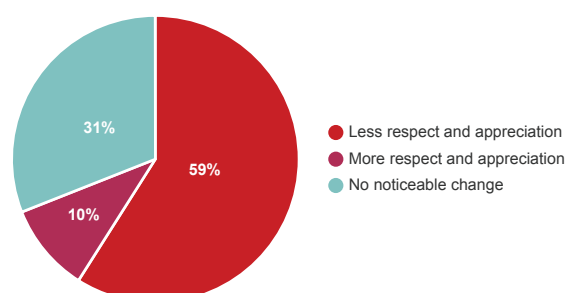
“PREVIOUSLY, THE OLDER PEOPLE WERE VALUED AND RESPECTED MORE THAN THEY ARE NOW.

Older man, 65-69, northwest Syria

“PREVIOUSLY, THERE WAS A GREATER APPRECIATION AND RESPECT FOR THE ELDERLY

Older man, 65-69, northwest Syria

Perceptions of attitudinal changes toward older individuals within their community over the past 13 years



Survey insights further highlight a perception of declining attitudes towards older people within the community, with 59% expressing a diminished sense of significance.

A recurring theme in groups of both men and women is the economic struggle. Displacement, coupled with conflict, has led to poverty and financial stress among older people. The loss of homes and community connections has resulted in significant challenges in adapting to new living conditions.

This not only prompted shifts in familial roles, but also shifted the conventional respect accorded to them within their communities. Traditional values and roles undergo transformations, potentially diminishing the recognition of the valuable contributions older people bring to the community.

“VARIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES HAVE LED TO SOCIETAL DISINTEGRATION, WITH NO CENTRAL ROLE LEFT FOR OLDER PEOPLE. THIS IS ATTRIBUTED TO A LACK OF AWARENESS ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE OLDER PEOPLE IN SOCIETY.

Older person, 80+, northwest Syria

“MARGINALISATION FOR OLDER PEOPLE HAS SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASED OVER THE PAST 13 YEARS DUE TO THE CONSEQUENCES OF WAR, DISPLACEMENT, AND THE DISAPPEARANCE OF SUPPORT FROM GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS.

Senior Committee Leader, 60-64, Aleppo

The experience of stigma, particularly in the workforce, may further exacerbate this dichotomy. Older people may find themselves marginalised in the community due to exclusion from the *workforce*,¹⁷ affecting their *perceived significance in the community*. Additionally, the loss of traditional leadership roles, coupled with generational differences in values, adds layers to the shifting landscape of respect for older people.

● Health challenges shaping perceptions of societal respect

The health challenges faced by older people in northwest Syria have emerged as a contributing factor reshaping their roles and responsibilities within their families and communities. Older people who participated in this study identified health issues as the third most important factor that contributed to the shifts in roles and responsibilities (25%).

Focus group participants revealed that the impact of ongoing displacement and recurring environmental changes, coupled with the strains of adapting to new and often adverse circumstances, including prolonged periods of living in informal settlements, has notably exacerbated their susceptibility to health issues, ranging from chronic disabilities to mental health issues. This impact has, in turn, had a detrimental effect on their perceptions of their societal contributions.

“CURRENTLY, HEALTH SERVICES HAVE BECOME LESS THAN WHAT THEY WERE BEFORE THE CONFLICT.

Older man, 75-79, northwest Syria

“THE CONFLICT AND DISPLACEMENT HAVE AFFECTED MY MENTAL HEALTH, CAUSING FEAR, AND I DEVELOPED DIABETES.

Older woman, 60-65, northwest Syria

“I HAVE EXPERIENCED AN INCREASE IN HEALTH PROBLEMS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL PRESSURES (THE CHANGES HAVE SIGNIFICANTLY IMPACTED MY HEALTH AND MENTAL WELL-BEING, AND LIVING ALONE HAS INCREASED MY PSYCHOLOGICAL PRESSURE). THIS HAS BEEN A DRIVER IN THE CHANGES IN ATTITUDES TOWARD OLDER PEOPLE WITHIN FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES INFLUENCED THE ROLES THEY PLAY IN SOCIETY.

Older woman, 65-69, northwest Syria

● **Perceived lack of support and isolation among older people influences self-worth**

Narratives of social isolation and a perceived lack of agency resonate significantly among the older people who took part in this research.

The impact of multiple displacements and conflict has instigated not only a restructuring of societal positions but has also impacted the wellbeing of older people who report a profound loss of personal wellbeing and social interconnectedness. Older people, who were once leaders within their communities, now describe experiences of marginalisation.

They also describe difficulties in staying connected to other older people due to communication challenges and displacement.

“I HAVE NOTICED A CHANGE IN MY ATTITUDE TOWARD PEOPLE AROUND ME. I HAVE GROWN TO PREFER SOLITUDE AND AVOID FAMILY BECAUSE I FEEL LIKE A BURDEN TO THEM, AND I DON'T PARTICIPATE IN THEIR LIVES.

Older woman, 75-79, Aleppo

“I HAVE STARTED FEELING LIKE A BURDEN TO MY FAMILY AND INCAPABLE OF HELPING THEM.

Older man, 70-74, Idlib

“I HAVE A SENSE OF LONELINESS, HELPLESSNESS, AND AN INCREASE IN DIFFICULTIES IN MY LIFE. I LACK THE ABILITY TO ASSIST MY FAMILY IN SOME SITUATIONS, LEADING TO FEELINGS OF HELPLESSNESS.

Older woman, 65-69, northwest Syria

“I FACE DIFFICULTIES IN COMMUNICATING WITH THE OLDER PEOPLE IN MY COMMUNITY DUE TO DISPLACEMENT AND TRAVEL.

Older man, 70-74, Idlib

● **Digital access and literacy driving feelings of exclusion**

Technological progress, compounded by the effects of conflict-related issues, has left some older people feeling digitally excluded. Digital exclusion is where a section of the population doesn't have access to the use of digital communications to help them fully participate in society.¹⁸ This has been particularly felt during crises like the earthquake and COVID-19. These challenges are further compounded for those with separated families or who live in rural areas.

“THE YOUNGER GENERATIONS USE COMPLICATED TECHNOLOGY AND OLDER PEOPLE FIND IT HARD TO KEEP UP WITHOUT YOUNGER GENERATIONS TO SUPPORT THEM. IT WAS VERY HARD FOR OLDER PEOPLE TO STAY CONNECTED DURING COVID-19 AND THE EARTHQUAKE WITHOUT YOUNGER GENERATIONS TO SHOW THEM HOW TO STAY CONNECTED.

Older Person in northwest Syria

“LIFE HAS EVOLVED TECHNOLOGICALLY, AND WAR-RELATED PROBLEMS HAVE LED TO OLDER PEOPLE FALLING BEHIND IN KEEPING UP WITH PROGRESS.

Physical Therapist, male, less than 49, Idlib



North-west Syria
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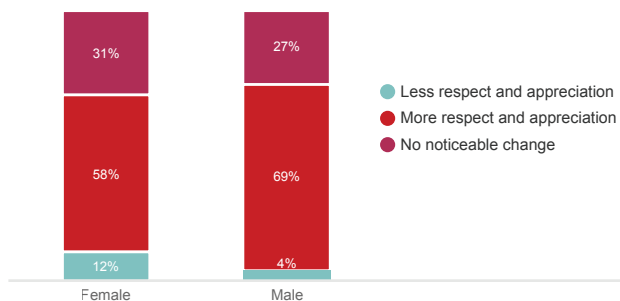


● **Age, gender and disability dynamics over the last 12 years Examining changes in respect within the family**

The breakdown of responses by gender provides an interesting lens to examine perceived changes in attitudes towards older people within the family over the last 12 years. Among women respondents, the majority (58%) perceive more respect and appreciation, which may reflect evolving societal norms leading to increased acknowledgement of the contributions of older women within the family.

For older men, the trend is even more pronounced, with close to 70% reporting an increase in respect and appreciation within their families.

● **Perceptions of attitudinal changes toward older people within their family over the past 13 years**



Whilst there is a higher percentage of older women reporting "more respect and appreciation", older women are also more likely than older men to highlight "less respect and appreciation" suggesting a less positive perception of their roles and status within the family. The comparatively higher percentage of men reporting perceptions of an increase in respect and appreciation is likely influenced by traditional gender roles and cultural expectations that confer a heightened sense of respect and appreciation to men.¹⁹

The data also suggests that older people with disabilities are less likely to perceive a positive shift in family respect towards older people over the past 12 years compared to the perceptions of those without disabilities. Only 39% of older respondents with disabilities perceive "more respect and appreciation". However, considerably more older respondents without a disability, (72%) perceived an increase in respect and appreciation towards older people in the family. This highlights a difference in the perceived familial attitudes to older people in the family, indicating that people with disabilities may face greater challenges in garnering respect within their families.

In addition, 5% of older respondents without a disability perceived 'less respect and appreciation within families compared to older respondents with disabilities'. (11%)

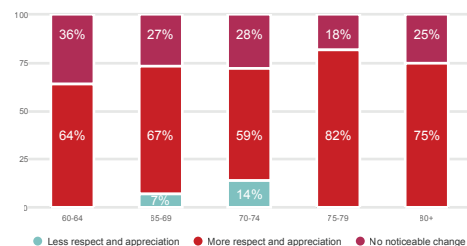
This highlights a potential disparity in the perceived evolution of familial attitudes, indicating that people with disabilities may face greater challenges in garnering respect within their families.

● **Older people's perceptions of changes in attitudes toward older family members over the past 13 years - disability insights**

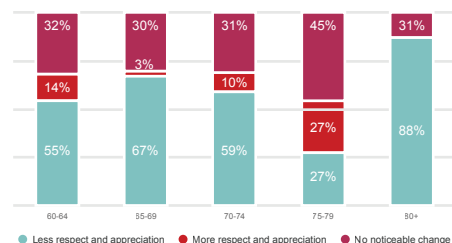


A consistent narrative of a perceived increase in respect and appreciation toward older people in families as people age emerged within the family unit. Particularly in the older age brackets (75-79 and 80+), there is a perception of increased regard. These perceptions collectively suggest a potential improvement in societal attitudes towards the older people within the family as they advance in age, although individual experiences may naturally vary within this broader trend.

● **Older people's perceptions of changes in attitudes toward older family members over the past 13 years - by age**



● **Older people's perceptions of changes in attitudes towards older people within the community over the last 12 years - by age**



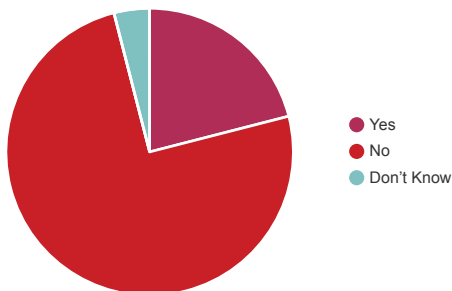
When assessing perceptions within the community, a more striking picture unfolds, particularly when analysing the perceptions on changes in respect and appreciation by different age brackets. Despite the reported increase in respect within the family, older people, especially those among the oldest age group (80+), reported a pronounced sense of diminished respect and appreciation within the broader community.

When assessing perceptions within the community, a more striking picture unfolds, particularly when analysing the perceptions on changes in respect and appreciation by different age brackets. Despite the reported increase in respect within the family, older people, especially those among the oldest age group (80+), reported a pronounced sense of diminished respect and appreciation within the broader community. Specifically, 88% of people in this age category report experiencing less respect, signifying a heightened vulnerability to societal dynamics that may contribute to a decline in perceived regard of individuals due to their age. The focus groups reveal a shared perception of changes in social roles and responsibilities. Both groups mentioned a decline in social gatherings, reduced respect across age groups, and shifts in leadership roles within families.

- **Minimal impacts on the roles and responsibilities of older people after the earthquake in comparison to the sustained impacts of the conflict**

The aftermath of the earthquake, while causing immediate devastation, did not result in a similar sustained shift in roles for older people, with 75% of older people surveyed reporting no change in roles or responsibilities, with 21% reporting shifts.

- **Older people's perceptions on whether roles and responsibilities of older people changed after the earthquake**



This could be due to a number of reasons. The distinct nature of the earthquake, characterised by the sudden and devastating impact rather than prolonged societal upheaval, could have contributed to a quicker return to pre-existing roles. Alternatively, the material nature of the roles described by those who reported a change, such as financial and shelter responsibilities, seems to contrast with previous research indicating that older women, for instance, played a crucial role in the recovery process by imparting resilience, knowledge, and life experiences, making distinctive contributions to community recovery.²⁰ It is plausible that, in the face of the crisis's gravity, older people may not perceive these roles as notably significant.

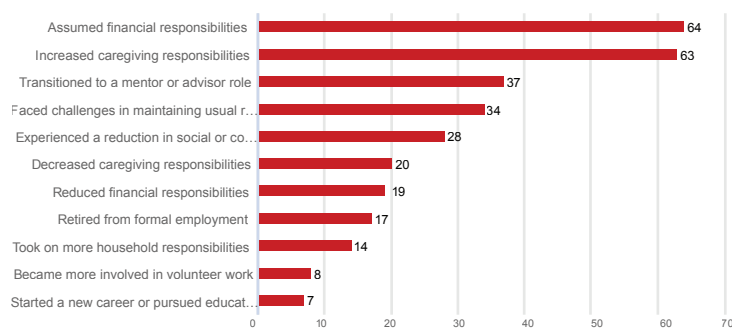




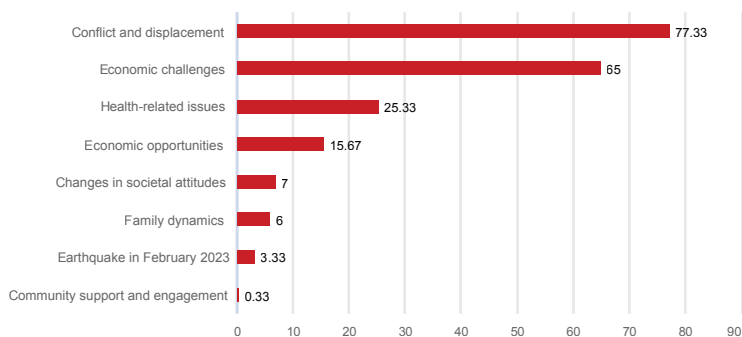
● Changes in specific roles and responsibilities among older people in northwest Syria

When asked about specific changes in roles and responsibilities, 64% older respondents mentioned assuming financial responsibilities, 63% reported increased caregiving responsibilities, and various other adaptations were noted, including transitions to mentorship roles, facing challenges in maintaining usual roles, and reductions in social or community engagement.

● Changes in specific roles and responsibilities among older people in northwest Syria

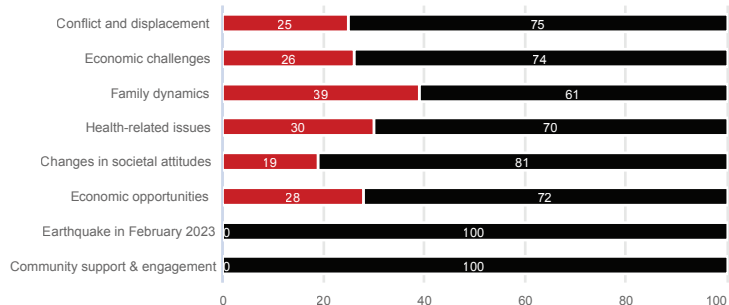


Key contributors to changing roles and responsibilities for older people in northwest Syria over the past 13 years



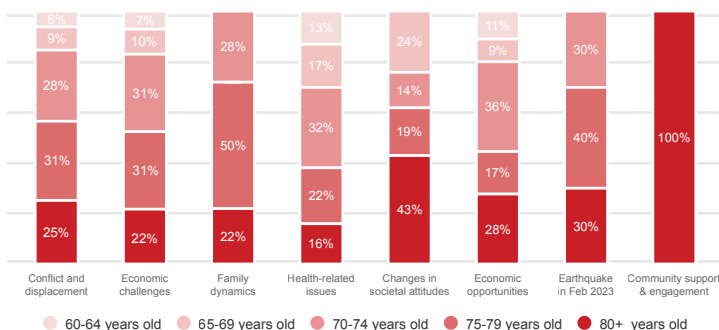
Unsurprisingly, ongoing conflict was identified as the primary driver of the changing roles and responsibilities of older people in northwest Syria, identified by 77% of respondents. Participants who took part in the KIIs reinforced the profound impact conflict is having on societal structures. Economic challenges closely follow at 65%, and health-related issues were identified by 25%. Changes in family dynamics contribute for 6% of respondents, although under further investigation in the KIIs and the FGDs, the impacts in the change in family dynamics were more pronounced, particularly as changes in family dynamics were identified as a driver in increased caregiving responsibilities. Factors like marginalisation due to technological advancements were also identified in the KIIs and FGDs. Changes in societal attitudes towards older people accounted for 7% of responses.

● Examining gendered perspectives on key factors shaping evolving roles and responsibilities among older people in northwest Syria over the past 13 years



The survey data highlights gendered perceptions of influences that shape the roles for older people in northwest Syria. Men, often associated with external leadership roles, were more likely to pinpoint factors like conflict and displacement, changes in community dynamics, and the earthquake as drivers of the changes in roles and responsibilities for older people in northwest Syria. In contrast, women's roles are more linked to internal family dynamics and health related challenges. These patterns suggest that traditional expectations persist for older people in northwest Syria.

● **Exploring age-related perspectives on key contributors to changing roles and responsibilities for older people in northwest Syria over the past 13 years**



● **Economic challenges, undignified work, and exclusion from the workplace**

“OLDER PEOPLE FACE A COMBINATION OF CHALLENGES THAT AFFECT THEIR ROLES. THESE CHALLENGES INCLUDE REPEATED DISPLACEMENT, NO ONE TO CARE FOR THEM, INABILITY TO MEET THEIR BASIC NEEDS, AND LACK OF FINANCIAL MEANS FOR MEDICAL EXPENSES. OLDER PEOPLE FEEL THEY ARE A BURDEN ON SOCIETY.

Older man, 75-79, northwest Syria

Against the backdrop of a deterioration in macroeconomic conditions, driven by the combined issues of currency devaluation, surging living costs, reduced fiscal income, escalating domestic debt, and widespread livelihood losses,²¹ economic concerns feature prominently as a high priority for both older men and women.

Older people, who may have previously relied on their families or on retirement funds, describe increasingly finding themselves needing to be financially independent and cover their own basic needs, more often returning to work. There is also a perception that older people are less likely to have access to economic opportunities. Evidence of this in northwest Syria is outside the scope of this study, but older people more broadly face challenges in finding new job opportunities compared to those in mid-life.²²

“CULTURALLY, IT IS A FAMILY’S RESPONSIBILITY TO TAKE CARE OF THEIR OLDER RELATIVES AT RETIREMENT AGE. THIS HAS CHANGED SOMEWHAT DUE TO THE CONFLICT, WITH MORE AND MORE OLDER PEOPLE NEEDING TO BE SELF-RELIANT OR BEING PLACED IN RETIREMENT HOMES.

Case Manager for a retirement home, man, 58, Aleppo

“IN THE PAST, OLDER PEOPLE WOULD RELY ON PRIVATE RETIREMENT PENSIONS OR THEIR FAMILIES; NOW THEY FIND THEMSELVES UNABLE TO COVER THEIR BASIC COSTS AND MAY FIND THEMSELVES RETURNING TO WORK.

Director of a retirement home for older people, man, 55, northwest Syria

Study participants described experiencing a decreased ability to cover these basic needs due to rising costs, which has impacted their role in society.

“THE CONFLICT HAS NEGATIVELY IMPACTED MY LIVING SITUATION DUE TO THE EVER-RISING COST OF LIVING AND MY LOW INCOME. BASIC NEEDS ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY EXPENSIVE.

Older man, 60-64, Idleb

This, coupled with exclusion from the workplace and from accessing economic opportunities, compounds the issues for older people. Participants capture this sentiment, stating,

“LACK OF JOB OPPORTUNITIES IS PREVALENT; WE HAVE NO ROLE IN SOCIETY.

Older woman, 75-79, Idleb

“I AM SADDENED BY THE HALTING OF MY PROFESSIONAL LIFE AND FEEL A SENSE OF DEPRESSION DUE TO THE CANCELLATION OF MY ROLE. I USED TO BE THE PROVIDER FOR MY FAMILY, BUT DUE TO MY OLD AGE AND THE TRAVEL OF MOST OF MY CHILDREN, I AM NO LONGER ABLE TO WORK OR SECURE SOME NECESSITIES FOR MYSELF.

Older woman, 65-69, Idleb

“I AM NOW FACING DIFFICULTY IN SECURING DAILY NECESSITIES DUE TO HIGH PRICES, AND HIGH PRICES HAVE LED TO WEAK SALES, WHICH HAS LED TO A WEAKNESS IN MY INCOME, EVEN THOUGH I HAVE A STALL.

Older man, 65-69, Aleppo



North-west Syria
© Action For Humanity

“THE COMMUNITY’S PERCEPTION OF OLDER PEOPLE HAS CHANGED; JOB APPLICATIONS FOR OLDER PEOPLE ARE NOT ACCEPTED, AND THERE ARE NO OPPORTUNITIES FOR THEM.

Volunteer for a Women’s Right Organisation (WRO), woman, 60-64, northwest Syria

There were also instances where older people, who once held employment, were reported to have been replaced by younger colleagues, even after actively contributing to the training of these successors.

“THERE IS A PREFERENCE AMONG EMPLOYERS TO HIRE YOUNGER PEOPLE BECAUSE OF THE STIGMA AROUND ABILITY (BOTH PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY). I HAVE SEEN INSTANCES WHERE AN OLDER PERSON IN THE WORKPLACE IS ASKED TO TRAIN NEW HIRES AND IS THEN REPLACED BY THE YOUNGER COLLEAGUE. OLDER PEOPLE ARE WARY OF THIS PRACTICE NOW.

Leader of a Women’s Rights Organisation, woman, 50-55, Idleb

The scarcity of suitable employment opportunities for older people contributes to their marginalisation, impacting their mental health, as well as their perceived and actual ability to contribute actively to society.

The absence of meaningful roles leads to a diminished sense of purpose. Older people describe a shift from active participation in the workforce to a role centred around providing guidance rather than actively contributing to economic activities.

“THERE IS NO USEFUL ROLE EXCEPT OFFERING ADVICE TO MY GRANDCHILDREN TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO WORK.

Older woman, 80+, northwest Syria

“THE ECONOMIC STRUGGLES NOT ONLY IMPACT THEIR FINANCIAL STABILITY BUT ALSO CONTRIBUTE TO A DECLINE IN MENTAL HEALTH.

Director of a retirement home for older people, man, 55-59, northwest Syria

“THE IMPERATIVE TO SECURE EMPLOYMENT SOMETIMES RESULTS IN UNSUITABLE OR UNDIGNIFIED WORK CONDITIONS FOR OLDER INDIVIDUALS.

CURRENTLY, OLDER INDIVIDUALS ARE SEEKING EMPLOYMENT TO PROVIDE COMPLETE CARE FOR THEIR FAMILIES, AND THIS CAN BE HARMFUL TO THEM IN TERMS OF UNSUITABLE WORK FOR THEIR HEALTH CONDITIONS OR THE ADVANCEMENT OF AGE.

Older woman, 75-79, northwest Syria

It was identified by older women in this study that older men tend to have better access to economic opportunities in northwest Syria, which can be attributed to societal norms and traditional gender roles, where men are more likely to be viewed as primary breadwinners. As a result, in situations where economic opportunities are limited, it is perceived that older men tend to be prioritised for employment and income-generating activities, leaving older women with less access to stable and dignified work options. The increasing participation of younger women in the workforce as a result of economic challenges driven by the conflict and the earthquake, has further intensified competition and challenges in the job market for older women.

“BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN, MEN ARE SEEN AS BETTER WORKERS, AND ARE MORE LIKELY TO GET JOBS. OLDER WOMEN IN NORTHWEST SYRIA HAVE FOUND THEMSELVES WORKING IN AGRICULTURE, WHERE THEY WOULDN'T HAVE TRADITIONALLY WORKED. IT IS HARD WORK.

Older woman, 60-64, northwest Syria

“BECAUSE OF THE ECONOMIC SITUATION, I'VE NOTICED A CHANGE IN THE JOB MARKET. MORE WOMEN, PARTICULARLY YOUNGER ONES, ARE ACTIVELY SEEKING EMPLOYMENT DUE TO THE ECONOMIC INSTABILITY IN THE REGION. OLDER WOMEN, LIKE ME, ARE LESS LIKELY TO FIND JOBS.

Badiaa Rmmo, 61, northwest Syria



Badiaa Rmmo, 61, from Jindires, Syria © HelpAge



Badiaa Rmmo, 61, from Jindires, Syria © HelpAge

● **Negative coping mechanisms as a result of economic pressures**

The economic challenges in northwest Syria have resulted in some older people resorting to negative coping mechanisms to support themselves, their families and their dependents. These might include engaging in undignified work or selling off assets.

“THE LACK OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES HAS PUSHED OLDER PEOPLE INTO UNDIGNIFIED WORK, UNDERMINING THEIR WELL-BEING AND EXACERBATING EXISTING CHALLENGES.

Older woman, 60-64, northwest Syria

“IN THE PAST, OLDER PEOPLE USED TO RECEIVE CARE FROM THEIR FAMILIES. CURRENTLY, OLDER PEOPLE ARE SEEKING EMPLOYMENT TO PROVIDE COMPLETE CARE FOR THEMSELVES OR THEIR FAMILIES, AND THIS CAN BE HARMFUL TO THEM IN TERMS OF UNSUITABLE WORK FOR THEIR HEALTH CONDITIONS OR THE ADVANCEMENT OF AGE.

NGO programme manager, man, under 49, northwest Syria

LIFE CHALLENGES HAVE COMPELLED OLDER PEOPLE TO ADAPT TO ALL CONDITIONS. PRE-CONFLICT, THEY MAY HAVE BEEN ABLE TO RETIRE, BUT NOW THEY ARE WORKING TO FIND SOURCES OF INCOME TO START ANEW AFTER DISPLACEMENT.

Member of the senior committee, man, 50-54, Aleppo

SOME OLDER PEOPLE WHO HAVE TAKEN ON NEW CAREGIVING RESPONSIBILITIES HAVE TO WORK ON PROTECTING THE CHILDREN AND SECURING THEIR LIVELIHOOD AND EDUCATION BY SEEKING EMPLOYMENT AND STRIVING TO MEET THE CHILDREN'S NEEDS.

Protection manager, woman, 49, northwest Syria

SINCE THE DEATH OF MY SON DUE TO THE CONFLICT, I NOW SUPPORT MY DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AND MY SON'S FAMILY FINANCIALLY.

Older man, 65-69, northwest Syria

“OLDER PEOPLE NOW ENGAGE IN AGRICULTURE OR ANY PROFESSION THAT HELPS THEM MAKE A LIVING. THERE ARE NEGATIVE COPING METHODS SUCH AS BEGGING.

Director of a retirement home for older people, man, 55-59, northwest Syria

“THERE HAS BEEN AN INCREASE IN OLDER PEOPLE SELLING THINGS ON THE STREETS AND COLLECTING TRASH.

Volunteer for a Women's Right Organisation (WRO), woman, 60-64, northwest Syria

“OVER THE COURSE OF TWELVE YEARS, THE ECONOMIC SITUATION FOR OLDER PEOPLE HAS WORSENERED AND TO SUPPORT THEMSELVES THEY HAVE HAD TO SELL THEIR PROPERTIES. THEY THEN HAVE TO PAY RENTS TO LIVE, AND RENTS ARE SUSCEPTIBLE TO THE VOLATILE MARKETS.

Case manager in a retirement home, woman, 50-54, Idleb

“SINCE I MOVED TO LIVE IN MY SON'S HOUSE, I HAVE BEEN SPARING WITH MY REQUIREMENTS SO AS NOT TO BE A BURDEN ON MY SON.

Older woman, 80, northwest Syria



● **Increased caregiving responsibilities and shifts in family dynamics**

Participants interviewed in this study highlighted that norms around caregiving responsibilities within families and communities have shifted since the beginning of conflict 13 years ago. Prior to the conflict, older people were more likely to hold the pivotal position of managing the family and making decisions. However, amidst the onset of conflict, their roles shifted towards caregiving and older people became less likely to receive care. This shift, from central figures in decision-making to more marginalised contributors, signifies a transition in their roles.

“BEFORE THE WAR, OLDER PEOPLE WERE DECISION MAKERS IN THE FAMILY. THEY MANAGED THE FAMILY COMPLETELY. SINCE THE ESCALATION OF CONFLICT, THEY TURNED INTO FAMILY CAREGIVERS, AND AT THE SAME TIME, THEIR ROLE WAS MARGINALISED AND NOT ACTIVELY ENGAGED.

Older man, 75-79, northwest Syria

Survey respondents identified an upsurge in caregiving responsibilities as the second most prominent shift in roles in northwest Syria, accounting for 63% of responses. Participants described multiple responsibilities, including caring for their children or orphaned children, other older people, and people with disabilities, as well as managing household chores. These tasks are often unrecognised but contribute to the functioning of communities and economies.²³

“I AM CHALLENGED BY THE DIFFICULTY OF ADAPTING TO THE LIVING SITUATION DUE TO THE CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES AND THE LOSS OF MY SON, WHICH HAVE LEFT ME RESPONSIBLE FOR TAKING CARE OF MY GRANDCHILDREN AND PROVIDING THEIR NECESSITIES.

Older man, 65-69, northwest Syria

The dispersion of families to different locations, both in and outside northwest Syria, has meant that older people find themselves solely responsible for their own well-being. Some older people describe struggling to care for themselves and their peers, as well as challenging living conditions.

“I AM CONCERNED BY MY INABILITY TO CONTINUE PERFORMING MY DAILY TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARDS MY FAMILY.

Older man, 65-69, northwest Syria

“IN THE PAST, OLDER PEOPLE WOULD RELY ON PRIVATE RETIREMENT PENSIONS OR THEIR FAMILIES; NOW THEY FIND THEMSELVES UNABLE TO COVER THEIR BASIC COSTS AND MAY FIND THEMSELVES RETURNING TO WORK.

Director of a retirement home for older people, man, 55, northwest Syria

Study participants described experiencing a decreased ability to cover these basic needs due to rising costs, which has impacted their role in society.

“THE CONFLICT HAS NEGATIVELY IMPACTED MY LIVING SITUATION DUE TO THE EVER-RISING COST OF LIVING AND MY LOW INCOME. BASIC NEEDS ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY EXPENSIVE.

Older man, 60-64, Idleb

“LACK OF JOB OPPORTUNITIES IS PREVALENT; WE HAVE NO ROLE IN SOCIETY.

Older woman, 75-79, Idleb

This, coupled with exclusion from the workplace and from accessing economic opportunities, compounds the issues for older people. Participants capture this sentiment, stating,

“I AM SADDENED BY THE HALTING OF MY PROFESSIONAL LIFE AND FEEL A SENSE OF DEPRESSION DUE TO THE CANCELLATION OF MY ROLE. I USED TO BE THE PROVIDER FOR MY FAMILY, BUT DUE TO MY OLD AGE AND THE TRAVEL OF MOST OF MY CHILDREN, I AM NO LONGER ABLE TO WORK OR SECURE SOME NECESSITIES FOR MYSELF.

Older woman, 65-69, Idleb

“I AM NOW FACING DIFFICULTY IN SECURING DAILY NECESSITIES DUE TO HIGH PRICES, AND HIGH PRICES HAVE LED TO WEAK SALES, WHICH HAS LED TO A WEAKNESS IN MY INCOME, EVEN THOUGH I HAVE A STALL.

Older man, 65-69, Aleppo

“I AM NO LONGER ABLE TO CARE FOR MY MOTHER DUE TO MY OLD AGE AND SOMETIMES BEING UNABLE TO SUPPORT MYSELF.

Older man, 60-64, northwest Syria

“IT IS QUITE COMMON FOR OLDER PEOPLE’S CHILDREN TO BE LOCATED IN DIFFERENT PLACES, WHICH MEANS THEY ARE NOW NOT ABLE TO CARE FOR THEIR PARENTS WHERE THEY WOULD HAVE PREVIOUSLY. THOUGH THERE ARE SOME INSTANCES WHERE THEIR CHILDREN ARE BETTER ABLE TO SUPPORT THEM FINANCIALLY, FOR EXAMPLE IF THEY HAVE MIGRATED TO WORK ELSEWHERE, THAT MEANS THE OLDER PEOPLE ARE LEFT TO CARE FOR THEMSELVES.

NGO programme manager, under 49, Northwest Syria

Additionally, some older people have taken on the responsibility of caring for family members who have remained in northwest Syria. The region faces challenges due to the absence of comprehensive institutionalised child protection mechanisms and the breakdown of social support structures.²⁴ The study shows that the persistent issue of separation from caregivers has led to the emergence of older people taking on caring responsibilities, referred to as ‘kinship care’.²⁵ Older people interviewed for this study describe the sense of responsibility they feel as a key driver for this increase in caregiving responsibilities.

“I FEEL A RESPONSIBILITY TO CARE FOR MY EXTENDED FAMILY, MAINTAIN THEIR SAFETY, AND SECURE A DIGNIFIED LIFE FOR THEM AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE.

Older woman, 65-69, northwest Syria

Many participants in the study also mentioned that older people have assumed responsibility for the increased number of orphaned young people as a result of the ongoing conflict and extensive displacement. One interviewee described how orphaned children are taken in, and alongside relatives are considered ‘new families’, hence increasing the caregiving load taken on by older people. The arrangements are informal and minimal support is provided to them, often placing additional burdens on older carers.

“THE INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF ORPHANS DUE TO THE CONFLICT HAS LED TO A DECREASE IN ATTENTION TO THEM, ALONG WITH AN ECONOMIC DECLINE. OTHERS HAVE HAD TO CARE FOR THEM, INCLUDING OLDER PEOPLE LIKE US.

Older woman, 60-64, northwest Syria

“AS I HAVE ORPHANED GRANDCHILDREN FROM MY DECEASED SON, I PROVIDE THEIR BASIC NEEDS BUT RELY A LOT ON NGOS AND ORGANISATIONS TO COVER THE COSTS.

Older man, 65-69, northwest Syria

Older people sometimes also seek work to support these dependents, and face challenges in balancing simultaneous roles of work and caregiving. The previously mentioned economic challenges that older people face, as well as exclusion from some economic opportunities, further adds to the pressures older people face as they strive to provide for themselves and their dependents.

“I TRY AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE TO CARE FOR THE PEOPLE IN MY COMMUNITY, NEIGHBOURS, AND RELATIVES, AND ALSO ORPHANED CHILDREN.

Older man, 60-64, northwest Syria

“OLDER PEOPLE TAKE CARE OF AND SUPPORT UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND ORPHANS.

Physical therapist, male, under 49, Idleb

“OLDER PEOPLE CARE FOR ORPHANED CHILDREN AND PROVIDE NEEDS AT TIMES. SOME OLDER PEOPLE ACTIVELY SEEK OUT HOMELESS CHILDREN AND WIDOWS, OFFERING SUPPORT FOR THESE CASES.

Resident doctor at a care home, woman, under 49, northwest Syria

“SOME OLDER PEOPLE HAVE BECOME FULLY RESPONSIBLE FOR OTHER OLDER PEOPLE DUE TO THE FAMILY SEPARATIONS.

Director of NGO providing support for older people, under 49, northwest Syria

“OLDER PEOPLE CONTRIBUTE BY HELPING AND CARING FOR EACH OTHER.

Lawyer, woman, under 49, northwest Syria

“OLDER PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY DISREGARD THEIR OWN NEEDS TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THEIR GRANDCHILDREN OR NEW FAMILIES. THEY FACE CHALLENGES IN HANDLING THESE RESPONSIBILITIES, ESPECIALLY WHEN THEY ARE WORKING AND SIMULTANEOUSLY CARING FOR CHILDREN.

NGO programme manager, man, under 49, northwest Syria

There are some examples where older people provide mutual support to each other in their caregiving roles. As well as familial collaboration in caregiving, older people have created support networks to balance the pressures of providing care.

“SIBLINGS COLLABORATE TO SUPPORT THEIR OLDER SIBLINGS.

Senior committee leader, 60-64, Aleppo Azaz

“OLDER PEOPLE WITH CAREGIVING RESPONSIBILITIES THAT ALSO BALANCE OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES LIKE WORK OR REGULAR MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS SOMETIMES SUPPORT EACH OTHER WITH CAREGIVING RESPONSIBILITIES.

Volunteer for a Women’s Right Organisation (WRO), woman, 60-64, northwest Syria

● **Shifting gender dynamics in caregiving responsibilities among older people in northwest Syria**

“DUE TO THE CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES AND THE LOSS OF MY SON, I AM NOW RESPONSIBLE FOR TAKING CARE OF MY GRANDCHILDREN AND PROVIDING THEIR NECESSITIES. I AM AN OLDER PERSON AND AM STRUGGLING WITH THIS.

Older man, 65-69, northwest Syria

Participants highlighted the norm where additional caregiving responsibilities typically fall on women, aligning with existing literature highlighting the unequal burden of unpaid care work rooted in enduring societal norms and traditional gender roles.²⁶ However, cases of older men taking on caregiving responsibilities are becoming much more common, for example one older man in northwest Syria cares for himself and his eight grandchildren, challenging conventional gender expectations in the realm of caregiving.

“OLDER MEN ARE TYPICALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVISIONS OF SHELTER AND BASIC NEEDS, SUCH AS FINANCIAL SUPPORT, FOR EXAMPLE, WHILE OLDER WOMEN ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR RAISING CHILDREN AT HOME.

Older man, 65-69, Aleppo

“PRIOR TO THE CONFLICT, MEN WERE MORE LIKELY TO HAVE GREATER RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROVIDING THE NECESSITIES OF LIVING, WHILE WOMEN WOULD TAKE CARE OF AND RAISE THE CHILDREN, BUT NOW I CARRY OUT BOTH TASKS.

Older man, 60-64, northwest Syria

“ONE OLDER MAN IN THE COMMUNITY IS RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS EIGHT GRANDCHILDREN, TWO OF WHOM HAVE A CHRONIC ILLNESS. HE ALSO HAS A CHRONIC ILLNESS.

Case manager at a retirement home, woman, 50-54, Idlib



● **Food insecurity driving role changes, particularly for women**

Older people, particularly older women, also face serious concerns regarding food insecurity. Syria's designation as a red zone on the World Food Programme's (WFP) Hunger Map indicates the highest category of insufficient food consumption.²⁷

Limited access to food in northwest Syria significantly impacts everyone, but impacts women differently, as it alters their traditional roles and community perceptions. Women, often primary caregivers, face heightened challenges in sustaining family well-being. The scarcity of food can lead to shifts in social dynamics, potential economic hurdles, and added caregiving responsibilities. This exacerbates existing vulnerabilities, impacting women's pivotal roles in family and community structures, further emphasising the profound repercussions of food insecurity on their lives.

“FOOD INSECURITY IS BEGINNING TO IMPACT US MORE. TRADITIONALLY, IT WOULD BE THE ROLE OF WOMEN TO PROVIDE FOOD, BUT NOWADAYS, IT'S HITTING EVERYONE, INCLUDING OLDER MEN WHO TAKE ON CAREGIVING RESPONSIBILITIES. THE STRUGGLE FOR FOOD GOES BEYOND TRADITIONAL ROLES; IT'S ABOUT PROVIDING AND CARING FOR OUR FAMILIES IN THE FACE OF SCARCITY AND RISING PRICES. IT'S A CHALLENGE THAT TOUCHES EVERY ASPECT OF OUR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

Older man, 70-75, Aleppo

● **Optimising humanitarian response mechanisms to foster older people's self-reliance, roles and responsibilities**

Older people described how they and some of their peers felt frustration with the nature and delivery of humanitarian assistance and services, particularly during the earthquake response, highlighting that the traditional model of humanitarian response, while still critical, is no longer sufficient to address the longer-term challenges faced by communities living in northwest Syria. The reactive nature of humanitarian response in crises limits their ability to expand their roles. Crucially, they also noted the importance of prioritising a shift away from humanitarian assistance towards projects that foster longer-term self-reliance, towards what could be considered as early recovery approaches.²⁸

Participants mentioned that lack of adequate shelter, health, water and sanitation facilities limits their ability to fulfil their roles in their families and their communities.

This speaks to the limited progress by the humanitarian response in northwest Syria in addressing early recovery, which instead focuses predominantly on immediate humanitarian needs. On shelter in particular, the compliance, political, and due diligence challenges faced by NGOs when trying to implement early recovery programs in Syria, particularly in northwest Syria, and also the reluctance from donors to allocate funds for extended shelter construction, diverting resources towards tent replacements, and prolongs the length IDPs spend in inadequate shelter.²⁹

“AFTER ALMOST THIRTEEN YEARS, WE ARE STILL TALKING ABOUT TENTS AND FOOD VOUCHERS. THESE ARE VERY IMPORTANT, BUT WHAT WE REALLY NEED IS ACCESS TO THE TOOLS TO BUILD A DIGNIFIED LIFE FOR OURSELVES, LIKE WE USED TO HAVE.

Older woman, 60-65, Idlib

“MANY OLDER PEOPLE IN NORTHWEST SYRIA ARE STILL LIVING IN TENTS WITH NO HEALTHCARE OR ADEQUATE WATER FACILITIES. THIS LIMITS THEIR PROGRESS AND LIMITS THEIR ROLES. WHILE PEOPLE LIVE IN TENTS, THEY ARE UNABLE TO BE FULLY SELF-RELIANT.

Older man, 80, Aleppo

“FOR THIRTEEN YEARS PEOPLE, INCLUDING OLDER PEOPLE, IN NES, SYRIA HAVE RELIED ON “AID”.

HUMANITARIAN AGENCIES NEED TO ADAPT THE SYSTEM TO ALLOW US TO BE SELF-RELIANT AND SUPPORT OURSELVES. PEOPLE IN NORTHWEST SYRIA HAVE THE RIGHT TO LIVE WITH DIGNITY.

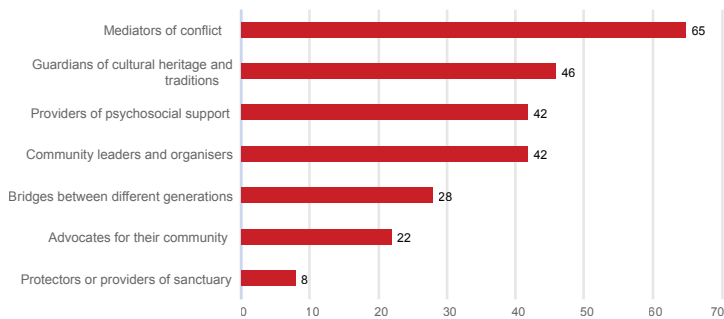
CSO leader, woman, 55-59, Northwest Syria

INSTANCES OF OLDER PEOPLE'S TAKING ON LEADERSHIP ROLES

● Emergence of older people as community leaders

In the midst of challenges, older people in northwest Syria emerge as pillars of self-reliance and community support, demonstrating multiple examples of taking on leadership roles. In exploring how older people perceive their roles within communities, the survey findings show interesting insights. 65% see older people's most effective role as crucial conflict mediators, highlighting their role in fostering community harmony. Additionally, 46% identify their strength as cultural guardians, preserving and transmitting community identity. Moreover, they view themselves as community leaders (42%), advocates (22%), and protectors (8%). The survey also highlights their perceived strengths in providing psychosocial support (42%) and serving as bridges between generations (28%).

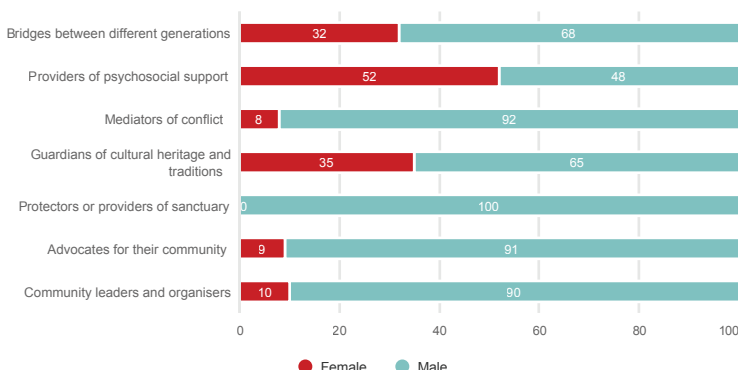
● Older people's perceptions of their roles and responsibilities in the community



● Gendered community roles

Examining gendered community roles among older people in northwest Syria reveals distinct patterns that demonstrate both traditional and evolving roles for women. While older men predominantly hold leadership and advocacy positions, a closer look at older women's roles sheds light on their contributions, influenced by cultural, historical, and societal factors.

● Older people's perceptions of their roles and responsibilities in the community, by gender



The data reveals that older men in northwest Syria predominantly perceive themselves to be more likely to assume roles associated with leadership, advocacy, conflict mediation, and protectors or providers of sanctuary (100%). This demonstrates that within the community there remains traditional expectations of men as decision-makers, conflict resolution facilitators, and designated as exclusive protectors. Older women perceive themselves to hold roles like guardians of cultural heritage, providers of psychosocial support, and bridges between generations. In the women-centred FGDs, it became evident that across various Syrian communities, older women have assumed a pivotal role as trustworthy insiders, actively facilitating discussions and negotiations, which reflects broader shifts in the roles of women during the conflict in Syria.³⁰

This role extends to bridging gaps between different age groups. The 32% representation of women as bridges between generations is indicative of a cultural shift where older women actively engage in fostering communication and understanding among diverse age groups. In times of societal upheaval, older women serve as sources of knowledge, displaying understanding that transcends generational divides and their roles extend beyond familial realms, influencing community dialogue and understanding.³¹

This shift reflects the transformative role women play in reshaping cultural norms and fostering unity amid challenging circumstances.

“ OLDER PEOPLE ENGAGE IN BUILDING BRIDGES TO CONNECT DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS

Older man, 70-74, northwest Syria



● Family and community conflict resolution

The leadership extends to mediating family and community conflicts, resolving disputes, preserving culture and heritage and advocating for new services. Older people actively address social problems and conflicts within their communities, playing a vital role in resolving disputes, including among different age groups. Older people were recognised by community members for their 'wisdom and guidance' (older person, northwest Syria), which become valuable assets in navigating complex societal issues, particularly during the earthquake response. By fostering open dialogues and promoting understanding, they contribute significantly to social cohesion, bridging gaps that may arise during challenging times. Notably, they coordinated with authorities to renovate a damaged school, showcasing a commitment to community welfare by securing operational expenses.

Despite their active contributions, societal norms and stereotypes may hinder the full recognition of the value older people bring to various aspects of community life.

“THERE IS POSITIVE INTERVENTION FROM SOME OLDER PEOPLE IN RESOLVING FAMILY CONFLICTS, OFFERING ADVICE, AND PROVIDING PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT.

Older man, 75-79, northwest Syria

“OUR ROLE IN THE COMMUNITY IS TO UNIFY PEOPLE'S EFFORTS, INCREASE SOCIAL COHESION THROUGH CULTURAL AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES, SEMINARS, AND MEETINGS, AIMING TO BRING THE COMMUNITY CLOSER TOGETHER.

Member of the senior committee, man, 50-54, Aleppo

“OLDER PEOPLE TOOK ON A KEY ROLE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE CONFLICT DUE TO THE ABSENCE OF A GOVERNMENTAL ROLE. THEY ASSUMED RESPONSIBILITY FOR RESOLVING DISPUTES, PRESERVING HERITAGE SITES AND CULTURAL PLACES, AND ACTIVELY BUILDING BRIDGES FOR COMMUNICATION ACROSS DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS.

Care home worker, woman, 50-54, Idleb

“OLDER PEOPLE HAVE LIVED A LONG LIFE, AND THIS LIFE EXPERIENCE HAS CONTRIBUTED TO SUPPORTING FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES, ESPECIALLY DURING TIMES WHEN ESSENTIAL RESOURCES FOR LIFE ARE SCARCE.

Director of NGO providing support for older people, under 49, northwest Syria

● Community leaders and organisers

In northwest Syria, older people have proactively formed 'senior committees' to address the region's prevalent challenges such as displacement, security instability, and increasing cases of neglect of older people. These committees, serving as a vital bridge of communication between the older community and broader community leadership, play a multifaceted role. Initially designed to facilitate voluntary work, experience transfer, and communication with community leadership, these committees have evolved to meet the changing needs of the community. The senior committees have formal structures with defined roles and responsibilities, and they convene bi-weekly meetings, fostering regular communication and collaboration to address the evolving needs of older people. These committees also actively engage in partnerships with NGOs and collaborate with various organisations, reflecting a concerted effort to enhance the effectiveness of their initiatives through external support and shared resources.

More recently, these committees have played a crucial role in responding to the challenges posed by the protracted conflict and the recent earthquake. They have initiated targeted initiatives to support families affected by these crises, showcasing a commitment to community welfare.



“THE COMMITTEES FOR OLDER PEOPLE IN NORTHWEST SYRIA OPERATE TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES ARISING FROM DISPLACEMENT, REGIONAL SECURITY INSTABILITY, AND THE INCREASING INCIDENTS OF NEGLECT OF OLDER PEOPLE BY THEIR FAMILIES. THE COMMITTEE UNITES OLDER PEOPLE WITH A PASSION FOR WORKING IN THE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE MORE BROADLY, LEVERAGES THEIR CAPABILITIES, AND SUPPORTS OLDER PEOPLE. ON A DAY-TO-DAY BASIS, WE PROVIDE CARE AND FOLLOW-UP FOR OLDER PEOPLE FOR THINGS LIKE HEALTH CONDITIONS AND LIVELIHOOD SUPPORT, AS WELL AS PROVIDING FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AND SPONSORSHIP FOR OLDER PEOPLE. WE PARTICULARLY DO THIS FOR OLDER PEOPLE WHO PROVIDE CARE FOR CHILDREN.

Senior committee leader, man, 60-64, Aleppo

“WITHIN THE SENIOR COMMITTEE, WE HAVE DESIGNATED ROLES LIKE ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF, MANAGER, CARE COORDINATOR, OBSERVATION OFFICER, AND FIELD TEAMS ETC. WE MEET EVERY FIFTEEN DAYS, AND WE COORDINATE WITH NGOS AND PROVIDE REFERRALS.

Older man, 60-64, northwest Syria

“OLDER PEOPLE IN MY VILLAGE HAVE FORMED JOINT INTERVENTIONS TO RESOLVE COMMUNITY CONFLICTS, OFFER ADVICE AND PROVIDE PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT.

Older man, 60-64, northwest Syria

“SOME OLDER PEOPLE HAVE FORMED COMMITTEES. THE ROLE OF THESE COMMITTEES IS TO FACILITATE OLDER PEOPLE TO DO VOLUNTARY WORK, EXPERIENCE TRANSFER, COMMUNICATION WITH COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP, AND PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR OTHER OLDER PEOPLE. PROFESSIONAL TRAINING IS PROVIDED EXCLUSIVELY FOR OLDER PEOPLE, INCLUDING ONLINE LITERACY COURSES.

Humanitarian advisor, woman, under 49, northwest Syria

“SOME OLDER PEOPLE WORKED ON COORDINATING AND COLLABORATING TO FORM COMMITTEES TO CARE FOR OTHER OLDER PEOPLE, ADVOCATING FOR AND SUPPORTING THIS GROUP. NEW COMMITMENTS AND CHALLENGES HAVE IMPOSED NEW CONDITIONS, REQUIRING THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT AND PERFORMING THEIR TASKS.

Lawyer, woman, under 49, northwest Syria

“SOME OLDER PEOPLE COORDINATE FREQUENT COMMITTEE MEETINGS. CERTAIN ADDITIONS WORK TO SOLVE COMMUNITY PROBLEMS AND ARE FULLY COORDINATED BY OLDER PEOPLE.

Resident doctor at a care home, woman, under 49, northwest Syria

A testament to the impact of these committees comes from a member of the senior committee, highlighting their significant contribution to the community's response efforts. These initiatives demonstrate the self-reliance and adaptability of older people in northwest Syria, as they actively shape their roles and contributions to better serve their community.

“THE COMMITTEE PLAYED A CRUCIAL ROLE IN THE EARTHQUAKE RESPONSE, FORMING MEDICAL TEAMS, PROVIDING LOGISTICAL SUPPORT, HIRING AND MANAGING YOUNG PROFESSIONALS. EFFORTS ALSO INVOLVED SECURING SHELTER FOR SOME FAMILIES, COORDINATING BETWEEN ORGANISATIONS AND BENEFICIARIES, PROVIDING MEDICAL AND FOOD ASSISTANCE, AND ENSURING TENTS WITHIN AVAILABLE RESOURCES. LIFE CHALLENGES HAVE COMPELLED OLDER PEOPLE TO ADAPT TO ALL CONDITIONS.

Member of the senior committee, man, 50-54, Aleppo





● Peer support for well-being

Amidst displacement, older people proactively foster important peer support mechanisms or links for psychosocial support and well-being. Initiatives include organising social gatherings to provide mutual support and creating spaces for shared experiences during displacement, including organising art exhibitions. Also older women in care homes have taken the lead in organising community-building activities, contributing to a supportive and cohesive environment. These activities not only provide a sense of shared identity but also serve as a platform for fostering understanding and social cohesion.

In other acts of community support, older community members who receive financial assistance from relatives residing abroad collaboratively contribute their resources, forming a collective financial effort to support other older people. This finding illustrates the community's proactive engagement in addressing the needs of older people.

“OLDER PEOPLE ORGANISED ART EXHIBITIONS TO SHARE THEIR COMMON INTERESTS. IT CREATED A SOCIAL ACTIVITY FOR THEM.

Care home manager, 60-64, Idlib

“THE CARE HOME FOR OLDER WOMEN ORGANISES A VARIETY OF ACTIVITIES LED BY OLDER WOMEN THEMSELVES AND PROVIDES SERVICES FOR THE HOME ITSELF (RESIDENTS) OR FOR THE COMMUNITY.

Care home manager, 55-59, Aleppo

“OLDER PEOPLE PROVIDE TRAINING IN PHYSICAL THERAPY AND SOME VOCATIONAL COURSES THAT CAN HELP INTEGRATE THEM INTO SOCIETY.

Lawyer, woman, under 49, northwest Syria



● Coordination efforts in crises

Other older people displayed remarkable coordination efforts during earthquakes, actively involving themselves in relief efforts. Some older people took personal initiatives, offering primary support for families, including family reunification and securing basic needs. It was recognised that older people have knowledge, particularly of responding to crises, that are invaluable for future crises.

“MY ROLE DURING THE EARTHQUAKE WAS TO COORDINATE THE DISPLACED PEOPLE AFFECTED BY THE EARTHQUAKE TO RELOCATE TO SOME HOUSES DESIGNATED FOR SURVIVORS.

Older man, 70-74, northwest Syria

“IN MANY OF THESE CASES, OLDER PEOPLE HAVE BEEN ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN RESPONDING TO AND SUPPORTING RELIEF EFFORTS, COVERING VARIOUS ASPECTS, INCLUDING FIRST AID, RESCUE OPERATIONS, AND ADVOCACY.

Humanitarian advisor, woman, under 49, northwest Syria

“OLDER PEOPLE POSSESS VALUABLE LIFE EXPERIENCES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO CRISIS RESPONSE, SUCH AS THE ABILITY TO STORE RESOURCES FOR CHALLENGING TIMES AND FINDING ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS IN TIMES OF CRISIS.

Volunteer for a Women's Right Organisation (WRO), woman, 60-64, northwest Syria

“OLDER PEOPLE HAVE LEARNED RESILIENCE STRATEGIES, SUCH AS PROVIDING ADVICE ON HOW TO ADAPT TO THAT BAD SITUATION AND MANAGING THE ECONOMIC SITUATION WELL AT THE FAMILY AND COMMUNITY LEVELS.

Older man, 68, northwest Syria



CONCLUSION

In summarising our findings on older communities in northwest Syria, a pragmatic narrative emerges, characterised by self-reliance and adaptability.

The nuanced shifts in roles within families, evolving caregiving responsibilities, and gender dynamics demonstrate the ability of older people to navigate and respond to complex challenges that arise in conflict and crises.

The implications of this extend beyond immediate humanitarian considerations. Our observations emphasise the necessity for policy adjustments that recognise the active agency of older people.

It is not merely a call for meeting basic needs but an imperative shift towards inclusive policies that integrate the valuable experiences of older people into the community and promote their self-reliance.

As we conclude, the practical takeaway lies in acknowledging and addressing the specific needs outlined in this report. It prompts a focused approach in designing interventions and policies that not only attend to immediate challenges but also harness the self-reliance and contributions of older people.

In a context defined by conflict and fragility, this report serves as a technical guidance, guiding towards practical, measurable and inclusive solutions for older communities in northwest Syria.



RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS TO HUMANITARIAN ACTORS

- Recognise the valuable role older people play as caregivers, community leaders and organisers, as well as their active role in conflict resolution, mediation, and peacebuilding efforts.
- Support the engagement, participation, empowerment, agency and autonomy of older people, engage them in formal and informal decision-making structures, community initiatives, and crisis responses, and incorporate their perspectives and experiences in plans, programmes and monitoring.
- Create opportunities for older people to advocate for themselves within their communities, recognising the barriers some may face to getting involved, and exploring how these barriers can be overcome.
- Work with older peoples' community-based committees as partners in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian response activities.
- Provide training and support to older people's committees to enable them to engage decision makers and exercise their voice, strengthening their links with communities, service providers and policy makers.
- Support the creation of new committees, providing older people with the opportunities to meet in a safe space to share experiences and increase their awareness of issues that affect them.
- Develop community awareness programmes which highlight the contribution made by of older people since the start of the conflict, with a focus on addressing age related biases and gender disparities. This can include targeted messaging and campaigns aimed at challenging stereotypes and fostering a more inclusive understanding of the contributions of older people.
- Facilitate intergenerational activities that bring together different generations in order to bridge generation gaps, provide social support for older people, and promote mutual understanding.

- Ensure that older peoples' rights are respected, protected and fulfilled and that they are able to access full basic services, including food and water, healthcare including mental health support, and information.
- Promote community-based health and care services and support, such as assisted living arrangements and home-based care services.
- Ensure availability of accessible mental health & psychosocial services tailored to the unique needs of older people.
- Allocate resources to ensure sufficient food access and implement measures to reduce economic vulnerabilities, particularly in regions where older persons report insufficient access to food.
- Acknowledge the increased risks of violence, abuse and neglect and ensure that older people are included in protection programming, including for sexual and gender based violence.
- Continue funding Multipurpose Cash Assistance (MPCA) programming in Northwest Syria, with the proviso that older people should receive a top up, due to larger expenses they face compared to the general population.
- Create economic opportunities suitable for older people, considering their skills and experiences.
- Implement technology literacy programmes tailored to older people and foster intergenerational learning initiatives to bridge the technological gap.
- Invest in capacity-strengthening activities to expand age, gender and disability expertise and ensure the integration of sex, age and disability disaggregated data and age and gender analysis into all programming.
- Work with partners, including academic institutions and research entities to increase research on the situation of older people and the barriers and enablers to their inclusion in humanitarian response.



RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE AUTHORITIES

- Respect, protect and fulfil the rights of older people in northwest Syria, ensuring that policies and programmes are age and disability inclusive and gender sensitive, are informed by sex, age and disability disaggregated data, recognise the various roles and address the barriers faced by older people in the community.
- Collaborate with humanitarian agencies to ensure that aid delivery meets the specific needs of older people and addresses their frustrations with the current assistance mechanisms.
- Recognise the contributions of community-based committees and actively engage with them to understand older people's needs. Provide necessary support to enhance the effectiveness of their initiatives.
- Support and facilitate community-building activities initiated by older people, contributing to a more cohesive and supportive environment within the community.
- Implement awareness campaigns within the community to address negative perceptions towards older people.
- Support and actively promote community-based care initiatives that align with the evolving landscape of care in northwest Syria. This includes addressing economic hardships and family separation issues.
- Work to alleviate economic challenges faced by older people taking on caregiving responsibilities. This may involve collaborating with local organisations and NGOs.
- Implement initiatives to bridge the digital gap, ensuring that older people have access to communication technologies and are not excluded, especially during crises.
- Consider awareness or training sessions within the authorities on integrating policies that specifically address the rights and needs of older people.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO DONORS

- In high level and political statements about the crisis, raise awareness of the valuable role older people play within their families and communities and advocate for increased attention, funding and prioritisation to ensure sufficient visibility for this at-risk population.
- Provide multi-year, flexible funding for organisations and programmes that include older people as a specific target group and that use an early recovery approach in addition to responding to humanitarian needs.
- Ensure that the entire project cycle is informed by age, sex and disability disaggregated data, increasing budgets to ensure adequate allocation for age, gender and disability expertise in programme teams.

North-west Syria
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METHODOLOGY

This research considers the lived experiences of older people in northwest Syria, examining the evolution of their roles amid the ongoing conflict and the aftermath of the February 2023 earthquake. The study employs a robust methodology, integrating surveys, Key Informant Interviews (KII), and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) to gather a nuanced understanding of the realities faced by older people.

For this study, mixed research methods were employed to gather data between October 2023 and January 2024. To ensure inclusivity and effective data collection, interviews with experts were conducted through video call platforms, allowing for remote engagement. In contrast, interviews with older people were carried out either in person or over the phone in an effort to mitigate digital exclusion and reaching people in hard-to-reach areas. Recognising the potential limitations of digital access, surveys were specifically conducted in person.

SURVEY

The survey was developed by HelpAge and Action For Humanity, featuring 24 questions distributed across various themes, including the socio-demographic profile of respondents, family structures, displacement impacts, and changes in perceptions of roles and responsibilities over 13 years. The survey also delved into community roles, inviting thoughts on leadership and advocacy.

The survey was prepared on the Kobo platform and the enumerators received an induction training on how to use the tool.

STAKEHOLDER MAPPING

The study used a strategic approach to participant selection by conducting stakeholder mapping to identify and engage older people. The stakeholder mapping, crucial for identifying older people in northwest Syria, was conducted by Action For Humanity, who have partnered with HelpAge to work with older communities in northwest Syria since February 2023.

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

15 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted, serving as a primary means of obtaining insights. Following the initial draft of the findings, an additional set of five KIIs were conducted, designed to reinforce and clarify the existing findings, providing a stronger understanding of the nuanced perspectives and experiences of older people within the study's scope.

The study also leveraged KIIs with a diverse group of experts and stakeholders to collectively provide an understanding of the challenges and experiences faced by older people in northwest Syria. These interviews included:

- Director of a retirement home, 50-55, man, northwest Syria.
- Member of the senior committee, man, 50-54, Aleppo Azaz.
- Resident doctor at a care home, woman, under 49, northwest Syria
- Physical therapist, male, under 49, Idleb
- Director of NGO providing support for older people, under 49, northwest Syria
- Senior committee leader, 60-64, Aleppo Azaz
- Lawyer, woman, under 49, northwest Syria
- NGO programme manager, man, under 50, northwest Syria
- Humanitarian advisor, woman, under 49, northwest Syria
- Case manager for a retirement home, woman, 50-54, Idleb
- Case manager for a retirement home, man, 50-59, Aleppo
- Case manager for a retirement home, man, 60-64, Idleb
- Volunteer for a Women's Right Organisation (WRO), woman, 60-64, northwest Syria
- Protection Manager, woman, 49, northwest Syria
- Leader of a Women's Rights Organisation, woman, 50-55, Idleb.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (FGDS)

The research employed a structured approach, conducting two focus group discussions (FGDs) to gather insights from diverse perspectives (one male and one female). The participants in each FGD were categorised based on age groups to ensure a comprehensive representation of experiences.

The breakdown is as follows:

Age Categories	Male - FGD	Female - FGD
60-64	1	2
65-69	3	3
70-74	2	3
75-79	1	0
80+	0	0
Total	7	8

The absence of participants in certain age groups may be attributed to factors such as availability, willingness to participate, or specific challenges faced by individuals in those particular age brackets. The study team aimed to ensure diversity and inclusion, but certain demographic gaps were inevitable based on voluntary participation.

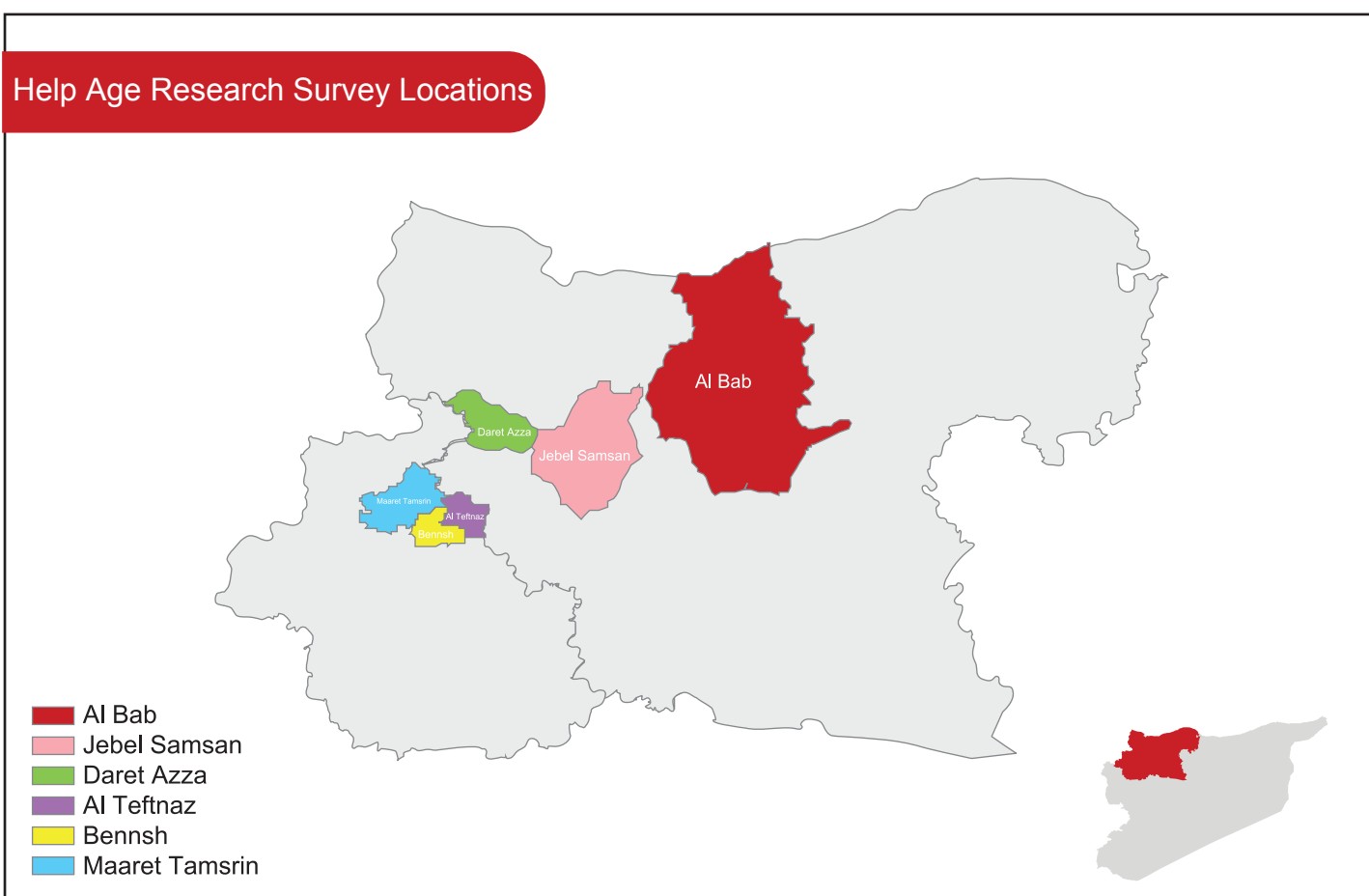


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LOCATIONS & PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

The research encompasses the governorates of Aleppo and Idleb Idliebib, with 100 older participants involved in the study. The following table outlines the administrative divisions and participant distribution across sub-districts:

Governorate	PCode	District	PCode	Subdistrict	PCode	# of participants
Aleppo	SY02	Al Bab	SY0202	Al Bab	SY020200	17
Aleppo	SY02	Jebel Saman	SY0200	Jebel Saman	SY020000	17
Aleppo	SY02	Jebel Saman	SY0200	Daret Azza	SY020004	17
Idleb	SY07	Idleb	SY0700	Bennsh	SY070002	17
Idleb	SY07	Idleb	SY0700	Maaret Tamsrin	SY070005	16
Idleb	SY07	Idleb	SY0700	Tefnaz	SY070004	16



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Older people affected by the earthquake in Jindires, Syria
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