

Leyden Academy

ON VITALITY AND AGEING



**Well-being of older migrants:
What do we know and what do they want?**

Nina Conkova

What do we know about the social well-being of older migrants?

Literature review

1. The concept of well-being
2. Experience of becoming older
3. Social participation
4. Loneliness
5. Living and commuting

What do older migrants want?

Research based on 8 focus groups

1. Topic list: experience of ageing; daily activities, social contacts, living arrangements, initiative and responsibility
2. Western, Indonesian, Surinamese, Antillean, Turkish (men and women), Moroccan (men and women)
3. 55-88 years old; b/n 4 and 10 participants
4. Amsterdam, The Hague, Leiden
5. In the Netherlands for 30+ years
6. (Never) worked, working, retired

The experience of being old

Ageing is not age related; it is important how you feel

"Ageing is not a matter of age but a way of thinking." (Turkish man, 68 years old)

*Moderator: "It is not age-related, you say. When is someone old? " Everyone together: "You are as old as you feel."
(Indonesian group)*

One is old when one is mentally and/or physically sick or inactive

"When I am depressed I feel old." (Woman with western background, 88 years old)

The experience of becoming older

A slow process which belongs to life

Primarily positive with more negative nuances for the Indonesian group and the exception of the groups of Moroccan men and women

"Growing older is not a final phase, getting older is just a new phase of life." (Man with a western background, 70 years old)

"Autumn, you are in the autumn of your life. Then the winter comes and then you die. Autumn is one of the most beautiful seasons." (Indonesian man, 70 years old)

"We live between the past and the present. [...] We came to the Netherlands at a young age. Around 20 to 22 years. Now I am 65. We spent most of our lives here. Back then, we were young, and everything was not as difficult as now. Now it's hard [...] We find ageing here difficult." (Moroccan men)

Other social domains

Social contacts and the family

"The social life is now under construction." (Man with a western origin, 73 years old)

"Everything revolves around the children. Here in the Netherlands, I am responsible for them." (Moroccan woman, 62 years old)

Origin context

"In Turkey we walk around as a chicken without a head." (Turkish woman, 58 years old)

"In Morocco you have peace, there are no letters from the tax authorities" (Moroccan man, 70 years old)

Living environment

"You have your Moroccan friends. It is as if we live in Morocco, really. We meet at the community center, in the mosque. It is even better than in Morocco." (Moroccan woman, 64 years old)

Wishes

Four higher order wishes for virtually everyone

1. To remain healthy (physically as well as mentally)
2. To remain active and contribute to society
3. To be social
4. To be independent

Wishes

Group-specific wishes

1. To travel: Western, Antilleans, Turkish women, Moroccans, Indonesians
2. Peace: Moroccans, Surinamese and Indonesians
3. Places for social activities: Turkish and Moroccan men
4. Be close to children and grandchildren: Turkish and Moroccan women
5. Cheaper/free parking on Sunday: Turkish and Moroccan men
6. Accessible and affordable care: Western, Turkish men, Moroccans
7. To die without suffering (euthanasia if dependent): Indonesians

Conclusions

1. Ageing in the Netherlands is overall experienced more positively than previously suggested/thought
 2. Differences in experiences between and within migrant groups (generation, religion, health)
 3. Higher order wishes revolve around being healthy, active, social and independent, but also group-specific wishes
- Research: link with successful ageing theories and prior research
 - Practice: ageing as own initiative vs. god's will vs. responsibility of the government

Leyden Academy

ON VITALITY AND AGEING

