

Exploring Climate Change Perception and Awareness among Immigrant Youth in Istanbul: Knowledge Gaps, Opportunities, and Structural Challenges¹

Mozharul Islam^{1*}, Nur Meryem Özbek²

¹ Department of Sociology, Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University, Türkiye

² Sociology Independent Researcher, Türkiye

Abstract

People from different socio-cultural and demographic backgrounds perceive climate change in a variety of ways, as socio-demographic factors shape their knowledge and perceptions. Climate change knowledge and perceptions are linked to environmental education, which plays a significant role in shaping human behavior and taking effective action to identify capacity-building priorities for enhancing community resilience. This study explores climate change perceptions, awareness levels, and knowledge gaps among immigrant youth aged 18-29 living in Istanbul, Türkiye. We will specifically focus on the opportunities and structural challenges that are related to community activities efforts to build climate resilience. Using a qualitative research methodology, we conducted eight FGDs with youth immigrant cohorts from different regions of the world, grouped into eight categories, i.e., Central Asia, North Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, Africa, Europe, Middle East, and Caucasus. The research explores how awareness and perceptions of climate change and its impacts on their communities vary by country of origin. The study findings reveal an important structural paradox. While immigrant youth exhibit high levels of conceptual climate literacy, this academic awareness does not translate into concrete community engagement. Although most of the participants migrated to Türkiye for education, they do not engage in any community-based activities related to the local environment or climate in Istanbul. Various structural constraints, including a lack of local information, language barriers, and subjective feelings of social detachment, cultural isolation, and negative reception govern this systemic gap between literacy and action. As a result, this youth group relies heavily on digital and social media such as Instagram, TikTok, and international news channels rather than municipal communication platforms, making them functionally detached from local environmental governance and policy formulation, as those channels do not address Istanbul-specific hazards. The study shows that low community engagement does not vary by language proficiency or duration of residence in Istanbul, Türkiye. It also shows that low community engagement among immigrant youth is due to structural barriers, including a lack of information in their own language, feelings of social exclusion, time constraints, and limited interest. The results identify significant opportunities for

¹ This study was supported by Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University Scientific Research Project (Project No: 2025-BAP-400-044).



4th Global Conference on Research in **Social Sciences**

21 - 23 August 2026

Oxford, United Kingdom

community-driven resilience-building initiatives that propose mixed, culturally sensitive engagement activities that integrate Turkish and immigrant youth, thereby ensuring immigrant youth participation in this area.

Keywords: Climate Change Knowledge, Perception and Awareness, Immigrant Youth, Community Engagement, Structural Challenges