

08
25

Issue: 8

SHURA AGENDA

Just Transition in Coal Regions



In July 2025, a new law was adopted in Türkiye that streamlines the authorization of energy-related mining activities in areas such as pastures, forests, and olive groves. The legislation sparked widespread public backlash due to its potential environmental and health impacts, as well as its implications for other sectors like agriculture and tourism. On the other hand, the importance of mining for local employment and economies has been a central point of debate.

Yet Türkiye's net-zero target requires a gradual phase-out of fossil fuels -particularly coal- in energy production. Expanding high-emission activities like coal mining into ecologically sensitive areas undermines climate goals and jeopardizes agricultural productivity, biodiversity, and rural livelihoods. This poses a direct challenge to the principles of a just and sustainable transition.

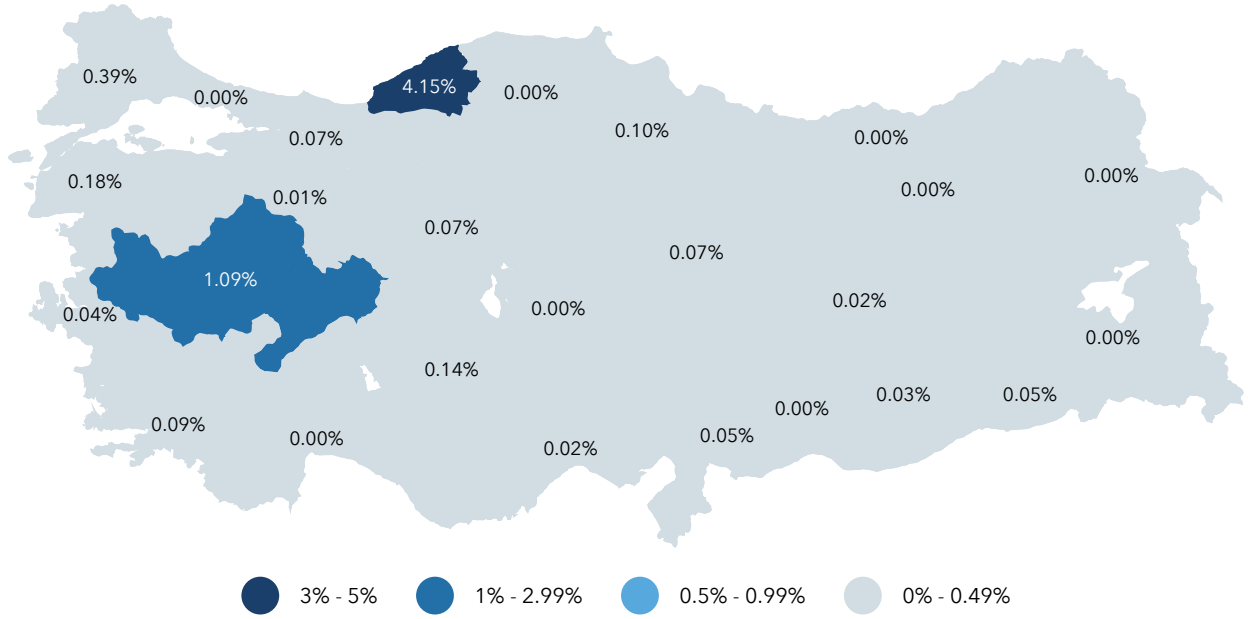
At the heart of a just transition is the protection of workers, communities, and regional economies currently reliant on coal. Safeguarding livelihoods, preventing income loss, and ensuring continued access to decent jobs and social benefits must be central to Türkiye's energy transition strategies.

Where is coal mining a major source of employment in Türkiye?

Coal mining employs around **40,000 people** in Türkiye—just **0.2%** of the national workforce of over 16 million. However, in certain regions, coal remains a cornerstone of local employment:

- In **Zonguldak-Karabük-Bartın** region, coal accounts for over 4% of total employment.
- In **Manisa-Afyonkarahisar-Kütahya-Uşak** region, the figure exceeds 1%.

Regions with high coal mining employment

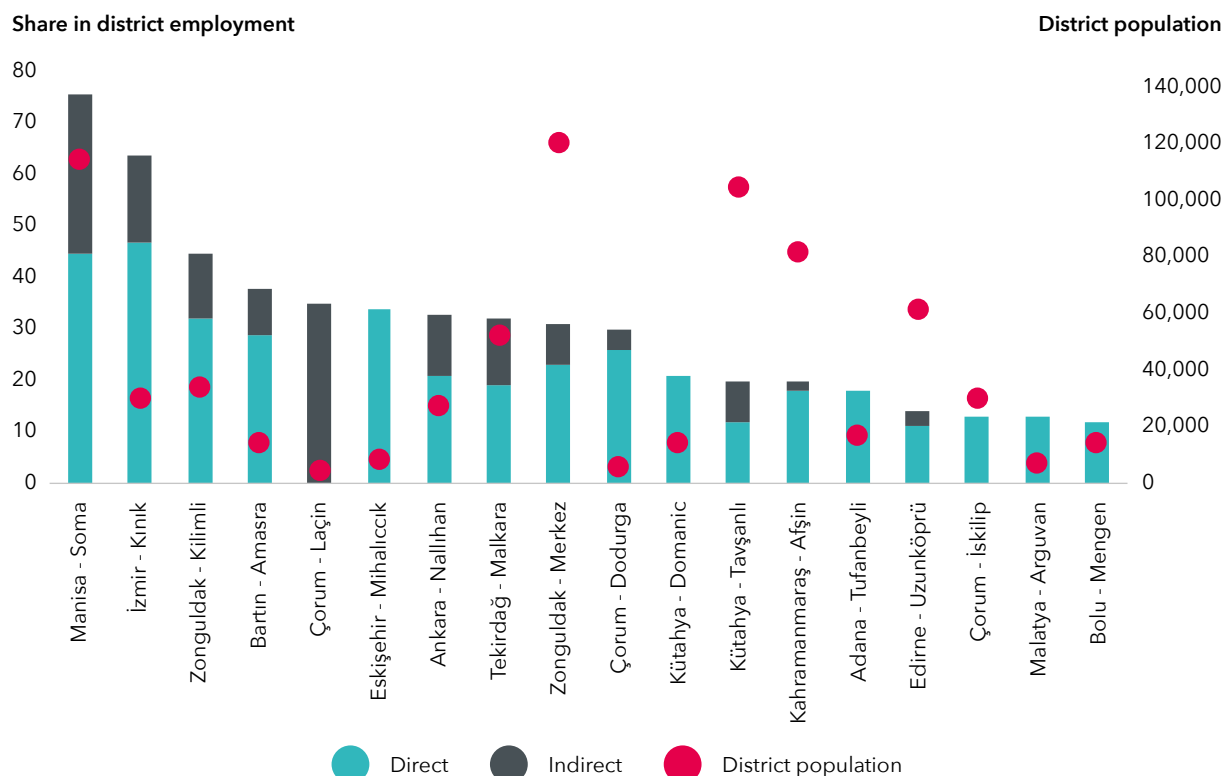


Source: SHURA, 2024 ([Just Transition and Regional Employment: Policy Choices for Türkiye](#))

Nearly **20 districts** have local economies where direct and indirect coal mining jobs represent **more than 10% of total employment**. In addition to the regions above, these districts are located in İzmir, Çorum, Eskişehir, Ankara, Kahramanmaraş, Adana, Edirne, Malatya, and Bolu. Notable districts include:

- Large population and high coal employment concentration: **Manisa-Soma, Zonguldak Merkez, Tekirdağ-Malkara, Kahramanmaraş-Afşin, Kütahya-Tavşanlı.**
- Smaller population but high coal employment share: **İzmir-Kınık, Zonguldak-Kilimli, Bartın-Amasra, Çorum-Laçın, Eskişehir-Mihalıççık, Ankara-Nallıhan, Çorum-Dodurga, and Kütahya-Domaniç.**

Districts with the highest share of direct and indirect coal mining employment in total local employment, and their total population



Source: SHURA, 2024 ([Just Transition and Regional Employment: Policy Choices for Türkiye](#)); TÜİK demographic statistics

*Indirect employment includes jobs in supply chains and services linked to mining. The overall indirect employment impact may be even greater when downstream industries and service providers are considered.

How can employment losses be minimized in coal regions?

Coal mining in Türkiye -despite harsh working conditions- offers wages 1.4 times higher than the national average, along with secure employment and relatively high unionization. To preserve living standards and protect workers' rights during the transition, targeted and regionally adapted programs are essential.

1. Skills transformation and job placement programs

Reskilling initiatives should be tailored to coal workers, with an emphasis on:

- Prioritizing working-age populations,
- Designing accessible programs for low-educated workers,
- Coordinating with social protection programs for dependents,
- Aligning with regional development plans.

2. Policies for regional economic diversification

In coal-reliant regions, programs to develop new employment areas should be designed. To improve effectiveness:

- Planning for regional development and designing regional support programs,
- Promoting alternative industries in coal-reliant districts,
- Providing employment incentive schemes specific to sectors with high skills matching, particularly for manufacturing,
- Embedding a long-term transition perspective in regional support programs.



3. Social support programs

Older, low-educated workers in coal mining are at greater risk of long-term unemployment. In regions where there is a concentration of employees with a high risk of unemployment and where dependent population and the regional unemployment rate are already high, social protection measures are essential:

- Introducing early retirement options for workers over 45 and with low education levels,
- Offering retraining and job placement alongside early retirement for ages 45–60,
- Extending support to dependent family members.

Enabling a just transition in coal regions

- **Employment-focused reskilling and diversification** must be prioritized, with special support for those at highest risk of exclusion.
- **Region-specific approaches** are key. Programs must reflect local realities and build on existing strengths.
- **Financing mechanisms**—such as emissions trading revenues and international climate finance—should be leveraged for training, employment incentives, early retirement, and social safety nets.
- **Inclusive governance** is essential. Local governments, trade unions, civil society, employers, and large exporters must all play a role in advancing just transition across value chains.



SHURA's Note

Energy transition must go hand-in-hand with ecosystem protection and community resilience. Expanding mining into environmentally sensitive areas, such as olive groves and forests, threatens both biodiversity and rural livelihoods. A successful transition must be inclusive, just, and nature-sensitive—balancing energy security with long-term economic, environmental, and social sustainability.
