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# Analysis of Measures to Increase the Labor Force Participation of Refugee and Turkish Women in Turkey

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## Executive Summary

- Women face similar problems all over the world. International literature shows that the main barriers limiting women's employment and empowerment are institutions that prioritize male employment, legal frameworks that implicitly or explicitly discriminate against women by making it harder for them to hold assets and property, limited supply of affordable child and elderly care, inflexible working conditions that make it harder for employees to balance family and work life, discrimination, physical and sexual violence and conservative social norms that seek female purity and limit women's mobility. Even in countries with higher gender equality, women's earnings and benefits seem to regress and fall behind men after childbirth.
- Refugee women unfortunately stumble upon further barriers. Refugee women often arrive with serious trauma and stress associated with conflict, displacement and forced migration. Insufficient access to key services, such as psychological support, reduces women's chances to successfully integrate into social and economic life in host countries. Furthermore, refugee women are under a higher degree of threat of abuse. Language problems add additional challenges to refugee women's employment and integration.
- Turkey is a country with a female labor force participation rate that is significantly lower than both the OECD and other emerging market countries with similar development levels. Although there has been several reforms and tax incentives aimed at increasing female employment, the de-facto legislative framework is still not completely equal. The World Bank's Woman, Business and Law index shows that a female citizen has 82.5 percent of the rights that a male citizen has in Turkey. Outsourced childcare services are also not within reach for most women at the prevailing prices. The combination of weak institutional capacity to level the field between male and female labor and the prevailing pro-natal political rhetoric enable conservative social norms to persist and put family and motherhood first rather than viewing women as equal breadwinners. Women in Turkey have difficulties accessing finance and face discrimination. Furthermore, femicide is on the rise in Turkey, and women face security concerns over physical and sexual violence.
- The labor market prospects of refugee women in Turkey are grim. Demographic and Health Surveys show that only 9 percent of Syrian women were employed while 5 percent were looking for a job in 2018. Of those who were employed, 99 percent worked informally. For non-Syrian refugee women, the data does not even exist.
- Household labor force surveys do not reveal the nationality of individuals working in Turkey but they do give an indication of whether a person was born abroad and/or previously resided abroad. Based on this information, it is possible to identify foreigners in the data, i.e. refugees registered under the Temporary Protection Regulation and individuals with other nationalities who are working legally or illegally. Labor force surveys

show that the textile sector absorbs a significant proportion of foreign-born men and women who work informally. The industrial sector comprising textiles and other industries employs 40 percent of all foreign men and 29 percent of all women who work informally. Informal workers in the agriculture sector have the lowest earnings, and within that specific group, foreign women earn almost one third of the amount that men with citizenship earn.

- In terms of the hours worked, foreign women in informal jobs tend to work a significantly higher number of hours per week compared to women with Turkish nationality. Even though the monthly earnings for foreign women might seem higher in some industries, working longer hours might be making the hourly wage lower in real terms.
- Syrian refugee women do not list language barriers as an important barrier for work, but as an important constraint for integration. They also have problems accessing key public services, and many of them are unaware that they are legally entitled to these services. Syrian women seem to have more conservative views on work and family balance, something which requires further research. On the other hand, field studies indicate that refugee women, especially those coming from more disadvantaged backgrounds, are under serious risk of exploitation and sexual abuse.
- Based on these findings, this report provides a comprehensive list of recommendations for policy makers and actors in the field.

## Section I. Introduction

Although Turkey is classified as a middle-income country, it ranks below other countries with similar levels of income in the gender equality index. As of February-2022, the female labor force participation rate is around 34 percent, which is among the lowest ranking among the G20 and the OECD countries. It is also far below some other Muslim countries such as Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Indonesia and Malaysia. Cuberes, Newiak, and Teignier (2017) estimate that among the OECD countries, Turkey faces the highest economic costs of low female participation.

Turkey ranks 133 in the World Economic Forum's 2021 Gender Gap Index. Its ranking has consistently declined over the years; it ranked 109 in 2006 and 130 in 2016. Turkey also ranked 59th in the 2019 Human Development Index, but its ranking in the Gender Inequality Index was even lower, at 66th place among 162 countries. Although it is among the largest 20 economies in the world, its ranking is not on a par with its relatively high ranking in income per capita due to large disparities in education, employment opportunities, earnings, and political representation across genders. In addition, the pervasiveness of violence against women, including femicides, and the recent repeal of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, makes Turkey a difficult country for women to live and work safely.

Turkey has received mass migration movements following the onset of the humanitarian crisis in Syria in 2012 and currently hosts 3.7 million Syrian refugees (among which 2 million are men; 1.7 million are women) and 320.000 refugees from other countries. Refugees generally arrive in host countries with insurmountable problems and with high levels of stress for survival. Being a refugee woman in an unfamiliar country is even more difficult due to the double hierarchies, social norms, unpaid care responsibilities, and a lack of information for accessing even the most basic public services.

The report has two objectives:

1. First, it aims to provide a detailed review of the literature, as well as evidence concerning the barriers preventing women from participating in labor markets. It will also uncover existing best practices for increasing women's employment.
2. The second aim of the report is to present quantitative evidence on the labor market characteristics and problems faced by women in Turkey, including by refugee women, using nationally representative micro surveys.

There are some caveats to the results of the report owing to a few factors. First of all, the quantitative analysis presented in the report is based on available official data. Unfortunately, in one of two nationally representative data, there is no information concerning ethnicity or specific country of birth of women living in Turkey, and in the other one, there is information only on Syrian women. Hence, it was not possible to provide a separate quantitative analysis on the hardships and barriers to the labor market that are faced by non-Syrian refugee women living in Turkey. The limited existing studies in the literature are based on interviews with a small number of non-Syrian refugee women and thus not necessarily representative. The other limitation of this study is that it does not provide a perspective on whether refugee women's obstacles to the labor market are deteriorating or improving over time, because the national statistics still do not include a separate statistical module on refugees living in Turkey. This is a major weakness as the lack of consistent time series data limits the ability of researchers and policy makers in addressing several key issues such as the potential



differential impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on refugee and national population, or the impact of existing policies on integration. Hence, the findings and the recommendations presented in this report should be evaluated considering the limitations on data.

The report proceeds as follows. Part II provides a summary of the existing data and research on the barriers to economic participation. Part III reviews the international evidence on what kind of policies work in empowering women globally. Part IV provides a review of the research on refugee women worldwide, their integration, and employment. Part V examines existing studies on the living conditions and employment of Syrian refugees in Turkey. Part VI provides a summary of the Turkish legal framework for the employment of refugees. Part VII provides quantitative analyses on the labor market conditions for both refugee and host community women in Turkey. Part VIII lists the existing programs and projects for supporting women's employment, including that of refugee women in Turkey. Part IX provides a qualitative and quantitative evaluation of the barriers faced by women in Turkey. Part X provides a list of recommendations with the aim of contributing to policy and practice in Turkey.

## **Section II. Literature on Barriers for Women's Economic Participation**

Gender inequalities in labor markets are widespread, including in industrialized countries. Even in countries where the female labor force participation rates almost surpass male participation rates, significant gender wage gaps and glass ceilings in top managerial positions persist. Men earn more than women in almost all societies; and gender gaps in several other dimensions, such as health, education, and bargaining power within marriage tend to persist (Jayachandran (2015)).

Despite the progress recorded towards improving the economic and political status of women over the last century, the barriers faced by women all over the world are strikingly similar. These barriers include a lack of institutions promoting gender equality, a lack of high quality and affordable child and elderly care, gender-based discrimination, social norms and conservatism putting a brake on women's empowerment, safety concerns and fear of sexual harassment, and a lack of professional and mental support systems and networks. Some of these barriers interact with others and impose greater constraints on women, especially in countries where legal frameworks and institutions are weaker. However, even in industrialized countries with the strongest institutions and where gender equality is highest, women still suffer from the unequal distribution of childcare responsibilities, causing their careers to fall behind those of men.

Turkey is a country where the legal system grants equal political and economic rights to women, yet, de facto, institutions fail to level the field for men and women. As we will discuss in greater detail below, institutional factors and a lack of affordable care services including childcare, elderly care and sick care services severely limit women's choices and economic participation. As a result, the size of the unpaid care economy remains large, leaving women economically and socially unprotected. In such an environment, being a refugee woman means having to face several additional barriers, such as language barriers, discrimination, exploitation, and lack of access to key government-provided services.

In this section, we aim to summarize the key findings of a vast literature on women's struggle towards equality. We present theories and evidence from international literature as well as from studies focusing on women in Turkey, discussing the similarities and differences in a comparative framework.

### ***A Background on Women's Economic Participation and the Feminization U-Hypothesis***

There is a vast literature on the root causes of gender inequalities in labor markets. Several studies investigate gender inequalities from a long-term view and provide historical explanations. Boserup (1970) hypothesized that agricultural suitability had a long-lasting impact on gender norms; in pre-industrial times, men had a strong absolute advantage in agriculture, and the tools used to prepare land for cultivation affected the returns to male versus female labor. Agriculture requires more physical power, and this led to the specialization of tasks between females and males. This strand of literature argues that when agricultural tilling was instead done with hand tools such as hoes, men's advantage was smaller and women played a greater role in agriculture (Galor & Weil (1996), Qian (2008), Carranza (2014), Jayachandran, (2021)). Indeed, Alesina et al. (2013) show empirically that consistent with existing hypotheses, the descendants of societies that traditionally practiced plow agriculture today have less equal gender norms, measured using reported gender-role attitudes and female participation in the workplace, politics, and entrepreneurial activities. Hansen et al. (2015) also show empirically that agricultural history has shaped modern gender roles but highlight the importance of the relationship between fertility and agriculture; in societies that transitioned from hunter-gatherer to agricultural lifestyle earlier, women have a lower employment rate today as the adoption of agriculture led to an increase in fertility and a decrease in women's time spent in economic production.

While agricultural suitability is documented to have a persistent impact on gender inequalities, it is still a sector that can absorb female labor. Over the course of development, the sectoral mix shifts away from agriculture and manufacturing toward services. In her seminal study, Goldin (1995) documents a U-shaped cross-country relationship between economic development and female labor force participation.<sup>1</sup> At low levels of development, women do unpaid work on family farms and in family businesses. However, as countries start developing, the composition of jobs starts changing, a process that goes hand in hand with urbanization. As urban jobs and the manufacturing sector flourish, women start withdrawing from the labor force, especially from manual jobs as higher wages for men mean that the household can afford to forgo the woman's earnings. Both security concerns and the social stigma men perceive from having their wives work in urban jobs also negatively affect female labor supply, along with the structural transformation from agriculture to manufacturing. However, as countries get richer, women's education rises and the women's wages grow because of the sectoral shift toward services that require less physical power (Jayachandran, (2016)). Indeed, over the last 30 years, women's education expanded very rapidly, leading to a rapid closing of the gender gaps in enrollment and attainment with males at the secondary and tertiary levels, as well as a dramatic decline in fertility all around the world (Klasen (2019)). All these factors improved the supply and demand for female labor. Service jobs are generally deemed more respectable and woman-friendly and it is usually not possible to meet the demand for services solely based on male

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<sup>1</sup> Also called the Feminization U-Hypothesis.

labor supply. Therefore, in the later stages of development and income per capita growth, female labor force participation rates tend to increase.

From a long-term perspective, an important factor that facilitated female labor force participation over the last decades has been the invention and diffusion of technologies that reduced time spent on household chores. Ramey (2009) shows that the time spent on homemaking by working-age women in the U.S. fell by around six hours from 1900 to 1965 and by another 12 hours from 1965 to 2005. Coen-Pirani et al. (2010) show that home appliances such as washing machines, freezers, etc. played an important role in “liberating” women from housework in the U.S. and led to an increase in labor force participation by married women, from 11 percent to 28 percent between 1960 and 1970. Greenwood and Güner (2008) also argue that technological progress was responsible for the dramatic increase in labor force participation of married women in the U.S. between 1955 and 1990. Within a developing country context, Dinkelman (2011) shows that the spread of electricity in rural South Africa caused substantial shifts away from using wood at home, and led to a significant increase in female labor force participation.

While there is a well-documented correlation between long-run development and increased female labor force participation, theoretical and empirical studies show that women’s participation is affected by business cycles and economic shocks. This channel is called the Added Worker Effect where unemployment of men in households during economic downturns may increase the labor supply of women (Bhalotra and Umaña-Aponte (2010)). Karaoglan and Okten (2015) show that in Turkey, involuntary job loss by husbands increased the transition probability of wives from inactivity to activity by about four percentage points between 2005-2010, the period covering the Great Recession of 2008. Giannakopoulos (2015) shows that labor force participation of married women increased by 6.7 percentage points and employment rates increased by 3.4 percentage points in Greece during the Greek Crisis of 2010. A clear reason why increased participation rates during economic downturns are not entirely reflected in higher employment rates is that women also are likely to be the first ones to lose their jobs during downturns. Hence, although more women are willing to enter labor markets due to the added worker effect, it is a stylized fact that their unemployment rates also increase significantly.

There is also overwhelming evidence that the Covid-19 shock negatively affected women’s labor and employment due to the disproportionate share of unpaid care responsibilities, including child and elderly care, that are shouldered by women. Furthermore, women are more likely to be employed in the service sector and in informal jobs that were hit the most. They also lose jobs through furloughs (Alon et al., (2020); Blundell et al., (2020); McKinsey & Company and LinkedIn, (2020)).

Shocks such as terrorism or natural catastrophes have also been recorded to have adverse effects on female labor. Social psychology theories suggest that populations might move towards traditional gender roles under threat (Jost et. Al 2003). Increased anxiety towards the well-being of children and protection concerns might motivate women to exit the labor force and watch over the family. Economic theory suggests that exogenous factors such as natural disasters or terrorism can cause a decline in both labor supply and labor demand (Belasen and Polachek, 2007).

## ***Formal Institutions and Family Policies***

In his seminal paper, Douglass North defines institutions as the *rules of the game in a society or, more formally, the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction.*<sup>2</sup> According to this definition, the term institutions apply to both formal institutions, such as the written constitution, laws, regulations, policies, and rights, and to informal institutions without written rules such as customs and social norms. Institutions define the rules of the game for the individuals living in a society. In this section, we will review the literature on how formal institutions are crucial to level the field and make progress towards higher gender equality.

The Women, Business and the Law index of the World Bank measures explicit discrimination in the law, legal rights, and the provision of certain benefits with an aim to identify formal barriers to women's success. The index evaluates the gender differences in legal rights in terms of mobility, workplace, earnings, marriage, parenthood, entrepreneurship, assets, and pensions. The 2022 report reveals that the global average of the Women, Business and the Law index is 76.5 out of 100, indicating that a typical woman has just three-quarters of the rights of men in the eight areas listed above. According to the same report, only 12 countries out of 190 grant equal rights to men and women. These figures imply, according to the report, that nearly 2.4 billion women of working age worldwide still are not afforded equal economic opportunities. The index score of Turkey is 82.5 out of 100 whereas the score of the wider Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is 53. While Turkey scores well above the MENA average, it still does not grant equal rights to women, despite all the reform efforts since the establishment of the Republic.

Gender gaps in formal rights in Turkey stem from a combination of policies that aim to protect women, and lack of institutional capacity for childcare (Aşık and İnan, (2015)), as well as elderly and sick care. Employment regulations for instance, restrict female employment in dangerous working conditions, such as in mining and underground infrastructure construction. On the other hand, the political rhetoric in the last two decades has shifted towards prioritization of family and promotion of pronatalism. Indeed, Dildar (2022) shows that President Erdoğan's untiring demand to have at least three children seems to have paid off by increasing the ideal number of children among at least some women. While there has been a series of legal amendments to improve maternity rights and provide tax incentives for employers providing childcare in establishments that employ between 100 to 150 women<sup>3</sup>, the enforcement of these key reforms remain weak in practice. Anecdotal evidence from news outlets suggest that many employers still prefer to pay the fines rather than provide childcare, and yet, there is no data to verify how widespread this tendency is. Furthermore, practices such as municipal childcare services are still not sufficiently common in Turkey. Overall, while there have been efforts on paper to improve formal institutions for women in Turkey, these did not translate into a strong rebound in female labor force participation rates due both to the lack of institutional capacity, and to inconsistent political rhetoric.

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<sup>2</sup> North, D. C. (1991). Institutions. *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 5(1), 97–112.

<sup>3</sup> The Work Conditions of Pregnant or Nursing Women and Nursery Rooms and Child Care Centers Regulation No. 25522

Several other studies in the literature also support our view on the role of formal institutions in Turkey. İlkaracan (2010) argues that the legal and institutional mechanisms, such as the lack of formal childcare support especially for younger children or unfriendly working hours, constitute major barriers for women at work. İlkaracan (2012) argues that the lack of a demand-side challenge to families with a male breadwinner resulted on the one hand in the institutionalization of the gendered division of labor, and on the other in roles as binding constraints on women's labor supply. According to İlkaracan (2012), the prevalence of informal sector employment and the absence of paid work-family reconciliation measures magnify these supply-side constraints, while social conservatism is a more limited constraint. Tokgöz (2012) argues that the neo-liberal economic model adopted by Turkey and the lack of policies that seek to reduce gender inequalities are among the key drivers of low female labor force participation and high informal employment. Similarly, Dedeoğlu (2012) highlights that the welfare state in Turkey is predominantly patriarchal, leaving female employment at the mercy of the free markets, increasing precarious conditions in female labor.

On the other hand, international studies investigating the evolution and effects of family policies across high-income economies on female labor force participation do not find conclusive evidence. Olivetti and Petrongolo (2017) review the literature and argue that cross-country and micro-level evidence has not found an overall strong connection between maternity leave and female labor force participation. There are two main reasons for the weak association. First, the generosity of maternity policies tends to reduce some women's attachment to the labor markets as the duration they remain away from employment gets longer. And second, evidence shows that longer maternity leave rights reduce women's earnings significantly, making it harder to cover the costs associated with returning to work. Reviewing the evidence, Olivetti and Petrongolo (2017) suggest that policies with the most substantial evidence for reducing gender disparities are **early childhood care spending** and **in-work benefits** (tax advantages, employment subsidies). The study concludes that making it easier to be a working mother may matter more than the length of leave or the payments that new parents receive while out of the labor force.

Finally, although the evidence is scarce, an important question is whether paternity leave policies help women maintain their employment status. Evaluating whether paternity leave policies are effective remains difficult because in most cases, reforms introduce paternity and maternity rights at the same time. Hence, it is notoriously difficult to assess the two effects separately. Furthermore, maternity rights tend to be significantly more generous, leaving limited space for paternity rights to have a meaningful effect. Hegewisch and Gornick (2011) review work-family policies in the OECD and conclude that while women tend to take up their leave in one block, men are more likely to take their leave in smaller installments, and to maintain some connection with their employment while on leave. Supporting this view, Kluge and Tamm (2013) find that after the 2007 German parental leave reform, while paternity leave take-up rate of fathers increased considerably, their involvement in childcare did not increase. In contrast, Farre and Gonzalez (2019) found that the introduction of paid paternity leave in Spain in 2007 increased the fathers' involvement in childcare and improved the labor force attachment among mothers, but led to delays in subsequent fertility. Overall, the evidence on paternity leave remains mixed, but this may not come as a total surprise given the fact that formal and informal institutions can vary significantly across different country contexts.

### *Lack of reliable and affordable care services*

In traditional societies, men are conceived of as the breadwinners and women are more likely to interrupt careers, dropping off from labor markets for childcare or elderly care. According to estimates from the ILO (2018), the global economic value of unpaid care work mostly undertaken by women aged 15 and above is around US\$11 trillion per year, or 9 percent of the global GDP. The joint Care Economy Report by Oxfam and KEDV shows that there are approximately 10.5 million children, elderly and disabled in need of care in Turkey. This makes up 12.6 percent of the population. Furthermore, the report estimates that the total volume of the paid segment of Turkey's care economy is US\$6.5 billion, equivalent to approximately 0.8 percent of Turkey's GDP in 2019. By contrast, the total volume of Turkey's unpaid care economy is around US\$27.4 billion, which is equal to 3.5 percent of the country's GDP.<sup>4</sup>

Reliable and affordable non-parental child and elderly care is intimately related to female labor force participation. Studies show that as the price of childcare falls, maternal labor force participation increases (Anderson & Levine (1999), Blau & Currie (2004), Gathmann and Sass (2012), Baker, et al. (2008)). In the context of Turkey, several studies highlight the inadequacy of affordable childcare facilities (Dedeoğlu (2012); Toksöz (2012); İlkaracan (2010); Akyol and Yılmaz (2021)). Yet, as of 2020, there were about 4 million children in the 3–5 age group, and 3.7 million in the 0–2 age group (Oxfam-KEDV, (2020)).

A 2015 report by the World Bank is among the most comprehensive studies to date that investigates the supply and demand for childcare in Turkey and provides evidence of significant shortages in affordable childcare facilities. The study argues that the current utilization of childcare services cannot be construed as the lack of demand for childcare services, but rather as a **lack of demand for services at existing cost and price-quality structures**. Existing services are mainly private and suit the needs of working mothers (in terms of hours) and tend to be more expensive than the ability to pay. For most women, particularly those with a lower educational background, the difference between earnings and the cost of care is too low to justify joining the labor force. More specifically, the report shows that in 2015, i) publicly provided services were mainly only available for children aged 5 years-old, and only 6 percent of spots were available for children younger than 3 in daycare services; ii) for children between 0-35 months, there was no public provision mandated by the law; iii) less than 25 percent of providers offered full-day services. Of the small percentage of providers that offered care services to 0-2 year-olds, most full-day care providers were private; iv) on average public schools operated till 16:50 (on a Monday), while private schools operated till 17:53 on average, and v) during the summer months, private schools mostly continued operating while most of the public schools were closed. A more recent study also provides evidence on private childcare prices in Turkey. Using a unique provider-level data set collected in Denizli, Eskişehir, Gaziantep, İstanbul, and Samsun, (Pekkurnaz et al. (2021)) found that higher prices were mainly driven by factors such as infrastructure and building costs of care provision centers, while human resources, curriculum and materials quality (aspects that are more likely to have a strong bearing on child development) do not have a significant impact on childcare provision prices in Turkey.

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<sup>4</sup> Turkey's Care Economy Towards 2040. Forthcoming

When childcare facilities are limited, women need to rely on informal arrangements to be able to work. There is a growing base of literature on the importance of grandparents in providing informal childcare for working mothers. This appears to be a global phenomenon, not specific to developing countries. Posadas and Vidal-Fernandez (2012) found that in the U.S., grandparent childcare increases maternal labor force participation by 15 percentage points and that most of the effect is driven by families from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Similar results are found in other country contexts too; Arpino et al (2010) find these effects in Italy, Compton and Pollak (2014) and Compton (2011) for the US and Canada, Khanna and Pandey (2021) for India, Talamas (2020) for Mexico, and Aassve et al. (2012) for France, Germany, Bulgaria, and Hungary. Akyol and Yilmaz (2021) also investigate the effect of proximity to grandparents on female labor force participation in Turkey and find that living in the same neighborhood as grandmothers increases the probability of labor force participation as well as the employment rates of women with young children by 18.2 and 16.4 percentage points, respectively. The study shows that the results are driven by less educated women whose reservation wages<sup>5</sup> are likely to be more sensitive to the cost of formal childcare.

Social norms prevalent globally on the role of women in the household also result in a traditional division of labor where women are expected to fulfill household chores first before seeking employment. In Turkey, Turkstat's figures suggest that more than 50 percent of Turkish women who are inactive in labor markets report that house-related responsibilities are the main reason why they are not in the labor force. Steinhauer (2018) exploits the cultural differences across German and French groups in Switzerland and shows that Swiss women born in the 1950s into the German ethno-linguistic group were 15-25 percent less likely to work as mothers compared to their French-born peers, consistent with the strong belief among the German-speaking residents that children suffer from being brought up in households with working mothers.

Even when care provision is available, existing studies demonstrate the impact that childcare responsibilities can have on upward mobility in the workplace. In a very influential study, Kleven et al. (2018) show that women in Denmark face almost 19 percent decline in earnings relative to men after giving birth to a child. Denmark has extremely generous family policies and the female labor force participation is around 80 percent, almost surpassing male participation rates. There are 18 weeks of paid maternity leave and 32 weeks of parental leave to be shared between mother and father. Public childcare in Denmark is universally available at a heavily subsidized price around 6 to 12 months after birth. Yet, the study which is based on administrative data covering the period 1980 to 2013 shows that while women's and men's incomes evolve in parallel until the birth of their first child, they diverge sharply immediately after childbirth, and do not converge again.<sup>6</sup> Figure 1 displays the trajectory of earnings between men and women five years before and fifteen years after the first childbirth. The study shows that this penalty increases with the number of children, and the penalty on earnings comes from three margins; labor force participation, hours of work, and the wage rate.<sup>7</sup> Children affect the job characteristics of women relative to men in a way that favors family amenities over pecuniary rewards. Women switch jobs to firms that are more family-friendly due to a range of

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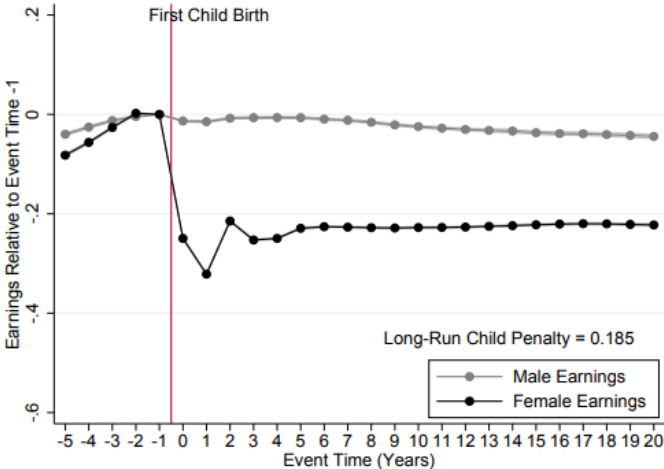
<sup>5</sup> Reservation wage is the minimum wage that a worker is willing to accept to take a job.

<sup>6</sup> The study focuses on first childbirths between 1985 and 2003, where the parents are known, alive, and reside in Denmark. It covers a sample of around 470,000 births or 15,040,000 individual year observations.

<sup>7</sup> Bloom et al. (2009) estimate that, on average, a birth reduces a woman's labor supply by almost 2 years.

factors that might include a lack of flexibility on the part of workplaces to flexible working systems, proxied either by being in the public sector or by having women with young children in management. Hence, the prospects for career promotion and the probability of becoming a manager decline for women with young children overall. The study also decomposes gender inequality into what can be attributed to children and what can be attributed to other factors, showing how this composition has evolved over time through Oaxaca-Blinder Decomposition. The striking fact is that education-related inequalities and residual inequalities (that can be attributed to gender-based discrimination) have declined sharply and all the remaining gender inequalities can be attributed to children.

Figure 1: Child Penalty in Denmark



Source: Kleven, Landais, and Sogaard (2018)

In a follow-up study, Kleven et al. (2019) extend the same analysis to Sweden, Germany, Austria, United Kingdom, and United States. The results confirm that the existence of large child penalties is a pervasive phenomenon, but the order of the magnitude differs significantly across countries. In Denmark and Sweden, the child penalty is estimated at 21-26 percent; English-speaking countries feature penalties of 31-44 percent, while German-speaking countries feature penalties as high as 51-61 percent. The study then argues, quite strikingly, that in the long run, parental leave and childcare policies have little or no effect on child penalties in these countries, but gender norms are likely to be the drivers of differences in the level of child penalty. However, further assessments should look beyond gender norms as the driver and examine the level of flexibility shown to women by workplaces in adjusting to becoming a working mother.

To understand the mechanisms that drive relative child penalty, Andersen and Nix (2019) estimate and compare the child penalties among same-sex male and same-sex female partners using administrative data from Norway. The study finds that for female same-sex couples, there is an initial 13 percent drop in the income of the partner who gives birth. Her partner experiences an initial income drop of 5 percent. Despite a larger immediate drop in income, the mother who gives birth catches up with her partner around two years after birth, and from that point on both mothers' experience similarly sized child penalties which decrease over time; by four years after birth, there is



no longer a child penalty. On the other hand, the study finds no income penalty for either spouse for the same-sex male couples with children. Based on these results, Andersen, and Nix (2019) argue that while biology may play a small role, most of the relative child penalty experienced by heterosexual couples is due to preferences and gender norms.

And finally, women also tend to value flexibility, possibly due to childcare responsibilities and gender norms. Booth and Van Ours (2009) show that controlling for family income, part-time working women are more satisfied with working hours than full-time women and that women's life satisfaction is increased if their partners work full-time but decreased if they themselves work full-time. Fleche et al. (2018) also provide evidence that in couples where the wife's working hours exceed the husband's, the wife reports lower life satisfaction. Flabbi and Moro (2012) show that more than one-third of women place a positive value on flexibility and women with a college degree value flexibility more than women with only a high school degree. Goldin (2014) documents that occupations characterized by high returns to long working hours are also those with the largest gender gap in earnings. Gicheva (2013) finds that in the U.S., workers who put in over 47 hours per week, 5 extra hours are associated with a 1 percent increase in annual wage growth and willingness to provide long hours potentially explains gender wage gaps. Cortes and Pan (2016) show that high returns to overwork are an important factor that limits the convergence in gender pay gaps in many highly-skilled occupations. Furthermore, the returns to working long hours appear to have risen particularly rapidly for highly skilled workers over time.

### ***Social norms and barriers***

Informal institutions consist of all socially transmitted information, and they matter as much as formal institutions. Informal institutions can be persistent, taking decades and generations to change, creating path dependency, especially if the political institutions are not inclusive for all (Acemoğlu et al. (2001)). These institutions often emerge as a response to the formal incentive structures in a society. Incentives matter and if the incentive structure in an economy assumes that women's employment is optional, social norms will be shaped such that women's main responsibilities lie outside labor markets. Hence it should be kept in mind that some of the findings of the literature summarized below may in fact reflect the interactions between exclusive political institutions and social norms, and not necessarily the independent impact of social norms on female employment.

As discussed earlier, the feminization U hypothesis, which argues that labor force participation of women tends to fall at the earlier stages of development and increase at later stages of development, receives empirical support from the literature. But there are other studies which criticize this hypothesis and highlight the importance of other factors such as social norms. Klasen (2019) argues that trends in female labor force participation (FLFP) rates have been quite heterogeneous in the last century. FLFP has been rising strongly in Latin America, remained modest in the Middle East, and stagnated in many other regions, especially in South Asia while the experience of socialism has been one of the most important shocks to women's labor force participation. Klasen (2019) argues that these trends are inconsistent with the feminization U hypothesis and other documented factors put a break on female empowerment. Klasen (2019) lists these factors as i) The type of economic model that generates inclusive or exclusive growth process, and ii) social norms affecting the ability of women to work, as well as affecting how intra-household labor is divided between men and women.

Related to these points, the other important factors listed in the literature are cultural factors, concerns for women's safety and fear of harassment, and lack of reliable and affordable non-parental child and elderly care.

Several other studies show that social norms such as patrilocality and patrilineality help explain both the male-skewed sex ratio in India and China and low female labor force participation in India, the Middle East, and North Africa (Jayachandran, (2015)). *Patrilocality* is defined as the social norm in which a married couple lives near or with the husband's parents. When a woman gets married, she becomes a part of the husband's family, limiting ties with her own birth family. In societies where patrilocality is common, returns to investments in a son's health and education are higher because he will remain a part of their family, whereas a daughter is expected to leave the household upon marriage. Therefore, there is a preference for sons and household resources are utilized for sons' well-being (Ramakrishnan et al. (2011); Chakraborty and Kim (2010)). Indeed, Ebenstein (2014) shows that countries where the elderly live with sons at higher rates have higher male-to-female sex ratios at birth.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, these countries also tend to have a higher number of "missing women", a term coined by Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen to explain the shortfall in the actual number of women in a country relative to the expected natural number of women.

*Patrilineality*, on the other hand, is a practice in which kinship and property pass to the next generation through male descendants. This system favors sons over daughters in the inheritance of property and land, which is especially likely to create gender equality gaps. Deininger et al. (2013) show that after the amendment of the Hindu Succession Act in four states of India to make daughters' status in inheritance equal to that of sons, women's bargaining power and financial independence within the household improved, women's age of marriage rose and girls' schooling increased as the mothers in households were more empowered. Within the context of Turkey, Kocabicak (2018) argues that the Turkish civil code (1926-2001) discriminated against women in inheriting small-scale agrarian land and that rural and urban women were divided by changing forms of patriarchal domination, gendered landownership, and paid employment. Again, using Turkey as a case study, Kocabicak (2020) argues that women's exclusion from ownership of means of production usually takes the form of exclusion from owning land in pre-modern societies. On the other hand, in modern societies, domestic patriarchy limits women's ability to participate in urban markets, forcing women to drop out of labor force or to work as unpaid domestic workers. Hence, in pre-modern domestic patriarchy, women's exclusion from agricultural land ownership, in conjunction with the dominance of small land ownership, sustains the patriarchal exploitation of labor in agriculture, whereas in modern domestic patriarchy, women's exclusion from paid employment in the market economy maintains the patriarchal exploitation of labor within the home.

Another social norm that goes hand in hand is the desire to protect female sexual purity. Sexual purity might limit female employment outside the home, as the "honor-namus", a concept prevalent in many parts of the world, depends on preventing the rumor of inappropriate sexual behavior. Keeping the women within household premises is one way of having control over their purity (Jayachandran, (2015)). Empirical studies support the view that these social norms have negative consequences on women's employment and education, especially if employment or education entails

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<sup>8</sup> Jayachandran, (2021) argues that although today's rich countries were historically similar to today's developing countries in terms of generally having higher human capital investments in males than in females, they did not exhibit as strong a desire to have sons as seen today in many developing countries.

traveling.<sup>9</sup> Evidence from Afghanistan shows that having schools in villages is crucial for closing large gender gaps in school enrolment. In particular, Burde and Linden (2013) show that constructing village schools in rural Afghanistan increased boys' enrolment by 35 percentage points whereas the program increased girls' enrolment by 52 percentage points.<sup>10</sup> Relying on a randomized controlled experiment in which a randomly selected sample of poor self-employed women was trained in basic financial literacy and business skills in India, Field et al. (2010) found that Muslim women who face the most social restrictions failed to benefit from the training program whereas, for women from other backgrounds, training increased borrowing and business income.

Goksel (2013) identifies religion, social norms, and conservatism as important factors that explain the low female labor force participation in Turkey. The study argues that conservatism has a negative effect on female employment in urban areas but not in rural areas. Findings by Guner and Uysal (2014) also support these findings and show that culture and religiosity have separately significant effects on female labor supply behavior in Turkey.

### ***Concerns for safety and sexual harassment***

While the expectation of sexual purity might restrict women's mobility for education and employment, women's own fear of sexual harassment and abuse while commuting to or at work are also among the most important reasons why some women refrain from participating in the labor markets. Surveys and research demonstrate that this is an issue that takes place globally. Based on 150,000 interviews conducted by Gallup in 142 countries, the 2020 World Risk Poll shows that nearly 11 percent of female workers globally have experienced workplace violence and harassment. According to this report, women in Malawi and Swaziland expressed the greatest levels of worry of sexual harassment with 75 percent and 72 percent respectively while the same figure was 42 percent for Finnish female workers.<sup>11</sup>

Surveys conducted in developed countries where gender equality is higher show that women in these countries are not immune to sexual harassment. 2020 Sexual Harassment Survey conducted by the UK Government Equalities Office shows that nearly three-quarters (72 percent) of the UK population experienced at least one form of sexual harassment in their lifetime, while two-in-five (43 percent) experienced at least one sexual harassment behavior in the last 12 months. In terms of workplace harassment, 29 percent of those in employment reported having experienced some form of sexual harassment in their workplace or work-related environment in the last 12 months. More than a quarter of people in the UK who had experienced sexual harassment in the last 12 months experienced it on public transport (28 percent), and, of these, 62 percent reported to have experienced an incident on a bus.<sup>12</sup> Another study conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) confirms these findings for the European Union (EU) countries. The report which is prepared based on interviews with 42,000 women across the 28 Member States of the EU shows that 11 percent of women have experienced some form of sexual violence since they were

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<sup>9</sup> Concerns over sexual purity in patriarchal societies also create demand for single sex education.

<sup>10</sup> Other studies also show that better infrastructure that alleviates security concerns could offset some of the effect that limit girls' mobility and education prospects. See Muralidharan & Prakash (2013) and Adukia et al (2020).

<sup>11</sup> <https://wrp.lrfoundation.org.uk/explore-the-poll/women-across-the-world-fear-violence-at-work/>

<sup>12</sup>

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1002873/2021-07-12\\_Sexual\\_Harassment\\_Report\\_FINAL.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1002873/2021-07-12_Sexual_Harassment_Report_FINAL.pdf)

15 years old, by a partner or some other person. One in 20 women (5 percent) has experienced rape at or over the age of 15.<sup>13</sup> The Domestic Violence Against Women Surveys of Turkstat reveal that in 2014, 35.5 percent of women in Turkey reported that they experienced physical violence and 12 percent reported that they experienced sexual violence at least once in their lifetimes. The percentage of women who report that they experienced physical and sexual violence at least once in the last 12 months are correspondingly 8.2 and 5.3 percent. Unfortunately, these figures are yet to be updated for more recent years which would enable researchers to evaluate whether incidences of physical and sexual violence have increased or not. There is also no official statistics on physical and sexual violence experienced by refugee women, although field studies show that sexual harassment is among the main problems reported by refugee women in Turkey (see Alpak et al. (2014); Baklacioğlu (2017); Baklacioğlu and Kivilcim (2015)).

Siddique (2021) explores how safety concerns, together with cultural norms associated with women's purity, have an impact on behavior such as female labor supply in India and finds that one standard deviation increase in lagged media reports per 1000 people of local sexual assaults reduces the probability that a woman is employed outside her home by 5.5 percent. Chakraborty et al. (2018) show that women in India are less likely to work away from home in regions where the perceived threat of sexual harassment against girls is higher. Furthermore, the deterrence effect of crime is stronger for women from conservative families and stronger for women earning wages. In line with these findings, Borker (2018) shows women students in India choose a lower-quality college within the Delhi University system which offers a safer commute from home, whereas male students give this concern little weight. The amount of money Indian women, relative to men, are willing to spend annually to have a commute that is safer is 300 USD, which is almost twice the annual university fees. The international evidence thus suggests that fear of sexual harassment not only affects women's decisions to participate in labor markets, but also their education decisions and human capital accumulation, which have implications for overall gender inequalities in societies.

### **Section III. What works? Evidence on effective policies**

International evidence shows that some policy interventions are more effective than others for empowering women economically and incentivizing female labor force participation. Most of the studies which are highlighted in this section are based on randomized controlled experiments or other methods that are proved to be state of the art and have high scientific credibility.

It should be noted, however, that there is no magic bullet that works in every context, in all countries. As the literature highlights, most of the programs targeting women are context-specific and there are layers of factors that might hinder the success of similar programs in other countries.

***Granting political rights to women and expanding women's political and civic representation:*** increase in political representation reshapes attitudes toward women as leaders and raises the aspirations of and long-term investments made by girls and their families. Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004) investigate the impact of the amendment to the constitution of India which randomly reserved one-third of Village Council head positions to women in 1993. The study compares the type of public goods provided in reserved and unreserved Village Councils and finds that policy decisions in reserved villages with women elected as leaders better reflect women's preferences. Evaluating the

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<sup>13</sup> [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/fra-2014-vaw-survey-main-results-apr14\\_en.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2014-vaw-survey-main-results-apr14_en.pdf)

same policy change in India, Beaman et al. (2009) show that prior exposure to a female chief councilor improved perceptions of female leader effectiveness and weakened stereotypes about gender roles in the public and domestic spheres. And quite strikingly, surveying adolescent girls aged 11 to 15 and their parents in 495 villages, Beaman et al. (2012) find that female leadership in these villages influenced adolescent girls' career aspirations and educational attainment in comparison to unreserved villages. The gender gap in aspirations closed by 20 percent in parents and 32 percent in adolescents; the gender gap in adolescent educational attainment was erased, and girls spent less time on household chores in two election cycles after the amendment in 1993.

***Measures to change women's (and men's) attitudes:*** experimental studies show that promoting success stories and role models are effective in changing cultural norms. Dhar et al. (2018) evaluate a school-based intervention in India that engaged adolescents in classroom discussions about gender equality for two and a half years with the goal of eroding their support for restrictive gender norms. Using a randomized controlled trial, the study finds that the program was successful to transform attitudes for greater gender equality, especially among boys and the effects observed in the short run were still present two years after the program had ended. Alan et al. (2018) find that the 3rd and 4th-grade girls in Turkey who are taught for longer than a year by teachers with traditional gender views have lower performance in objective math and verbal tests, and this effect is amplified with longer exposure to the same teacher. The study finds no effect on boys. Some studies also document the positive impact of soap operas (in Brazil, La Ferrara et al. (2012)) and cable TV (in India, by Jensen & Oster (2009)) on reducing fertility, acceptability of domestic violence toward women, and son preference.

***Providing financial incentives for parents to invest in girls:*** policies such as conditional cash transfers are proven to be effective in leveling the field for girls' education, which can influence their future outcomes for inclusion in the labor market. Schultz (2004) shows that the Progresa program which provided poor mothers in rural Mexico with education grants increased the education enrollment rate of girls by 14.8 percentage points compared with the boys whose enrollment increased 6.5 percentage points. Aygün et al. (2021) explore the impact of the unconditional cash transfers provided to Syrian refugees in Turkey, one of world's largest cash transfer programs for refugees. The study documents that the program reduced the share of boys not in school from 28.4 percent to 10.4 percent and the share of girls not in school from 24.9 to 10.3 percent.

***Ensuring Women's Safety at Work and While Commuting:*** studies show that better transportation networks and measures to reduce the likelihood of crime during commutes foster female employment. Martinez et al. (2018) show that the improved transport system due to Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) in the metropolitan region of Lima, Perú had large effects on employment and earnings per hour among women, but not for men. Similarly, Seki and Yamada (2020) show that the Delhi Metro project significantly increased the female labor force participation rate, whereas its effect on males was ambiguous. Although there is controversy over women-only-subways and the so-called "pink busses"<sup>14</sup>, Aguilar et al. (2021) find that subway cars reserved only for women in Mexico City

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<sup>14</sup> The controversy mainly stems from the concerns that establishing women-only transport systems may further justify men's attitudes on sexual harassment in mixed public transport system by associating women traveling in the public space with sexual provocation.

were successful at reducing sexual harassment toward women by 2.9 percentage points.<sup>15</sup> Kondylis et al. (2020) implement an interesting experiment to document the costs to women of harassment on public transit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. They randomly assign women to ride in either the women-reserved space or the public space and find that riders in the public space experience sexual harassment in 18 percent of rides, of which 15 percent are instances of physical harassment. Their findings imply that the average woman commuting in the public space is sexually harassed once or twice a week and physically harassed once a month. On the other hand, riders assigned to the women reserved space experience 50 percent lower rates of physical harassment relative to the public space. The study documents that 60 percent of riders cite avoiding harassment as the main advantage of the reserved space.

***Business skills training, coordination among working women and mentoring:*** There is a growing literature which shows that efforts to improve women's business knowledge and success are effective in many different contexts. Employing a randomized controlled experiment in Sri Lanka, De Mel et al. (2014) find that training female business owners leads to improvements in business practices, but no detectable effects on profitability or employment, whereas training for new business owners is more effective. Valdivia (2015) evaluates the effects of a business training program serving female micro-entrepreneurs in Lima using an experimental design and finds that women who received training increased sales revenues and self-reported the adoption of recommended business practices. Due to social norms limiting women's mobility, women lack rich networks of peer entrepreneurs. Formal business training can be especially helpful in socially conservative communities where women are less free to casually interact with others and learn business tips informally (Jayachandran, (2021)). Field et al. (2016) implements a very interesting randomized controlled experiment in India where a random sample of customers of India's largest women's bank was offered two days of business counseling, and a random subsample was invited to attend with a friend. The experiment shows that the training significantly increased participants' business activity, but only if they were trained with a friend. Those trained with a friend were more likely to have taken out business loans, were less likely to be housewives, and reported increased business activity and higher household income, with stronger impacts among women subject to social norms that restrict female mobility. In a similar experimental design, Lafortune et al. (2018) tested the impact of business training in Chile and find that visits by an alumna of the program who became successful in her business or individually increased participants' business profits.

***Making it easier to balance work and family and increased access to childcare:*** As explained in the previous section, women are in greater need of flexible hours as well as support for childcare, compared to their male counterparts. Olivetti and Petrongolo (2017) review the existing evidence and argue that the two measures which have the strongest impact on female employment are the childcare subsidies and in-work benefits such as tax credits (mostly) to low-income workers with children. Diaz et al. (2013) provide a summary of impact evaluations of childcare interventions around the world and suggest that the international evidence shows consistent and strong positive effects of access to childcare on maternal labor force participation. Jayachandran (2021) also reviews the evidence and documents that the range of estimated effects of childcare on female employment is between 5 percent (in Chile) and 46 percent (in Brazil). And finally, as Blau and Currie (2006) argue, pre-school and out-of-school care not only makes it feasible for both parents or the only parent in a

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<sup>15</sup> A side effect of the program was, however, that led to an increase in nonsexual aggression incidents such as insults and shoving among men by 15.3 percentage points.

single-parent family to be employed but also enhances child development, particularly among disadvantaged children.

**Improving access to finance:** A significant proportion of micro-entrepreneurs in developing countries are women, but female-owned businesses tend to underperform compared to male-owned businesses. Studies show programs like microfinance tend to fail because resources might be extracted by men. A randomized controlled experiment by De Mel et al. (2008) evaluates the returns to giving cash grants to micro-entrepreneurs in Sri Lanka and finds grants given to men but not women raise profits considerably. In a follow-up study, De Mel et al. (2009) finds no evidence that the gender gap is explained by differences in ability, risk aversion, or entrepreneurial attitudes. The study does find that a smaller share of the smaller grants remained in the female-owned enterprises, that women's grants were "captured" by other household members. The literature shows that one solution is non-cash support or mobile money deposit (Riley (2020)). Fafchamps et al. (2014) show that the program which randomly gave cash and in-kind grants to male- and female-owned microenterprises in urban Ghana were effective only for women who received in-kind grants. The study explains the results as a flypaper effect whereby capital coming directly into the business sticks there, but cash does not. Improved financial control might also be effective for defying gender norms in certain contexts. Field et al. (2021) implemented an experiment in collaboration with Indian government partners and provided rural women with individual bank accounts. Women in a random subset of villages were also trained on account use. The study finds that in the short run, relative to women who were just offered bank accounts, those who also received direct deposit and training increased their labor supply in the public and private sectors. It shows that in the long run, gender norms liberalized: women who received direct deposit and training became more accepting of female work, and their husbands perceived fewer social costs to having a wife who works.

#### **Section IV. Literature on refugee women's integration and employment**

As the OECD and many other studies highlight, migrant women face layers of disadvantages as they have lower outcomes compared to both migrant men and host-community women (Grenier and Xue (2011)). Compared to other migrant groups, refugees are much more disadvantaged both socially and economically. They face lower employment rates and if they are employed, they earn lower wage. Financial instability, or accommodation creates barriers to their integration process, women refugees with lower education face extra difficulties. Liebig and Tronstad (2018) suggest that refugee women in fact face "triple disadvantage" as the challenges related to gender, legal status and forced migration add up, or even mutually reinforce each other.

Liebig and Tronstad (2018) document that while women account for only 30 percent of asylum seekers across Europe, about 45 percent of refugees are women. In contrast to refugee men, refugee women often come through family reunification or resettlement. Compared with both other migrant women and refugee men, refugee women tend to have lower education levels and are overrepresented among those lacking basic qualifications.<sup>16</sup> Refugee women take more time to get

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<sup>16</sup> In over two-thirds of OECD and EU countries, immigrant women have larger gaps with respect to employment vis-à-vis their native-born peers than immigrant men.



established in the labor market compared with refugee men. Men experience relatively steep gains in employment rates during the first 5-9 years after arrival while the integration of refugee women takes at least 10-15 years.

The report by OECD (2020) on strengthening the integration of migrant women documents that migrant women remain disproportionately at higher risk of exclusion from the labor market. In the EU, foreign-born are significantly more likely than native-born to experience long-term unemployment, and foreign-born women consistently more so than foreign-born men since 2007. Furthermore, the report also shows that among working migrant women, 23 percent are in low-skilled employment, 8 percentage points more than among native-born women across the OECD countries. The difference in the EU is 10 percentage points, and more than one in four migrant women is working in low-skilled jobs (26 percent). Among the migrant population of women that are in employment, 23 percent are in low-skilled employment, 8 percentage points more than among native-born women. The difference in the EU is 10 percentage points, and more than one in four migrant women are working in low-skilled jobs.

Where there are differences in language, language barriers are arguably one of the most important problems that refugees face in successfully integrating into the host society and labor markets, and this is particularly true for refugee women. Using data from the 2014 EU Labour Force Survey Liebiger and Tronstad (2018) show that refugee women with intermediate or advanced levels of proficiency in the host-country language have a full 40 percentage points higher employment rate than those with little or no language skills. Once accounting for observable differences in socio-demographic characteristics, the difference is halved but still remains much stronger than for other migrant women. Grenier and Xue (2011) show that in Canada, refugee women with working English knowledge are much more likely to find jobs. On the other hand, a survey by UN Women (2016) shows that in Jordan, where the Syrian refugee population is the second highest in the world, Jordanian and Syrian women list childcare, household responsibilities and family objection as the primary reasons for not working. At the same time, women report structural reasons, such as lack of opportunities in the area (15 percent), lack of opportunities compatible with skills and training (11 percent) and lack of opportunities for women specifically (6 percent) as the main barriers to women's employment.

While some studies in the literature suggest that building basic skills in terms of educational attainment and host-country language training bears a high return in terms of improving labor market outcomes, others show that language skills matter more for immigrants' and refugees' children's integration into the host societies. Children of immigrant parents, and especially those with parents born outside the EU, have lower education and labor market outcomes than their peers with native-born parents, especially for those migrating from Turkey (Crul and Schneider, (2009); Heath et al. (2008); van de Werfhorst and van Tubergen (2007)). OECD (2017) examines the intergenerational aspects of immigrants in the EU and argues that the integration of refugee women has positive effects on children's educational and employment outcomes in Austria, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, the United States and Canada. As evidence from Turkey also shows, being able to communicate with teachers remains among the top reasons why refugee women believe language courses are necessary. Kayaoğlu and Erdoğan (2019) suggest that having a higher level of education



and Turkish language proficiency are associated with a higher likelihood of being employed as regular workers across Syrian women in Turkey.

OECD (2020) documents that having had a working mother at age 14 (as opposed to a mother staying at home) increases the employment probability for native-born children of immigrants from a non-EU country by about twice as much as for their peers with native-born parents (4 percentage points). For daughters of non-EU-origin women, the difference is most pronounced: having a working mother instead of one staying at home increases daughters' employment rate by 16 percentage points. Several studies examine the role of source country gender norms in explaining refugee women's labor market behavior. Hou and Frank (2013) explore whether source-country gender roles affect the paid and unpaid (i.e. housework) labor of immigrant women in Canada. The results show that the female-male labor activity ratio and female-male secondary education ratio in source countries—two indicators of source-country gender roles—are both positively associated with immigrant women's labor supply and negatively associated with the amount of housework that they perform. Senthana et al. (2021) argue that refugees emigrating from countries with less equitable attitudes about employment for women may, in turn, be less inclined to participate in the host country labor market and those who participate do so mostly out of financial necessity, having to navigate labor market barriers as well as managing a familial role. OECD (2020) shows that across the EU, 22 percent of the foreign-born population and 16 percent of the native-born population agree with the statement that "when jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women". On the other hand, Liebig and Tronstad (2018) document that there is a peak in fertility in the year after arrival to host countries and a large fraction has come from countries where gender inequality is high and employment of women tends to be low.

Existing studies on refugee women suggest that social contact with the local population is key for integration. Refugee women frequently receive less integration support than their male counterparts; especially with respect to employment-related measures (Tronstad and Hernes (2014), Albrecht et al. (2021)). Social contact with citizens greatly increases refugee women's chances of finding a job. Worbs and Baraulina (2017) find that weekly personal contact with Germans is associated with a 12 percentage points higher employment probability among refugee women. The analysis shows no statistically significant association for refugee men.

Asylum processes play an important role in the early integration of refugees. The literature shows that the time spent in refugee camps or other asylum centers affects the future integration processes of refugees. In the Netherlands, Bakker et al. (2014) show that a longer stay in an asylum center decreases the likelihood and quality of employment of refugees. They also showed that temporary legal refugee status in the Netherlands slows down socio-economic integration. Another problem with the integration process of refugees is geographically dispersing asylum seekers. Most countries in Europe apply strict laws to force refugees to live in specific locations because it is believed that dispersing refugees will boost their economic and social integration. For instance, in Germany, refugees lose their financial support if they leave the federal state they were assigned to (Martén et al. (2019)). However, Martén et al, (2019) find that living closer to their respective communities eases the integration process and shows the importance of creating policies that protect the networks of different refugee groups.

Another important factor that might limit refugee women's integration into society and the labor market is mental health issues and the high incidence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) seen in refugee women. As Albrecht et al. (2021) highlight, refugees usually have to overcome a dangerous journey in fleeing to host countries, while many face scandalous conditions in refugee camps. And what is worse is that refugee women are often victims of sexual violence while in transit to host countries (OECD (2019)); Albrecht et al. (2021)). Liebig and Tronstad (2018) document that in Australia, 24 percent of refugee women report serious mental health problems shortly after and in the two years after arrival, respectively, compared with 15 percent of men. Incidences of PTSD was also higher for refugee women, at 37 percent. In Norway, 20 percent of refugee women report symptoms of anxiety and depression (Liebig and Tronstad (2018)). Alpak et al. (2014) finds that the incidence of PTSD is 33.5 percent among the Syrian refugees in Turkey and that the rate is significantly higher for Syrian women in camps.

## **Section V. Literature on refugee movements to Turkey and its impact on refugee economic participation**

Most of the international evidence in the labor economics literature suggests that effects of immigration on average host community workers' wages and employment are generally small or zero (Clemens and Hunt, (2019)). The immigration of low skilled labor is a particular concern for policymakers in most countries, but studies show time and time again that while immigrants might replace local workers in some of the low skilled and low paying jobs, their existence also leads to the creation of new jobs because of the increased demand for goods and services in the economy.<sup>17</sup> The same applies to the case of Syrians in Turkey, where Syrian refugees boost consumption, increase the demand for housing and also establish their own businesses, which in turn spurs job creation (Aşık, (2017)).

Several studies investigate the impact of Syrian refugee inflows on the employment prospects for the host community and find mostly small effects on men but slightly more negative impact on the participation and employment of low skilled native women (Ceritoğlu et. al (2017)). Del Carpio and Wagner (2015) show that persons with lower education and women experience net displacement from the labor market; around 6 persons from the host community for every 10 refugees. Aksu et al. (2018) find that total female employment falls, an effect which results mainly from the elimination of part-time jobs. The study also suggests that the refugee influx had adverse effects on the informal market in Turkey, increasing the job competition between refugees' and host-community workers. However, the study also points to the favorable effects of refugee influx on complementary workers in the formal sector. Aracı et al. (2021) find that the impact of refugees on the host community's labor market outcomes becomes significantly less adverse as regional development level rises. Existing studies also show the positive impact of Syrian refugees on local economies. Altındağ et al. (2020) show a one-percentage-point increase in the share of refugees to total population boosts a firm's electricity by 4.3 percent and these effects are entirely driven by small-to-medium-sized firms. They are also more pronounced among those operating in the construction, restaurant, and hotel sectors.

The studies summarized above are predominantly concerned with the economic effects of Syrian refugees in Turkey using nationally representative official data. There are other field studies that look

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<sup>17</sup> There are studies showing that in the long-run migration fosters innovation. See Akcigit et al. (2017)

at the specific work and living conditions and challenges faced by Syrian women in Turkey. These studies are usually based on face-to-face interviews. Hence, they inevitably depend on a limited number of observations and their statistical representation might not be guaranteed. Nevertheless, they provide useful information on the problems faced by women which cannot always be observed through nationally representative household surveys.

Fieldwork by Körükmez, Karakılıç, and Daniş (2020) is among these studies. The interviews conducted in the fieldwork show that the main reason why refugee women start working is the economic hardships faced within the household. Thus, most of the employment is involuntary. The study highlights that Syrian women (and men) tend to see women working as a loss of social status. The socio-economic background of women in their native country is an important predictor of labor market outcomes in Turkey. The other key findings of the study are that social networks are key to finding jobs, and that Syrian women report significant discrimination at the hands of Turkish women at work. Yet, the study suggests that interviewed women nevertheless report a sense of empowerment due to employment. Fieldwork by Baklacioğlu (2017) documents the immense degree of sexual harassment faced by women from Syria, especially in the camps. Syrian women who are attached to a Syrian man tend to feel safer, however, in many cases, sexual violence and exploitation are normalized and legitimized in the private sphere.

Other studies suggest that a lack of access to decent jobs is among the most significant barriers for refugee women in Turkey. Based on a field study conducted in Istanbul, Gaziantep, and Kilis, Baban et al. (2017) argue that the temporary protection status of Syrian refugees renders them more precarious than might be the case had they received a designation of conditional refugee status. The restricted number of work permits forces Syrian refugees into pathways of precarity as well as informality and limits their ability to fully benefit from the extension of social citizenship rights in other areas. Dedeoğlu (2021) argues that the precarious work of Syrians in the Turkish agricultural sector has been widely influenced by intersecting vulnerabilities put into play to have access to agricultural jobs. Syrian families rely on patriarchal control through the alliance formed by men in their communities to channel women and children's labor into production.

## **Section VI. Legal framework and work permit for foreigners in Turkey**

The Turkish legal system puts strict regulations on the employment of non-Turkish citizens. Law No. 4817 on Work Permits for Foreigners issued in 2003 defined the term "foreigner" as any person who is not a Turkish national within the scope of Turkish Nationality Law. This allows foreigners to work in Turkey by means of a work permit but does not centralize the management of work permits to be issued (Toksöz et al. (2012)). In 2013, the Law on Foreigners and International Protection No. 6458 was adopted, and certain articles of Law No. 4817 were amended to ensure consistency with the new law. The International Labor Force Law No. 6735 was adopted by the Turkish Grand National Assembly in July 2016, which extended five types of work permits: temporary, permanent, independent, Turquoise Card, and work permit exemptions. Temporary work permits enable foreigners to have a one-year work permit on their first application given that they are employed for a certain job in a certain workplace. If foreigners have long-term residence permits or a minimum of eight years of work permits, then they may apply for a permanent work permit. An Independent work permit is granted to foreigners who are willing to work independently in their area of expertise. Turquoise Cards aim to attract qualified and academically advanced foreigners to the country by

simplifying the citizenship process. The purpose is to increase the employment and investment capacity of the country by encouraging qualified foreigners to work and start their businesses in Turkey.

The “Regulation Concerning Work Permits of Foreigners Under Temporary Protection”, was prepared based on the 29th Article of “Regulation on Temporary Protection”, and entered into force on 15 January 2016. According to this legislation, labor regulations for Syrians under temporary protection have the following pillars (Syrian Barometer, (2019)). **Duration Condition:** Refugees must remain in Turkey with the temporary protection status for at least 6 months. **Location Condition:** Employment is only possible in the provinces where the individual is registered (with certain exceptions). **Quota:** The number of workers under temporary protection cannot be more than 10 percent of the total number of workers at an establishment. **Employer Condition:** Application for the work permit must be made by the employer with whom the foreigner under temporary protection will work. **Wage Condition:** Employers cannot pay workers less than the prevailing official minimum wage. **İŞKUR:** Foreigners under temporary protection can participate in the courses and programs organized by İŞKUR. **Exception:** An exception to the requirement of a work permit can be issued by provincial governorates for those who will work as seasonal agricultural and husbandry workers. **Limitation:** Syrians cannot apply to jobs and occupations which are exclusively limited to Turkish citizens by law, such as practicing law, dentistry, nursery, veterinary, pharmacy, notary, open sea fishing.<sup>18</sup>

Table 1. Work Permits Issued for All Foreigners Since 2011

Year	Female		Male		Total
	Number	%	Number	%	
2011	8.396	48,1	9.070	51,9	17.466
2012	19.552	60,6	12.727	39,4	32.279
2013	28.406	62,0	17.417	38,0	45.823
2014	31.308	59,9	20.986	40,1	52.295
2015	37.621	58,3	26.899	41,7	64.521
2016	35.601	48,4	37.948	51,6	73.549
2017	37.756	43,3	49.426	56,7	87.182
2018	48.087	41,5	67.750	58,5	115.837
2019	50.690	34,9	94.542	65,1	145.232
2020	41.853	33,9	81.721	66,1	123.574

Source: ÇSGB, Çalışma Hayatı İstatistikleri, 2020

According to the Ministry of Labor’s 2020 (latest available) yearbook on work permits; a total of 633.7 thousand work permits were granted cumulatively between 2011-2019, of which 140.3 thousand of

<sup>18</sup> Source: Ministry of Labor and Social Security  
<https://www.csgb.gov.tr/uigm/calisma-izni/turk-vatandaslarina-hasredilen-meslekler/>

these permits were issued to citizens of Syria.<sup>19</sup> The annual breakdown is as follows. In 2016, 13.3 thousand; in 2017, 23 thousand; in 2018, 34.6 thousand; in 2019, 63.8 thousand; and in 2020, 63.4 thousand Syrians were granted work permits. Unfortunately, the number of work permits remains extremely low relative to the 3.7 million individuals who are registered under the Temporary Protection Law in Turkey. According to the Ministry of Interior, there are a total of 2.1 million Syrians between the ages of 15-64, implying that work permits are extended only to 6 percent of the working age population. Gender composition by nationality is unfortunately not disclosed in the report.

## **Section VII. Labor Market Opportunities of Women in Turkey**

After providing insights from the international literature on barriers faced by host community and refugee women in economic empowerment, this section provides a quantitative description of the profile and labor market opportunities of women in Turkey based on existing data. While there are numerous official data sources for thorough investigation of the labor market barriers faced by women born in Turkey, representative data sources remain quite limited for refugee women. One of the key reasons that it is hard to integrate refugees into official data sources is that the Turkish Statistics Agency samples individuals using the Address Based Population Registration System (ABPRS). Since most refugees do not have permanent addresses and move frequently, identifying their conditions in the household labor force surveys was and continues to be a challenge.

The quantitative analyses provided in the rest of this report mostly rely on two official and nationally representative data sets which contain comprehensive information on the labor market profile of women living in Turkey. The first one is the 2018 Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS). These surveys are conducted every 5 years by the Institute of Population Studies at Hacettepe University in collaboration with the Turkish Republic, Presidency of Turkey Directorate of Strategy and Budget, and the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK). The purpose of the DHS is to gather data to formulate national indicators related to demographics, fertility, child mortality, maternal health, and the nutritional status of women and children. Data is collected through in-person interviews conducted in the home. The sample includes women aged 15-49 and provides a rich set of information on individual characteristics such as education, fertility, employment history and cultural views. Unlike previous DHS' conducted in Turkey, the latest DHS in 2018 includes a Syrian module with exact questionnaires as Turkish citizens. The number of observations is 2,216 for Syrian women (of which 11 percent were living in camps) and 7,344 for women citizens of Turkey. The sample is nationally representative for Syrian and Turkish women. While the DHS data is a very useful source to objectively study the labor market conditions of women in Turkey, especially Syrian women, it has a key limitation: since this data is collected to gather information on fertility trends worldwide, it does not include women aged above 49. It is also not a labor force survey per se, and information on husbands/partners is limited.

The second data source is the 2014-2020 Household Labor Force Surveys (HLFS) collected by the Turkish Statistics Agency. These surveys are conducted regularly to measure employment, unemployment, and several other labor market trends in Turkey. They include a rich set of information on labor market characteristics of individuals, such as wages earned, hours worked and

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<sup>19</sup> It is not clear in the official statistics whether these figures represent permits given to a unique number of individuals or whether some of the figures include renewal of existing permits.

type of employment. The micro data between 2014-2020 include 1.3 million observations on women and 1.4 million observations on men. They are nationally representative, and samples are selected based on the address registry system. A key advantage of the HLFS is that the information provided in these surveys help in measuring wage gaps and differences in hours worked across genders, sectors and education groups. Unlike the 2018 DHS though, the HLFS does not contain a separate module for refugees, but it includes key information that helps researchers to identify whether an individual was born abroad and/or has previously resided outside Turkey. Using this information, it is possible to analyze the labor market characteristics of foreign women and men living in Turkey.<sup>20</sup> However, it is important to emphasize that foreigners identified in HLFS do not consist of only refugees but also individuals with other nationalities and Turkish nationals born abroad. Though the latter constitutes a smaller share of the foreign population in Turkey, this may still have an impact on the available data.

In addition to these two official data sources described above, this report benefits from other information presented in secondary sources. In this regard, the 2018 report on the “Needs Assessment of Syrian Women and Girls Under Temporary Protection Status in Turkey” by UN-Women and the Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants (SGDD-ASAM) was particularly helpful for identifying the non-labor market challenges faced by refugee women in Turkey. The other resource that this report benefited from immensely is the 2019 Syrian Barometer commissioned by the UNHCR. The Syrian Barometer provides useful information on the conditions faced by Syrian refugees in Turkey and recommendations on how to achieve social cohesion.

Lastly, this report is limited in that it provides limited insights on the situation of refugee women of any origin except Syrian. Comparable, consistent, and representative data for women from other countries of origin, such as Afghanistan and Iraq, among others, are almost nonexistent. This is in part due to the fact that the humanitarian crisis and the mass migration from Syria have inevitably directed the public focus on Syrians in Turkey. Unfortunately, the experience shows that refugees are not a homogenous group, and inequalities, discrimination, and hierarchies exist within refugee groups. Labor market conditions of some of these disadvantaged women are likely to be captured in the HLFS, but it is unfortunately not possible to identify their countries of origin, as the country of birth information is not provided in the available datasets.

### ***Syrian Women in Turkey***

The Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM) and UNHCR indicate that there are in total 3.7 million Syrian refugees (2 million men and 1.7 million women) and 320 thousand refugees from other nationalities in Turkey as of December 2021. Syrian refugees constitute 4.5 percent of the total population of Turkey. The total number of refugees remaining in camps is 51.6 thousand. As Table 2 shows, according to the DHS of 2018, the Syrian population consisted of mostly younger individuals: 44.9 percent of Syrians in Turkey are less than 15 years old, and 47.4 percent is aged between 15 and 49.<sup>21</sup>

According to the DHS, Syrian households in Turkey have 6 members on average, and 10 percent of households are female headed. 79 percent of Syrian children under age 5 are registered with civil authorities. 78 percent of Syrian girls aged 6-13 attend primary or secondary school, compared to 74 percent of boys. The net attendance ratio drops in high school: 17 percent of Syrian girls and 12

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<sup>20</sup> Pinedo-Caro (2019) provides a methodology to identify the Syrian refugees in Turkish HLFS.

<sup>21</sup> The percent of Syrians below age 15 is 40.5 percent as of March 2022, according to the Ministry of Interior.

percent of Syrian boys aged 14-17 attend high school. The median age at first marriage is 19.3 years for Syrian women aged 25-49. The DHS also shows that the total fertility rate of Syrians in Turkey is 5.3 births per woman, whereas the same figure is 2.3 for women from Turkey. Fertility peaks in the 20-24 age group. The median birth interval is 27 months for Syrian women and about one fifth of non-first births occur within 18 months of the preceding birth. Median birth interval is 44 months for women from Turkey.

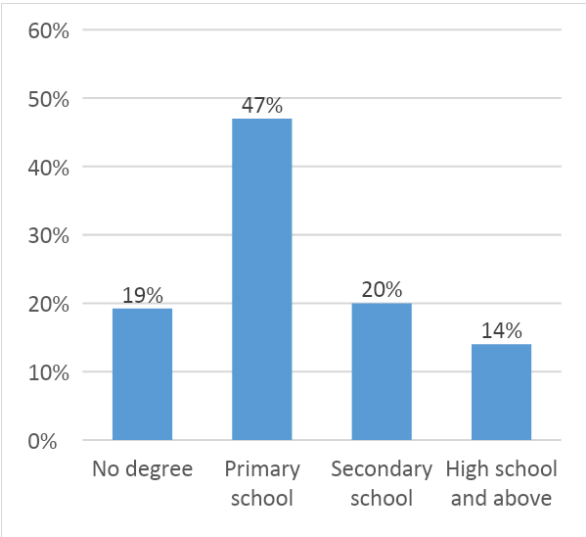
*Table 2. Age Profile of Syrians in Turkey, 2018*

	Male	Female	Total
<i>Less than 5 years old</i>	18.6	17.4	18.0
<i>5-9 years old</i>	13.4	14.0	13.7
<i>10-14 years old</i>	12.7	13.7	13.2
<i>15-19 years old</i>	10.5	9.8	10.2
<i>20-24 years old</i>	10.4	9.9	10.2
<i>25-29 years old</i>	8.2	8.5	8.4
<i>30-34 years old</i>	7.5	6.5	7.1
<i>35-39 years old</i>	5.3	5.0	5.1
<i>40-44 years old</i>	3.7	4.0	3.8
<i>45-49 years old</i>	2.7	2.5	2.6
<i>50-54 years old</i>	2.4	2.9	2.6
<i>55-59 years old</i>	1.3	2.0	1.7
<i>60-64 years old</i>	1.5	1.5	1.5
<i>65-69 years old</i>	0.8	1.1	0.9
<i>70-74 years old</i>	0.5	0.6	0.5
<i>75+ years old</i>	0.6	0.7	0.5

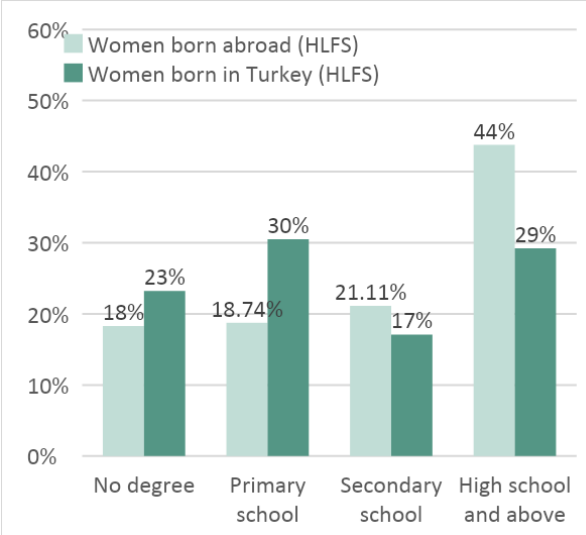
*Source: DHS 2018, sample weights are used*

Figure 2 displays the distribution of education profiles of both Syrian women in the 2018 DHS sample and all women living in Turkey, using the HLFS sample between 2014-2020. Panel (b) of Figure 2 makes a distinction between two types of women; those who were born in Turkey and have lived in Turkey until now, and those who were born abroad and had their previous residency outside Turkey. The two figures show some disparities across the two datasets. The DHS sample shows that Syrian women have overall lower education compared to both the women in Turkey and other women born outside Turkey but migrated to Turkey. According to the data, 86 percent of Syrian women have secondary school degrees (8 years of schooling) or fewer qualifications, whereas the same figure is 30 percentage points lower, i.e. 56 percent for all foreign women living in Turkey. As for Turkish women, on average 71 percent have 8 years or less schooling. Figure 2 also shows that the share of women with high school or tertiary education is much higher among all foreign women living in Turkey compared to Syrian and Turkish women.

Figure 2 Education Profile of Women from Syria (DHS 2018) and All Women in Turkey (HLFS 2014-2020)



a) Women from Syria (DHS)



b) All women living in Turkey (HLFS)

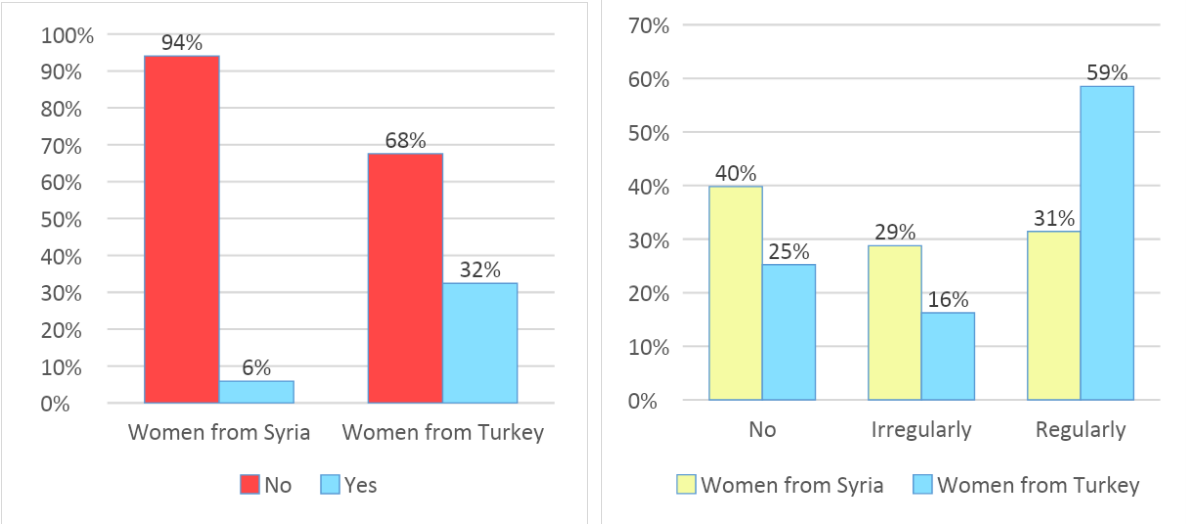
Source: 2018 DHS and HLFS 2014-2020, sample weights are used in both datasets

UN-Women’s needs assessment (2018) reveals some striking facts about the conditions and challenges faced by Syrian women in Turkey. The limited resources available to Syrian households are often only sufficient to cover the cost of the most basic needs. According to the survey collected for the report, 36 percent of women describe their home as bad or very bad to live in, 62 percent as habitable, while only 2.2 percent report as very good. 39.8 percent of women from Syria report that they go out once a week or less. Furthermore, the Syrian households are unfortunately obliged to move frequently due to high rents and their dependence on landlords, as the survey shows. Most Syrian women are also unaware of key public services that they have access to. As the needs assessment shows, 30 percent of Syrian women report they had accessed family planning services while 50 percent were not aware that this service is available; 39 percent did not know that they could visit a gynecologist, and 60 percent did not realize that they could access psychological help. The DHS sample also provides some information with respect to the limited freedoms of Syrian



women. Figure 3 shows that 94 percent of Syrian women report that they do not have money to spend for themselves whereas the same figure is 68 percent in the Turkish sample of the DHS. On the other hand, 40 percent of women from Syria report that they have no access to the internet and only 31 percent have regular access to the internet. In the Turkish sample of the DHS, 59 percent of the women reported that they have frequent access to the internet while 25 percent have no access.

Figure 3 Limited Freedoms and Opportunities (DHS 2018)



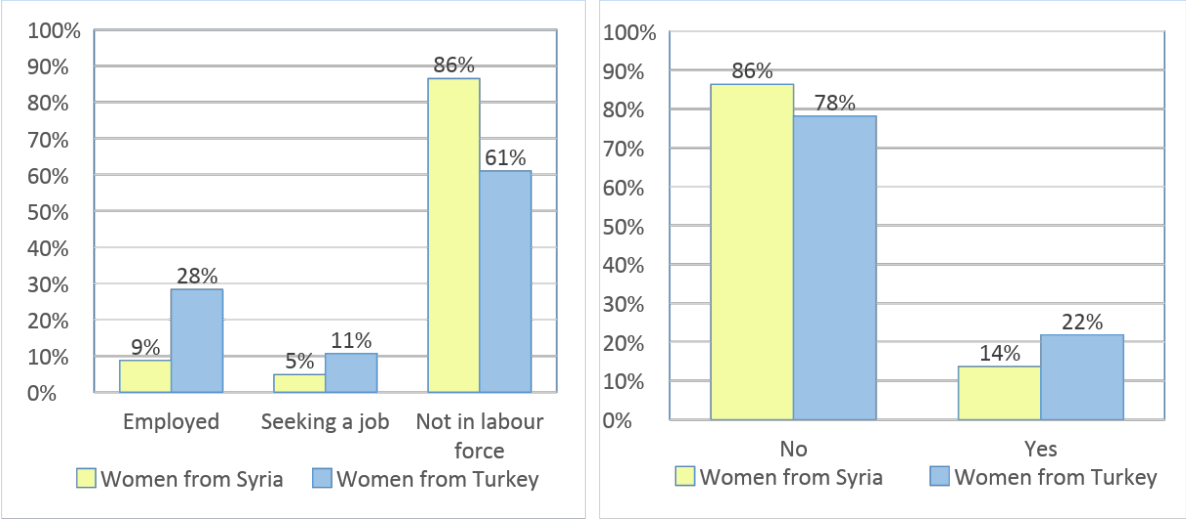
a) Money to spend for herself (DHS)

b) Internet access (DHS)

Source: 2018 DHS, sample weights are used.

**Labor market profile of Syrian and other women in Turkey**

Figure 4. Economic Participation of Women in DHS



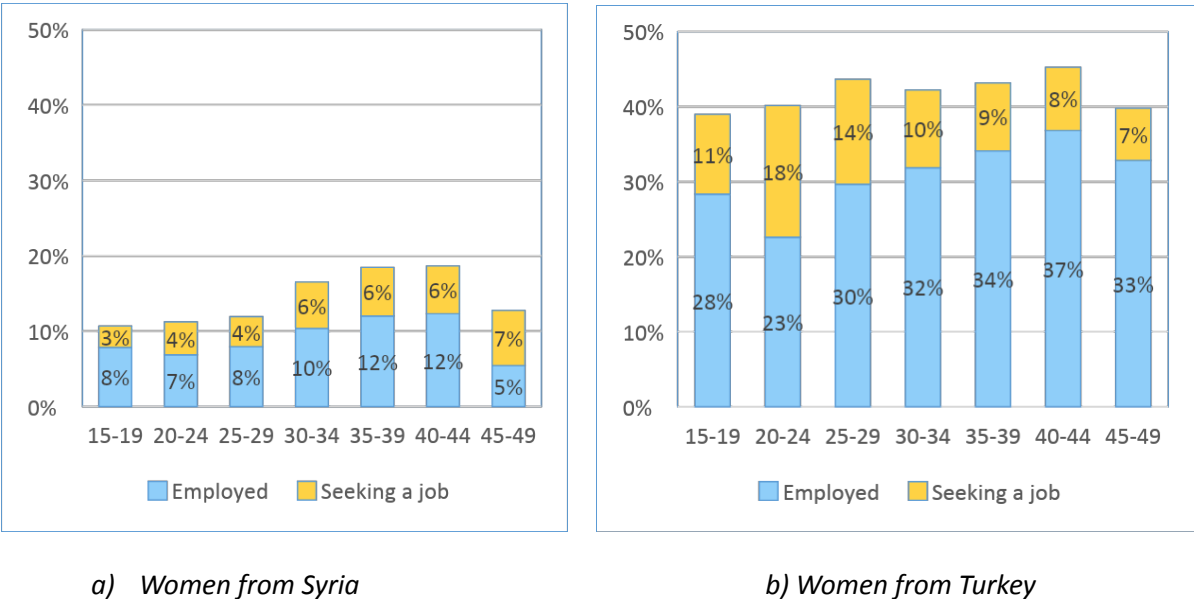
a) Labor market status of women

b) Percent ready to start work in 2 weeks

Source: 2018 DHS, sample weights are used.

The DHS 2018 data, which provides a statistically representative survey of Syrian women aged 15-49 in Turkey show that only 9 percent of Syrian women were employed, while 5 percent were looking for a job in 2018, as panel (a) of Figure 4 reveals. These two rates imply that the labor force participation rate of Syrian women was roughly 14 percent using a general definition of participation. The Turkish module of the DHS shows that the labor force participation rate was 39 percent (28 percent employed and 11 percent unemployed) for women in Turkey, which is consistent with the participation rates based on HLFS announced by the Turkish Statistical Agency figures.<sup>22</sup> Panel (b) of Figure 4 shows that while some women might not be actively looking for a job, and hence not counted in the labor force, they might still be ready to supply their labor in 2 weeks if a job opportunity arises.<sup>23</sup> The share of women who report that they are able to start working in two weeks is 14 percent in the Syrian module and 22 percent in the Turkish module of the DHS. Overall, the statistics show that a vast majority of women in Turkey are unable to participate in economic activity. Furthermore, it should be kept in mind that being employed as an unpaid family worker is common practice across poorer households in Turkey, which implies that even less than 9 percent of women from Syria and less than 28 percent of the women from Turkey in fact earn a proper wage income.<sup>24</sup> These figures reveal not only the immense degree of gender-based inequalities but also the inequalities among different segments of women in Turkish labor markets.

Figure 5. Labor Force Participation by Age Groups



Source: 2018 DHS, sample weights are used.

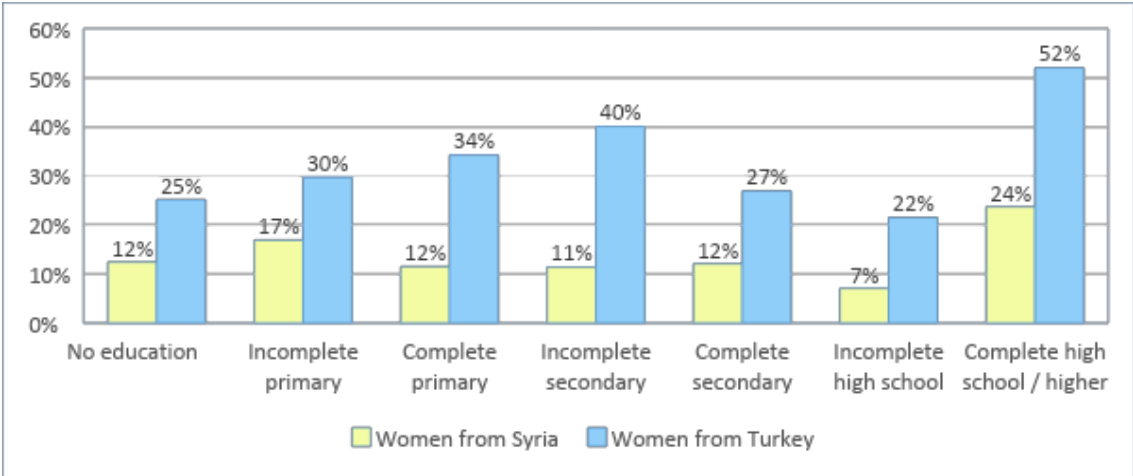
<sup>22</sup> Although DHS is not a labor force survey, in the sense that its main purpose is to measure fertility trends, the fact that the labor market statistics derived from the DHS are consistent with household labor force surveys gives confidence in the analysis provided in this section.

<sup>23</sup> The difference between the unemployed and such individuals reflect the discouragement of workers. Although some individuals might stop looking for a job due to the fact that they lose hope of finding employment, they might nevertheless still be ready to work.

<sup>24</sup> The definition of employment in both the DHS and HLFS includes formal, informal, paid, unpaid, part-time, full time forms of work.

Figure 5 displays the labor force participation by age groups whereas Figure 6 shows the participation by education. Starting with Figure 5, the labor force participation rate in the Syrian module increases with age; Syrian women who are between 35 to 44 have the highest participation rates with 18 percent whereas younger women between the ages 15-24 have the lowest participation with 11 percent. This might hint at the fact that older Syrian women tend to supply their labor out of necessity, a phenomenon that will be discussed in more detail in the next section. The participation rates are more homogeneous across age groups in the Turkish module, displayed by Panel (b) of Figure 5. The high youth unemployment problem is also confirmed in the DHS sample; 18 percent of women between the ages 20-24 and 14 percent of women between the ages 25-29 are looking for a job in the Turkish module. Unemployment rates decline and employment rates increase with age.

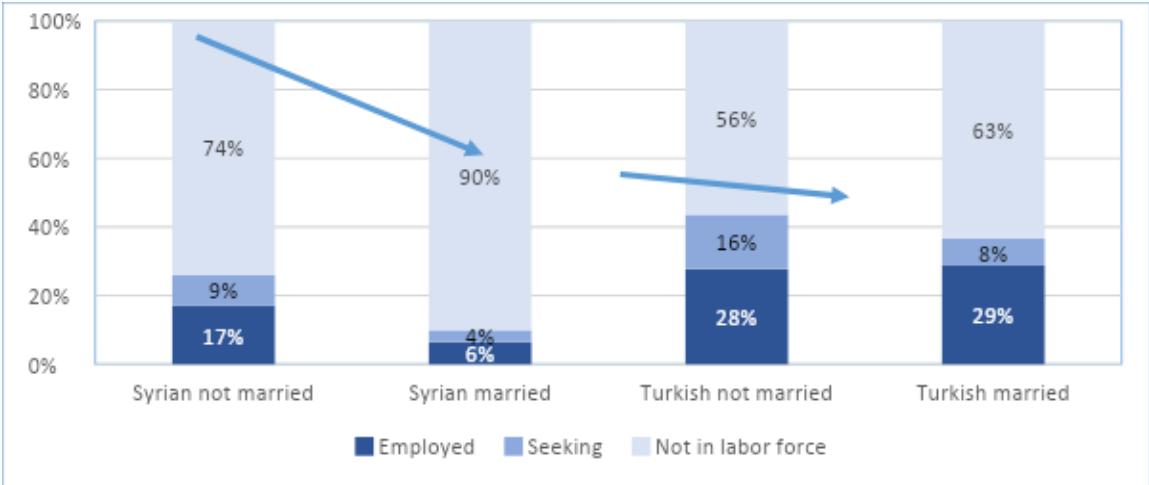
Figure 6. Labor Force Participation by Education Categories in the DHS



Source: 2018 DHS, sample weights are used.

Labor force participation rates are highest among the more educated women in both modules of the DHS, as is observed almost everywhere worldwide, emphasizing the importance of receiving and completing education as a means of increasing women’s labor force participation and employment. On the other hand, participation rates are also relatively high for women with incomplete secondary school education (less than 8 years) in the Turkish module and incomplete primary school education (less than 5 years) in the Syrian module. These figures might also reflect the fact that women from disadvantaged backgrounds tend to work out of financial necessity.

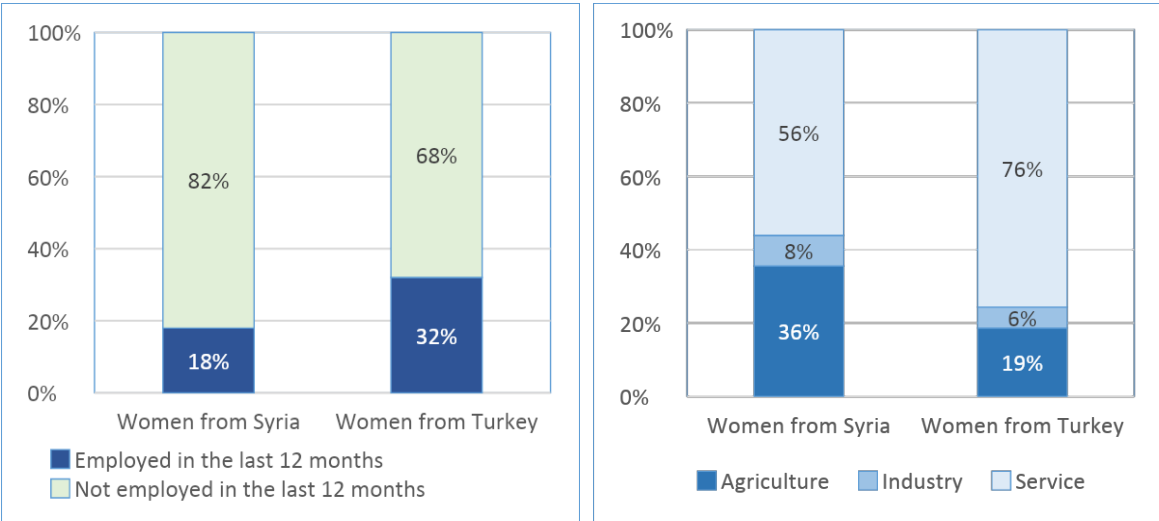
Figure 7. Labor Force Participation of Married and Single Women



Source: 2018 DHS, sample weights are used.

Figure 7 displays participation rates by marriage status. In more conservative societies, married women tend to drop out of the labor force at higher rates, a phenomenon commonly observed in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region (Assaad et al. (2022)). The drop in the labor force participation of women after marriage is mostly related to social norms, as will be discussed more thoroughly in remaining sections of the report. However, Figure 7 reveals important differences between women from Turkey and Syria. The decline in participation rates is much steeper for Syrian women in comparison to the decline for Turkish women. In fact, in the Turkish module, the employment rate of women is slightly higher for married women in comparison with the employment rates of single women. It seems that mostly unemployed women tend to drop out of the labor force upon marriage.

Figure 8. Employment Status in the Last 12 Months



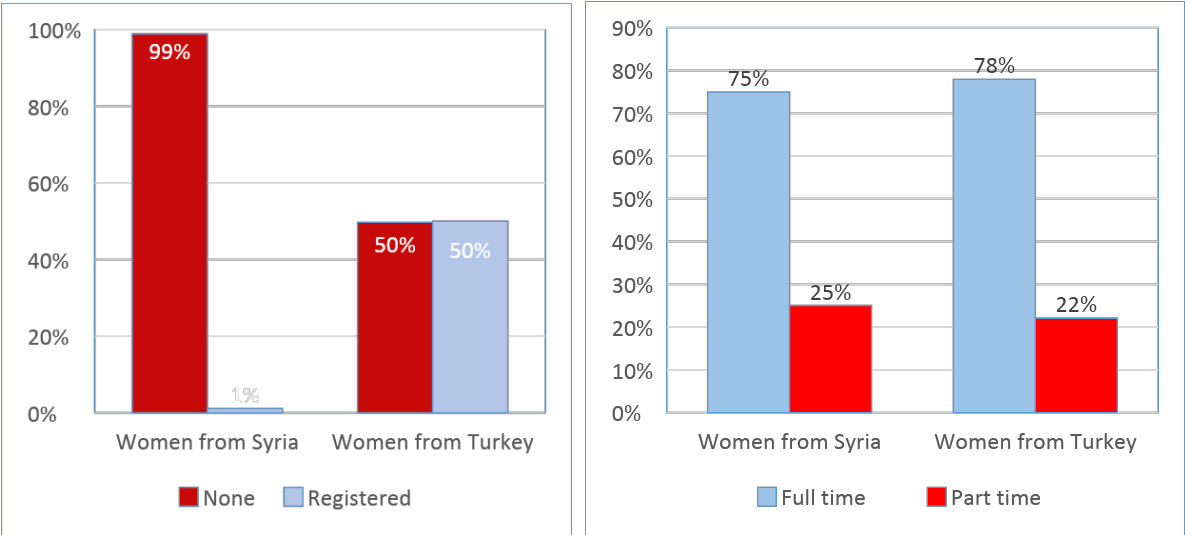
a) Percent employed in the last 12 months

b) Sector of employment in the last 12 months

Source: 2018 DHS, sample weights are used.

The 2018 DHS includes a question on whether women were ever employed and which sector they were employed in the last 12 months preceding the survey date. Figure 8 displays the results and shows that 18 percent of women from Syria and 32 percent of women from Turkey were employed in the last 12 months. The estimations show that women are mostly employed in the services sector. The share of Syrian women employed in the last 12 months in the services sector is 56 percent while the same figure is a staggering 76 percent for Turkish women. The agriculture sector comes next, where 36 percent of women in the Syrian module claimed that they worked in the agriculture sector among those who reported having worked in the last 12 months, while the same figure is 19 percent in the Turkish module. While it is not possible to observe the occupation information in the Syrian module, the Turkish module reveals that 47 percent of women are working as waged workers and 15 percent are salaried government employees. The percentage of unpaid family workers has decreased from 19 percent in 2013 to 12 percent in 2018. Albeit in a limited capacity, the DHS survey also asks questions on employment status for women’s partners and/or spouses. The statistics suggest that 88.8 percent of partners and/or spouses were employed in the last 12 months in the Syrian module and 94 percent of partners and/or spouses were employed in the last 12 months in the Turkish module.

Figure 9. Employment Security



a) Formal versus informal employment    b) Full-time versus part-time employment

Source: 2018 DHS, sample weights are used.

In addition to the questions on employment status, the DHS surveys also ask women whether they are registered in the Social Security System through their employment. Hence, it is possible to detect whether a woman is employed formally or informally. The analysis of informality in the DHS reveals a striking statistic. While the employment rate was as low as 9 percent for Syrian women between the ages of 15-49 in 2018, 99 percent of these women were employed formally (Figure 9). This is in fact not unexpected, as so far only a limited number of work permits have been issued for Syrians, as the official statistics of the Ministry of Labor and Social Security reveal. The informality rate was 50 percent for Turkish women in 2018 DHS, which is again consistent with HLFs. Official statistics of Turkstat suggest that the informality rate for women in the agriculture sector is as high as 95 percent whereas outside agriculture it is around 40 percent. While there are significant differences in the

labor market characteristics of women in the Syrian and Turkish samples in the DHS, they are similar in terms of full-time versus part-time employment. In both samples, approximately a quarter of women are employed in part-time contracts and the remainder in full-time contracts. Table 3 displays the reasons listed for not working in the two samples. The results provide some interesting insights. Among the Syrian women, being a housewife is listed as the single most important reason for not participating in the labor market. Nearly half of all women between the ages of 15-49 report that they do not work because they are housewives. This figure is 20.3 percent in the Turkish sample. This stark difference between the two groups seems to stem from how women perceive work, rather than the differences in patriarchal norms, as the share of women who report that their partners/husbands/families do not allow them to work is very similar across the sample of Syrian and Turkish women (13.8 versus 10.9 percent). The share of women who report that they must provide care for the elderly and children are also very similar across both groups (23.9 percent versus 23.6 percent). Thus, although Syrian and Turkish women might have different perceptions of work, it is also clear that many women are unable to join the labor market due to care responsibilities and/or family restrictions. The burden of domestic chores, and the impact of it on employment preferences would need to be further explored.<sup>25</sup>

While the Syrian population residing in Turkey are on average much younger than the Turkish population, the share of women who report that they do not work because of continuing education is only 6 percent in the Syrian sample whereas it is 17.6 percent in the Turkish sample. This basic difference might be evidence of young Syrian women not being able to continue higher education in Turkey. Interestingly, the share of Syrian women who report language barriers as a reason for not working is only 0.4 percent.

*Table 3. Reasons Listed for Not Working*

<i>Reasons for not participating</i>	<i>Women from Syria</i>	<i>Women from Turkey</i>
Student	6.0%	17.6%
Housewife	43.9%	20.3%
Retired	0.0%	0.5%
Disabled/Sick	2.4%	4.0%
Caring for elderly	1.6%	2.8%
Caring for children	22.3%	20.8%
Looking for a job/unemployed	3.3%	8.3%
Partner/Family does not allow to work	13.8%	10.9%
Just migrated/left	0.4%	0.1%
Does not need (want) to work	1.9%	5.8%
Pregnant/just delivered a baby	2.4%	1.6%
Does not have a work permit	0.1%	0.2%
Does not speak the language	0.4%	0.0%
Other	1.6%	7.3%

*Source: DHS, 2018*

<sup>25</sup> It is not clear whether the terms “housewife” and “childcare/elderly care” mean exactly the same types of responsibilities to Syrian and Turkish women. It should be kept in mind that the differences in responses could be partially reflecting differences in perceptions of each type of domestic responsibility across the two groups of women.

While the DHS is a useful data source to identify the basic labor market characteristics of women, it does not include key information on earnings and hours worked. In what follows below, we provide further analyses using the HLFS waves between 2014 and 2020. The analyses on the labor market conditions of four groups; men and women who are citizens of the Republic of Turkey, -hereby referred to as nationals- without loss of generality; and men and women who were born abroad and who formerly resided outside Turkey. The latter two groups will be referred to as “foreigners” in the remainder of the section for the sake of convenience, and the reader should be reminded again that they represent a diverse group including refugees and other nationals. According to the Turkstat figures, in addition to the 3.7 million Syrian refugees under the Temporary protection, there were in total 1.79 million foreigners living in Turkey as of the end of 2021. Of the 1.79 million foreigners, 901,000 are women. Considering the fact that there are 1.7 million Syrian women in Turkey, these figures imply that Syrian women constitute two thirds of all foreign-born women. It is important to note that the Covid-19 pandemic had adverse effects on the female labor force in 2020 and there is already a vast amount of literature covering this issue. To ensure that our quantitative analyses do not just reflect the impact of the pandemic, we take the averages of labor market outcomes between 2014 and 2020. Taking the averages should dampen the effects of the specific shock in 2020 and provide a more balanced analysis.

Table 4 starts by providing a snapshot of the different types of education and employment of foreigners working in Turkey. An interesting contrast emerges between men and women born abroad. The probability of being self-employed is higher for women without any educational qualifications in comparison to men with the same skill category. On the other hand, the probability of being a wage worker increases with education for women whereas it declines for men. There are significant gaps in the probability of working as an employer across the two groups while the probability increases with education. As expected, the incidence of working as an unpaid family worker is much more common for women with few years of schooling, and it tends to decline with increased education. The probability of working as an unpaid family worker is close to zero for foreign men working in Turkey.

*Table 4. Education and Employment Type of Foreigners in Turkey*

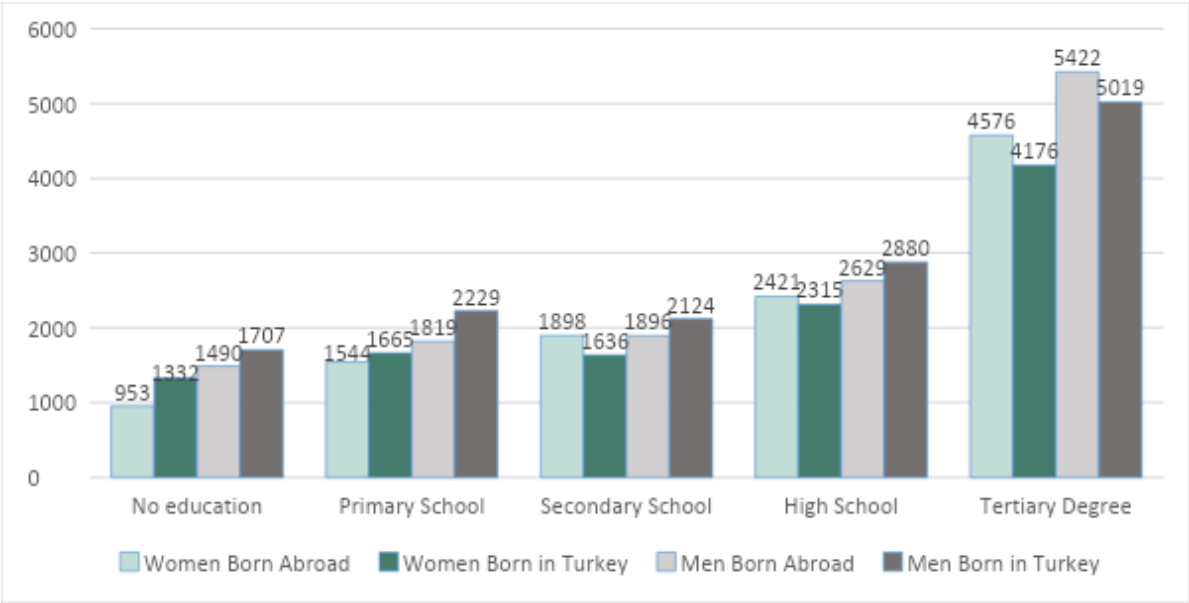
<i>Women born abroad</i>	No degree	Primary School	Secondary School	High School	Tertiary Degree
Wage employee	76%	72%	83%	84%	89%
Employer	0%	1%	2%	2%	2%
Self-employed	11%	12%	8%	9%	7%
Unpaid family worker	13%	15%	7%	5%	2%
<i>Men born abroad</i>	No degree	Primary School	Secondary School	High School	Tertiary Degree
Wage employee	92%	81%	87%	81%	80%
Employer	0%	4%	3%	5%	9%
Self-employed	7%	14%	8%	13%	11%
Unpaid family worker	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%

*Source: HLFS 2014-2020 averages, sample weights are used.*

Figure 10 displays the unconditional average monthly earnings of the four groups by education groups.<sup>26</sup> The HLFs questionnaire asks individuals how much they received in earnings in the previous month by providing their labor. There is no hourly wage information in the HLFs. The questionnaire asks how many hours the individuals worked in the previous week. As in the case of DHS, a great advantage of the HLFs is that the survey asks whether individuals are registered in the Social Security System in Turkey through their employment. It is thus possible to identify whether the individuals are employed formally or informally. Furthermore, the questionnaire also includes questions on sectors of employment (Nace Rev. 2), and whether the individuals work in their current job as wage employees, employers, self-employed, or unpaid family workers.

The estimations reveal interesting differences. Among individuals without any educational qualifications, foreign women have the lowest average earnings. The wage gap between national and foreign women is about 400 Turkish Liras (TL), whereas the wage gap between foreign women and male nationals is approximately 500 TL. Male nationals without any education degree earn almost twice the earnings of foreign women. These individuals are highly likely to be refugees.

Figure 10. Average Monthly Earnings by Education Categories



Source: HLFs 2014-2020 averages, sample weights are used. The earnings are adjusted for inflation but not adjusted for individual characteristics.

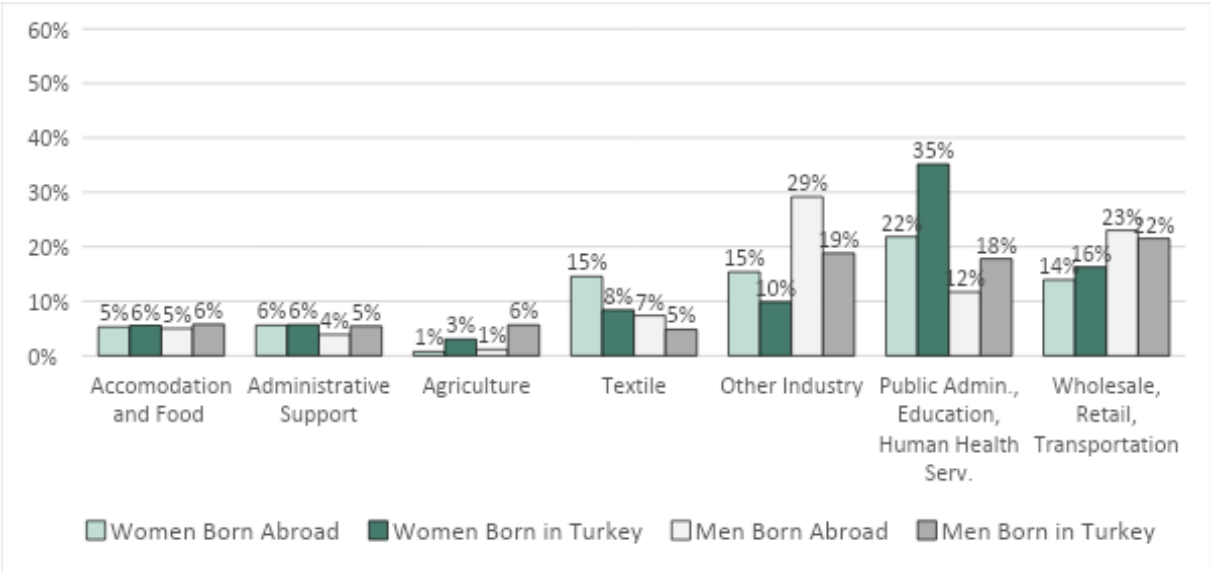
Figure 10 also shows that the wage gaps between foreign women and foreign men, as well as between foreign women and male nationals tend to decline with education. Accordingly, foreign women on average have higher monthly earnings in comparison to female nationals in higher education categories. In the top education category, foreign women earn more than female nationals and foreign men earn more than male nationals in Turkey.

<sup>26</sup> The estimations provided in this section are unconditional, in the sense that they are not adjusted for individual characteristics such as age, marital status, sector, occupation and etc.

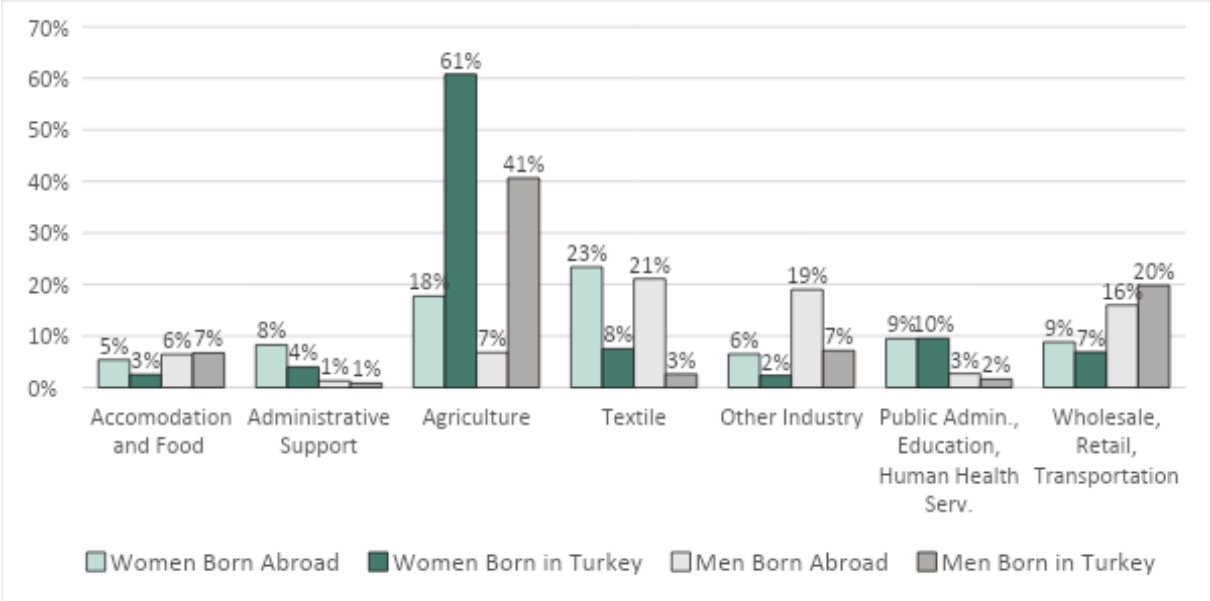


Figure 11. Sector of Employment

Panel A: Formally employed



Panel B: Informally employed



Source: HLFS 2014-2020 averages, sample weights are used.

Panel A of Figure 11 shows the sectors of employment for formally employed foreign and national workers in Turkey whereas Panel B shows the sectors for informal workers. As expected, formally employed men and women are less likely to work in agriculture and more likely to work in the services sectors, such as in public administration, health, and education. The share of women working formally in the textile sector is highest for foreign women whereas the share of men working formally in other industries is highest for foreign men.<sup>27</sup> The sectoral distribution displays significant

<sup>27</sup> Other industry include manufacturing of food products, beverages, wood, paper, petroleum, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, rubber and plastic, metallic and non-metallic products, computer, electronic and optical products, machinery equipment, motor vehicles, transport equipment and furniture.

differences between persons who are formally and informally employed. Female and male nationals who are employed informally work largely in the agricultural sector. The textile sector also absorbs a significant proportion of foreign men and women working informally. The industrial sector as the sum of textiles and other industries employs 40 percent of all foreign men and 29 percent of all foreign women working informally.

*Table 5. Average Monthly Earnings by Sector and Formality Status*

	Agricul.	Textile	Other Industries	Wholesale, Retail, Transp.	Accom. and Food Services	Administ. Support	Public Admin., Education, Human Health Serv.
<i>Formally employed</i>							
Women Born Abroad	3,861	2,351	3,114	3,900	2,528	3,029	4,321
Women Born in Turkey	1,882	2,214	2,639	2,512	2,160	2,315	4,071
Men Born Abroad	2,494	2,773	3,440	3,705	2,811	2,869	5,093
Men Born in Turkey	2,608	2,530	3,011	2,896	2,561	2,526	4,899
<i>Informally employed</i>							
Women Born Abroad	313	1,352	1,179	1,161	1,386	1,464	1,838
Women Born in Turkey	576	1,103	906	1,058	1,104	710	1,367
Men Born Abroad	493	1,804	1,690	1,857	1,724	1,728	2,244
Men Born in Turkey	907	1,676	1,528	1,457	1,393	1,427	1,714

*Source: HLFs 2014-2020 averages, sample weights are used. The earnings are adjusted for inflation but not adjusted for individual characteristics.*

Estimating average monthly earnings by sector and formality status across the four groups of individuals also reveal important insights. Table 5 shows that among all groups and sectors, informal workers in the agriculture sector have the lowest earnings, and within that specific group, foreign women earn almost one-third of the earnings of male nationals. Foreign men employed informally in agriculture also earn slightly less than female nationals. On the other hand, foreign women employed formally in agriculture have the highest average earnings among the four groups of individuals.<sup>28</sup> In the textile sector, which is shown above to absorb a significant proportion of the foreign labor supply in Turkey, the wage gaps seem to be small across genders and nationals versus foreigners among those employed formally. However, there are significant wage gaps between the formally and informally employed in the textile sector. Among all the informal workers in textiles, female nationals earn the lowest income while foreign men earn the highest. Across all sectors, public administration, education, and human health services offer the highest earnings for both formal and informal workers. Reading Table 5, it is possible to argue that on average, foreign men tend to earn more than male nationals and foreign women tend to earn more than female nationals in most sectors, with the clear exception of agriculture. Although these tables only reflect the average monthly earnings, and

<sup>28</sup> The estimates for foreign women formally employed in agriculture should nevertheless be taken with caution because it relies on a small sample of women.

do not account for the number of hours worked by an individual, these figures are still interesting, and are in contrast to the conventional beliefs about the earnings of foreigners in Turkey.

*Table 6. Average Number of Hours Worked per Week by Sector and Formality Status*

	Agricult.	Textile	Other Indust.	Wholesale, Retail, Transp.	Accom. and Food Services	Administ. Support	Public Admin., Education, Human Health Serv.
<i>Formally employed</i>							
Women Born Abroad	43	48	47	47	52	44	40
Women Born in Turkey	42	48	47	49	51	45	39
Men Born Abroad	50	50	48	52	56	49	41
Men Born in Turkey	48	50	50	54	58	48	42
<i>Informally employed</i>							
Women Born Abroad	38	43	38	39	55	29	49
Women Born in Turkey	36	32	36	36	44	21	60
Men Born Abroad	42	53	52	52	59	43	35
Men Born in Turkey	42	50	49	49	55	42	46

*Source: HLFS 2014-2020 averages, sample weights are used.*

Table 6 shows the hours worked by sector and formality status. In formal employment, there are almost no differences in the hours worked between the foreign and female nationals. However, among those informally employed, **foreign women tend to work a significantly higher number of hours per week compared to female nationals, making the hourly wage less than those of female nationals.** These differences in hours supplied by foreign and national women are especially large in the textile, food and accommodation, and administrative support sectors. As for informal employment in public administration, education and health sectors, the situation is the opposite and female nationals work significantly more hours per week. The information in Tables 4 and 5 strikingly reveal that hourly wages can be as low as 7 TL for foreign women working in the textile sector and 5.8 TL for female nationals working in other industries. Turkey has the highest working hours across all OECD members and the information in Table 5 confirms this. Long working hours are particularly brutal for both formally and informally employed men in the hospitality and food sectors.

## **Section VIII. Existing Programs and Projects for Supporting Female Employment in Turkey**

The Turkish government offers several institutional initiatives and tax advantages to increase female labor force participation and support women's employment. In addition to several labor market reforms and employment incentives that have been enacted in the last two decades, the Turkish government launched an employment program in July 2008 to subsidize the employers' social security contributions for the two target groups: young men (aged between 18 and 29) and all women above 18. The purpose of the program was to increase the formal employment of relatively disadvantaged groups by reducing the employment costs in the labor market (Balkan et al. (2016)). The Turkish government covered 100 percent of social security payments of new employees for the first year and reduced its participation by 20 percent each year for the following four years. In 2011, a similar but more comprehensive employment subsidy package was announced with the enactment of

Law 6111, extending the coverage to both men and women of all ages, who were not employed as tax-registered workers in the preceding 6 months. (Balkan et al. (2016)) find that the subsidy has been effective in facilitating the transition into formal jobs for women who are unemployed or informally working.

The Turkish Employment Agency, İŞKUR also offers *on-the-job training* (OJT) programs to young individuals, women, and other disadvantaged groups in Turkey. All unemployed individuals regardless of their education are eligible to participate in the trainings and they can apply to training programs several times. There are several tax advantages for firms which employ trainees through the OJT programs, and employers do not have to make commitments or agree to financial liabilities. İŞKUR pays for occupational accident and illness insurance premiums and general health insurance premiums. Moreover, İŞKUR also pays trainees a daily allowance. The amount paid to trainees almost corresponds to daily minimum wage, therefore, if a trainee participates in the program for a month, he/she is paid an amount close to minimum wage. According to İŞKUR's statistics, as of December 2021, approximately 360 thousand individuals, 184 thousand of which are women, participated in 94 thousand OJT programs.<sup>29</sup> 105 thousand of all women who participated in the OJT programs were aged between 20-29. İŞKUR statistics also show that in 2021, a total of 465 thousand women were placed in jobs through all İŞKUR programs.<sup>30</sup>

In addition to the employment incentives and active labor market programs that target women in Turkey, there are also initiatives to increase female entrepreneurship and reduce credit constraints for women. KOSGEB offers several credit, grant, and mentoring programs for women in Turkey. KOSGEB reports that in 2020, a total of 11.8 thousand women benefited from entrepreneurship support, and support given to women constituted 34.7 percent of all support provided by the KOSGEB.<sup>31</sup>

There are numerous programs and projects that target refugees in Turkey. The Turkish government has several partnerships with the World Bank, EBRD, ILO, UN Women, UNHCR, UNDP, the European Union, the Government of Japan, the Government of Iceland, the Government of Norway and the U.S. Government to foster refugee integration and employment. These programs have sizable budgets. In addition to the official programs, there are also several micro-initiatives by NGOs in Turkey to help refugee women. Table 7 provides information on selected programs and projects that target refugee and host community women in Turkey.

There are several difficulties associated with assessing whether these programs are effective. The first one is transparency. Unfortunately, information on funding, beneficiaries, and after-program monitoring efforts is not readily and publicly accessible in the majority of cases, but more so for the programs implemented by the NGOs at the micro-scale. This is understandable, as the main aim of such programs is to reach out to beneficiaries quickly and provide help and support immediately. However, a culture of rigorous statistical design, data collection, and post-program impact evaluation is still at a relatively nascent stage in Turkey. This applies to the impact evaluation of government projects as well. Hence, while such programs help thousands of women, it is not possible to i) assess the statistical counterfactual, ii) provide a quantitative answer to the question, "what would happen

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<sup>29</sup> <https://media.iskur.gov.tr/52140/12-aralik-2021-aylik-i-statistik-bu-lteni.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> İŞKUR has several other programs in partnership with international organizations such as the World Bank and the EBRD to increase the skills and support the employment of refugees in Turkey but the number of refugees that benefit from these programs are not disclosed transparently or regularly.

<sup>31</sup> [https://webdosya.kosgeb.gov.tr/Content/Upload/Dosya/Mali%20Tablolar/Performans%20Program%C4%B1/KOSGEB\\_2021\\_Y%C4%B1%C4%B1\\_Performans\\_Program%C4%B1\\_.pdf](https://webdosya.kosgeb.gov.tr/Content/Upload/Dosya/Mali%20Tablolar/Performans%20Program%C4%B1/KOSGEB_2021_Y%C4%B1%C4%B1_Performans_Program%C4%B1_.pdf)

in the absence of the program?”, or iii) to evaluate whether the funds used have been cost-effective (could they have been spent more effectively to increase women’s economic participation?) given the limited information.

Table 7. Programs to Support Refugee and Other Women in Turkey

Programme Name	Objective of the Programme	Finances & Funding	How many women benefited from the programme?
UN Women Refugee Response Programme in Turkey - SADA Women's Empowerment and Solidarity Center	In partnership with Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality and Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants (ASAM), The SADA Center contributes to strengthening the resilience of Syrian and Turkish women by providing gender-responsive protection and livelihood services. Women benefit from basic and vocational trainings (home textiles, traditional food production, shoes/bags production, computer), job seminars as well as participate in social cohesion and solidarity activities.	Funded by UN Women, European Union, Government of Japan, Government of Iceland, Government of Norway	Over 10,200 refugee women
UN Women Refugee Response Programme in Turkey - Women's Solidarity Center	The Center is run by UN Women in partnership with the CSO Refugee Support Center (MUDEM). The Center provides protection services including psychosocial support, health and legal counseling through its outreach activities, aiming to assess the needs of vulnerable refugee and host community women. Furthermore, the Center contributes to the participation of women in the labour market through Turkish language courses, as well as basic skills trainings. The Center also supports rehabilitation activities for women with disabilities. The Women's Solidarity Center brings women from both the refugee and host communities around social cohesion through its social and cultural activities.	Funded by UN Women, European Union, Government of Japan, Government of Iceland, Government of Norway	From April 2019 to March 2021 more than 4,900 Syrian and Turkish women benefited from the services.
UN Women Refugee Response Programme in Turkey - Women and Child Center	Center demonstrates a women-led peer support and referral system. Community leader women who have attended trainings on leadership, gender issues, how to carry out need assessments, and the available public services, reach vulnerable Syrian and Turkish women through house visits, and spread information on the legal rights of Syrians under temporary protection, education, and employment services.	UN Women, European Union, Government of Japan, Government of Iceland, Government of Norway	Between October 2019 and January 2021, the Center reached 1,815 women through the women-led referral system and 120 children benefited from the child playroom and toy library.
Employment Support Project for Syrians under Temporary Protection and Turkish Citizens	Project improves the employability of Syrians under Temporary Protection, as well as that of Turkish citizens residing in selected localities. Project provides refugees and host communities with skills and language training, job counseling and job placement services.	Funded by World Bank Amount: US\$ 48.18 million	Nearly 20,000 people have received training under the program, with women constituting half of the participants in language courses and over 90 percent in skills training programs.

Programme Name	Objective of the Programme	Finances & Funding	How many women benefited from the programme?
Mahir Eller Projesi	Project increases the employability of both Turkish citizens and Syrians under temporary protection via certification of their existing vocational skills.	Funded by TOBB, TEPAV Amount: € 15 million	Since this project aimed at reaching individuals who already had a profession, it received limited applications from Syrian women.
UN Women - Strengthening the Resilience of Syrian Women and Girls and Host Communities in Iraq, Jordan and Turkey	This programme builds on the work UN Women has been doing in strengthening the resilience of affected Syrian women in refugee camps and host communities, through protection, economic empowerment and increased access to multi-sectoral services in selected countries.	Funded by: UN Women Amount € 5,529,078	897 Syrian refugees and host community members participated in employability skills training programmes. 1,069 Syrian refugees and host community members benefited from employment-related services. 370 Syrian refugees completed a Turkish language course outside the formal education system.
Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP)	While the Republic of Turkey takes the role of leadership in activities for refugees, the UN provides complementary support in coordination with its humanitarian and development partners working in the fields of protection, food security, education, health, basic needs and livelihoods. To provide international protection and permanent solutions to refugees, UNHCR coordinates the 3RP together with UNDP, leads the protection and basic needs sectors, and leads the higher education field under the leadership of UNICEF. By providing access to its employment services, İŞKUR works in cooperation with UNHCR.	Funded by: UNHCR, UNDP, EU Amount: 47% of the required \$1.035 billion is currently funded.	
Mülteciler Derneği - Kadın Dayanışma Projesi	Women and their children who are admitted to the Solidarity Center receive psycho-social support according to their needs, and women are guided to vocational training and hobby courses according to their abilities and skills.		50 women and 64 children have benefited from the project in 2020.

Programme Name	Objective of the Programme	Finances & Funding	How many women benefited from the programme?
Mültecileri Güçlendirme Projesi	Project enables refugee women to attend sewing courses. After the completion of the course, a cooperative is be formed for refugee women to contribute to their economy by selling their products. Establishment of the cooperative ensures the sustainability of this project.	Ankara Büyükşehir Belediyesi , UNHCR	20 Refugee women have completed courses in 2020.
Yerel Eşitlik Eylem Planı - Göçmen kadınların kooperatiflere katılımının desteklenmesi	This action plan facilitates the analysis of gender and diversity and the development of targets for gender equality issues, as well as the identification and selection of priority areas. Supporting the participation of migrant women in cooperatives is an objective in the action plan that will support the financial freedom of refugee women.		
Bir Umut Bir Ufuk Projesi	The objective of this project is for refugee women who have problems in terms of education and language to participate in social life and in the labor market as productive individuals. This project includes language and occupation courses for refugee women.	TOGEMDER	
Meryem Kadın Girişim-Üretim ve İşletme Kooperatifi	The cooperative provides women who immigrated to Adana with the opportunity to work, produce and earn money. It operates in fields such as Open Field Agriculture, Mushroom Production, Greenhouse, Fruit and Vegetable Drying, Visor Production and Mask Production	Adana Büyükşehir Belediyesi, ILO	150 women are employed at this cooperative initiative.
KEDV - Güçlendirme ve Kooperatifleştirme Programı	To meet the needs of women who are facing poverty, this organization strengthens and diversifies organizing models for women, including refugee women. In order to share experiences and create collective power, they support grassroots women's organizations in Turkey to better connect with their peers in global grassroots movements, they support grassroots women's access to local and national decision-making processes, particularly groups that are more discriminated against.	Funded by: EU Delegation	
MOKİD - Artuklu'nun Mülteci Kadınları	The project, which is ongoing in Mardin for 3 years, aimed to empower women refugees with a gender perspective and to ensure social cohesion. It is planning to provide awareness trainings on "Violence Against Women", awareness trainings for 180 lawyers in total with the Mardin Bar Association, and refugee empowerment trainings within the scope of the project. Through Turkish literacy courses and vocational skills courses, this project will support refugee women in facilitating their lives and provide them with a profession.		



Programme Name	Objective of the Programme	Finances & Funding	How many women benefited from the programme?
SEVKAR	The purpose of this organization is to reduce poverty for all people who are in need of help, who are in a difficult situation economically and socially, who are poor, elderly, disabled, orphans, sick, children, asylum seekers, immigrants, refugees, or who have been harmed by natural disasters, wars and other social disasters. It is also generally aimed at the disadvantaged. It was established with the aim of providing legal, health, education, vocational training, social and economic support services or access to these services by working on the creation of healthy and decent living spaces.		
Türk Kızılay	The organization is responsible for providing emergency aid, adaptation and integration services, cash aid, developing and implementing projects for all foreigners registered in Turkey and living in need of assistance. Red Crescent Card (smart cards distributed for in-kind and cash aid), child protection, community centres, vocational and language courses, integration studies, psychosocial support, protection, referral and border aid activities, as well as accommodation and return services.		
ILO - Türkiye'de Mülteciler ve Ev Sahibi Topluluklar için İnsana Yakışır İş Fırsatları Projesi	The overall objective of the project is to strengthen the resilience and social cohesion of refugees and host communities by promoting inclusive economic growth based on decent work principles, as well as access to decent work.	Funded by: U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugee and Migration	

## **Section IX. Constraints on the ability of women in Turkey to participate economically**

The aim of this section is to present an evaluation of the constraints faced by all women in Turkey, both nationals and refugees, in accessing the labor market, in light of the literature and data.

### ***Language Barriers for Refugee Women***

The DHS surveys show that only 19 percent of women from Syria can speak Turkish. 95 percent of the surveys were conducted in Arabic. Only 8 percent of women from Syria reported ever attending a foreign language course. These figures are consistent with the UN Women's survey which shows that 8.8 percent of Syrian girls and women attended Turkish courses.

Existing studies on the challenges faced by refugees in Turkey consistently highlight the importance of language support. The UN Women Needs Assessment Report shows that refugee women in focus groups highlighted the importance of language courses and the provision of childcare services to help women continue their education or attend vocational training. A study by the Association for Human Rights and Solidarity for the Oppressed (Mazlumder) dated 2014 also points out that language barriers make social adaptation and access to public services difficult, as well as restrict opportunities for refugees to find a job. A 2018 report by the Center for Public Policy and Democracy Studies (PODEM) suggests that although the Directorate General of Migration Management's website and helpline 157 are useful, some Syrians express the need for additional help desks at local public institutions. The same study reveals that Syrian parents mostly expect the provision of Turkish language courses to their children before they start school. The UN Women report shows that 6 percent of Syrian girls drop out of school due to language barriers.

Language barriers, however, may not be a significant binding constraint for employment as only 0.4 percent of all women from Syria lists language barriers as a reason for not participating in the labor force. The international evidence summarized in the literature review suggests that it takes considerably longer for refugee women to participate economically and language skills could be relatively more effective in ensuring social integration for the women and their children, rather than employment.

### ***Barriers in accessing information on employment opportunities for refugee women***

According to the UN Women's Needs Assessment Report, there are significant barriers in accessing key information for refugee women. The study shows that although there are several vocational training programs targeting refugee women, only 7 percent have taken part in vocational training. Among those who attended, the most popular areas of study were hairdressing (30 percent) and needlework (27 percent), areas closely related to traditional gender roles. The report also lists refugee women's reasons for not attending, such as i) no childcare services available (26.4 percent), ii) not useful (16.8 percent), iii) unaware of possibility (14.8 percent), iv) unsure of what to do (14.8 percent), v) no time (14.1 percent) and vi) her spouse/partner does not allow her to attend the course (6.2 percent). According to the report, 92 percent are unaware of work permit regulations, 73 percent do not know where to seek assistance related to violence or harassment, 68 percent do not know about free legal counseling, 63 percent do not have information about home care, 59 percent

do not know how to get psychosocial support, and 57 percent do not have information about childcare services.

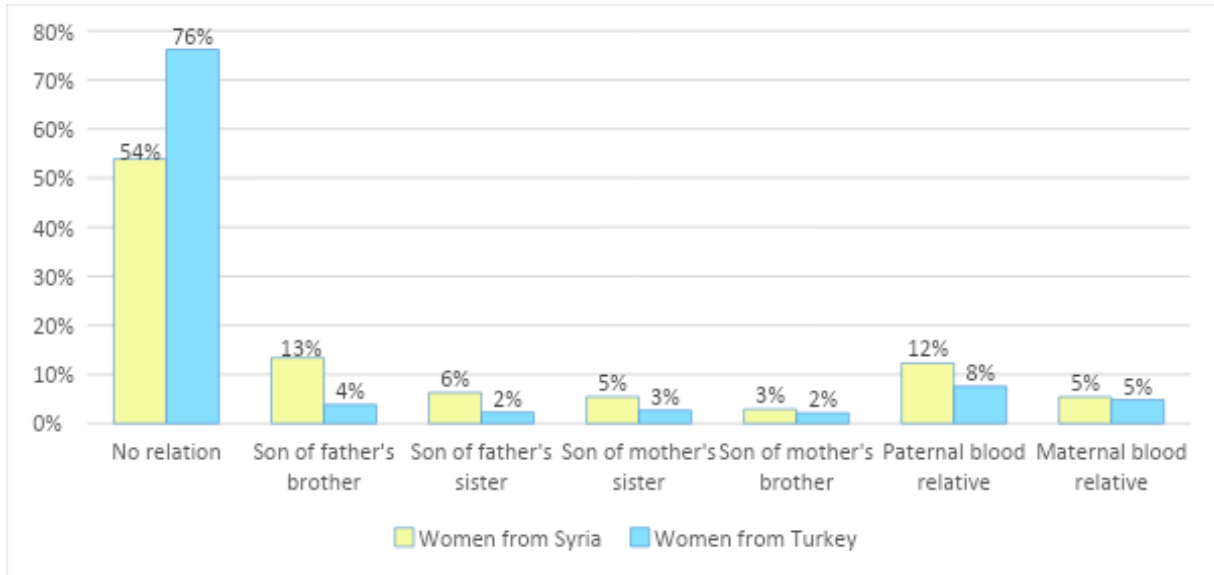
As the literature review highlighted, refugee women worldwide are more likely to suffer from mental illness and PTSD. However, in the case of refugees in Turkey, a significant share of women seems to not have access to key information on public services that they have a right to benefit from. The lack of information is likely to make the integration of refugee women slower as well as delay the timing when they mentally and physically feel healthy to work.

**Conservatism and social norms as barriers**

Many of the existing studies highlight the importance of conservatism and social norms as barriers for women’s economic empowerment. In the context of refugees in Turkey, Körükmez, Karakılıç and Daniş (2020) show that the main reason why refugee women start working is economic hardships faced within the household and that most employment among refugee women is involuntary. This study and the anecdotal evidence from the field suggests that refugee women in Turkey perceive their own employment as a downgrade of their social status.

While it is hard to document conservatism in the data, the DHS sample provides some useful self-reported information which can be used as proxies of social norms and conservatism. One of the figures provided from data in the DHS depicts blood ties between spouses/partners. Figure 12 displays the share of marriages between cousins for Syrian and Turkish women aged 15-49. The figure shows that a staggering 46 percent of Syrian women are married/in an intimate partnership with a blood relative. And among all marriages within extended family, the probability of being wed to someone with paternal blood ties is higher. As for Turkish women, the share of those who are married to a blood relative is 24 percent, almost half the rate for Syrian women.

Figure 12. Conservatism and Cultural Barriers: Blood Relation to Husband



Source: 2018 DHS, sample weights are used.

The DHS also provides information on opinions for certain social norms. Table 8 summarizes the results for some of these questions. In general, there is no large difference on how women value sons' education versus girls' education. However, the perceptions on whether a woman should work seem to be different between Turkish and Syrian women. 68 percent of Syrian women agree with the statement that women should not work, whereas 41 percent of Turkish women agree with the statement. While there is a 27 percent difference in the approval rates between Syrian and national women, the figures should be interpreted with caution as i) these interviews are conducted in different languages, and ii) the two groups of women might have different perceptions of the term "work". It remains as an important research area to explore the reasons why women report that they should not work, and how this response is influenced by their views on household responsibilities. Interestingly, Turkish women have more conservative perceptions on marriage, 86 percent agree with the statement that marriages should not end whereas the approval rate for Syrian women is 52 percent.<sup>32</sup>

Table 8. Perceptions on Selected Social Judgements

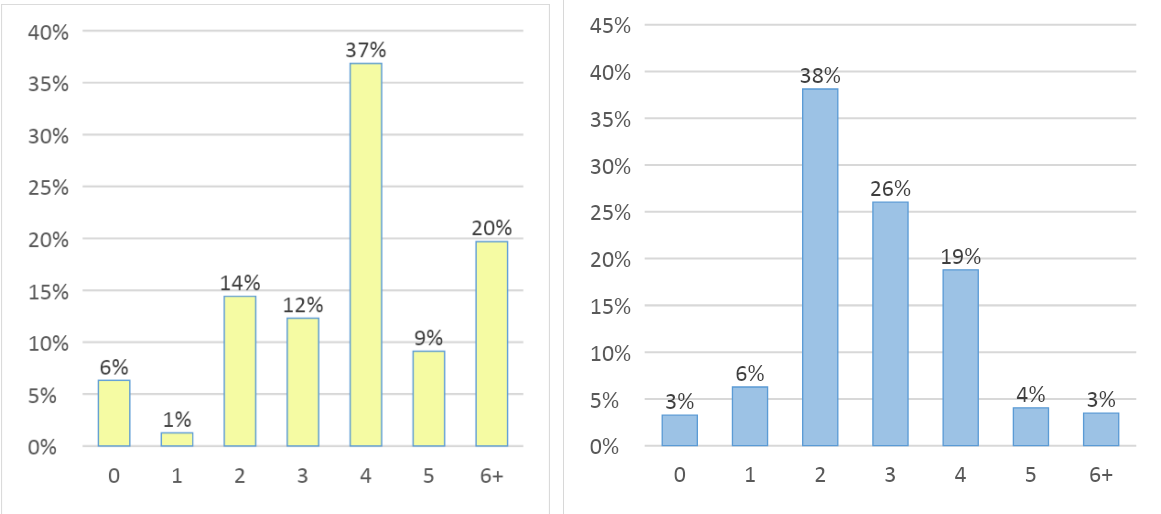
<i>Opinion: better to educate sons than daughters</i>	Women from Syria	Women from Turkey
Disagree	89%	93%
Agree	10%	7%
Don't know	1%	0%
<i>Opinion: women should not work</i>	Women from Syria	Women from Turkey
Disagree	29%	57%
Agree	68%	41%
Don't know	3%	2%
<i>Opinion: marriage should not end</i>	Women from Syria	Women from Turkey
Disagree	46%	14%
Agree	52%	86%
Don't know	2%	0%

Source: 2018 DHS, sample weights are used.

As explained in the previous section, the fertility rates are considerably higher for Syrian women. Figure 13 provides further evidence that the fertility is higher, not just because Syrian men force women for higher fertility but Syrian women also desire a higher number of children in comparison to Turkish women. 37 percent of women from Syria believe that having 4 kids is ideal, and as high as 20 percent of women from Syria believe 6 or more kids are ideal. The latter figure is only 3 percent for women from Turkey. Taking these statistics together, it seems that perceptions and traditional social norms are among the driving factors of Syrian women's preferences for employment.

<sup>32</sup> There are also questions in DHS survey on whether beating is justified under certain circumstances. The approval for beating is as low as 7 percent in the Syrian sample and 9 percent in the Turkish sample.

Figure 13. Ideal Number of Children



a) Women from Syria

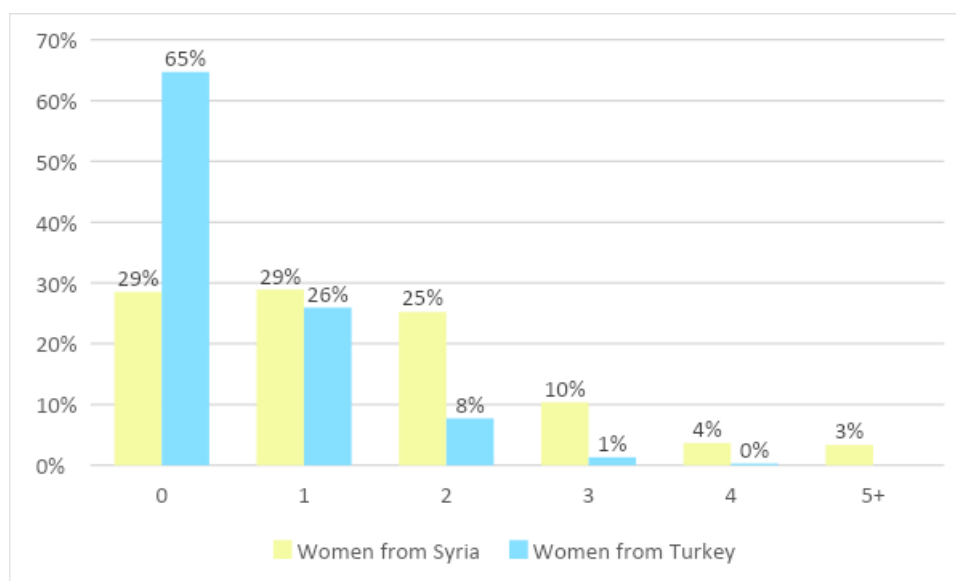
b) Women from Turkey

Source: 2018 DHS, sample weights are used.

**Limited Access to Childcare Services**

The literature review in the previous sections show that access to childcare is among the most insurmountable problems that constrain women in Turkey. As the World Bank (2015) has demonstrated, childcare services in Turkey do not best suit working women’s needs and the prevailing market prices for childcare services are out of reach for most households. Hence, informal childcare services such as care provided by grandmothers are helpful tools to support working women (Akyol and Yilmaz, (2021)). The inadequacy of affordable childcare services put Syrian women at a disadvantage relatively more than female nationals, as Syrian women are likely to have become separated from their parents and thus have less childcare support from grandmothers. As Table 2 shows, the share of Syrian women who are above age 55 are only 5.9 percent of the total Syrian women in Turkey. Against this background, Figure 14 shows that 71 percent of Syrian households have at least one child under five years old whereas the same figure for Turkish households is 35 percent. Sadly, the share of children of Syrian parents under age five attending daycare is 0 percent in the survey whereas it is 8 percent for children of Turkish citizens.

Figure 14. Number of Children Under 5 in the Household



Source: 2018 DHS, sample weights are used.

Table 9 displays the answers given to the question of who bears childcare responsibilities in the household. The results show that the share of women who always provide childcare themselves is very similar between Syrian and Turkish women. On the other hand, there is a 14 percent difference in the share of women who usually provide childcare themselves. Turkish women seem to be twice more likely to benefit from receiving support from other females in the household in comparison to Syrian women. The share of women who are able to employ a paid childcare giver at home is 0 percent for Syrian women and 0.1 percent for Turkish women. Overall, the literature review, as well as the quantitative evidence highlight the need for access to formal childcare services for all women in Turkey.

Table 9. Who bears the burden of childcare?

	Women from Syria	Women from Turkey
Always herself	22.1%	23.2%
Usually herself	27.2%	13.1%
Together with her (ex) husband	14.7%	13.8%
Usually her (ex) husband	0.0%	0.2%
Always her (ex) husband	0.3%	0.1%
Other females in household	4.7%	7.5%
Other males in household	0.3%	0.3%
Paid nanny	0.0%	0.1%
Other	0.5%	1.9%
No one	30.4%	39.8%

Source: 2018 DHS, sample weights are used.

### ***Limited Access to Finance***

Lack of access to finance is a global phenomena for women everywhere and Turkey is no exception. Although numerous projects and initiatives exist to increase funds to female entrepreneurs by KOSGEB, IFC, World Bank, and EBRD, only 10 percent of firms in Turkey are female-owned (IFC). The 2019 Enterprise Survey of the World Bank shows that in Turkey, 58 percent of loans require collateral when the business is managed by a woman, versus 37 percent when the business is run by a man. The 2017 Global Findex Report by the World Bank shows that 83 percent of men and 54 percent of women in Turkey have bank accounts and the gender gap is about **three times as large** as the average gap in developing countries. The Global Findex Report also show that 72 percent of unbanked women in Turkey (and 51 percent of unbanked men) indicate that one reason they do not have an account is that one of their family members already has one. Strikingly, 89 percent of unbanked women are out of the labor force in Turkey. One in six unbanked women in Turkey saves using semi-formal methods. The World Bank estimates that if those savings were moved into accounts, up to 2 million unbanked women could join the formal financial system.

A recent study based on a randomized controlled experiment conducted in Turkey by the World Bank staff finds that 35 percent of loan officers are biased against women applicants, where gender bias is measured as any positive difference between the amount of money allocated to men versus women loan applicants in the experiment (Alibhai et al. (2019)). The experiment shows that women applicants in Turkey receive approximately \$14,000 less in comparison to the loan approved for men. This corresponds to women receiving a 7.5 percent lower loan amount. Interestingly, the study finds that experience in the banking sector emerges as the key explanatory variable. The more experienced a loan officer is, the less likely they are to resort to gender bias in decision making.

The unmet credit needs of women-owned SMEs in Turkey are estimated to be 5 billion USD (IFC). While the evidence shows that there are barriers for women in Turkey to have access to credit, borrowing constraints also seem to be affecting refugee men. According to the Syrian entrepreneurial report by the Economic Policy Research Institute of Turkey (TEPAV), approximately 10,000 companies have been established by Syrians between 2011-2019 in Turkey, providing a living for at least 7 percent of Syrians in Turkey. More than half of all refugee-driven companies are micro-sized (employing less than 5 people) and operate predominantly in the services sector. 75 percent of all Syrians surveyed by TEPAV state that they had a company before coming to Turkey, and that access to banking systems and access to finance are the two greatest obstacles limiting Syrian entrepreneurs' inclusion into the Turkish economy. 28 percent of Syrian employers admit that they face problems with opening a commercial bank account, while the same issue poses a problem to merely 10 percent of Turkish employers.

While increased access to finance has the potential to increase the economic participation of women from Turkey and promote jobs, its impact might be limited for women from Syria due to lack of information on the legal system, support and mentoring mechanisms, language barriers, and limited networks.

### ***Security concerns, sexual harassment, and discrimination***

The international evidence shows that security concerns and fear of sexual harassment are among the most important barriers keeping women out of the labor markets. Violence against women also has significant economic costs in terms of decreased mental health and productivity, lost income, and expenditures on service provision. Turkey ranks among the top countries in terms of female homicides by intimate partners, family, and non-partners (Asik and Ozen, (2021)). Several episodes of violent crimes against women in recent years caused immense public uproar, but there are no systematic studies to document to what extent these specific incidences affected women's decisions to supply their labor.

A survey by Turkstat (2021) shows that 26.8 percent of women do not feel safe and 8.7 percent of women do not feel safe at all when they are walking alone at night in Turkey. These figures imply that 35.5 percent of women do not feel safe. The same statistics are correspondingly 11.9 and 2.4 percent for men. The 2014 (the latest) wave of the Domestic Violence Against Women survey of Turkstat reveals that 35.5 of women in Turkey have experienced physical violence and 12 percent have experienced sexual violence at least once in their lifetimes. The percent of women who report that they have experienced physical and sexual violence at least once in the last 12 months are correspondingly 8.2 and 5.3 percent. Lifetime incidence of physical violence and sexual violence are most prevalent among women with primary school degrees with 41.4 and 14.4 percent correspondingly. Unfortunately, there are no official and comparable statistics on incidences of physical and sexual violence for refugee women in Turkey.

The official statistics are also confirmed in existing studies, in which face to face interviews with women were conducted. Toker and Sümer (2010) interviewed 353 women from various institutions to identify culture-relevant behaviors that are considered to be sexual harassment and found that 11 percent of women were exposed to sexual harassment, 38 percent of women to physical sexual harassment, and 43 percent of women to behaviors involving sexual hostility at least once in their lives.

As explained previously, Ünlütürk Ulutaş and Durusoy Öztepe (2021) conducted a field study in Konya and Bursa provinces in Turkey and found that fear of sexual harassment at work is the major obstacle against women's employment in Konya, but not in Bursa. Furthermore, the study found that most employers reacted to women who raised concerns by laying off the victims of sexual harassment. Studies show that it is not only women from more disadvantaged backgrounds in Turkey that are subject to sexual violence, but also women in professional occupations. Çelik and Çelik (2007), in a study conducted with hospital nurses in Turkey, document that 37.1 percent reported that they had been harassed sexually at the workplace at least once. The study by Gunduz et al. (2007) documented that 200 out of 356 professional sportswomen in Turkey claim that they have been sexually harassed by trainers, administrators, and spectators.

Sexual abuse is a more serious concern for refugee women in Turkey because of the vulnerable and disadvantaged conditions they live in. Alpak et al. (2014) and Baklacioğlu (2017) document the immense degree of sexual harassment faced by women from Syria, especially in camps. Sexual



exploitation by landlords and employers is acute for poorer and single refugee women. Informal financial support mechanisms by neighbors and employers tend to make refugee women more vulnerable to sexual demands. Due to fear of sexual harassment, families tend to employ male children in the household, creating another layer of inequality and exploitation (Baklacioğlu & Kivilcim (2015)). Hence, the probability of sexual abuse might be among the main reasons why an overwhelming share of Syrian women believe that women should not work, as shown in the previous section.

Discrimination also seems to be an important problem slowing down the integration of refugee women in Turkey. According to the UN Women's Needs Assessment Report, 7.1 percent of employed Syrian women are dissatisfied with their work due to discrimination. Fieldwork by Körükmez, Karakılıç, and Daniş (2020) suggests that women from Syria prefer to work in workplaces where other male members of the household are also employed in the same workplace to avoid harassment.

## **Section X. Recommendations**

This section provides policy recommendations to support the empowerment and participation of women in labor markets based on evidence reviewed and provided in the previous sections. Some of the recommendations listed below can also help facilitate the integration of refugee women into society and build networks.

- Disseminate information on access to key public services through simple interventions such as sending SMS, digital information awareness campaigns, or leaflets to refugee and host community women in Arabic, Turkish, and Kurdish. The information provided can be about the nearest health clinic, police station, legal counseling, language courses, vocational training and other types of free services provided by the government, NGOs or international organizations.
- Increase the capacity for Turkish language courses for refugee women. Design mother and child courses where women can attend, interact, and practice with their children through playing. Though language courses may not immediately help Syrian and other refugee women to find jobs, it will nevertheless facilitate the integration process in the medium term.
- Integrate modules into the education curriculum to foster social cohesion, gender equality, and inspire girls through successful female role models. This is particularly important for Syrian girls, as some parents are likely to come from backgrounds where female employment is seen as a loss of social status.
- Increase work permits and prioritize work permit coverage of young refugee men and women through tax advantages.
- Regulate working hours. Turkey's working hours are among the longest working hours globally (average 50+ a week), which creates an environment for exploitation. Stable, flexible, and predictable working hours has a potential to increase women's participation in paid work.

- Subsidize childcare. The lack of affordable childcare services in Turkey is driving low employment amongst women in Turkey, yet progress remains limited.
- Invest in the care economy. Provide training and certify women who are willing to work in the care economy. The care economy offers flexibility for women. Provide subsidies for households who are willing to benefit from such services at affordable prices. While subsidies can put a burden on the government budget, they usually pay off the costs directly and indirectly through the formalization of employment, especially if designed well.
- Invest in job creation in other sectors which have potential to drive formal employment for women.
- Invest in better data and ensure that the official statistics and surveys include not only Syrian refugees but also refugees from other nationalities. Without high-quality data, it is not possible to identify the problems and constraints, test whether the public resources are efficiently used, or develop policies to improve the inclusion of refugee and host community women in the labor market.
- Develop a research agenda to better understand national and refugee women's perceptions of what constitutes work, as well as their views on division of labor within households. Understanding why women consider that they should not work is crucial in developing policies and helping women balance work and family life.
- Strengthen the legal environment to increase deterrence of all crimes against women. Disseminate information to refugee and host community women on their legal rights as a means of preventing sexual abuse and violence.
- Increase the safety of public transportation and invest in female-friendly cities. Disseminate information on helplines in several languages. Fear of violence and sexual abuse is among the top concerns of women, not only in Turkey but in most countries.
- Alleviate the credit bottlenecks for female entrepreneurs. Design blind systems which make the gender information unknown to employers and/or credit officers. Credit constraints do not seem to be the most important barrier for Syrian women, as the participation rates are very low, and Syrian women tend to work out of necessity. Nevertheless, equal opportunities for refugee and host community women should be provided, since refugee women are a good source of ideas, having overcome several barriers themselves.
- Women face various forms of discrimination in the workplace and from employers. Mentorship between women can be effective in breaking glass ceilings, as well as in empowering women. Launch voluntary nationwide mentorship programs between working women and high school and university girls. Similar programs started flourishing in academia in the U.S. and Europe and initial statistical evaluation of such programs shows a positive impact on achieving better career prospects for the mentees. Launch a voluntary mentorship program also for refugee girls in school.
- Advocate for a political quota for women. This could be a worthwhile long-term investment to reduce gender gaps in political representation and establish mechanisms to provide public services that women demand.

- Advertise successful examples of women’s cooperatives all around Turkey to support women’s networks and scale up such initiatives. Seek further partnerships with municipalities and the private sector.
- Implement policies which improve the regulatory and fiscal framework that enable women’s SMEs, including women’s cooperatives, to better thrive and create jobs for women.

## Section XI. Conclusion

This report presents a review of the literature on barriers limiting women’s participation in the economy. The literature shows that women all over the world face common problems. The evidence consistently indicates that political institutions that prioritize male employment, insufficient childcare support, discrimination, negative social norms, and fear of harassment are significant barriers to leveling the field for men and women. Considering also the fact that women are expected to bear the double shift of market work and household chores, participating in the labor market is relatively more costly for women, especially if the expected wages are low.

The analysis presented in this report shows that while women in Turkey face similar problems, some of these barriers are even more pressing for refugee women. According to the World Bank’s Women Business and Law Index, a woman in Turkey has 82.5 percent of the rights that a man has. The childcare service capacity at the prevailing fees are unreachable for many women. Femicide is on the rise and women from all walks of life feel under the threat of physical and sexual violence. Access to finance and discrimination is still a major problem for women entrepreneurs in Turkey.

Unfortunately, refugee women in Turkey face even harder challenges. They have extremely low rates of employment, and those who are employed endure significant wage gaps and job insecurity. Language barriers significantly reduce refugee women’s access to public services, integration into the economy, and opportunities to create bonds with women from the host community. While there is no systematic and representative data, several field studies show that refugee women are under threat of sexual harassment both in and out of the workplace.

This report recommends several actions and policies. As the most binding constraint, supply of publicly provided child care services needs to be increased urgently. Regulations that put women at a disadvantage should be reviewed and amended. Fiscal and legal incentives should be introduced to level the field for male and female labor supply and make work-family life more balanced for women and men. Regulations which incentivize the care economy should also be enacted. Improvements in policing and investments in infrastructure are crucial for making cities safer for women.

While these actions would help foster women’s participation in the economy, further action is still needed for creating an enabling environment for refugee women. Providing language courses can facilitate integration, both for women and their children. Dissemination of information to refugee communities might also facilitate the integration and employment prospects for younger generations. Most importantly, work permits extended to individuals under the Temporary Protection Regulation should be increased significantly. The penal code should be strengthened to deter crimes, especially sexual crimes against refugees. The government also needs to invest in statistical and data collection capacity to be able to formulate policies based on evidence. Data on refugees, especially on

non-Syrian women is scarce, while programs targeting refugees are numerous. Better data allows evaluation as to the effectiveness of the existing integration policies, and allows space for their modification if and when necessary.

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