

Turkey's Gender Equality Performance from 2000 to 2019:

A Rights-Based Analysis via UNDP Human Development
and Gender Development Indices

UNDP Turkey - CEID (Association for Monitoring Gender Equality)

Introduced by UNDP in the early 1990s, the Human Development Index (HDI) and Gender Development Index (GDI) set the ground for making comparison, among countries, of the actual progress in the human development based on equality. Likewise, the Gender Inequality Index (GII) makes it possible to compare how inequalities have changed between countries. Thereafter, the efforts evolved into the largest indicator set developed for the Sustainable Development Goals. The United Nations made recommendations within the framework of the human rights-based development approach for the use of rights-based indicators in the monitoring of countries' development performances.

In this context, the current study aims, using the rights-based indicators developed for monitoring gender equality in Turkey, to shed light on how HDI, GDI and GII values have changed over time, to understand the change observed over time, and to draw attention to such change to encourage taking necessary steps. Monitoring the change in Turkey over time through indicators makes it possible to clarify the progressing or receding areas and to develop policies accordingly.

PROGRESS



Turkey's Human Development Index (HDI) value increased by **%24,2** from 0.660 in 2000 to 0.820 in 2019.

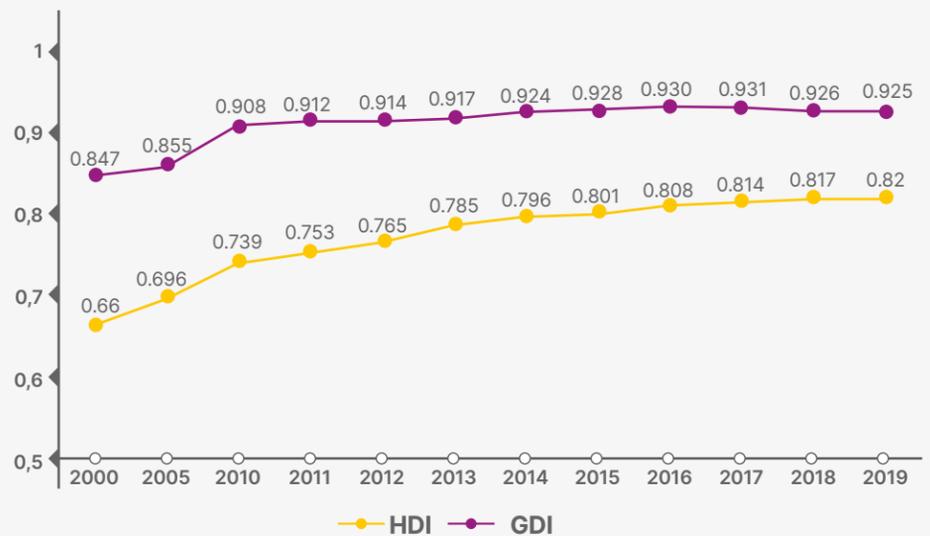
Thus, being in the medium human development category in 2000, **Turkey rose to the very high human development category in 2019.**

Human Development Index values disaggregated by sex increased.

The Gender Development Index (GDI) also increased during this period, but not as rapid as HDI. It increased from 0.847 in 2000 to 0.93 in 2016.

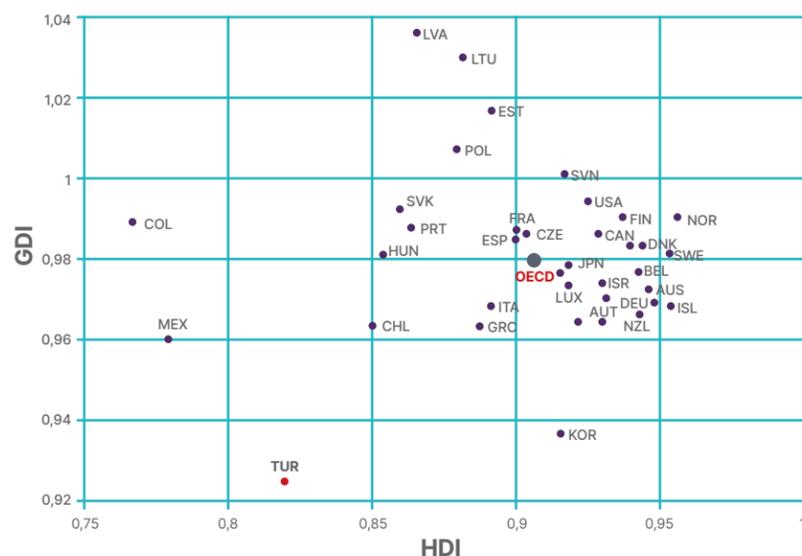
However, it stalled in 2017 and receded thereafter.

Human Development Index and Gender Development Index



EXISTING INEQUALITIES

Turkey's HDI value remains lower than the vast majority of OECD member states, whereas its GDI value remains lower than all of them



Gender inequality in human development still persists in 2019.

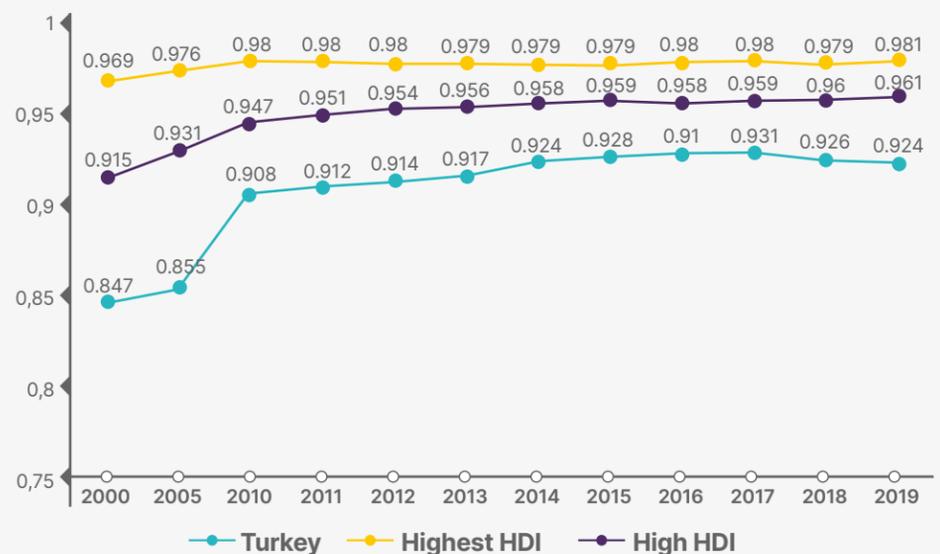
Turkey ranks 54th among 189 countries by the Human Development Index, **whereas it ranks 68th among 162 countries by the Gender Development Index.** This makes Turkey one of those countries with the highest difference between the HDI values for women and men.



The GDI value for Turkey is lower compared to all countries with very high or high HDI values.

Furthermore, the GDI value for Turkey has decreased in recent years.

Gender Development Index



There are only two countries among the very high HDI countries which, similar to Turkey, have lower GDI values than other countries in this category: **Saudi Arabia and Bahrain.**

EDUCATION

PROGRESS

The basic components of the Human Development Index (HDI) are HEALTH, EDUCATION and INCOME. Disaggregating the changes in the Human Development Index values on the basis of these components allows to elaborate the improvements in the HDI value according to the examined area and to investigate the root causes of the differences between women and men. In the 2000-2019 period, the education and income components demonstrate inequality in favour of men and to the detriment of women. When these two components are compared with each other, the gender inequality in income is higher than the gender inequality in education during the entire period except for the year 2000. The income component slightly progressed towards equality, a similar development in education over the significant part of the period reversed after 2016, and the gender gap in education started to increase again. The gender gap in education persists, keeping Turkey behind the countries in the high and very high development groups.



Why is there a large gender gap by human development of Turkey?

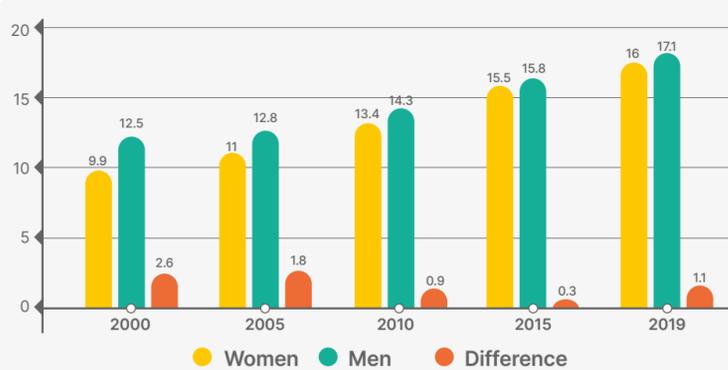
Education has continued to make the highest contribution to the human development.

The improvement observed in Turkey's HDI values particularly resulted from the progress in education. During the same period, the average contribution of education to the **human development was 58 percent**. Education is the most significant factor in the Human Development Index both for women and men.

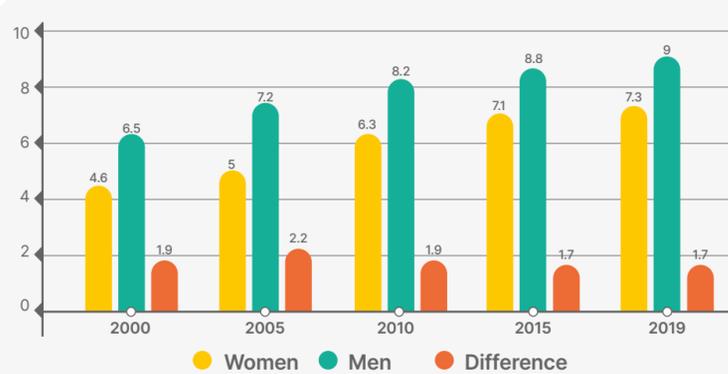
Difference between women and men decreased in terms of both expected and mean years of schooling.

Increasing compulsory education to **8 years in 1997 and then to 12 years in 2011** significantly increased the schooling rate of girls and boys. The difference between women and men decreased in terms of both expected and mean years of schooling. However, the difference in the expected years of schooling started to increase again in 2019.

Expected Years of Schooling



Mean Years of Schooling

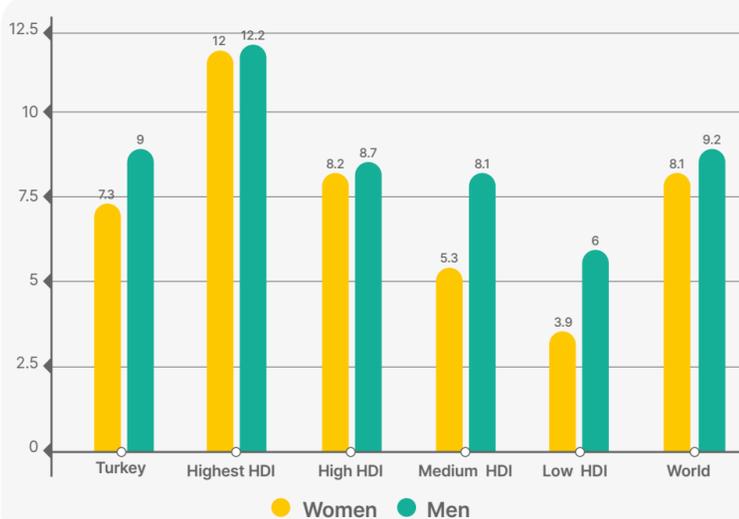


EXISTING INEQUALITIES

Gender equality in education is still lower than in countries with high and very high Human Development Index.

Despite the recent progress in education in Turkey, gender equality remains lower than in countries with high and very high HDI values. Although all reforms for increasing compulsory education benefited both girls and boys, boys benefited more from education as the gender gap remained the same. This shows up in the mean years of schooling of women and men.

Mean Years of Schooling (2019)



In countries with high and very high HDIs, gender gap in education (the ratio of women's education index to men's education index) is 1 on average and equal to each other, whereas this ratio was **still 0.887 in Turkey in 2019**.

Poverty adversely affects girls' access to education.

Despite the increase in the schooling rate over time, there is a significant child population not going to school at primary and secondary education levels. Poverty is still a determining factor in the dropout of children from primary education, and affects girls more negatively particularly in the Northeast Anatolia, East Anatolia and Southeast Anatolia regions. In 2019, the schooling rate of girls at the high school level was

70.8% in Central East Anatolia and 68.4% in Southeast Anatolia.



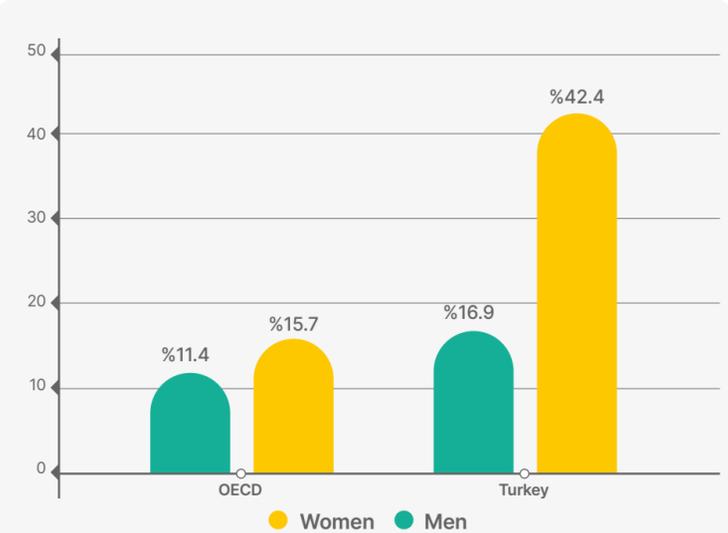
Turkey is the country with the highest school dropouts among European countries.

According to the Statistical Office of the European Union (Eurostat) data, Turkey has the highest school dropout rates among the European countries. In 2019 this rate was **28.6% for women and 28.9% for men**.

In Turkey, **42.4%** of women aged 15 to 29 are neither in education, nor in employment (NEET).

In Turkey, **27.2%** of the young people aged 15 to 29 are neither in education nor in employment (NEET). This is the second highest rate after Colombia (29.6%) among the OECD member states (14.1% on average). In Turkey, this rate is **16.9% for men aged 15 to 29**, whereas it is **42.4%** for women in the same age group (OECD, 2020).

Youth Not in Education, Employment or Training



HEALTH

In terms of contribution to the HDI value, income is the second component for women, whereas it is health for men. The contribution of income to the women's human development index is 26%. Similarly, the contribution of the progress for men's health to their human development is 28%.

PROGRESS

In Turkey, women's average life expectancy is longer than that of men

In Turkey, the index values calculated based on the health-related indicators are higher for women compared to men, in all ages.. However, gender inequality in health has been slightly and steadily changing in favour of men over time. In 2019, average life expectancy was 80.6 years for women and 74.7 years for men. However, these figures are still lower than the countries with very high HDI values.



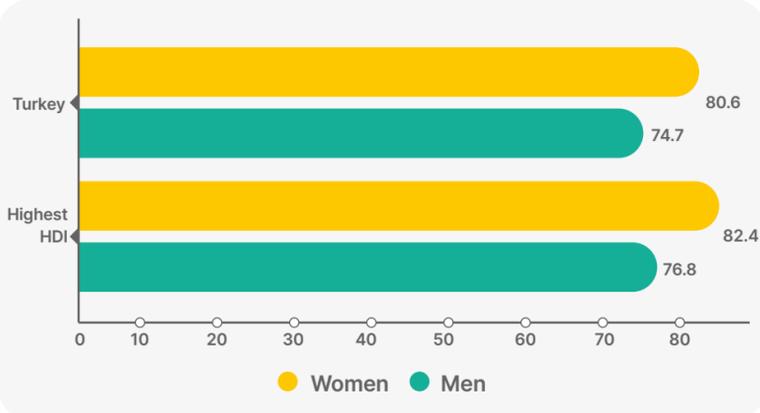
Maternal Mortality Ratios and Adolescent Birth Rates decreased.

The Gender Inequality Index (GII) have two main indicators under the reproductive health: Maternal Mortality Ratios (per 100,000 live births) and Adolescent Birth Rates (live births per 1,000 women aged 15 to 19). The progress over years in Turkey in the "maternal health" services related to pregnancy and birth were effective in reducing. Maternal Mortality Ratios and Adolescent Birth Rates.

Maternal Mortality Ratios decreased from 42 per 100,000 live births in 2000 to 17 per 100,000 live births in 2019.

Adolescent Birth Rates decreased from 55 live births per 1,000 women in 2000 to 27 in 2019.

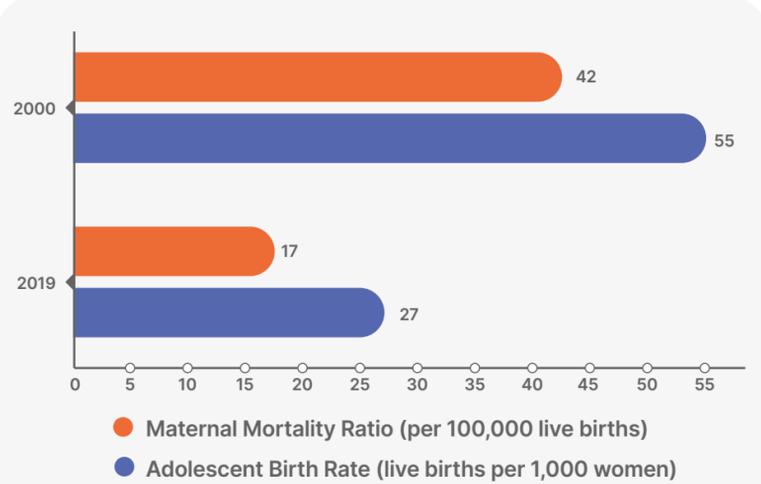
Average life expectancy (Turkey - Highest HDI) (2019)



Men's life expectancy at birth increased over the years, and the age gap between men and women decreased.

As women had longer life expectancy at birth than men in the 2000-2019 period, women's health index was higher than men's. Men's life expectancy at birth increased over years due to improvement in healthcare services and health conditions, **and the age difference between men and women decreased, from 7.4 years in 2000 to 5.9 years in 2019.**

Maternal Mortality Ratio and Adolescent Birth Rate (2000-2019)



EXISTING INEQUALITIES

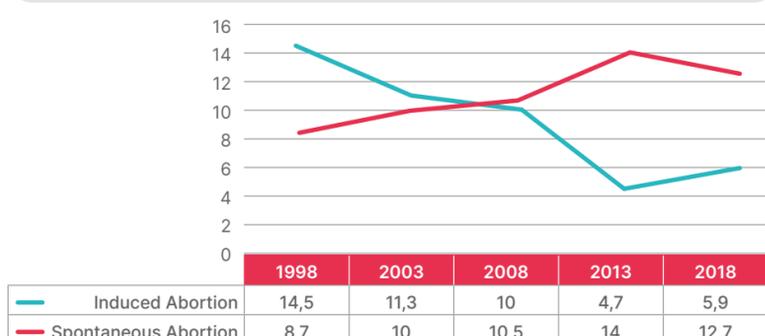
Reproductive health, family planning and sexual rights issues are gradually being less frequently included in official documents.

With gradual abandonment of gender equality norms in the political decision-making mechanisms, reproductive health, family planning and sexual rights issues are gradually being less frequently included in official documents. Sexual health and reproductive health are addressed merely limited to maternity and birth.

Access to induced abortion services has become difficult.

Since 2008, induced abortions (with medical intervention) have decreased whereas spontaneous abortions (without medical intervention) have unexpectedly increased. This was a result of the elimination of access to induced abortion services at public health institutions.

Induced and Spontaneous Abortions by years in Turkey (per 100 pregnancies) (TNSA 1998-2018)

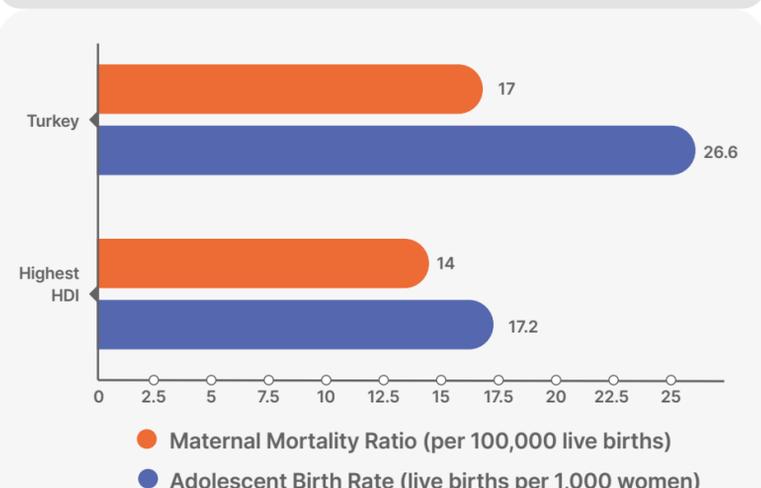


Unmet needs for family planning have been growing.

Family planning needs for one third of families are not met. "Unmet needs for family planning" have been increasing due to rhetoric against birth control, political encouragement of women's fertility and failure to provide family planning services sufficiently at primary healthcare institutions.

Turkey is behind the countries with very high HDI values by Maternal Mortality Ratio and Adolescent Birth Rate.

Maternal Mortality Ratio and Adolescent Birth Rate (2019)





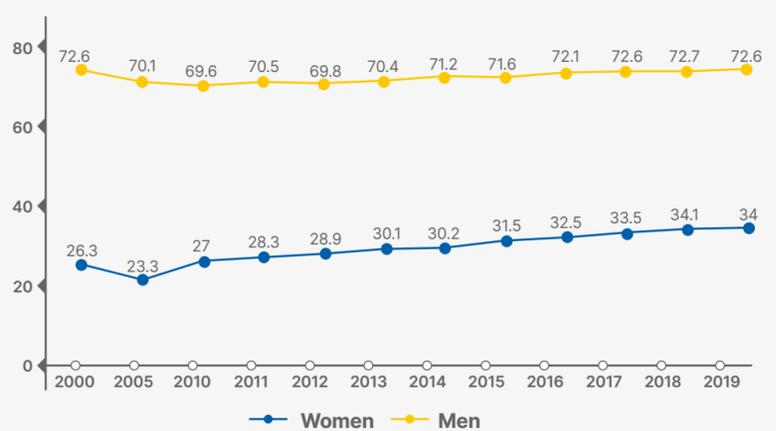
EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME

PROGRESS

Female labour force participation rate has been increasing steadily but very slowly.

The female labour force participation rate has steadily increased particularly since 2011. However, the female labour force participation rate in Turkey is still very low compared to males. In 2019, this rate was 34% for women and 72% for men.

Labour Force Participation Rate (Turkey)



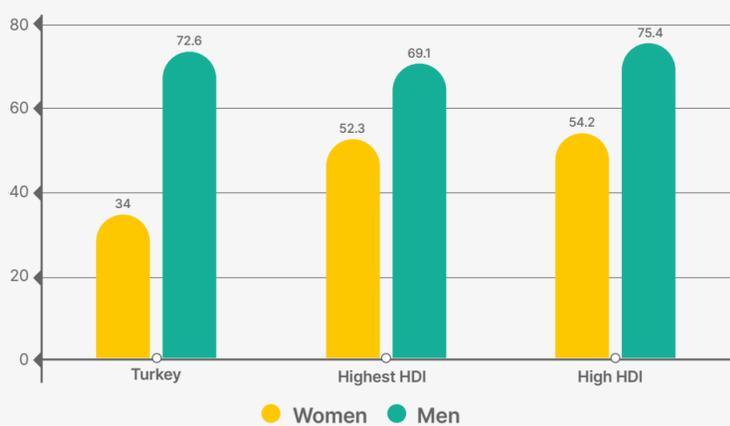
Income-generating employment makes a contribution of 26% to female HDI growth.

EXISTING INEQUALITIES

Female labour force participation rate in Turkey is very low compared to other countries.

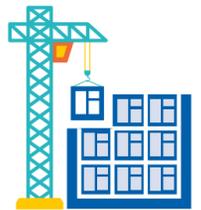
The female labour force participation rate in Turkey is 34% and **very low compared** to average rate observed in the countries with high human development (54%) and very high human development (52%) categories.

Labour Force Participation Rate (%) (2019)



The limited inclusiveness of economic growth has restricted new employment opportunities.

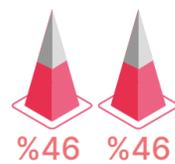
Turkey's growth performance in the first decade of the 21st century depended on the construction sector rather than the manufacturing industry and services. However, the construction sector, which is based on male-oriented employment, follows the GDP growth rather than driving growth. The construction sector has therefore been inadequate to provide a solution to the deeply rooted employment problems.



Employment rate in Turkey remains behind the levels in the 2000s.

The employment rate in Turkey did not increase during the 2000-2019 period.

- The employment was 46% in 2000 and remained at the same level in 2019.

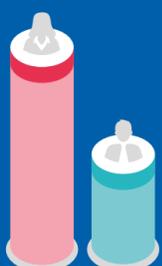


This is well below the global average in 2019 (57%).

The underlying factor here is the female employment rate (29%) which is way below the male employment rate (63%).

Female labour force participation rate further decreased to 30% in 2020 with the onset of pandemic.

Female unemployment rate has been higher than men since 2005. In 2019, female unemployment rate was **approximately 1,4 times** the male unemployment rate.

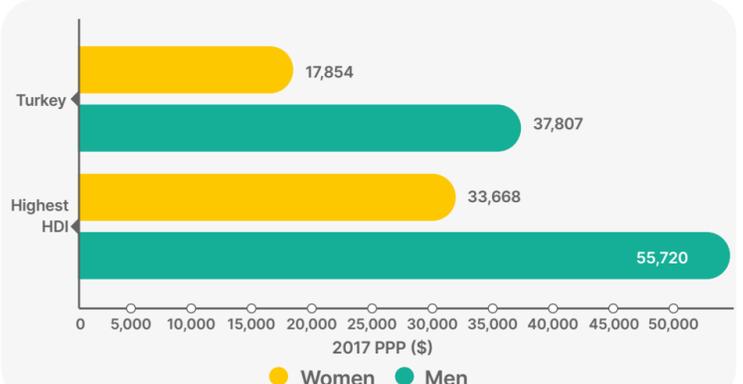


This is much higher than countries with high and very high HDIs in which female and male unemployment rates are close.

Even as women participate in employment, the large gender gap in income still persists.

The gender gap in income in Turkey is well above the gap in countries with high and very high HDIs. On average, Turkish men achieve an income level which is almost three fourths of their peers in the very high human development category. On the other hand, the level of income achieved by Turkish women is about half of the women in countries in the same category.

Income Per Capita (Turkey - Highest HDI) (2019)



One of the components of the UNDP Gender Inequality Index is the rate of women in the parliament. In Turkey, the basic laws, regulating the decision-making processes and rules of political representation, do not contain a clause on gender equality/balance. In public strategic plans and action plans, which aims to increase women's empowerment and their representation in decision-making mechanisms, there are only indirect interventions and recommendations, such as awareness raising, mindset transformation, which have limited effect.

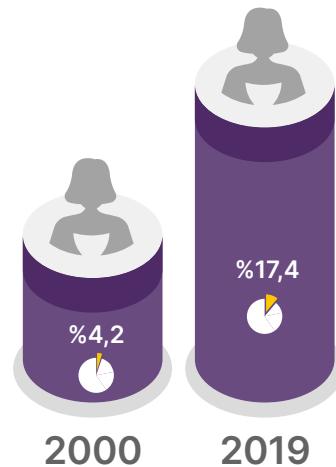


POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

PROGRESS

Ratio of women in the parliament increased.

The ratio of women in the parliament in Turkey increased by more than four times, from 4.2% in 2000 to 17.4% in 2019.



EXISTING INEQUALITIES

Ratio of women in the parliament is still too low.

The ratio of women in the parliament is **lower than all country groups**, across all different human development levels. This ratio is 24.5% in the category of high HDI countries, whereas it is 28.3% in very high HDI countries.



Gender equality is not included in basic laws which govern political decision-making processes and principles of political representation.



There is no provision regarding achieving gender equality in any of the basic laws in Turkey which govern political decision-making processes and principles of political representation.

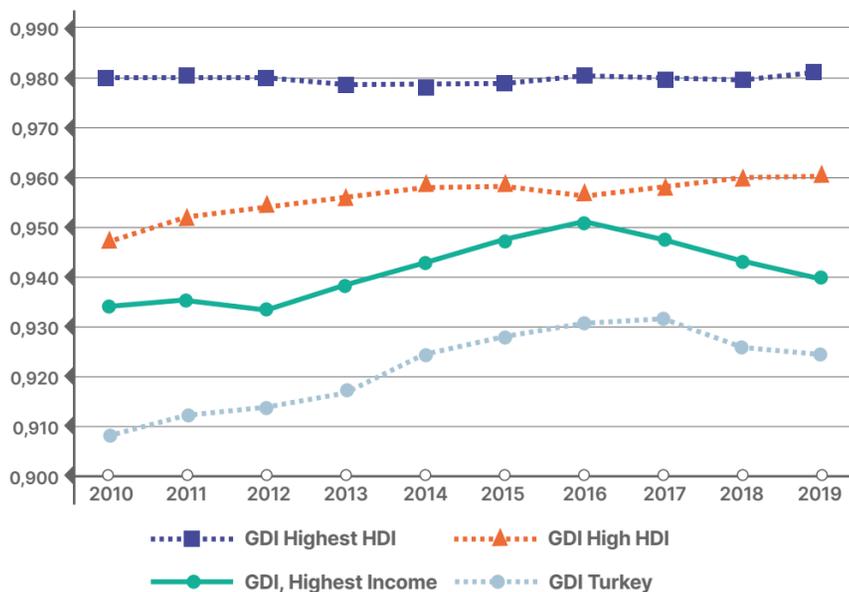
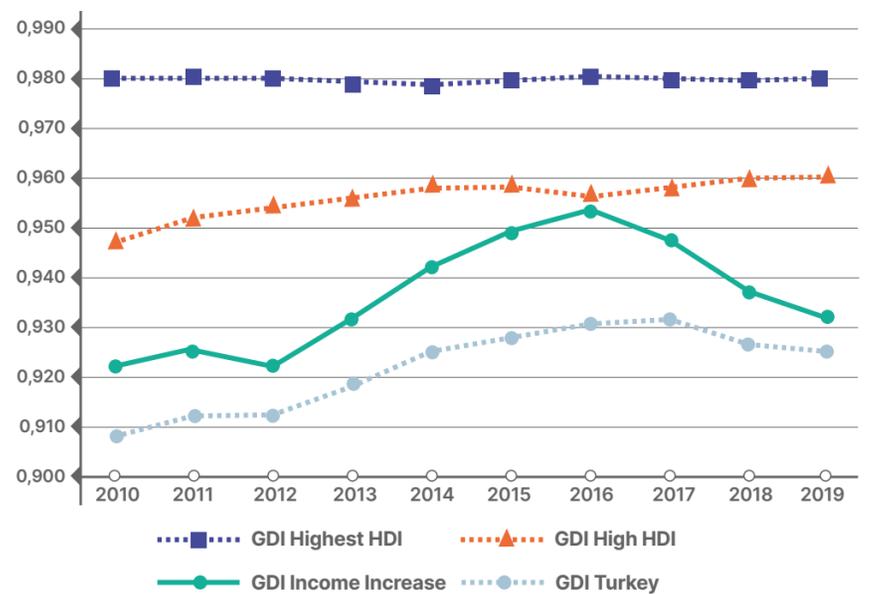
Action plans, which aim to increase the representation of women in decision-making mechanisms, and which are prepared for women's empowerment, only prescribe such activities as indirect intervention, raising awareness and mindset transformation, with very limited effect.

Can Turkey achieve Gender Development Index (GDI) scores as in countries with very high HDI?

Gender inequalities in income and education are among the major barriers for Turkey to reaching to the GDI scores of the countries with very high HDI. Various policy tracks can be followed to overcome this.

The first is to reduce the gender gap in income per capita in a way to equalize with the gender gap in education.

However, if the observed changes towards equality in education had been observed in the income component, then Turkey would have only been able to achieve a GDI score close to that of the country group with high HDI.

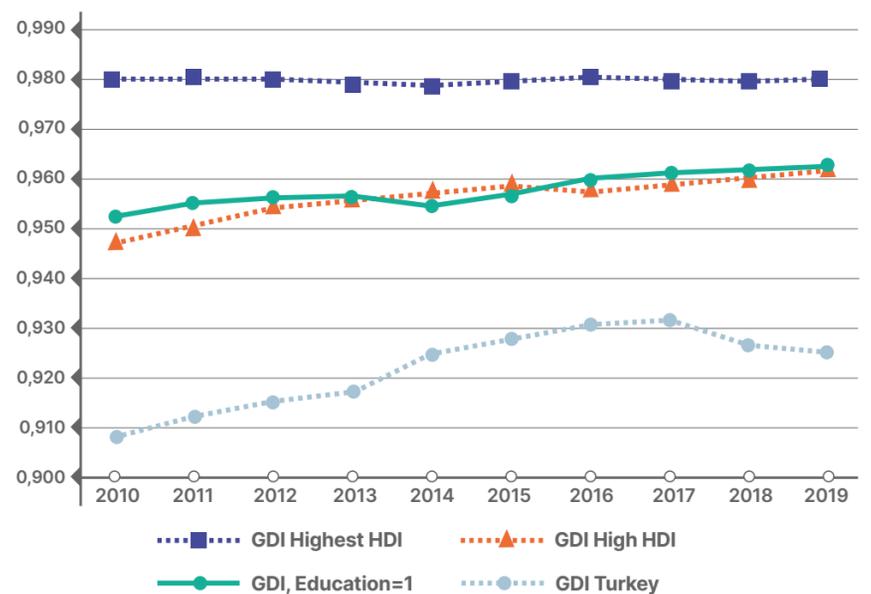


The second is to reduce Turkey's gender gap in income per capita to the average value of the countries with very high HDI.

In this case, Turkey will go up closer to the average GDI values of the country group with high HDI, but remain behind the countries with very high HDI.

The third is to ensure full gender equality in education in Turkey.

In this case, Turkey will go up most closely to the GDI scores of the countries with very high GDI but still remain behind.



For gender equality, gains in education or in income are necessary but not sufficient alone to achieve the level of very high HDI. Gender equality of the same level with countries with high HDI can be achieved only if there is simultaneous progress in both components.

Policies should be implemented to address gender inequalities in education, health, politics and employment as well as gender pay gap in a holistic perspective, and promote each of them to mutually reduce inequality.