

Country Youth Profile



TURKEY



Women and Youth Empowerment Division
Resilience and Social Development Department
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Socio-Economic Profile

The Republic of Turkey is at the geopolitical intersection between Europe, the Balkans, the Caucasus, and the Middle East¹. Its estimated population in March 2019 is at 82,663,339². Turkey's economic and social development since 2000 has been remarkable, leading to increased employment and incomes, making Turkey an upper-middle-income country³. The predicted economic outlook for 2018 reveals a downward trend. Growth is expected to fall from 7.4% in 2017 to 3.7% in 2018 and 2.3% in 2019⁴. Poverty is forecasted to decline at a slow pace, from 9.3% in 2017 to 9% in 2018 and 8.8% in 2019, measured based on the upper-middle-income country poverty line (US\$5.5 per day in 2011 purchasing power parity)⁵. Turkey is a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the G20 and a candidate country for European Union (EU) accession.

1.2 Turkey maintained its 2016 rank of 64th among 189 countries on the United Nations Program's (UNDP) 2017 Human Development Index (HDI)⁶. The 2016 position moved up seven steps from its 2015 rank of 71st to 64th out of 188 countries, which puts the country in the high human development category⁷. Turkey's HDI level of 0.791 is above both the average of 0.757 for countries in the high human development category and the average of 0.771 for countries in Europe and Central Asia⁸. Turkey's HDI rank is higher than Azerbaijan (80th) and Serbia (67th) - two countries with close HDI and population to it⁹.

1.3 The official description of youth in Turkey refers to persons between ages 14-29 years¹⁰. Turkish Statistical Institute's (TurkStat) categorization of youth is fluid. In its first Annual Report on Youth in 2011, young individuals between 18-24 years were categorized as youth, ages 15-25 years was used in the second report, and in some employment surveys, 18-24 years was used to define young people¹¹. In some researches and demographic surveys, 15-24 years was used in their classification, and at times, even in the same survey 18-24 age bracket was used¹². However, the OECD defines youth as those between 15-29 years. The United Nations and the World Bank classify youth as persons aged 15-24 years, the Islamic Development Bank's Youth Development Strategy sets the target age group at 15–35 years. The Strategy encompasses a large age bracket to facilitate inclusion and participation and to allow for service delivery to the maximum number of young people. The Commonwealth identifies young people aged 15-29 as youth.

1.4. The youth population in Turkey in 2017 stood at 12,983,097 million or 16.1% of the country's population. The female and male population at the time was 48.8% and 51.2% respectively¹³. Turkey's rank on the Global Youth Development Index (YDI) in 2016 was 62nd among 183 countries¹⁴. The country was listed among the ten countries with the lowest rank in the Civic Participation domain compared to their overall YDI¹⁵

1.5. The minimum age of marriage is 18 years for both women and men. However, the law also allows 17-year-olds to marry with the consent of their parents or guardians, and the Civil Code permits 16-year-olds to marry with the permission of a court in 'exceptional' circumstances¹⁶. It is therefore unsurprising that an estimated 15% of girls marry before the age of 18 years and 1% before age 15 in 2017, making Turkey one of the countries with the highest

1 GIZ (ND), Turkey, <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/290.html>

2 World Population Review (2018), Turkey Country Profile, <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/turkey-population/>

3 World Bank (2018), Turkey Overview, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/turkey/overview#1>

4 Ibid

5 Ibid

6 UNDP (2018) Turkey Country Notes, http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/TUR.pdf

7 UNDP (2018), Turkey Country Note, http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/TUR.pdf, P. 3

8 UNDP 2018, op.cit:3

9 Ibid:3

10 European Commission (2017) Youth Policies in Turkey, <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/sites/youthwiki/files/gdlturkey.pdf>

11 Yurhaguler, L. (2016), The Impact of Youth Policies in Turkey, http://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/p2y_10.pdf, P.6

12 Ibid:6

13 Turkish Statistical Institute (2017), Youth in Statistics, 2017 <http://www.turkstat.gov.tr/HbPrint.do?id=27598>

14 Commonwealth Secretariat (2016), Global Youth Development Index, <https://youtheconomicopportunities.org/sites/default/files/uploads/resource/2016%20Global%20Youth%20Development%20Index%20and%20Report.pdf>, P.122

15 Ibid:44

16 BBC (2018), Turkish Child Marriage Religious Document Sparks Anger, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-42558328>

rates of child marriages in Europe¹⁷. Turkey has committed to eliminating child, early and forced marriage by 2030 in line with target 5.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)¹⁸. The government did not provide an update on progress towards achieving this target during its Voluntary National Review at the 2016 High-level Political Forum¹⁹. Turkey co-sponsored the 2013 and 2014 UN General Assembly resolutions on child, early and forced marriage, and the 2013 Human Rights Council's resolution on child, early and forced marriage²⁰. In 2014, Turkey signed a joint statement at the Human Rights Council calling for a resolution on child marriage²¹ and, during its 2015 Universal Periodic Review, the GoTR supported recommendations to criminalize child marriage and take legislative and political measures to end the practice as soon as possible²².

Table 1: Youth at Glance in Turkey

Categories	Females	Males
Age of marriage	18	18
Labor force participation (ILO 2017)	31.4%	55.1%
Unemployment (ILO 2017)	25.6%	17.7%
NEET (ILO, 2017)	34.0%	14.6%
Net enrolment (UNESCO, 2016),	84.98%	86%
Literacy Rate (UNESCO, 2016)	99.37%	99.86%
Out of school Youth (WEF, 2018)	15.3%	13.5%

1. Youth in National Development: Institutional and Policy Framework

2.1. Youth was first acknowledged by the Government of Turkey (GoTR) in 1972 with the renaming of the Ministry of Sports to the Ministry of Youth and Sports²³. The ministry was merged with the Ministry of National Education to become the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports in 1983²⁴. The current Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS) came into being in 2011 with the reorganization of governmental structures and the creation of ten new ministries²⁵. The ministry's functions include planning, implementation, formulation and monitoring of all issues on youth except formal education²⁶. Article 18 of the law establishing the ministry tasks it with formulating policy and renewing it every four years²⁷. The MoYS organizes a variety of activities for youth such as youth centers and camps, as well as an annual youth week²⁸.

2.2 The functions are carried out through the following four departments, namely, Directorate General of Youth Services, Directorate General of Projects and Coordination, Directorate of Education, Culture, and Research and Sports Department²⁹. Other responsibilities of the ministry include to stimulate the active participation of young people in all fields of social life especially about decision-making and implementation process and provide services such as access to information, counseling, and guidance³⁰.

17 Girls Not Bride (2019) Turkey Country Data, <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/child-marriage/turkey/>

18 Ibid

19 The mechanism through which countries report progress in implementing the SDGs

20 Ibid

21 Ibid

22 Ibid

23 Lukuslu, D. and Osmanoglu, B. (2018), Youth Work in Turkey: A Sector Newly Emerging and Marked by Political Competition, <https://www.mdpi.com/2076-0760/7/2/31>, P. 4

24 Ibid:4

25 Yurhaguler, Impact of Youth Policies in Turkey, http://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/p2y_10.pdf, P3

26 Youth Policy (2014), Turkey: Youth Policy, <http://www.youthpolicy.org/factsheets/country/turkey/>

27 Yurhaguler, op.cit: 6

28 Youth Policy, op.cit

29 European Commission, op.cit: 11

30 Yurhaguler, op.cit:4

2.3 Article 58 of the Turkish constitution entitled “Protection of Youth” stipulates that: “The state should ensure both training and development of youth and protect them from addiction and other vices³¹. The Turkish National Youth Policy, adopted in 2013, covers 13 wide-ranging themes including education, employment and entrepreneurship, participation, civic consciousness, and culture³².

2. Education

3.1. The Turkish government’s primary objective is to increase access to quality education based on equality. In this context, several campaigns such as “Snowdrops”, “Daddy, Send me to School”, “Girls, Let’s Go to School” were embarked up to increase girls’ enrollment in school³³. These campaigns were strengthened by distributing primary school books to all students and Conditional Cash Transfer was offered to low-income families who send their children to school, with an extra 20% incentive for girls³⁴. Furthermore, mobile schools, mobile teachers, and busing opportunities for disadvantaged students, especially for rural girls, were provided. Compulsory education increased from 8 years to 12 years in 2012. These efforts were rewarded with a narrowing of the enrollment ratio between boys and girls in both primary and secondary schools. The net enrollment rate in primary education reached 97.10% between 2014-2015 and secondary school increased from 74.4% in 2000 to 95.4% in 2014-2015³⁵.

3.2 Despite these achievements, Turkey’s results on the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2015 is lower than the OECD average. In science literacy, 15-year-olds in Turkey scored 425 points compared to an average of 493 points in OECD countries. Girls perform better than boys with a non-statistically significant difference of 6 points (OECD average:3.5 points higher for boys)³⁶. The score in mathematics for 15-year-olds of 420 compared to an average of 490 points in OECD. Boys performed better than girls with a non-statistically difference of 6 points (OECD average:8 points higher for boys)³⁷. Turkish 15-year-olds underperformed their OECD counterparts in reading at 428 to 493. Girls perform better than boys with a statistically significant difference of 28 points (OECD average:27 points higher than girls)³⁸. On another front, there is more out of -school female youth at 15.3% compared to 13.5% male youth.

3.2. Skills-Based Training

3.2.1. Turkey sets itself ambitious goals as part of its centennial celebration in 2023 including being the world’s 10th largest economy with a \$ 2 trillion economy, a per capita income of \$25,000 and exports amounting to \$ 500 billion³⁹. As a result, the government invested over € 9 billion between 2003-2012 and in 2013, the Ministry of National Education allocated 37% of its investment budget directly into the TVET sector⁴⁰. These investments resulted in the development of a wide-reaching TVET system providing education and training in more than 130 different occupations⁴¹. The delegation of the EU to Turkey aimed at improving the quality of vocational education and training involves four components.

3.2.2 First, the development of the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET (EQARF) which was piloted in selected post-secondary and vocational institutions as part of the program to improve the quality of vocational education and training. Second, new curricula modules were developed for justice, agriculture, maritime, and health and transferred to the Ministry of National Education to ensure competitiveness. Third, partnerships were

31 Youth policy, op.cit:11

32 Ibid

33 Gumus, S. and Gumus, E. (2013), Achieving Gender Parity in Primary School Education in Turkey via the Campaign, <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.907.4290&rep=rep1&type=pdf>, P. 21

34 Ibid:21

35 MoTR (2015), Turkey’s Sustainable Development Pathway: Towards Agenda 2030, <http://www.comcec.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Turkey.pdf>, P.21

36 OECD (2015) Turkey: Student Performance, (PISA2015) <http://gpseducation.oecd.org/CountryProfile?primaryCountry=TUR&fresh-old=10&topic=PI>

37 Ibid

38 Ibid

39 Turkey 2023 (2016), Turkey’s Path to Prosperity in 2023, https://medium.com/@Turkey__2023/turkeys-path-to-prosperity-in-2023-9bd-067d1e718

40 UK-NARIC (2015), Technical and Vocational Education and Training in Turkey, Part 1 <https://uknaric.org/2015/12/18/technical-and-vocational-education-and-training-in-turkey-part-1/>

41 Ibid

established between vocational institutions, social partners, and the private sector to develop collaboration between the labor market and VET. Fourth, administrators and staff participating in VET were provided with additional pedagogical and professional training and vocational and career guidance services were improved⁴².

3.2.3 Unfortunately, there are no sex-disaggregated data on the number of female participants in TVET and their courses of study.

3.3 Inclusive Education

3.3.1 At the international level, Turkey signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2008, and it went into effect in 2009, and its optional supplementary protocol was signed in 2009 and ratified in December in 2014⁴³. At the national level, Article 42 of Turkey's Constitution guarantees the rights of all citizens to education and Article 4 of the Basic Law of National Education states that educational institutions are open to everyone regardless of their gender, language, religion or race. Disability was added to the Article in 2014⁴⁴. Turkey's national legislature passed Law No. 5378 in 2005 for Persons with Disabilities (PWD). It stipulates that the education of PWD cannot be prevented on any grounds whatsoever⁴⁵. As per the Civil Code (Law No.4721), parents are responsible for educating their children and for ensuring and protecting their physical, mental, psychological and social development.⁴⁶ The Special Education Services Regulation (SESR), passed in 2006 and revised in 2012, consolidated the principles of starting early in terms of special education and prioritized mainstreaming⁴⁷.

3.3.2. The Ministries of Family and Social Policies (MFSP) and National Education (MoNE) are the coordinating institutions for PWD. The MFSP 2013-2017 Strategic Plan outlines different forms of financial support in the Social Assistance Program to increase the literacy and education levels of PWD, alongside legal measures⁴⁸. The MFSP also provides free transportation to students with disabilities who attend special official institutions⁴⁹. The MoNE provides another portion of the financial support to PWDs⁵⁰. The ministry covers the education costs of persons with disabilities who have been assessed by the Special Educational Evaluation Board as needing support. The support program includes all PWDs irrespective of age⁵¹.

3.3.3 Turkish legislation guarantees the right to education to all children, including those whose families have sought international protection in Turkey⁵². To create space for the 833,039 war-affected Syrian school-age children, the GoTR has, since 2016, expanded its education system to absorb them into its public-school system⁵³. This effort resulted in a 25% increase in the number of Syrian children in Turkish public schools by the end of 2017⁵⁴. The GoTR plans to close all temporary education centers by the end of 2018 and transfer all students to the public school system and another 360,000 refugee students who were out of the system will also be enrolled in the formal education⁵⁵.

3.3.4 The UN Refugee Agency, the UNHCR in partnership with the MoNE, UNICEF, and NGOs ensure that families know their rights, assist them in the enrollment process, gain language proficiency in Turkish and in accessing available financial aid⁵⁶. Turkey is the largest recipient of the UNHCR's worldwide scholarship program (DAFI) for undergraduate refugee students totaling more than 800 beneficiaries⁵⁷. DAFI covers a wide range of costs such as

42 EU (ND), Improving the Quality of Vocational, Education and Training, <https://www.avrupa.info.tr/en/improving-quality-vocational-education-and-training-127>

43 Hande Sart, Z. et al (2016), The Right of Children with Disabilities to Education: Situation Analysis and Recommendations for Turkey, http://en.egitimreformugirisimi.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/UnicefOzelGereksinimliRaporENG.08.06.16.web_.pdf, 11

44 Ibid: 13

45 Ibid:13

46 Ibid:13

47 Ibid:14

48 Ibid:18

49 Ibid:18

50 Ibid:18

51 Ibid:18

52 UNHCR (2019), Turkey-Education, <https://www.unhcr.org/tr/en/education>

53 Borgen Project (2018), Expanding Education for Syrian Refugees in Turkey, <https://borgenproject.org/expanding-education-for-syrian-refugees-in-turkey/>

54 Ibid

55 Ibid

56 Ibid

57 Ibid

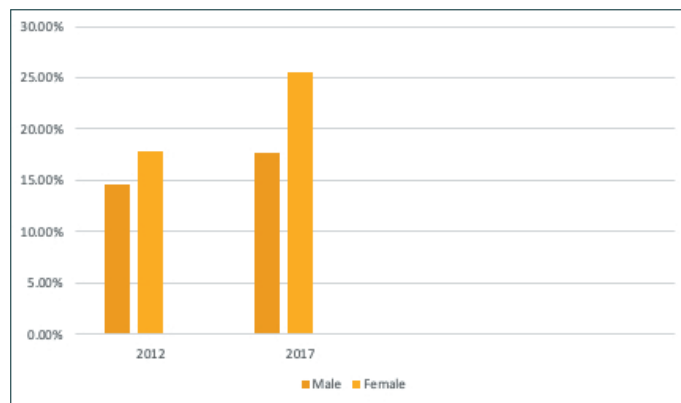
tuition fees and study materials, monthly stipends for living expenses, and offer activities where students can meet and create peer support networks⁵⁸. UNHCR introduced cash grants to assist non-Syrian refugee students who are expected to pay foreign student fees at universities. Over 300 refugee students have accessed the facility⁵⁹.

3. Economic Empowerment

4.1. Employment and Unemployment

4.1.1 The labor force participation rate in 2017 among youth was 31.4% and 55.1% for women and men respectively. The unemployment rate, the not in education, employment, and training (NEET) and out of school youth, for females and males was 25.5%, 34.0% and 15.3% and 17.7%, 14.6% and 13.5% respectively. The statistics show that there are more females in all the categories, but they more than double males in NEET. Youth have been categorized in a variety of policy documents as a disadvantaged group in the labor market, alongside women and the disabled⁶⁰. For example, the National Employment Strategy notes that youth participation in the labor market remains limited; they are usually found in unacceptable working conditions and face a higher risk of unemployment⁶¹. Furthermore, the strategy also highlights the obstacles in school-to-work transition is the main reason behind high youth unemployment rates and therefore, outlines policies that can facilitate the employment of first-time jobs seekers⁶². The Strategy targets lowering youth employment to the average unemployment rate through better and more effective internship opportunities, career planning and job search assistance, matching and counselling services, support for youth entrepreneurship and by establishing specific youth units in the Turkish Employment Agency, as well as regulating employer's social security premium discounts for encouraging youth employment⁶³.

Figure 2- Youth Unemployment in Turkey, 2012 & 2017



Source: ILOSTAT

4.1.2. The National Youth Action Plan (ISKUR, 2011) provides a situation analysis of the labor market with 32 policy recommendations⁶⁴. The Plan - like the Strategy - notes that youth are a disadvantaged group in terms of labor market opportunities and states that focus on youth, gender sensitivity, flows of young migrant from agriculture, and disabled young people are adopted as the guiding principles for the Plan⁶⁵. The Tenth 5-Year Development Plan 2014-2018 states that maintaining high growth rates may be possible if the quality and innovative capacity of the workforce through the support of the young population can be enhanced. However, it also notes that the education system, which is crucial for increasing the quality of the workforce, has been inadequate in meeting labor market needs and reducing the unemployment rate of young people has been limited. The following policy options were recommended to solve the issues of youth employment:

58 Ibid

59 Ibid

60 Yurhaguler, op.cit:14

61 Ibid:14

62 Ibid:14

63 Ibid:14

64 Ibid:15

65 Ibid:15

- Increasing the number of qualified employees taking into account regional, local, and dynamics;
- Recommending policies for reconciling work and family life and employability;
- Combating informal employment and reducing labor cost;
- Activating labor policies, policies, particularly vocational, guidance and counseling services;
- Increasing education levels and enhancing skill formation through formal and informal vocational education; and
- Making changes in severance payment, subcontracting and temporary employment⁶⁶.

4.2 Ecosystem and Entrepreneurship

4.2.1 Turkey's entrepreneurial ecosystem is comprised of three actors, namely, the GoTR, national and international entrepreneurs. The Turkish government has put in place a robust infrastructure for the development and growth of the country's entrepreneurial ecosystem. The Ministry of Science, Industry, and Technology supports technology park and provides up to \$55,000 seed capital for entrepreneurs through the "Techno-Entrepreneurship Grant Program"⁶⁷. The ministry plans to establish "science and technology counselor offices in various developed countries" such as Germany, Japan, and the United States. The Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey (TEPAV) is a think tank focusing on economic issues. It has partnered with the U.S State's Department's Global Entrepreneurship program to provide a platform for Turkish entrepreneurs and funders⁶⁸. The Turkish Technology Development (TTGV) was established in 1991 as part of a World Bank loan agreement with the Turkish government. It supports "technological innovation activities in Turkey", providing 300 million to \$950 million, primarily research and development (R&D), projects carried out by 800 companies. TTGV also contributed to the establishment of investment firms, such as Is Girisim and TURKUEN, which were launched in 2000 and have over \$ 3.5billion between them⁶⁹.

4.2.2. Turkish incubator and ecosystem go beyond Istanbul.

- Avea Labs Istanbul- was created by the R&D arm of Avea, a leading Turkish mobile company. Their goal is to foster new-term technologies and to transform academic studies in the field of ICT;
- Endeavor, Turkey (Istanbul)- is a branch of the global incubator network opened in 2006. They provide programs and services to facilitate entrepreneurs access to talent, capital, and market;
- e-Tohum, Istanbul- launched in 2008/9 by a group of investors and tech companies such as Naspers Group, UK Trade and Investment, MENA Ventures Investment and Arzan Venture Capital. E-Tohum invests in investors and that show exceptional promise;
- ITU Seed, Istanbul- is supported by the Istanbul Technical University. They work with entrepreneurs in the pre-incubation, acceleration and incubation stages;
- Atom, Ankara- is a pre-incubation centered with a focus on the digital game sector. The center supports entrepreneurs working on game development and animation technologies for a year;
- Inovent, Gebze- focuses on tech-based start-ups. Inovent is an accelerator and seed provider. Its goal is to create a dynamic ecosystem in Turkey⁷⁰.

4. Youth Engagement and Civic Participation

5.1. Youth engagement and civic participation take place within structured political institutions through constitu-

66 Ibid:15

67 Bayrasli, E. (2012), Turkey's Entrepreneurial Ecosystem: More Than Just Start-Ups, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/elmirabayrasli/2012/09/19/turkish-entrepreneurial-ecosystem-more-than-just-start-ups/#7a40a91c4216>

68 Ibid

69 Ibid

70 Rios, L. (2016), The Incubators and Accelerators Powering Turkey's Start-ups, <https://www.wamda.com/2016/07/incubators-accelerators-powering-turkeys-startups>

tional provisions and in the NGO sector. Article 67 of the Turkish constitution grants all citizens over 18 years the right to vote and take part in referenda⁷¹. In 2007, a constitutional amendment lowering the age of eligibility to contest an election to be a deputy to the Turkish Grand National Assembly from 30 to 25 years was adopted. The provision is embodied in Article 76, of the Constitution. Despite the change, the average of the current Grand Assembly is 50 years and consists of only nine members younger than 30 years on election date⁷².

5.2. The age of participation in local administration is also 25 years and eligibility was determined in 1983⁷³. Article 7 of the Political Parties Act makes provisions for youth and women wings⁷⁴. While Turkey does not have a Youth Parliament or a National Youth Council, there are city council youth assemblies in municipalities⁷⁵. It is argued that while there are no criteria for membership in the councils, members are usually aged between 15-30 years⁷⁶. Other mechanisms for youth participation within state structures include the Ministry of Youth and Sports, nationally, councils for the inclusion of youth locally, and assemblies organized in schools within the education system⁷⁷.

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5. Development Partners in the Youth Sector

- World Bank
- European Union
- Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)
- UN System

Recommendations

- i. The Bank should consider assisting the GoTR with technical assistance to mainstream youth development into all country's sectoral policies and strategies;
- ii. TurkStat should be provided with technical assistance to ensure that sex and age disaggregation are part of all data collection and reports, and to apply a consistent age grouping in their analysis in the youth sector;
- iii. The IsDB should work with other development partners to support the government to improve the quality of education to make the country competitive both regionally and internationally;
- iv. IsDB should provide technical support to assist the GoTR to implement SDG target 8b (develop and operationalize a national strategy for youth employment, as a distinct strategy or as part of a national employment strategy); and,
- v. The Bank should work with the GoTR to reduce the high unemployment rate among youth.

71 European Commission, op.cit: 63

72 Ibid: 63

73 Ibid:63

74 Ibid:64

75 Ibid:64

76 Ibid: 64

77 Ibid: 62

78 Ibid:63

79 Ibid:64

80 Ibid:64

81 Ibid: 64

82 Ibid: 62

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