

An Analysis of Trends in Female Labour Force Participation in Turkey

CEYDA ÖZSOY (*Anadolu University, Eskişehir, Turkey, ceydae@anadolu.edu.tr*)
SEVILAY ATLAMA (*Anadolu University, Eskişehir, Turkey, satlama@anadolu.edu.tr*)

High female participation in the labour market implies both an advance in the relative economic and social position of women and also an increased utilization of human potential for economic development. The female labour force participation rates increased substantially in developed countries. However, the female labour force participation rates show a declining trend in many developing countries and in Turkey as well, from 1955 to 2008, labour force participation rate diminished from 72 percent to about 25 percent. This ratio is nearly one third of the rate in terms of men in recent years. Additionally, Turkey has the lowest rate among OECD countries. Several factors can be used to explain this trend. In this paper, we investigate the reasons for the declining trend in the female labour force in Turkey. Some of those: recent increases in enrollment rates at all levels of schooling, delayed entry into the labour market of the young, changing composition of the labour force diverging from agriculture towards non-agricultural activities, cultural values against their participation in market work, their lack of education and marketable skills, unfavourable labour market conditions, huge wage gap and disparity in promotion opportunities between female and male workers, exclusion from social security, and early retirement system.

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