

Understanding Female ‘Not in Employment, Education or Training’ (NEET) in Turkey

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Abstract

Participation of women to the labor force is an important policy issue in many low and middle-income countries. In Turkey in particular, female labor force participation (FLFP) rates are particularly low, despite rapid economic growth and recent improvements in women’s education. However, FLFP can be a misleading indicator in a context characterized by important demographic and socio-economic changes. This paper studies female employment by focusing on individuals that are ‘not in employment, not in education, nor in training’ (NEET). Indeed, NEET women are not working (either out of the labor force or unemployed) while not accumulating human capital (in education or training) either. Using the Turkish 2016 Household labor force survey, we analyze the determinants of NEET for different age groups which are likely to be not working for different reasons (e.g., not finding a job vs. caring for children). Our results show that women are much more likely than men to be NEET for all age groups, even more so after controlling for socio-economic characteristics. Besides, NEET is strongly correlated with married status and with previous internal migrations, while (higher) education decreases the likelihood to be NEET for women. Geographically, both men and women from the eastern part of Turkey have the highest probability of being NEET compared to the rest of the country, and the gender gap is even greater in these regions. These findings suggest that the gender gap in employment in Turkey is not driven mainly by socio-economic or age-related determinants, but due to other factors such as gender norms.

Keywords: Female labor force participation; unemployment; Fertility; Education; Gender; NEET; Turkey

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