

# Immigration and Gender Equality – An Analysis of the Labor Market Characteristics of Turkish Migrants Living in Germany

C. Asarkaya, S. Z. Siretioglu Girgin

**Abstract**—Turkish migrants constitute the largest group among people with migration background living in Germany. Turkish women's labor market participation is of significant importance for their social and economic integration to the German society. This paper thus aims to investigate their labor market positions. Turkish migrant women participate less in the labor market compared to men, and are responsible for most of the housework, child care, and elderly care. This is due to their traditional roles in the family, educational level, insufficient knowledge of German language, and insufficient professional experience. We strongly recommend that wide-reaching integration policies for women are formulated, so as to encourage participation of not only migrant women but also their husbands, fathers and/or brothers, and natives.

**Keywords**—Empowerment, Germany, Labor Market, Migration, Turkish, Women.

## I. INTRODUCTION

IN the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the main motives of people migrating from Turkey to the European Union in general, and to Germany, in particular, have changed. Following the bilateral contract signed between West Germany and Turkey in 1961 and prolonged in 1964, a high number of Turkish nationals migrated to Germany as 'Gastarbeiter' – guest workers. After the 1973 oil crisis, Germany stopped to request more guest workers, however migration continued in form of family reunification. During the 1980s and 1990s, migration continued owing to political conflicts and economic instability in Turkey. Labor migration also took place but at a significantly decreased rate.

Although the number of Turks migrating to Germany per year has significantly decreased over time, Turkish migrants constitute the largest group among people with migration background living in Germany. Persons with migration background include the foreign population independent from their country of birth as well as immigrants independent from their nationality. In 2012, Turks constituted 18.3% of the population with migration background [1]. In addition, as of end of 2008, 84.8% of people of Turkish origin had been

residing in Germany longer than ten years [2]. In 2007, the average length of stay of Turkish migrants was 24.1 years [3]. This is the fourth highest ratio among all migrants. Therefore, it is of special interest to analyze the status of Turkish migrants on the German labor market.

In industrialized Western countries migrant women have been providing the least protected, most flexible and least requiring labor force. The aim of this paper is to investigate the labor market characteristics of Turkish population residing in Germany with a special focus on gender inequality.

Migration research considering gender differentiates four social and power relationship sets: women, migrants, different ethnic groups and working class. Thus, a migrant worker woman is in a disadvantaged position as a migrant compared to a native worker woman, as a woman compared to a migrant worker man, and as a (non-qualified) worker compared to a qualified migrant worker [4].

According to Kofman, in the prevailing migration model, there is a 'male deviation' of adventurous men looking for new opportunities abroad and their families joining them later. This model presents women as passive followers attributed secondary importance and as dependent family members. In this model, women do not individually decide to migrate or do not actively take part in this decision process as a family member [5].

Nevertheless, in the 1960s and 1970s a high number of women migrated as workers, especially to Germany. This indicates that they were actively taking part in the decision process of migration. In addition, due to non-acceptance of their diplomas and work experience acquired in Turkey as well as their lack of language skills, they faced problems of adjustment to the labor market. These issues played a role in the formation of negative prejudices in the eyes of natives.

The theory of labor market segmentation, on the other hand, is more convenient for explaining the labor market conditions of migrant women. Several features such as having a low continuity and low professional motivation at work, and being less prone to be (professionally) educated, determine the conditions of migrant women in the labor market. These features are considered by employers as attributes of migrants and women, although they are determined by social norms and values and can be relevant for natives as well.

Consequently, the secondary jobs are performed primarily by migrants and women. The discriminatory practices towards these groups lead to unequal income distribution through jobs

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of different quality, different unemployment risks, and different promotion opportunities [6].

Chapter II will analyze the labor market characteristics of Turkish migrant women by comparing them with the characteristics of Turkish migrant men and of migrants from other ethnicities. Chapter III will then sum up the major problems that Turkish migrant women face on the labor market and give policy recommendations.

## II. LABOR MARKET CHARACTERISTICS

In 2012, Turkish migrants formed the biggest group among migrant groups. The main motives of migration are as follows:

Higher education, language course or schooling, other kinds of education, business, humanitarian reasons, family reasons, and other reasons. In 2013, the most common reasons for Turkish migrants were family-related, education, and business [8].

Between 2006 and 2013, the Turks were the biggest ethnic group entering Germany due to family-related reasons [7]. However, the migrant flows from Turkey on basis of family reunification have been continuously decreasing since 2010.

Table I presents the numbers of migrants from non-EU countries according to their reason of migration and type of residence permit.

TABLE I  
THE NUMBERS OF MIGRANTS FROM NON-EU COUNTRIES ACCORDING TO THEIR REASON OF MIGRATION AND TYPE OF RESIDENCE PERMIT [8]

Nationality	Residence Permit							Total Numbers					
	Higher Education	Language course School attendance	Other education	Employment	Humanitarian reasons	Family reasons	Other reasons	Unlimited Residence Permit	EU-Residence Permit	Temporary Residence Permit	Duldung	Total	Female
Russian Federation	1.954	266	134	1.552	687	4.108	169	257	282	6.993	1.913	27.120	15.537
Serbia***	186	26	59	2.075	119	1.389	107	171	678	5.354	5.134	24.203	10.546
Turkey	1.465	98	133	1.307	135	6.966	284	2.362	266	1.109	313	19.256	7.987
China	8.188	447	373	3.095	42	2.114	333	57	92	278	74	19.106	9.779
Syria	622	80	55	165	7.467	860	49	20	34	5.522	317	18.419	6.735
USA	3.648	881	523	4.674	36	2.942	887	123	235	3	15	18.157	8.320
India	3.312	49	284	4.376	40	3.542	273	34	172	912	390	17.630	5.532
<b>Total from non-EU Countries</b>	<b>42.206</b>	<b>5.797</b>	<b>3.915</b>	<b>33.621</b>	<b>14.804</b>	<b>56.046</b>	<b>8.275</b>	<b>4.719</b>	<b>7.192</b>	<b>68.974</b>	<b>20.016</b>	<b>362.984</b>	<b>155.512</b>

### A. Labor Force Participation Rates

The labor force participation rate of Turkish migrant women is very low compared to the rate of Turkish male migrants, to those of German women and other migrant women. Consequently, they are included in economic and social life to a lesser extent. This in turn hammers their adaptation to the society.

In general, the labor force participation rates of people with a migration background are lower than that of people without a migration history [9]. Independent from the existence of a migration background, women's participation rates are lower than those of men [10]. In addition, the employment rate of men with migration background is approximately only as high as the employment rate of women without migration background [11].

The participation rate differences are higher between the two genders in the group with migration background.

When the labor force participation rates of people in working age (between 15 and 65) from different countries of origin are compared, it is observed that participation rates of the Turkish are significantly lower than other groups [12]. While the labor force participation rate of Turkish men is 59.5%, that of Turkish women lies only at 46.1%. Both male and female labor force participation rates lie far below the average rate of people without migration background (82.9% and 72.8% for men and women, respectively).

As can be seen in Fig. 1, compared to people without migration background and to people from other countries of

origin, the employment rate of Turks are significantly lower. The employment rate of Turkish women in working age is approximately half of the employment rate of women without migration background.

After Serbian and Bosnian migrants, the ratio of employed women is lowest for Turkish migrants [13]. This can be interpreted as a sign of low self-determination and high economic dependence of Turkish migrant women.

### B. Social Insurance and Economic Sectors

In 2009, Turkish male employees with social insurance constituted 2.2% of all employees (with insurance), whereas Turkish female employees enjoying social insurance accounted only for 1.1% - exactly half of the share of the Turkish male workforce [14]. From 2000 to 2009, there has been a drop in these shares of both Turkish male and female employees. Despite the slight increase in the number and the share of female migrants (from 5.5% to 5.7%), the number as well as the share of Turkish female employees has decreased (from 1.4% to 1.1%).

In 2009, the employment rate of Turkish males with social insurance was 49.3% [15], whereas the employment rate of Turkish females with social insurance was only 23.1% [16], which is the lowest rate compared to natives as well as to other ethnic groups. This means that the majority of women of Turkish origin are working without being covered by the social security system.

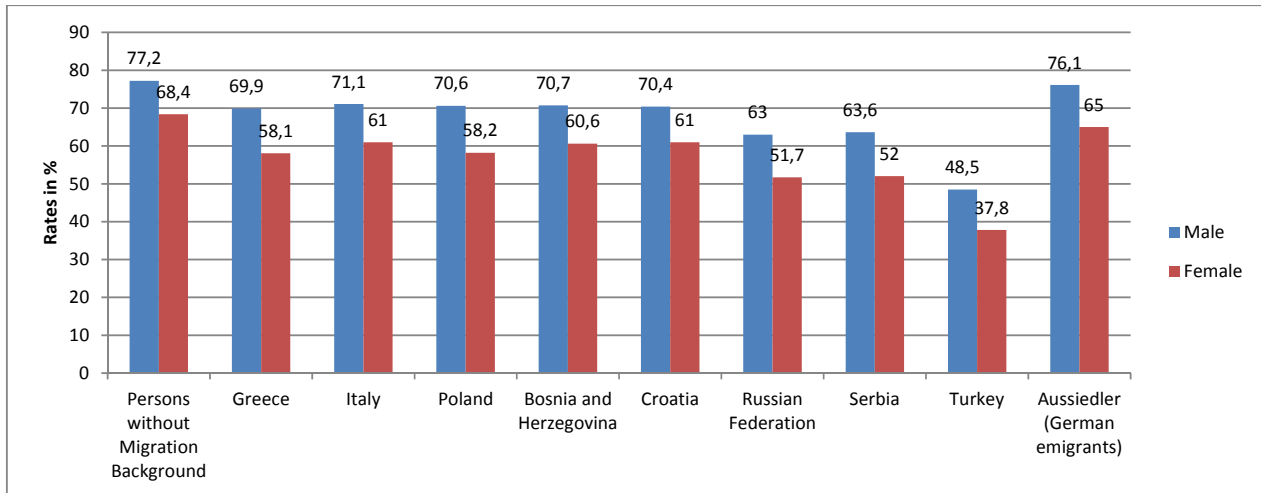


Fig. 1 Employment Rates of People Aged 15-64, According to Nationality and Gender [17]

Turkish migrants are working in positions which require lower qualifications [18]. This is indicated by the year 2009 sectoral distribution of those who have social security. The ratio of people who have a migration background and work in the hospitality industry is higher than the ratio of those who do not have a migration background. The opposite holds for those who work in sectors of government, education, health-care, and veterinary medicine.

#### C. Position and Type of Employment Contract

As the segmented labor market theory foresees, migrants and women rather work in part-time, hourly jobs that require lower qualifications. While in the 1960s and 1970s, Turkish migrants formed the least educated and qualified migrant group together with Yugoslavians, their profile has been increasing. According to 2013 data, based on their average levels of qualification, following Indian, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean migrants, Turkish migrants form the fifth highest-qualified group.

In 2009, 57.6% of Turkish male employees and 44.4% of Turkish female employees were positioned as workers [19]. Both male and female rates were the highest among all nationality groups. 31.2% of Turkish male employees and 49.7% of Turkish female employees were positioned as clerical workers, which were below the rates of other nationality groups.

For all ethnic groups, the share of female part-time workers is higher than that of males [20]. In 2009, the share of Turkish female part-time workers in employees with social insurance was 38.3%, which is slightly higher than the share of Germans and other ethnic groups. The potential reasons for the higher share of females in part-time positions are level of education, childcare (care of their own child/ren and/or their younger siblings), care of the elderly and housework. It is reported that the eldest girl in the family often takes the responsibility of childcare and housework, if both parents are working [21]. This, in turn, limits their academic and professional success.

The share of hourly employed persons on all employees is higher for people with migration background than of those without [22]. The share of male and female employees in the age group 25-55 and with migration background is significantly higher than (almost two times as high as) that of employees of the same age group but without migration history. The potential reasons are lack of work permit, level of education, childcare, care of the elderly and housework. On average, there is not much difference between Turkish migrants and other migrants.

When the qualification level of Turkish migrants who have moved to Germany in 2013 with a motivation to work, is investigated, we see that Turkish migrants form the 7th biggest group among 14 groups of different nationalities. In 2013, 1133 Turks out of 26836 migrants have migrated to Germany in order to work [23]. All of Turkish migrants belong to one of these three levels of qualification: non-qualified, qualified and working in the public sector, qualified and working in other sectors. Almost 74% of Turkish migrants fall into the group 'qualified and working in other sectors'.

The first three sources of qualified migrants to Germany between 2005 and 2013 are United States, Russia, and India [24]. The number of migrants, who entered Germany in 2013 with a Blue-Card, is another sign of the qualification level of migrant groups [25]. The first three of the most crowded migrant groups are Indians, Russians, and Americans. Turkish migrants form the least crowded group in the 8-country list of the most crowded migrant groups.

Between 2009 and 2013, there were no Turkish migrants who are researchers. Chinese, Indians, and Americans are the biggest three groups. The migrant researchers have been generally increasing in number over this time period [26].

Based on the annual number of entrances between 2005 and 2013, Americans are the most crowded group of self-employed migrants. Chinese, Australians, and Canadians follow. Within this period, the number of Turkish self-employed migrants (33, of which only 5 is women) is highest in 2013 [27]. In 2009, the share of self-employed Turkish

male and female workers was 10.4% and 4.5%, respectively. Toksöz mentions that in 1990s, entrepreneurship has shown an increasing trend among Turkish migrant women due to the decrease in employment alternatives, increasing unemployment rates, changing age structure, and the societal role of women [28].

#### D. Unemployment Rates

Unemployment causes a waste of human capital as well as of education investment, the exclusion of women from social and economic life, and thus social inequality. In addition, in case of Germany, as the state supports unemployed people through the social security system; heightening unemployment rate leads to a financial burden.

Based on Bundesamt for Migration data, between 2005 and 2009, the unemployment rates of those with a migration background are more than twice than that of Germans [29]. The general tendency of decrease in these rates has turned into an increase in 2008.

The unemployment rates are considerably higher in migrant groups. In 2009, the unemployment rates of Turkish migrants –when compared to Germans- are almost thrice for men, and twice for women. Among those who have a migration background, the unemployment rates are highest for Russians, and then for Turks [30].

In 2009, among migrants, the lowest unemployment rates are for those between 25 and 55. It is interesting that among migrant groups, the rates are higher for men when compared to women [31]. On the other hand, a reason for this might be the lower ratio of women who are willing to work. The potential reasons for this lower ratio might be the lack of work permit, relatively low level of education, child- and elderly-care, and housework.

The ratio of long-term unemployment within the total rate of unemployment had been decreasing between 2006 and 2009. However, the highest rates are for women with a migration background, women without a migration background, and men with a migration background [32]. This indicates that migrant women are the most disadvantaged of all groups, and that regardless of a migration background, women are disadvantaged compared to men.

### III. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Problems women face on the labor market in general are categorized as [33]:

1. Women are missing in certain professions, sectors and on the upper end of the career ladder: The horizontal and vertical segregation of the labor market along gender lines continues to be a reality.
2. Women have to interrupt their careers or reduce their working time for family reasons more frequently and for longer periods than men.
3. During individual as well as collective wage negotiations women cannot assert themselves sufficiently. Traditionally jobs performed by women are regarded less favorably and are lower-paid than positions that men typically hold.

In addition to these, Turkish migrant women often have language difficulty (especially in the first generation), give birth to more children than German women, have to take care of the children and the elderly in their own and their husbands' families, have lower levels of education and face cultural and religious pressures from their fathers and/or husbands.

Gender differences in employment are evident in Fig. 2, which highlights the radical gender gaps in UNECE (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe) region especially in managerial and employer positions.

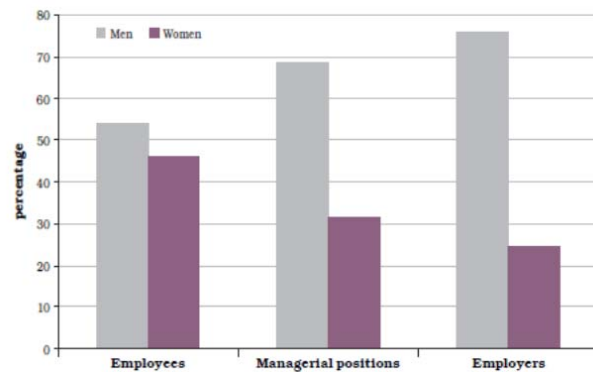


Fig. 2 Gender Differences in Employment in the UNECE Region [34]

In 2005 Gender Gap Rankings, despite women's considerable economic contribution (rank: 22), Turkey's educational, political and overall ranks are 55, 53 and 57, respectively. These results show that the economic value-added of Turkish women is not reflected to other domains [35].

Social policy agendas should aim to promote the wellbeing of all citizens, independent of their origin, to assure cohesion in multicultural and multiethnic societies [36]. The high share of Turkish migrants in German society, heightens the importance of social, economic, and political integration of this group.

The lesson learned from the experience of Turkish migrants is that the participation of migrant women in the labor market is not a process that will occur automatically. Therefore, policy makers should foster and encourage the inclusion of migrant women to social and economic life through developing new policies and projects. Since integration is a process that requires willingness and effort from both the migrant and the native groups, the policies should be formalized to include both [37].

According to Garcia-Ramirez et al. (2011), acculturative integration takes place on three hierarchical levels – intrapersonal, interpersonal and citizenship. The following figure depicts these levels of “empowerment and liberation involved in immigrants' self-reconstruction”, as well as listing the potential consequences of the integration process [38].

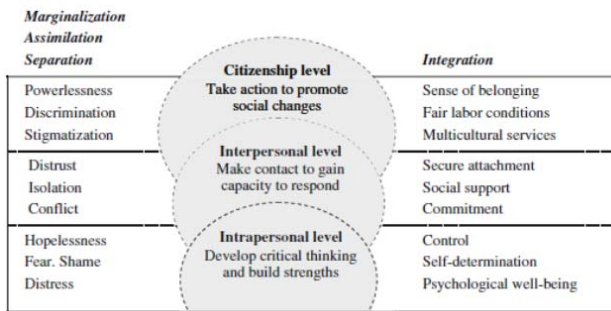


Fig. 3 Acculturative Integration as a Psycho-political Liberation Process [39]

Due to some of their cultural and religious characteristics, Turkish migrant women with lower socio-economic backgrounds and lower education levels, have difficulty in practicing self-determination and control over their social and economic lives. This hampers their integration to German society. Turkish men, on the other hand, who are traditionally the breadwinner of the household; have considerably more autonomy in their social and economic lives.

On the other hand, migrant women of the second and third generation generally adapt more easily to the role models of German women, while migrant men tend to identify more with traditional role models from their original culture [40]. This situation potentially causes conflict between migrant couples and between fathers and daughters.

More efforts are needed to support the adaptation of migrant men to the new culture. In other words, authorities should also develop projects that will inform migrant women's fathers, husbands and/or brothers about the importance of women's equal participation in economic and social life. As an example, the husband of a well-known and successfully integrated Turkish migrant couple could be invited to mentor the migrant men.

In fact, 'immigration provides new opportunities for identity construction, self-determination and realizing aspirations' [41]. In order to support the "psycho-political empowerment processes" of migrant women, carrying out some projects may be useful [42]. A successful attempt of improving women's integration is the Project Network 21—*living and working in a trans-cultural Society*, in which 'young women are offered a mentoring program ... which provides a supportive network for individual labor market and career orientation. It allows the examination of topics such as gender roles within both the original and the new culture and targets the encouragement of political awareness and the readiness for civic commitment.' [43].

As mentioned before, distrust, isolation, and conflict between natives and migrants can only be transformed into secure attachment, social support, and commitment through participation of both parties on an interpersonal level. This is why we also recommend projects that emphasize the importance and benefits of multiculturalism to natives.

Integration on the highest level can also be achieved only through mutual efforts. The sense of belonging in migrants can be established only if natives embrace them. We believe that "new social ties, organizations and social networks that develop new social references, increase" both immigrants' and natives' resources [44].

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Based on German data on the employment of migrants, Turkish migrant women participate less in the labor market compared to men, and are responsible for most of the housework, child care, and elderly care. This is due to their traditional roles in the family, educational level, insufficient knowledge of German language, and insufficient professional experience. Women out of the labor market are regarded as passive followers attributed secondary importance and as dependent family members.

The only way to break this vicious cycle is their participation in the labor market; which will gradually lead to their independence—first economically, then socially and politically.

States primarily give effort to increase the welfare of their native citizens and inhabitants. Most immigrant sending countries, including Turkey, have not sufficiently monitored the cultural and social integration of the immigrants. Experience taught us that the integration of immigrants and their families should not be viewed as only their own problem, but also as a challenge for the German society that has invited and/or accepted them.

We believe that full integration can be achieved only through enabling the cooperation of both migrants and natives. On the one hand, immigrants should be supported in their efforts to integrate; on the other hand, natives should be encouraged to embrace their migrant neighbors. So long as the need for migrant workers continues, due to the demographic transformation and aging in Germany; authorities should formulate new and better plans for cultural integration. With this mission, approaches should thoroughly consider the vision of all the individuals and groups involved; especially the most vulnerable, silenced and forgotten: migrant women [45].

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