

## THE COMPARISON OF LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE OF WOMEN IN TURKEY WITH THE WORLD COUNTRY GROUPS\*

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### ABSTRACT

*As a part of the community, women play active roles in different assignments and types of economic activities. This is important for women themselves and for the country; therefore, many legal regulations have been established. According to the ILO Global Employment Trends 2008, in 2007 1.2 billion women were in economic activities. Unfortunately this condition is not valid for Turkey. The ratio of women in the labor force has gradually decreased in Turkey. While the Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR) was 72% in 1955, in 2008 it is only 21.2%. The average LFPR is approximately 61% for the EU and OECD countries. According to this data, Turkey takes place at the last line among the OECD, G8 and EU countries. In Turkey, the unemployment problem has become a serious matter and the performance of the economy to produce new investments has decreased and informal economy has grown. This nugatory situation has affected the female labor force negatively.*

**Keywords:** Labor Force Participation Rate, Women, Turkey, Categories of Country

## TÜRKİYE'DE KADININ İŞGÜCÜNE KATILIM ORANININ DÜNYA ÜLKE GRUPLARIYLA KARŞILAŞTIRILMASI

### ÖZ

*Toplumun bir parçası olan kadınlar, farklı ekonomik faaliyetler ve görevlerde aktif rol oynarlar. Bu hem ülke ekonomisi açısından hem de kadının konumu açısından büyük önem taşımaktadır. Be nedenle de kadın işgücünün çalışma hayatına kazandırılması için pek çok yasal düzenlemeler yapılmıştır. ILO Küresel Eğilimler 2008 Raporuna göre 2007 yılında 1.2 milyar kadın ekonomik faaliyet içinde bulunmaktadır. Dünya genelindeki bu olumlu tablo Türkiye için maalesef geçerli olmamıştır. Türkiye'de kadın işgücünün istihdama katılım oranı giderek azalmaktadır. TÜİK'e göre 1955 yılında %72 olan bu oran 2008'de %21.2'ye kadar gerilemiştir. OECD ve AB ülkelerinde bu oran %61'dir. Bu rakamlarla Türkiye OECD ve AB ülkeleri gibi pek çok ülkenin bulunduğu listede son sırada yer almaktadır. Söz konusu dönemde Türkiye'de işsizlik sorununun ciddi boyutlara ulaşması, ekonominin yeni yatırımlar yaratma performansının azalması ve kayıt dışı ekonominin giderek büyümesi gibi pek çok nedenden dolayı kadın işgücü olumsuz etkilenmiştir.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İşgücüne Katılım Oranı, Kadın, Türkiye, Ülke Grupları

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

From past to present, as a part of the community, women play an active role in different assignments and types of economic activities. Resultant inequalities between men and women due to biological differences have continued since the ancient times and became disadvantageous for women, and today it progresses even though there have been certain differences according to the development status of the society.

According to TurkStat data, although women form 49,3% of the Turkish population, they are underemployed, and, unfortunately, women in the labor force work in nugatory conditions.(Turkstat, Population Statistics and Projections, 2000)

At the beginning of Turkish history, women had great authority on the management of the hordes, but in ongoing years women began to loose their rights due to muscle power and religious tendency until the proclamation of the Turkish Republic. Since 1923, women in Turkey began to achieve their rights in a slow manner though there have been some gaps from time to time. Although, Turkish women had achieved a great many rights before most of the countries in the world, today their place in the labor force is not satisfactory due to socioeconomic and traditional reasons. (Sağ, 2001, s.9-23)

Today, Turkish women are low graduated and employed for works called as female occupation. Additionally, they work for down market and for low paid jobs. For the working women, home duties and child care are the basic tasks which are not shared by men. (Karadeniz ve Yılmaz, 2007, s.23-41)

This study aims to evaluate the status of women in the labor force who have great importance for the Turkish economy. First, we compared the labor force participation rate in Turkey according to gender. Then, women's labor force participation rate has been compared according to socio-demographic factors and finally according to other countries' values. At the end of the paper, necessary measures and precautions to ameliorate the present situation have given.

## 2. LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE (LFPR)

The labor force participation rate is the percentage of working-age persons in an economy who are employed and unemployed but looking for a job. Typically "working-age persons" is defined as people between the ages of 16-64. People in those age groups who are not counted as participating in the labor force are typically students, homemakers, soldiers and persons under the age of 64 who are retired. Participation rate is the ratio between the labor force and working-age persons, one of the important indicators of labor force supply. (TUSİAD, 2002, s.29)

**Working-age Persons = Labor Force + not participating in the labor force**

**LFPR= employed + unemployed / working-age persons x 100**

Increase or decrease in LFPR depends on many factors, such as increases in expectations, conservation of life quality, education level, productivity increases in home jobs, labor market conditions, social attitude towards womens' working in labor markets, marital status and presence of children and age. (Biçerli, 2005, s.52-55) Changes in LFPR may also depend on the circulation of labor force. In another words, the number of the persons who leave the labor force and the number of the unemployed attending to the labor force determines the trends. If the number of the attending workers becomes more than the leavers, LFPR increases, on the other hand, LPFR decreases in contrary situations. (Çullu, 2009, s.6)

One of the main determining factors of the upswing and the economic structure of a country is the evaluation of the number of working-age persons taking place in the labor force. The increase in the number of people taking place in the labor force emphasizes the effective usage of the country's sources. In countries having higher labor force participation, production increases and becomes a reflex for national income and leads to increases in the welfare level of the country. (Palaz, 2005a, s.325)

### **3. WOMEN'S LABOR FORCE**

Breaking of labor according to gender has continued due to the biological construction of either sex, since ancient times. In early times, women were dominant by struggling at home, while men were hunting and surviving the family and carrying basic necessities.

Later, due to the settled life, men began to work in the agriculture and livestock fields and became dominant by changing the status of women. Hereafter, men became the decision makers while women became responsible only from the home and children. After the industrial revolution, women began to meet to the working-life.

Through globalization, women's labor force participation rate has increased in many countries. During the 1980's, acquiring of two third of the 17 million new jobs by women in the USA, and after 1980's, 2% increase in wage-earning employment of women in OECD countries show us that women began to play important roles in the labor force in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. (Tokol, 1999, s.19)

Today, women's participation in the labor force is in an increasing trend. In many developed countries, women's participation in labor is almost equal to men's participation. On the other hand, in many undeveloped countries women's labor force is much lower than that of men's. (KSGM, 2008, s.5-7)

Due to the flexibility in production, enterprises began to decrease the number of full-time workers and to increase the number of half-time or temporary workers. This new system gave women, who have no chance due to their responsibilities in the family, the opportunity to participate in the labor force, so the increase in the women participating in the labor force has continued in developed countries. (Özer and Biçerli, 2004, s.59)

After the industrial revolution, especially after globalization trends, women achieved wage-earning employment status besides being a mother and a homemaker. Although, payment is essential for labor, a homemaker has no salary.

The biological differences between men and women cause women to be employed especially at labor-intensive industries. The reasons of this can be explained as:

- The cost of women workers is cheaper than that of men's,
- Because of the tasks given to women by society as a homemaker, unorganized women labor have some difficulties on notifying their requests,
- Being in a home dependent condition. (Parasız and Bildirici, 2002, s.73)

Women's importance in the development process had been affirmed by Boserup in 1970. Firstly, he introduced the idea of women for development, the effect of gender and the importance of women on labor force by enhancing the women's literature. (Palaz, 2005a, s.317)



Negligence of women and not taking into account this potential power leads to a short fall of development goals. Perhaps gender inequality reduces economic growth. Moreover gender inequality may have adverse impacts on a number of valuable development goals such as child mortality, fertility and education of the next generation. (Klasen, 1999.)

#### **4. WOMEN'S LABOR FORCE IN TURKEY**

According to the last Turkish Demographic survey, 2000, although women represent half of the Turkish population, their contribution to the economic development is relatively small. As Palaz (2005b) reported in her study, according to stereotyped beliefs, the Turkish woman stays at home to take care of children and household duties.

Moreover, as experienced in many developing countries, female labour force participation rates in Turkey are in a declining trend. This can be explained by on going structural changes in the economy. Since the mid 2000's, Turkey has been experiencing a huge transformation from agriculture towards non agricultural activities.

On the other hand, in the study of Tansel (2002), the overall labor force participation rates have been declining over time in Turkey. Men's labor force participation declined from about 95 percent in 1955 to about 73 percent in 2000. She also declined that similarly, female labor force participation also declined since the mid 1950's. It was 72 percent in 1955 and declined to about 26 percent in 2000. She suggested that the main reasons of the declining trends may depend on the increases in enrollment rates at all levels of schooling, on-going structural changes in the economy, and the early retirement scheme.

As mentioned above, in recent years we have the experience of decreasing the share of women having or seeking jobs in Turkey. Urbanization, schooling rates, on going structural changes in the economic activities and the early retirement schemes are the main factors that can be attributed to this decrease.

Because of urbanization, women migrated from a high-participation rural environment (where they engage in unpaid agriculture) to a low-participation urban environment (where many of them stay at home). Furthermore, according to the SPO and world Bank report, women's participation in the labor market in rural areas has been decreasing in the past 20 years – from 50.7 percent in 1988 to 33 percent in 2006. This decrease is explained by the fact that young men are becoming more educated and thus move away from agricultural employment into better-paid jobs in manufacturing and services. In the report, it is also declared that, shifts in family activities away from subsistence agriculture (and especially in cases where the husband and/or household head move away from agriculture) cause a withdrawal of women from the labor force.

From 2002 to present, in general, especially women's Labor Force Participating Rate is decreasing although there have been high economic growth rates. Additionally, the decrease in women's LFPR couldn't be compensated by the increase of men's LFPR. The strong decrease in women's Labor Force Participating Rate (from 27.9% to 24.6%) plays an important role in the decrease of the total Labor Force Participating Rate. Trends in the Labor Force Participating Rate in Turkey are given in table 1.

**Table 1. Trends in the Labor Force Participating Rate (%) in Turkey (2000-2008)**

YEARS	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
2000	73,7	26,6	49,9
2001	72,9	27,1	49,8
2002	71,6	27,9	49,6
2003	70,4	26,6	48,3
2004	72,3	25,4	48,7
2005	72,2	24,8	48,3
2006	71,5	24,9	48,0
2007	71,3	24,8	47,8
2008	71,3	24,6	47,7
2009	69,1	23,5	45,9

Source: TurkStat [www.tuik.gov.tr](http://www.tuik.gov.tr)

For the 2002-2009 period overvaluation of TL forced the industrial and service sectors to realize technology consistent investment; consequently, usage of industrial robotics has been increased and automation in service sector has been accelerated. Such developments caused unskilled workers to fall out of work, meanwhile the demand for skilled workers slowly increased.

At this point, firstly, we must analyze the educational level of Turkish women. The literacy rate increased continuously over the years. The adult literacy rate for women was 76.9 per cent in 1997 and 80.4 per cent in 2006. The overall gross schooling rate in higher education was 15.95 per cent in 1997 and 31.89 per cent in 2007. So, we can conclude that, women workers in the future will be educated but for today, it is not satisfactory. On the other hand, we know that the level of education affects the labor force participation rates of both men and women. Moreover, the role of education in women's decision to work in a paid job is greater than that of men's. Women's LFPR according to graduation status is given in Table 2

**Table 2. Women's LFPR according to graduation status (%)**

Years	Illiterate	Under high school	High school	University
2000	25,2	23,0	31,8	70,1
2001	24,8	24,2	31,1	70,8
2002	24,4	24,9	31,9	71,5
2003	23,6	23,4	28,9	69,5
2004	19,3	22,8	30,6	71,3
2005	17,5	21,8	30,9	70,0
2006	16,2	21,8	31,4	69,8
2007	15,7	21,3	31,7	70,4
2008	12,9	20,6	33,5	71,9

Source: TurkStat, Labor force data,

While the labor force participation rate of illiterate women was 25,2% in 2000, at the end of 2008 the ratio decreased to 12,9%. This decrement is also valid for under high school graduates. On the other hand, the light increases in the labor force participation rates of high school or university graduate women are a long way off counterbalance.

According to TurkStat labor force 2007 data, the labor force participation rate was 46,4% for the under high school graduateones. It was 70,7% for men and 21,3% for women. The labor force participation rate is 83,9% and 70,4% respectively for men and women with a general rate of 78,6% for the university graduates. As shown in the table, in Turkey, the labor force participation increases by the level of education rises. Moreover, the difference in the labor force participation rate between men and women decreases by the level of education rises.



The labor force participation rate among the under high school graduated women is low. Most of these women work in the agricultural sector. They are unpaid family workers. Probably they couldn't find work in other sectors and perhaps their family does not permit them to work at an alternative employment. (KSGM, 2007, s.45)

The labor force participation rate of high school graduated and university graduated women are 33,5% and 71,9%, respectively. An interpretation can be made to explain this dramatic difference as the difficulty of finding employment and implied coercion of their husband or family not to work.

Under the circumstances of continuous economic growth, despite of slowing, the decrease in labor force participation rate can not be accepted as a comprehensible progress. Its reasons must be explicated. It will be appropriate for women who are not graduated from a university to attend adult education or courses.

In November 2008, the labor force participation rate increased to 48,4% throughout Turkey with an increase of 1,5 points according to the same period of previous year. Under the influence of global crisis, labor force participation rate increased to 71,8% and 25,4% respectively for men and women. Global crisis showed its effect by increasing the labor force participation rate not only in urban but also in rural parts of Turkey. This increase has been reflected to rates as 46,3% and 52,2%, respectively for urban and for rural areas.

Meanwhile, we can discuss the increased migration to urban areas as a consequence of decreasing trend of agricultural employment. This also leads to a withdrawal of in particular women from the labor force. Trend of women's labor force participation rate is given in Table 3

**Table 3. Trend of women's labor force participation rate**

Year	Population over 15 years*	Working women*	Working women in agricultural sector*	LFPR (%)
2002	24,214	6,760	3,674	27,9
2003	24,652	6,555	3,447	26,6
2004	25,150	6,388	3,299	25,4
2005	25,617	6,352	2,943	24,8
2006	26,067	6,480	2,816	24,9
2007	24,861	6,159	2,616	24,8

**Source:** TurkStat , labor force statistics \*000 will be added

As seen in table 3 the number of women working in agricultural sector decreases. In other words, from 2002 to 2007, 28,8% of the women working in the agricultural sector left this area. What happened? To answer this question, we have to look to the men's situation. Also the number of the men working in this sector had also decreased. The decrease is approximately 21,1%. Again what happened? Probably, they are added on the jobless army.

There is also a need to discuss the sectors women worked for. In Turkey, 50% of the labor force of women work in agricultural sector and only 35% of them work in service sector. Formation of national income depends on the sum of added values. There are major differences between the added values generated by an individual working in agricultural sector and service sector (education, banking, insurance, law, medicine). (KSGM, 2008, s.10) Distribution of women's labor force according to sectors in Turkey is given in table 4

**Table 4. Distribution of women's labor force according to sectors in Turkey**

Year	Agricultural (%)	Industrial (%)	Services (%)
2000	60	14	26
2001	63	12	25
2002	60	14	26
2003	59	13	28
2004	57	14	29
2005	52	15	33
2006	48	15	37
2007	48	17	35
2008	50	15	35

**Source:**TurkStat, Household Labour Force Survey Results.

Turkey embarrasses its economic and social development by not doing necessary investments on education, not extending compulsory education to 11 or 12 years, ignoring job-oriented education, preconceived idea on working women and hiding women at home. It is essential to mark that the rising of women's educational status is an important matter which also guarantees the rising of quality of men's educational status. Without implicating the potential power of women to working area, Turkey will slowly get to on being a developed, democratic, laic and social country governed by the rule of law.

## **5. THE COMPARISON OF WOMEN'S LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATING RATE IN SELECTED COUNTRIES AND TURKEY**

While most of the working women in developing countries work especially in agricultural sector as unpaid family workers, in developed countries they work in service sector as salaried personnel. In developing countries, the working areas are broken down as women or men's work. Women are employed at low paid businesses and are in the lower steps of job hierarchy. The number of working women at top echelons is limited. (Karadeniz ve Yılmaz, 2007, s.23-41)

Global Gender Gap Report, first published in 2005 by the World Economic Forum and the 2008 report covers 130 major and emerging economies, assesses countries on how well they are dividing their resources and opportunities among their male and female populations, regardless of the overall levels of these resources and opportunities. And also, The Report's Gender Gap Index ranks economies according to their gender gaps and their scores can be interpreted as the percentage of the gap between women and men that has been closed. The three highest ranking countries have closed a little over 80% of their gender gaps, while the lowest ranking country has closed only a little over 45% of its gender gap (World Economic Forum 2008).



*Table 5. The Gender Gap Index rankings of selected countries*

Countries	2006 Ranking	2007 Ranking	2008 Ranking
Sweden	1	1	3
Norway	2	2	1
Finland	3	3	2
Germany	5	7	11
New Zealand	7	5	5
Denmark	8	8	7
United Kingdom	9	11	13
Ireland	10	9	8
Spain	11	10	17
Netherlands	12	12	9
Canada	14	18	31
Australia	15	17	21
Belgium	20	19	28
United States	23	31	27
Switzerland	26	40	14
Austria	27	27	29
Portugal	33	37	39
Bulgaria	37	25	36
Argentina	41	33	24
Poland	44	60	49
Romania	46	47	70
Russian Federation	49	45	42
Czech Republic	53	64	69
Hungary	55	61	60
China	63	73	57
Brazil	67	74	73
Greece	69	72	75
France	70	51	15
Mexico	75	93	97
Italy	77	84	67
Chile	78	86	65
Gambia, The	79	95	85
Korea, Rep.	92	97	108
India	98	114	113
<b>TURKEY</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>123</b>
Total	115	128	130

**Source:** Global Gender Gap Report 2008, World Economic Forum

According to “The global Gender Gap Report 2008” presented at the “World Economic Forum, 2008” Turkey displays a negative position by taking the 123th line between the 130 countries. But when we look to countries in means of “wage equality” Turkey takes the 54th line, still lower than some European countries.

When we rank the countries according to their development status in order to display the status of Turkey, striking states come into the view in means of women’s Labor Force Participating Rate. Women’s LFPR in selected developed countries in 2005 are given in Table 6

*Table 6. Women’s LFPR in selected developed countries in 2005 (%)*

Countries	Women’s LFPR (%)
United States	59,6
Gambia, The	48,3
France	48,2
Germany	50,8
Spain	44,9
Korea, Rep.	50,2
Greece	43,5
<b>TURKEY</b>	<b>27,7</b>

**Source:** UNDP Human Development Report 2007/2008

Women's LFPR in selected developed countries was approximately two times of Turkey in 2005. This indicator alone can explain the difference between Turkey and other countries in means of average per capita income. Moreover, ILO World of Work Report, 2008 pronounces that women's LFPR is 56,3% for EU and 20,8% for Turkey.

According to the Human Development Report 2007/2008, in countries having similar economic and social development levels, the participation of women to labor force in Turkey is also not satisfactory. Women's LFPR in selected developing countries in 2005 are given in Table 7

Table 7. Women's LFPR in selected developing countries in 2005 (%)

Countries	Women's LFPR
Argentina	53,3
Brazil	56,7
Mexico	40,2
Poland	47,7
<b>TURKEY</b>	<b>27,7</b>

Source: UNDP, Human Development Report 2007/2008

When we look at more similar countries in means of custom and usage, religion, culture and social environment, the Turkic Countries, although there have been differences in economics, women's LFPR of these countries are higher than Turkey. Women's LFPR in Turkic Countries in 2005 is given in table 8

Table 8. Women's LFPR in selected Turkic Countries in 2005 (%)

Countries	Women's LFPR
Azerbaijan	60,2
Kazakhstan	65,3
Kyrgyz Rep.	55,6
Uzbekistan	56,6
Turkmenistan	60,5
<b>TURKEY</b>	<b>27,7</b>

Source: UNDP, Human Development Report 2007/2008

Demirel et al. (1999) had reported that economic development is not the only effect on the women's employment. They grouped the main reasons lying under the unemployment of women into two subtitles, factual and judicial. The factual reasons are highness of unemployment rate in the country, lowness of women's wages, low graduation and ingenuity and the lack of nursery schools. On the other hand, the judicial reasons are characterizing herself firstly as a mother, accepting the market work as men's job, and limiting her work area by the walls of her home.

Besides the social values of the population, also religion has important effects on population especially on women by its rules and applications. However, religion comes into view as an important component of society for the antecedent and today's countries. Kuzgun and Sevim (2004) had reported that there was a negative and weak relationship between the attitudes towards women's work roles and religious tendency in their work. When they analyzed attitudes towards women's work roles according to gender, they found that, high school graduated women had positive approach according to graduated ones from only primary school. Similarly the same results are valid for the ones who are graduated from university or high school. In other words, they mentioned that as the level of education rises, positive attitudes towards women's working increases and level of religious tendency decreases. It is also known that the ones who have high level of religious tendency denote that the first task of women is her home, her husband, her children and then if she has more time she can work outside of home. This conclusion is stated expressly in many studies conducted in many countries.



One of the important components of social environment is religious belief. If we analyze the women's LFPR in countries having similar religious belief as Turkey, Turkey's position is again not satisfactory. Women's LFPR in selected Islamic countries in 2005 is given in Table 9. Only the rate of Saudi Arabia is worse than Turkey. So, we can not attribute the lowness of women's LFPR to religious tendency. This situation displays how we ignore the important role of women on economic and social development, or how we lose the chance of improving the democratic life.

*Table 9. Women's LFPR in selected Islamic countries in 2005 (%)*

Countries	Women's LFPR
Indonesia	51,0
Iran	38,6
Kuwait	49,0
Malaysia	46,5
Pakistan	32,7
Saudi Arabia	17,6
Syria	38,6
<b>TURKEY</b>	<b>27,7</b>

**Source:** UNDP, Human Development Report 2007/2008

It is suggested that, by ignoring women and without using women's brain and arm power, any economic and social development could reach to the planned targets and it is difficult to reach the levels of developed countries as being a secular, democratic, social country governed by the rule of law. We have to investigate the reasons of the lowness of women's LFPR in Turkey. (KSGM, Women and Economy Report, 2008)

## **6. THE FACTORS LEADING THE WOMEN'S LOW RATE OF LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE IN TURKEY AND POLICY SUGGESTIONS**

**Women's employment in rural areas and the break away from agriculture:** Despite the rapid decrease in agricultural employment, agriculture continues to be the sector with the highest level of women's employment. According to the November 2008 data, share of agricultural employment in the overall employment of women is 45 percent. The decrease in agricultural income has led men to gradually leave this sector, resulting in the feminization of agriculture.

Moreover a significant number of these women work without pay in the fields of male members of their families or the income they make in activities is confiscated by the men. Due to patriarchal traditions, women are still obligated to part with their legal rights in favor of men. Another problem is the fact that 98 percent of the women who work in agriculture are not registered. A huge number of women in rural areas are excluded from the social security system.

On the other hand, women of families that own little or no land, participate in production as migrant or temporary workers. Migrant agriculture workers constitute the most disadvantaged group in agricultural employment. Their earnings are very low in addition to the extremely unfavorable conditions of housing, health, work, sustenance and transportation. (KEIG, 2009)

Another problem area is women's withdrawal from agricultural employment. Women, who have receded from agricultural employment due to agricultural mechanization or migration to urban areas, do not have easy access to non-agricultural employment opportunities and are thus left with the options of either becoming a "housewife" or taking on informal jobs in the cities. As a result of Neoliberal

policies, between the years 2001 and 2007, 1.164 million women working in agriculture mostly as unpaid family workers were excluded from agricultural employment. The rate of women's employment in rural areas decreased 10 points in those 6 years and dropped from 41 to 31 percent; while the non-agricultural unemployment rate of women in rural areas increased from 11 to 19 percent. Consequently, it is evident that though there is a rapid break away from the agricultural employment; the non-agricultural employment opportunities are far from compensating the resulting gap with regards the women. (KEIG, 2009)

Precaution should be taken into account to prevent women from tortuosity due to patriarchal traditions and to achieving their legal rights. For building self confidence women must be educated. Beside women's education, men must also be educated for women's legal rights and not confiscating their income.

On the other hand, it will be appropriate for women to attend adult education or courses to find a new job in the case of women's withdrawal from agricultural employment.

***Low level of women's employment in the urban areas:*** Increase in employment in non-agricultural sectors concentrated in the cities falls much behind the increase in the population joining the labor force. According to the population census data, the economic growth in Turkey between 1955-1990 created only 1.3 million jobs in non-agricultural sectors for women while it created around 7 million jobs for men; that is 5.5 times more jobs. In other words, the economic development process oriented to industry and services rather than agriculture involves a growth fostering gender inequalities. (KEIG, 2009)

***Creating job opportunities for first time job seekers:*** Interventions should aim at promoting formal employment for women with low levels of education, and especially for those transitioning from school to work. More flexible labor market regulation may reduce the barriers of businesses hiring women.

Even though they are not perfect substitutes for the full-time jobs, part-time jobs may ease women's entrance to the labor force. This type of employment is not as common as it is in OECD countries. According to the statistics of 2005 on average women's proportion who work on part-time basis was 72.9% in OECD countries whereas it was 59.4% in Turkey 24 (MESS, 2008). Flexible working-time arrangements and the possibility to work parttime help women to combine market work with traditional family responsibilities. The possibility to find a part-time job can be crucial to the labor force participation of these women, particularly when family responsibilities cannot be discharged in another way. Governments should provide incentives to increase the numbers and qualities of part-time jobs. (Biçeli,M.K. and Gündoğan,N. 2009, s.24)

***Sustaining investments on education:*** Higher education attainment is associated with higher levels of female participation. Investment in Vocational Education and Training (VET) are likely to prepare women, and especially young women, with the skills needed to qualify for good jobs in the labor market. International evidence indicates that investments on VET help women to get formal jobs, and promotes gender equality in earnings and labor market opportunities (World Bank and SPO)

***Unregistered employment:*** According to the December 2008 data, 58 percent of employed women engaged in unregistered sectors. For men this rate is 38 percent. Women work unregistered in small family enterprises in manufacturing industry or services sectors as unpaid family workers without receiving any payment for their labor. Unregistered work is very common among self-employed women (79 percent) as well as in manufacturing industry or services sectors. (KEIG, 2009)



It is known that the economic well being of a population is determined not only by how much each working person earns, but also what proportion of the population is registered. A policy to register the informal economic activities is required to improve working women's incomes and working conditions. Since most of the women work in informal sector, such approach may limit women's employment opportunities in the short run. But in the medium and long terms shrinking the informal sector may assist to broaden the number of decent jobs which in turn will develop women's position in the labor markets (Biçeli, M.K. and Gündoğan, N. 2009, s.23)

***There is sectoral and occupational gender segregation:*** 40 percent of employed women in cities are white collar workers and the percentage of women working generally in services sector as unskilled labor is almost the same (40 percent). The percentage of blue collar women workers is approximately 20 percent. Women usually work in jobs closely related to domestic labor and care work. One of the foremost results of this sexist segmentation is the high pay gap between men and women workers doing the jobs of the same value. (KEIG, 2009)

***There is a huge pay gap:*** There is a pay gap of 22 percent between average wages of women and men in cities in Turkey. Studies indicate that the pay gap between women and men working in private sector is higher than 50 percent and there is an undeniable wage inequality between women and men even when the factors such as education and work experience are fixed. (Ulutaş, 2009, s.29)

In a research conducted by Lordoğlu on women who work at home in Bursa and İstanbul it has been found that their weekly earnings are only 30% of the minimum wage in return for working 34 hours in Bursa and 51 hours in İstanbul. (Lordoğlu, 1993, s.106.)

***Male dominant structures of unions exclude women:*** The rate of unionization in Turkey is around 9 percent. Number of workers with union membership is 892 thousands. Women workers make up only 10 percent of union members and are not represented on union boards. Only 19 out of 489 board members are women. This data reveals the male dominant structure of unions in our country. (KEIG, 2009)

***Affordable childcare:*** A woman prefer to stay at home and take care of her children. First of all, she is a mother. So, this consideration is a barrier for working outside of home. Many women could be encouraged to work by having access to affordable care for their children. This could be achieved by promoting early childhood development programs (ECD), such as preschool education and public/subsidized childcare programs. A forthcoming World Bank report on Equality of Opportunities in Turkey highlights that ECD interventions may contribute to break intergenerational transmissions of poverty and inequality. (World Bank and SPO s.3)

***Sexual Harassment:*** Another reason that causes men to oppose their wives' working in the labor markets is sexual harassment. In a survey covering 31 countries in Europe including Turkey, following the Czech Republic and Norway, Turkey along with Croatia is the third country from the point of view of sexual harassment assurance (35.4%) (ABHABER, 2009).

Additionally, besides the factors mentioned above, according to the report prepared by KSGM, there are some other factors lowering the women's labor force participation rate such as: (KSGM, Women and Economy report, 2008)

- Low educational level of the labor force,
- Economic crises,
- In an environment of high unemployment, persons, in particular women, lose hopes of finding a job and thus they no longer seek a job,
- Early retirement, (Biçerli,M.K.and Özer,M. 2003-2004, s.66-70)

## **7. CONCLUSION**

In most of the developed countries, the women's labor force participation rate is slightly lower than that of men's, but, the Turkey's position points out serious issues when compared to similar development showing countries. Although there have been some differences between TurkStat and UNDP rates, the women's labor force participation rate is 56,3% for EU and 26% for Turkey. Moreover the rate in Turkey is decreasing. Turkish women are backing out of labor force. Although a slight increase in the rate can be seen, due to global crisis, it is not subjected as a result of economic grow or of the acceptance of women as a part of labor force.

Division of labor according to gender, charged roles to men and women in the society, education and migration to urban areas are some of the reasons of Turkey's being at the last ranks, in the studies conducted and compared by EU, ILO, UN, OECD, World Economic Forum in means of the labor force participation rate.

For example, institutionalizing problem on care services are one of the supply-side main reasons of avoiding women to participate in the labor force. We have to surmount difficulties.

Policies balancing family and work life will support women to be a part of labor force. By covering women, oriented flexible working arrangement and extending it throughout Turkey will support women.

Economic, social, and political improvement of Turkey needs to encourage women to find her place in industrial and service sectors. For this, firstly, it is essential to increase the level of education of women or at least to include them in adult education or courses to access to non-agricultural employment opportunities. Secondly, precautions should be taken into account to prevent women from tortuosity due to patriarchal traditions and to achiving their legal rights. And finally, pay gap should be eradicated and wage quality should be guaranteed.

Although women's labor force participating rate is high in agriculture sector, she is an unpaid family worker. On the other hand, a serious decrease in agricultural work causes a decrease in women's employment. The changes in the agriculture policies caused women to lost their employment and forced women to move to urban to work as unregistered workers without social security.

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