

## ONE OF EVERY FOUR FEMALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS IS POOR

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### Executive Summary

The status of female-headed households is an important topic in terms of both gender equality and equality of opportunities for future generations. According to the 2011 wave of Survey of Income and Living Conditions data, two different profiles of female-headed households emerge: young and educated women with relatively strong attachment to the labor market and old and low-educated women living alone. Nevertheless, material deprivation is more common among female-headed households regardless of their profiles. One of every four female-headed households can satisfy none of their basic needs of heating, nutrition or clothing. It is evident that targeted policies are required to help female-headed households fight poverty, however women's attachment to the labor market ought to be taken into account in designing these policies.

### 15 percent of household heads are female

The relative status of female-headed households has been an important topic among academics, policymakers and NGO's. Indeed, the relative status of female-headed households becomes an important determinant of the living conditions of adults as well as of children who grow up in these households. Using Survey of Income and Living Conditions 2011 data, we study the status of female household heads and their households. "Household head" in this research brief corresponds to the "reference person" of TurkStat. Turkstat defines "reference person" as an adult household member who is responsible for managing and providing for the household and who can provide the best information about the socioeconomic status and the characteristics of members of the household.

**Table 1: Distribution of female and male household heads, by age (2011)**

Age group	Female household heads		Male household heads	
	Number of heads (in thousands)	%	Number of heads (in thousands)	%
Less than 65	2,014	67.3	10,967	88.2
65 and more	977	32.6	1,968	11.8
<b>Total number of households</b>	<b>2,991</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>16,667</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: 2011 TurkStat Income and Living Conditions Survey; Betam

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According to 2011 Turkish Survey of Income and Living Conditions data, 15.2 percent of approximately 19.6 million household heads are women. In other words, in Turkey 7.7 million of approximately 72 million people are living in female-headed households. When we analyze the distribution of male and female household heads by age, we can clearly see that women tend to live longer. One-third of female household heads are older than the age of 65 years, this ratio is only 11.8 percent for male heads (Table 1).

**Majority of female household heads are widowed**

Marital status of female household heads are represented in Table 2. The data reveals that, parallel to the age distribution, the partners of approximately half of the female household heads passed away. 22.9 percent of female household heads have never been married, are divorced or seperated from their husbands. On the other hand, 20 percent of female heads are married.

**Table 2: The marital status of female household heads (2011)**

	The number of female heads (in thousands)	%
Never married	216	7.2
Married	601	20.1
Widowed	1,704	57
Divorced	385	13
Living apart	84	2.8
<b>Total number of female heads</b>	<b>2,991</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: 2011 TurkStat Income and Living Conditions Survey; Betam

**Female household heads are low-educated**

Table 3 shows the educational status of male and female household heads. The educational status of relatively younger household heads points out two different dynamics. 17.9 percent of female household heads and only 2.2 percent of male heads are illiterate. Although illiteracy is more common among female household heads, the number of illiterate male and females household heads are almost the same. There are 360 thousand female and 323 thousand male household heads. Parallel to the overall education level in Turkey, we observe that the majority of household heads have less than a high school degree. Half of female household heads and almost two-third of male household heads attained at most 8 years of schooling. On the other hand, 28.4 percent of female household heads and 34 percent of male household heads are at least high school graduates. As can be seen, the frequency of being at least high school graduate does not differ between male and female household heads.

The educational status distribution of 65 or more aged household heads paints a bleak picture for females. More than half of the relatively older female household heads are illiterate. This fact certainly is a reflection of low education level of previous generations.

**Table 3: Household heads by educational status (2011)**

<b>Female household heads</b>				
	<b>Less than 65</b>		<b>65 and more</b>	
	<b>The number of heads (in thousands)</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>The number of heads (in thousands)</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Illiterate</b>	360	17.9	542	55.5
<b>Less than high school</b>	1,083	53.8	402	41.1
<b>High school</b>	304	15.1	15	1.5
<b>Tertiary education</b>	267	13.3	18	1.9
<b>Total number of female household heads</b>	2,014	100	977	100
<b>Male household heads</b>				
	<b>Less than 65</b>		<b>65 and more</b>	
	<b>The number of heads (in thousands)</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>The number of heads (in thousands)</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Illiterate</b>	323	2.2	333	17
<b>Less than high school</b>	9,372	63.8	1,412	71.8
<b>High school</b>	2,938	20	103	5.2
<b>Tertiary education</b>	2,060	14	118	6
<b>Total number of male household heads</b>	14,693	100	1,967	100

Source: 2011 TurkStat Income and Living Conditions Survey; Betam

Table 4 provides the average household sizes of female- and male-headed households. According to the data, the average size of female-headed households is 2.6 persons and the average size for male-headed households (3.9 persons) is higher compared to female-headed households (Table 5). Female household heads are relatively older on average, which contributes to this fact. Also, it is obvious that the household size of female-headed households among households with younger than 65 years of age is smaller. While average size of younger than 65 years of age female-headed households is 2.9 persons, this ratio is 4.1 persons for male-headed.

### **The number of children in female-headed household is small**

Similarly, there are more children in male-headed households compared to that in female-headed households. While there are at least 3 children in 12 percent of male-headed households, this share among female-headed households are approximately 5 percent. On the other hand, 72 percent of about 3 million female household heads do not have any children living with them. For male household heads this ratio is 44 percent.

**Table 4: Average household sizes (2011)**

	<b>Female-headed households</b>	<b>Male-headed households</b>
Less than 65 years old	2.9	4.1
65 years or older	2	2.9
All age groups	2.6	3.9

Source: 2011 TurkStat Income and Living Conditions Survey; Betam

**Table 5: Distribution of household heads by the number of children (2011)**

Female household heads				
Age groups	Less than 65		65 and more	
Number of children	Number of female household heads (in thousands)	%	Number of female household heads (in thousands)	%
0	1,317	65.4	865	88.5
1	391	19.4	59	6.1
2	206	10.2	37	3.8
3+	100	4.9	15	1.6
<b>Total number of female household heads</b>	2,014	100	977	100
Male household heads				
	Less than 65		65 and more	
Number of children	Number of female household heads (in thousands)	%	Number of female household heads (in thousands)	%
0	5,670	39	1,689	85,8
1	4,017	27.3	123	6,2
2	3,232	22	86	4,4
3+	1,780	12	70	3,6
<b>Total number of male household heads</b>	14,699	100	1,968	100

Source: 2011 TurkStat Income and Living Conditions Survey; Betam

### One of four young female household heads are wage and/or salary earners

In Table 6 the labor market status of female household heads is provided. Compatible with previous tables, the labor market status of female heads (Table 6) are differentiated by age groups (less than 65 and 65 or more). In the age group of younger than 65 years, the ratio of female household heads in the labor market (working or seeking a job) reaches 36.3 percent. It is still striking that almost half of female household heads are busy with household chores. The majority of females household heads older than 65 years of age is retired or consider themselves too old to work but still one-third of them are busy with household chores.

**Table 6: The labor market status of female household heads (2011)**

Labor market status	All ages	Less than 65	65 and more
Wage and/or salary earners	17.4	25.3	1.4
Employer / Self-employed	6.6	8.6	2.5
Seeking a job	1.6	2.4	-
Student	1.1	1.7	-
Retired	10.1	9.5	11.4
Old, ill and disabled	19.0	4.1	49.6
Busy with household chores	43.7	48.3	34.3
Other inactives	0.4	0.2	0.9

Source: 2011 TurkStat Income and Living Conditions Survey; Betam

Female household heads, who are already employed, are predominantly wage and/or salary earners in non-agricultural sectors. The ratio of employer or self-employed women is above 15 percent. On the other hand, women in agriculture are employed largely as self-employed, unpaid family workers or casual workers.

**Table 7: The employment status of female household heads (2011)**

Employment status	Non-agricultural sectors		Agriculture	
	Number of household heads (in thousands)	%	Number of household heads (in thousands)	%
Wage and/or salary earners	412	74.7	0.9	0.6
Causal workers	38	7	31	18.5
Employer	14	2.6	0,7	0.4
Self-employed	81	14.8	115	68.2
Unpaid family workers	4,5	0.8	20	12.3
<b>Total working female household heads</b>	<b>552</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: 2011 TurkStat Income and Living Conditions Survey; Betam

### West-East differentiation

The regional distribution of household heads is provided in Table 8. Above we mentioned that 15.2 percent of overall households in Turkey are female-headed. However, there are important regional differences. Two regions have the highest share of female household heads: Mediterranean (17.5 percent) and Aegean (17.1 percent), whereas Central Anatolia (8.7 percent) and Northeast Anatolia (10.3 percent) have the lowest ratios. It is interesting to see that the ratio of female household heads in Southeast Anatolia (14.4 percent) is close to national average ratio and higher than expected. High female household head ratio found in this region, which has socio-economic structural similarities with Central East Anatolia and Northeast Anatolia region, is a fact worth investigating.

**Table 8: The distribution of female and male household heads by regions (2011)**

Regions	The number of female household heads	The number of male household heads	The ratio of female household heads
Istanbul	599	3,051	16.4
West Marmara	169	871	16.3
Aegean	498	2,419	17.1
East Marmara	257	1,675	13.3
West Anatolia	273	1,661	14.1
Mediterranean	468	2,199	17.5
Central Anatolia	109	863	11.2
West Black Sea	197	1,067	15.6
East Black Sea	109	597	15.4
Northeast Anatolia	45	393	10.3
Central East Anatolia	62	649	8.7
South East Anatolia	205	1,222	14.4
Total household heads	2,991	16,667	15.2

Source: 2011 TurkStat Income and Living Conditions Survey; Betam

## One of every four female-headed household faces material deprivation

In this research brief, poverty is measured in terms of material deprivation, and the people who gave negative responses to the questions related to the satisfaction of needs of nutrition, heating and clothing in 2011 Income and Living Conditions Survey are considered to be materially deprived.<sup>1</sup> In the year of 2011, 15.1 million people could not meet any of the three needs of nutrition, heating and clothing. Furthermore, material deprivation depends on the gender of household head and according to the data, material deprivation is more widespread among female-headed households.

771 thousand (25.8 percent) of approximately 3 million female-headed households are facing material deprivation (Table 9). Among the 13 million households with male heads, about 3 million (17.7 percent) live in material deprivation. In other words, material deprivation is more common among female-headed households.

A similar pattern emerges when we consider poverty from other point of view. 15.1 million people are living in material deprivation in Turkey. 2 million of them are living in female-headed households and other 13 million are living in male-headed households. In other words, 27.2 percent of people living in female-headed households and 20 percent of individuals living in male-headed households are poor.

**Table 9: Material deprivation in male- and female-headed households (2011)**

	Female-headed	Male-headed
<b>Total number of households (in thousands)</b>	2,991	16,667
Number of poor households (in thousands)	771	2,948
Poor household ratio (%)	25.8	17.7
<b>Total number of people (in thousands)</b>	7,666	64,710
Number of poor people (in thousands)	2,088	12,993
Poor people ratio (%)	27.2	20

Source: 2011 TurkStat Income and Living Conditions Survey; Betam

## Two different profiles of female household heads

To sum up briefly, two different profiles among female-headed households stand out. While one group consists of women that are relatively younger, highly-educated, in wage employment in non-agricultural sectors, the other is characterized by relatively older and low-educated women. Even though for clearly different reasons, both groups of women have fewer children living with them. It is easy to anticipate that the children of relatively older women are living in another households. For the group of relatively younger women, fertility rate is probably lower due to high material and emotional costs of raising children as a single-parent.

Regardless of the profile of the female head, material deprivation is more common among female-headed households. One of every four female-headed households and 27.2 percent of people living

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<sup>1</sup> The questions related to nutrition, heating and clothing in Income and Living Conditions Survey are as follows: "Are you able to afford a meal with meat, chicken or fish every other day if needed or required?" "Are you able to keep your home adequately warm?" and "Are you able to replace worn out clothes by new ones?".

in these households are facing material deprivation, in terms of nutrition, heating and clothing. These ratios is lower for male-headed households.

Policies aiming to improve the relative status of female household heads will help foster gender equality and improve equality of opportunity for children who grow up in these households. In this respect, these policies ought to include components aiming to strengthen the labor market attachment of females.