

## 1.2 MILLION FEMALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS SUFFER FROM DEPRIVATION

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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 2014 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. It is evident that targeted policies are required to help female-headed households fight against poverty; however, women's attachment to the labor market ought to be taken into account in designing these policies.

### 17.6 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 2014 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 the adult member of household who has the most accurate information about the socio-economic and personal characteristics of household members and responsible for the administration of household.

**Table 1: Distribution of female and male household heads, by age (2014)**

Age group	Female household heads		Male household heads	
	Number of heads (in thousands)	%	Number of heads (in thousands)	%
Less than 65	2293	61.2	15335	87.0
65 and more	1451	38.8	2300	13.0
<b>Total number of households</b>	<b>3744</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>17636</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: 2014 TurkStat Income and Living Conditions Survey; Betam

According to 2014 Turkish Survey of Income and Living Conditions data, 17.5 percent of approximately 21.4 million household heads are women. In other words, in Turkey 8.5 million of approximately 75.7 million people are living in female-headed households. When we analyze the

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distribution of male and female household heads by age, we can clearly see that women tend to live longer. Approximately 39 percent of female household heads are older than the age of 65 years; this ratio is only 13 percent for male heads (Table 1).

**Majority of female household heads are widowed**

Marital statuses of female household heads are represented in Table 2. The data reveals that, parallel to the age distribution, the partners of 58.2 percent of the female household heads had passed away. 32 percent of female household heads have never been married, are divorced, or separated from their husbands. On the other hand, only 9.2 percent of female heads are married.

**Table 2: The marital status of female household heads (2014)**

	The number of female heads (in thousands)	%
Never married	609	16.3
Married	346	9.2
Widowed	2200	58.8
Divorced	492	13.1
Living apart	97	2.6
<b>Total number of female heads</b>	<b>3744</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: 2014 TurkStat Income and Living Conditions Survey; Betam

**Female household heads have lower education levels**

Table 3 shows the educational status of male and female household heads. 15.1 percent of female household heads and only 2.3 percent of male heads are illiterate. Although illiteracy is more common among female household heads, the numbers of illiterate male and female household heads are almost the same. There are 346 thousand female and 355 thousand male household heads who are illiterate. Mirroring the educational distribution in Turkey, we observe that the majority of household heads have less than a high school degree. 54 percent of female households and 60 percent of male households attained at most 8 years of schooling. On the other hand, 31 percent of female household heads and 37 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 share of university graduates are the same among male and female households (17.3 percent).

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 whereas this ratio is 14.8 percent for male household heads. This fact certainly is a reflection of low education levels of previous generations.

**Table 3: Household heads by educational status (2014)**

Female household heads				
	Less than 65		65 and more	
	The number of heads (in thousands)	%	The number of heads (in thousands)	%
Illiterate	346	15.1	833	57.4
Less than high school	1239	54.0	536	36.9
High school	313	13.6	57	4.0
Tertiary education	396	17.3	54	1.7
<b>Total number of female household heads</b>	<b>2293</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1451</b>	<b>100</b>
Male household heads				
	Less than 65		65 and more	
	The number of heads (in thousands)	%	The number of heads (in thousands)	%
Illiterate	355	2.3	341	14.8
Less than high school	9303	60.7	1691	73.5
High school	3019	19.7	102	4.4
Tertiary education	2653	17.3	166	7.2
<b>Total number of male household heads</b>	<b>15330</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2300</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: 2014 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 2.5 persons. Note that the average size for male-headed households (3.9 persons) is higher than that of female-headed households (Table 5). Female household heads are relatively older on average, which contributes to this fact. In addition, 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 2.8 persons, this ratio is 4.0 persons for male-headed.

**Table 4: Average household sizes (2014)**

	Female-headed households	Male-headed households
Less than 65 years old	2.8	4.0
65 years or older	2	2.9
All age groups	2.5	3.9

Source: 2014 TurkStat Income and Living Conditions Survey; Betam

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

Similarly, there are more children in male-headed households compared to that in female-headed households. While there are at least three children in 12.3 percent of male-headed households, its share among female-headed households is approximately 4.2 percent. On the other hand, 81.8 percent of about 3 million 75 thousand female household heads do not have any children living with them. For male household heads, this ratio is 48.6 percent.

**Table 5: Distribution of household heads by the number of children (2014)**

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	1714	74.4	1347	92.9
1	331	14.5	52	3.6
2	151	6.6	29	2.0
3+	97	4.2	23	1.6
<b>Total number of female household heads</b>	2293	100	1451	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	6653	43.4	1921	83.5
1	3667	23.9	132	5.7
2	3124	20.4	143	6.2
3+	1892	12.3	105	4.6
<b>Total number of male household heads</b>	15335	100	2300	100

Source: 2014 TurkStat Income and Living Conditions Survey; Betam

### One of four young female household heads is 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 statuses of female heads 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 (12.3 percent) or consider themselves too old to work (47.8 percent) but still one-third of them are busy with household chores.

**Table 6: The labor market status of female household heads (2014)**

Labor market status	All ages	Less than 65	65 and more
Wage and/or salary earners	15.9	25.2	1.2
Employer / Self-employed	6.4	9.1	2.0
Seeking a job	1.3	2.0	0.1
Student	1.3	2.1	
Retired	10.0	8.6	12.3
Old, ill and disabled	20.9	3.8	47.8
Busy with household chores	44.1	48.9	36.3
Other inactives	0.2	0.1	0.2

Source: 2014 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 (67.7 percent), unpaid family workers (15.8 percent) or casual workers (12.3 percent).

**Table 7: The employment status of female household heads (2014)**

Employment status	Non-agricultural sectors		Agriculture	
	Number of household heads (in thousands)	%	Number of household heads (in thousands)	%
Wage and/or salary earners	526	78.0	5	2.9
Causal workers	35	5.2	20	12.3
Employer	27	4.0	2	1.3
Self-employed	79	11.7	111	67.7
Unpaid family workers	8	1.1	26	15.8
<b>Total working female household heads</b>	<b>675</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: 2014 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 17.5 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 (19.6 percent) and Aegean (19.7 percent). Moreover, shares of female-headed households in West Marmara, Istanbul, and East Black Sea Regions are higher than the overall average in Turkey. Central East Anatolia (12 percent) and Northeast Anatolia (12 percent) have the lowest ratios.

**Table 8: The distribution of female and male household heads by regions (2014)**

Regions	The number of female household heads	The number of male household heads	The ratio of female household heads
Istanbul	811	3371	19.4
West Marmara	204	930	18.0
Aegean	640	2615	19.7
East Marmara	342	1715	16.6
West Anatolia	337	1865	15.3
Mediterranean	555	2273	19.6
Central Anatolia	147	878	14.4
West Black Sea	204	1043	16.4
East Black Sea	133	607	17.9
Northeast Anatolia	52	383	12.0
Central East Anatolia	90	661	12.0
South East Anatolia	228	1294	15.0
Total household heads	3744	17636	17.5

Source: 2014 TurkStat Income and Living Conditions Survey; Betam

**One of every three female-headed household faces material deprivation**

In this research brief, poverty is measured by the severe material deprivation defined by Eurostat. According to this measure, people who cannot afford at least four of the following items are severely materially deprived: (1) to pay their rent, mortgage or utility bills, (2) the keep their home adequately warm, (3) to face unexpected expenses, (4) to eat a meal involving meat, chicken or fish every second day, (5) to afford a one-week annual holiday away from home, (6) a washing machine, (7) a color television, (8) a telephone (including mobile phone) or (9) a car.

In the year of 2014, 22.2 million people (29.4 percent) could not afford at least four of nine items mentioned above. Furthermore, material deprivation depends on the gender of household head and according to the data, material deprivation is more widespread among female-headed households. 1.2 million (31 percent) of approximately 3.7 million female-headed households are facing material deprivation (Table 9). Among the 17.6 million households with male heads, about 4.6 million (26.2 percent) live in material deprivation. A similar pattern emerges when we consider poverty from other point of view. 22.2 million people are living in material deprivation in Turkey. 2.8 million of them are living in female-headed households and other 19.4 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 (2014)**

	<b>Female-headed</b>	<b>Male-headed</b>
Total number of households (in thousands)	3744	17636
Number of poor households (in thousands)	1162	4618
<b>Poor household ratio (%)</b>	<b>31.0</b>	<b>26.2</b>
Total number of people (in thousands)	8504	67189
Number of poor people (in thousands)	2841	19374
<b>Poor people ratio (%)</b>	<b>33.4</b>	<b>28.8</b>

Source: 2014 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 easy to anticipate that the children of relatively older women are living in other 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 female-headed households and 33.4 percent of people living in these households cannot afford at least four of nine items such as unexpected expenses, rent/utility bills payments, a meal with meat, chicken, fish or vegetarian equivalent every second day, heating to keep the home sufficiently warm, possession of a car, a telephone, a color TV and a washing

machine. These ratios are 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.