

## Drivers, Barriers, and the Economic Impact of Female Labor Force Participation

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### Introduction

Understanding female labor force participation (FLFP) in Turkey is essential for developing a global perspective on gendered economic structures outside of Western contexts. Conducted as part of the Museum Anthropology course to inform an upcoming exhibit in the Anthropology Department next spring, this research investigates the specific socio-cultural and economic drivers; such as the "added-worker" effect and shifting educational standards; that explain the participation gap between Turkish women and their counterparts in the US, UK, and France. The methodology involves a systematic synthesis of existing academic research and secondary datasets, specifically focusing on firm-level data and comparative socioeconomic indicators to distinguish between institutional barriers and individual facilitators. Preliminary findings indicate that while Turkey's gender ratio in the workforce currently lags behind Western nations, participation is steadily increasing. This shift is driven by a combination of higher educational attainment among younger generations and economic necessity, which forces a re-evaluation of traditional household roles. As women become a primary target demographic, their integration into the bustling Turkish economy becomes a critical driver for national GDP growth. This research highlights shifting cultural norms in Southern Europe and the Middle East, offering a foundation for future study into contemporary data. Ultimately, the study underscores that increasing female education and workforce entry are not only social milestones but economic imperatives for Turkey's future development.

### Analysis & Methodology

The analysis employs a comparative and interpretive approach to distinguish between institutional barriers and individual facilitators, such as rising educational attainment. Unlike broad national statistics, this method emphasizes firm-level data to provide a "molecular" look at the Turkish labor market. This granular perspective allows the research to highlight cultural shifts in real-time, providing a clearer understanding of how Turkey's unique economic structure compares to Western counterparts. This study utilizes a synthesized bibliography of peer-reviewed articles to analyze Turkish women's labor habits, with a specific focus on married workers. This demographic was selected because their workforce participation is the most sensitive to shifting household norms and economic pressures. By triangulating data from diverse academic sources, the research measures key indicators such as FLFP rates and the "gender multiplier"—an economic concept describing how informal employment for women creates a ripple effect that impacts wages and job security across the entire market.

### Results

Preliminary findings indicate that while Turkey's gender ratio in the workforce currently lags behind Western counterparts, participation is steadily increasing among younger, more educated cohorts. This study identifies higher educational attainment and shifting economic necessity as the primary drivers forcing a regional re-evaluation of traditional household roles. These results are significant because they demonstrate that integrating women into the "bustling" Turkish economy is a critical economic imperative for national GDP growth, rather than just a social milestone. Supporting an upcoming spring Anthropology Department exhibit, this research utilizes firm-level data to connect individual household choices to broader macro-economic trends.

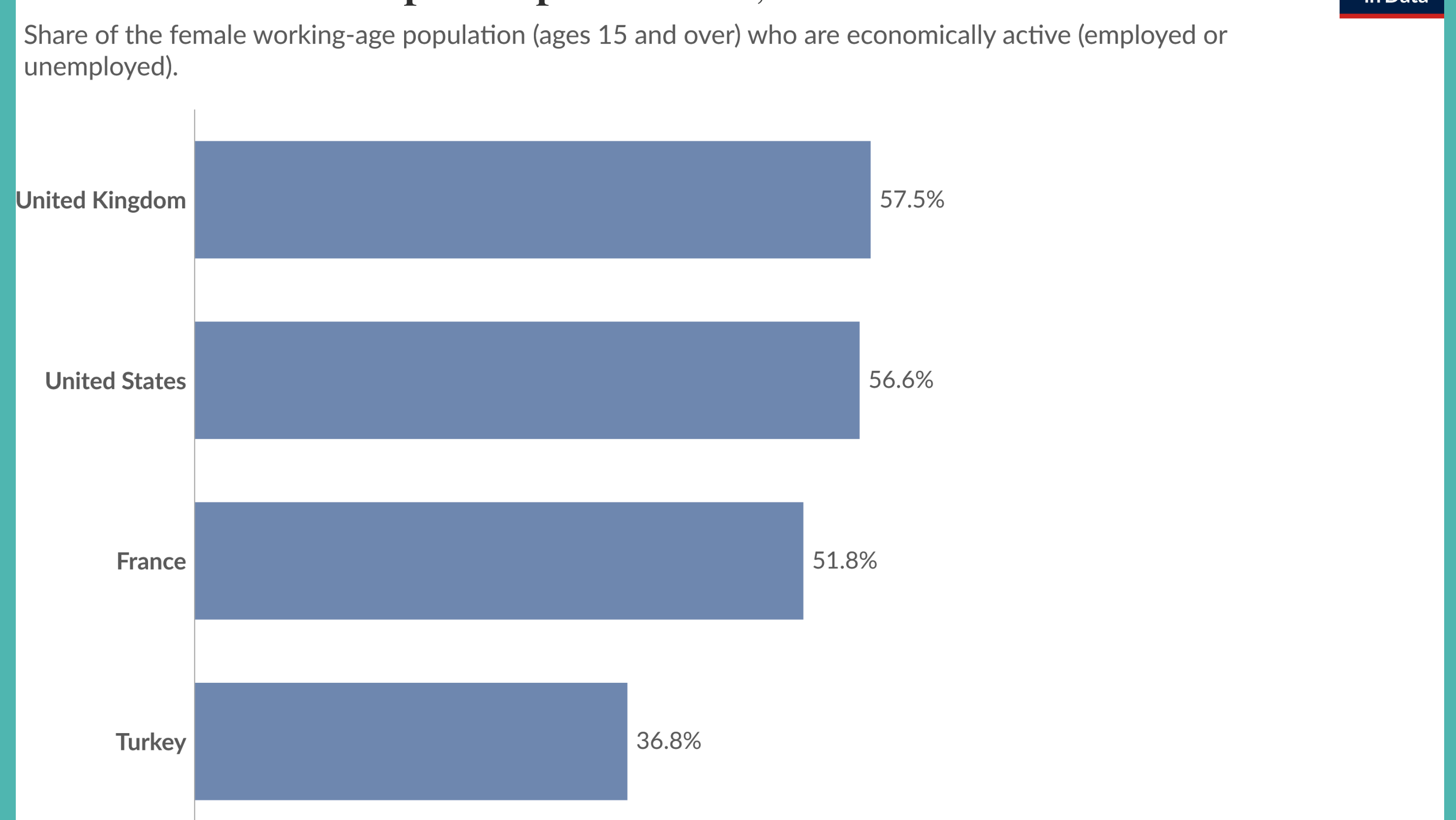
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Turkish women working in a garment production factory. Credits to A News TV Channel.

### Female labor force participation rate, 2024



Graph made using Women's Employment Data, from Our World in Data



Photo of Rural Turkish women working on the land in the countryside of Toros Mountains, Turkey. Credits to TasFoto on Dreamstime.com

### Resources



### Conclusion

The findings confirm that economic necessity and the "added-worker" effect drive married women's entry into the Turkish workforce, while a shift toward professionalization aligns Turkey with Southern European models. This suggests that educational gains and shifting cultural norms are successfully addressing the "Turkish Puzzle." We recommend that policymakers prioritize female education as a core economic strategy and suggest that the upcoming Anthropology Department exhibit incorporate personal narratives to humanize these statistics. Ultimately, women's integration is essential for Turkey's future growth. Future research should examine how institutional supports, like childcare, can further reduce the "discouraged-worker" effect in this evolving Middle Eastern context.