

2. Equity Aspirations

6. From the Marmara earthquake and the 2001 financial crisis to the onset of the global economic slowdown in mid-2008, Turkey recorded major social and human development progress. Under-five mortality rates continued their remarkable, decade-long decline, reaching 23.9 (per thousand live births) in 2008.⁷ As Graph 1 shows, Turkey achieved such sustained reduction even during the times of economic decline and is now outperforming countries in the Middle East and North Africa that for a long time held similar levels of the under-five mortality rate. Net enrolment rates

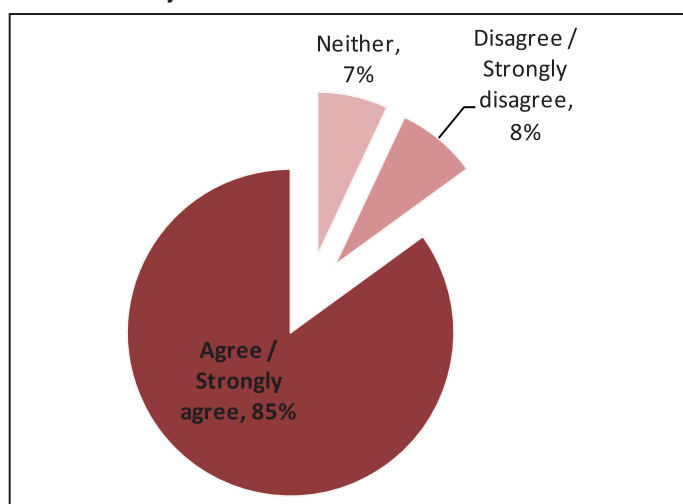
in secondary school, often characterized as the Achilles heel of human development in the country, climbed steeply from 51 percent (2002) to 59 percent (2008).⁸ Similarly, poverty had decreased from 27 percent in 2002 to 19 percent in 2007 – and further decreases have likely materialized until mid-2008. Such poverty reduction was achieved not only through the strong growth performance of the economy but also due to a marked reduction in inequality in society: between 2003 and 2006, consumption inequality declined by more than ten percent.⁹

⁷ Preliminary results of Turkey Demographic and Health Survey (2008), Hacettepe University.

⁸ Ministry of National Education, Statistical Yearbook, 2008-2009.

⁹ Aran et. al. (2009), one of the working papers jointly produced by the Government and the World Bank on social policy, has a detailed analysis of the contributions of changes in inequality and average consumption to poverty reduction in Turkey between 2003 and 2006. Inequality, as measured by the adult equivalence adjusted consumption Gini coefficient, declined from 34 percent to 31 percent.

Graph 2: Should the Gap Between the Rich and the Poor in Turkey be Reduced?

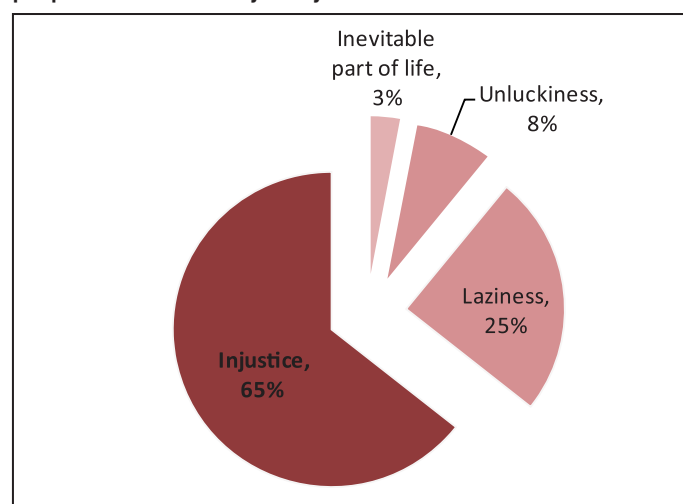


Source: Life in Transition Survey (2006)

7. Such improvements, welcome as they certainly are, still lag the aspirations of the Turkish people, as eloquently documented in a 2006 opinion survey. The Life in Transition Survey¹⁰ was conducted in Turkey and twenty-seven countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia and asked a nationally representative group of adults about their opinions on living standards, poverty and inequality, trust in state institutions, and attitudes to the market economy and public services. A full 85 percent of the adult population expressed that the gap between the rich and the poor in society should be reduced – the single highest proportion in any country in which the survey was fielded (Graph 2). And an even higher proportion, 92 percent, believes that the state should be involved in reducing this very gap between the rich and the poor.

8. The same survey also solicits opinions about justice and fate. Two out of three Turkish adults responded that the main reason why poverty existed in the country was ‘injustice in society’ (Graph 3) – if we consider that ‘luck’ and ‘inevitable part of modern life’ also refer to factors beyond the control of the individual, then a full three-quarters of the Turkish population feel that the poor should *not* be held responsible for their condition. Such opinion does not imply, however, that those who did obtain wealth and standing do not deserve

Graph 3: What is the Main Reason why there are some people in need in Turkey today?



Source: Life in Transition Survey (2006)

it – on the contrary. The opinion survey also finds that three quarters of Turkish people feel that success is due to effort, hard work, intelligence or skills.

9. Some divergences in social indicators, often identified with potential underlying inequities in societies, are indeed significant in Turkey today. While net secondary school enrolment rates have increased, as observed above, the gap between girls’ and boys’ completion rates remains significant, at 9 percentage points in 2006.¹¹ As prominently pointed out by the Education Reform Initiative (2009) and also emphasized later in this Report, girls’ learning achievement is at least equal to that of boys – so that different school attainment rates are often interpreted as representing underlying inequities.

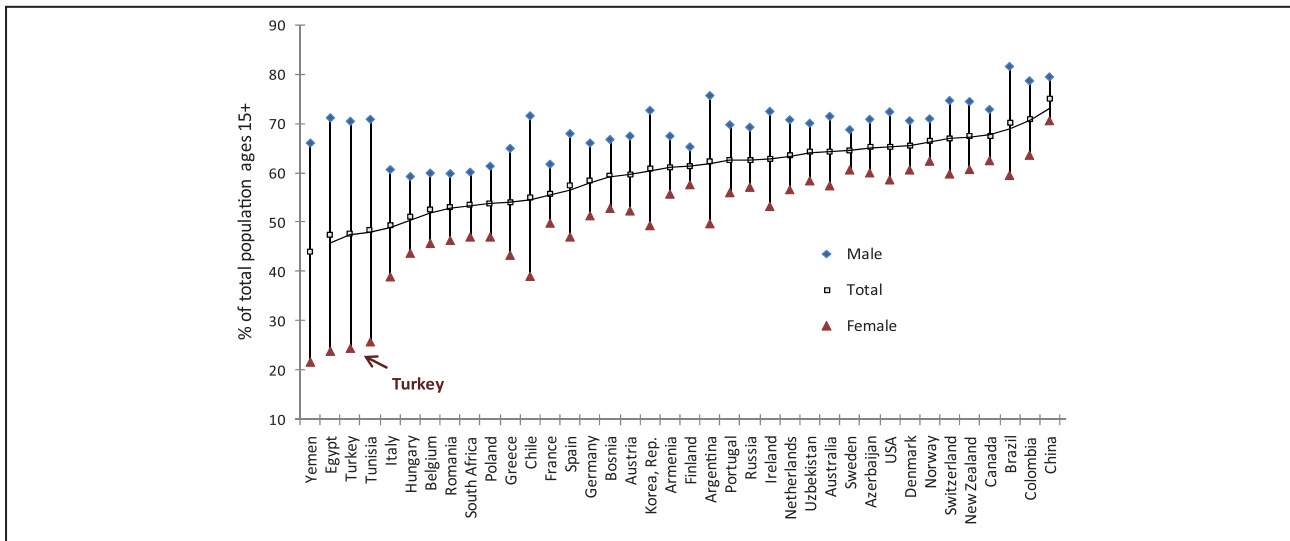
10. Similarly, the female labor force participation rate remains, with 25.5 percent in 2008, at very low levels. Graph 4 visualizes that the low level of the female participation rate as well as its large gap to the male rate stand in stark contrast to emerging market and OECD countries. A companion report from the World Bank¹² shows that educational attainment is strongly correlated with female labor force participation rates – so that the observed participation gap could, at least in part, be due to inequities materializing through the education system and beyond.

¹⁰ For descriptions and results of the surveys, see European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (2007) and Zaidi et al. (2009); Ferreira et al. (2009) discusses the Turkey results.

¹¹ World Development Indicators (2009). School completion rates, by gender, are only provided in the World Development Indicators until 2006. More recent data is available only for net enrollment (and not completion) rates for secondary school which are reported by MONE at 60.6 percent for males and 56.3 percent for females as of 2008.

¹² World Bank (2009b).

Graph 4: Labor Force Participation Rates, by Gender



Source: World Development Indicators, 2009