

# WOMEN'S LABOR IN THE GRIP OF MARKET, POLICY, & GENDER



**KIRKAYAK**  
K U L T U R



**MINISTRY OF  
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**kadav**  
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women's solidarity foundation

  
**ŞİMDİKİ KADINLAR**  
KARŞI LAZIMA VE DÜNYAMIZA GEREKİ

MUTFAK مطبخ



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# CONTENTS

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Acronyms</b>  | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>   | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>INTRODUCTION</b>  | <b>8</b>  |
| Women’s labor in the Turkish labor market in figures                 | 10        |
| Research Method  | 13        |
| <b>WOMEN’S LABOR IN THE GRIP OF MARKET, POLICY, AND SOCIAL NORMS</b> | <b>18</b> |
| Entry into paid employment   | 21        |
| Job... but what kind of a job?                                       | 24        |
| To continue working  | 24        |
| Labor, Gender, Politics, and the Market in Two Life Histories        | 30        |
| <b>LABOR, GENDER &amp; HOSTILITY</b>                                 | <b>38</b> |
| Labor and hostility  | 39        |
| Gender and hostility   | 41        |
| Hostile discourse of media and politicians                           | 44        |
| (Is) the solution to problem is more contact (?)                     | 46        |
| What should we do to live together?                                  | 50        |
| <b>CONCLUSION</b>  | <b>52</b> |
| <b>POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS</b>  | <b>57</b> |
| <b>REFERENCES</b>  | <b>61</b> |
| <b>ANNEX 1. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS</b>                                 | <b>67</b> |
| <b>ANNEX 2. FOCUS GROUP STUDY MATERIALS</b>                          | <b>69</b> |
| <b>Table of Charts</b>   |           |
| <b>Chart 1 Work Permits Given to Foreigners by Years and Gender</b>  | <b>13</b> |
| <b>Chart 2 Age distribution of participants</b>                      | <b>16</b> |
| <b>Chart 3 Marital status of the participants</b>                    | <b>16</b> |
| <b>Chart 4 Sectors of Participants</b>                               | <b>17</b> |
| <b>Chart 5 Insurance status of participants</b>                      | <b>17</b> |

# ACRONYMS

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| MoLSS    | Ministry of Labor and Social Security               |
| DISK     | Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey |
| Danida   | Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark              |
| ILO      | International Labour Organization                   |
| KADAV    | Women's Solidarity Foundation                       |
| SSI      | Social Security Institution                         |
| NGO      | Non-Governmental Organization                       |
| TURKSTAT | Turkish Statistical Institute                       |

## **PREFACE**

The study, which is the subject of this report, was designed and organized in cooperation with the Mutfak||Matbakh Workshop program of the Kirkayak Kültür, Women Now for Development and the Women's Solidarity Foundation. Women Now for Development is a feminist organization that aims to deepen and strengthen the role of women in shaping Syria's democratic future, and to respond to the humanitarian crisis in Syria and the Syrian refugee community in Turkey. The association works in four integrated areas: Protection, Empowerment, Participation and Advocacy. Women's Solidarity Foundation (KADAV) is a rights-based organization working with a feminist perspective. KADAV focuses on supporting the most vulnerable groups such as migrant, imprisoned, poor women and LGBTI+ individuals. The main focus of its work is to fight gender inequalities, the patriarchal system, violence and multiple discrimination in order to achieve an equal and democratic society. Kirkayak Kültür conducts rights-based activities in various fields to promote social cohesion in Gaziantep and its surrounding region. Its works on migration, culture, arts and social cohesion, as well as advocacy efforts for the participation of both communities, aims to create open spaces for refugees to protect and develop their cultural heritage.

This project, which seeks ways to unite the experiences and voices of women beyond their nationality or other connections, emerged from the combination of the experiences of these three organizations. We hope that this report will make at least a modest contribution to that goal.

The study was supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark. The importance of funding organizations cannot be denied in the efforts of non-governmental organizations to achieve the goal of establishing an equal and fair life together. We would like to express our thanks to Danida for their contribution.

We also would like to express our gratitude to our colleague translators Yasemin Göncüoğlu, Tamara Aboud and Amina Suveha, who played a key role in the realization of the fieldwork.

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Lastly, we would like to thank the women we met, talked to, listened to, and thought together during this study.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The objective of this report is to understand the determinants and impacts of Turkish and Syrian women's participation in paid work outside the home, focusing on gender and intergroup relations. This effort to understand is made from an analysis perspective that is generated at the intersection of macro policies, political and economic contexts and social gender regimes. One of the targets of the study is to reveal the determinants of women's paid employment outside the home and their decision on whether they will continue working or not. Another target is to comprehend the impact of Turkish and Syrian women's collaboration experiences on racism and xenophobia.

Within the framework of the research, 38 in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted, and six focus group meetings were held. While nearly 40% of the participants are in 26-35 age group and 27% are in 36-45 age group, 63% of the participants are married. Eighteen women worked in the textile sector, 18 served in the services sector and 7 managed their own business, 7 worked as cleaning workers and 5 were unemployed at the time of the interview.

Determinants of the paid employment and continuation of working outside the home are common for Turkish and Syrian women. Market conditions and gender regimes do not only establish the works and working conditions accessible by women, but also determine whether women will remain a member of the working life or not.

Working conditions and the gender regime are the most important determinants for remaining a member of the working life. In addition to working at low-paying and uninsured jobs, deeming home and children care the responsibility of solely women and the absence of public services to ease such burden result in women's working for as long as they have to, in the cases of both Turkish and Syrian women. Marriage, having children or economic distress become, therefore, the reasons for quitting work on the women's side.

Whereas jobs and working conditions of Turkish and Syrian women have commonalities, it is seen that education levels of Turkish women are lower than those of Syrian women, which demonstrate how refugees have to work at jobs that require less qualifications than they actually have.

The Temporary Protection regime for Syrian refugees create and maintain the informal employment conditions that make Syrians vulnerable to being exploited as the precarious labor force needed in the market.

Informal market conditions cause positioning Turkish and Syrian people as two separate groups in competition with each other to make a living. Finding a job and generating income within sectors where informal employment and exploitation are high, particularly like the textile sector, pave the way for conflicts and hostilities between Turkish people and Syrians.

There are substantial restrictions preventing self-reliance programs, which mainly focus on providing skills and professions, enabling labor force market accessible and encouraging entrepreneurship for both Turkish and Syrian people, from making a lasting effect on the living conditions of the target group, regardless of the market conditions.

Discourses and representations produced and extended by politicians and the media seem to occupy a significant place in the hostile and racist attitudes against Syrian refugees.

The research presents the limitations of the assumption that social contact is the key to cohabitation on the basis of equality, by reducing racism and hostility. Poverty and precarity, as well as competition and struggling to survive under the market conditions, restrain physical intimacy at workplace and neighborhood from turning into contact and empathy. It seems impossible that physical intimacy could evolve into social contact and social contact into cohabitation, without protective and supportive mechanisms and policies for both Turkish and Syrian people.





# INTRODUCTION



All kinds of activities, from humanitarian aid in the field of migration and asylum to international policy frameworks, are shaped based on the distinction between citizens and non-citizens. This ethnicity- and nation-state-centered distinction normalized the legal statuses as essential categories. The normalization of the discrepancies associated with the migration movement has of course permeated the social world where the actors of the migration field (researchers, civil society professionals, and volunteers, activists, etc.) socialize (Dahinden 2016:2210). This distinction, which assumes that the artificial but physical boundaries of states coincide with social, political, cultural, and economic boundaries at the same time, also contributes to reproducing the insider and outsider dilemma. The data and ultimately the knowledge produced by research built on the duality of migrants (1) and non-migrants greatly grays the transitions and similarities, - and creates representation of those as two mutually exclusionary categories. The paradigm built on this duality, assimilates social relations, values, identities, etc. in nation-state bond by putting them in "migration container" (Pries 2004: 29) and by emphasizing discrepancies and commonalities. The macro factors that shape them and cause their constant transformation remain, at best, as a faint background.

Almost all studies on migratory flows, migrants, and refugees in Turkey, as in the rest of the world, have been shaped on this distinction. The distinction made between Syrians and Turkish people, as used categories through homogenization, has been stigmatized by the same paradigm since the Syrians who were massively displaced due to the war started arriving in Turkey on April 29, 2011.

This study was carried out in a political and economic environment of intense political polarization and oppression, rising economic crisis and increasing poverty in Turkey. Synchronously, hate speech, discrimination, racism, and attacks against Syrian refugees are on the rise. In addition, we are in a process in which the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has deeply affected and injured all world societies. Under all these challenging circumstances, this research was conducted in the hopes of making at least a modest contribution to the search for ways to build a rights-based life together.

The present study was carried out while being aware that neither Turkish nor Syrians are homogeneous groups, and taking a position that rejects ethnic and nation-state-centered essentialized and naturalized (Dahinden 2016) categories... Such a position made it necessary to focus on factors such as

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(1) «Immigrant» is hereby used as an umbrella concept for human movements that cross national borders, regardless of legal status and the purpose of the migration movement.

gender, education, legal status, age, and the effects of structural policies. Within this framework, it was also possible to understand the factors that inevitably affect the capabilities and limits of individuals, without degrading them into an individual level and a narrow framework.

The aim of the research is to understand the participation of low-class Turkish and Syrian women in the paid labor force outside the home and its effects. It tries to achieve this aim by placing the context of today's Turkey, which we mentioned above, at the intersection of macro policies and gender regimes. The questions of the research are as follows:

- What are the ways in which women participate in working and leave the work?
- How does working affect women's lives?
- What are the causes and forms of discrimination against women in the workplace?
- Does the assumption that casual encounters and face-to-face communication increase empathy and reduce discrimination still hold true?

## Women's labor in the Turkish labor market in figures

### 1. Turkish Women

According to 2020 data, while the rate of participation in labor force in Turkey is 54.9% for the general population, this rate was calculated as 74.6% for men and 35% for women, who are the citizens of Turkey; the rate of those working actively was calculated as 47.5%, 65.2% and 29.7%, respectively <sup>(2)</sup> (TURKSTAT 2021a). However, the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey (DISK) reports claimed that the Household Labor Force data of TURKSTAT is insufficient and does not reflect reality, and in November 2020, "unemployment and job loss rate with the revised broad definition due to the effect of COVID-19 was 43% for women". (DISK 2021: 4) <sup>(3)</sup>. Although the rate of participation in labor force increases as the education level of women increases, the gap between women and men remains constant (MoLLS 2017:36); moreover, as of 2015, approximately six out of every ten long-term unemployed are women (ibid:40).

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(2) Calculations for the general population are made for the age group between 15-64.

(3) For its effects on the Turkish economy during the COVID-19 period, see. ILO (2020).

In addition to the dramatic difference in the rates of participation of women and men in labor force, the gender equality figures in the labor market show the scene of inequality within the working population. According to the World Economic Forum's 2021 Global Gender Gap Report, Turkey ranks 133rd among 156 countries in terms of gender equality and 150th in terms of participation in the economy and opportunities (WEF 2021). According to the joint research of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Office for Turkey and the Turkish Statistical Institute (TURKSTAT), the gender wage gap in Turkey is calculated as 15.6% (4), while the gender wage gap (11.5%) in formal employment (i.e. workers with social security, formal sector) is much lower than informal workers without social security (informal sector, 24.2%)” (ILO 2020: 11).

Although the informal sector has shrunk over the years in Turkey, it is still quite large: while the informal employment rate was 30.59% in 2020, it was calculated as 83.46% in the agricultural sector and 19.30% in the non-agricultural sector (SSI, no date) (5). In the period of November 2019-November 2020, when the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were most intense, the rate of women working informally “decreased by 5.8 points from 41.3 percent to 35.5 percent”; thus, “informal female employment has decreased by 20 percent in the last year” (DISK 2021: 6).

## 2. Migrant women's labor

Since the 1990s, Turkey has been a country of destination for migratory flows due to the disintegration of the Soviet Union, political and economic turmoils in the Middle Eastern countries, and a transit country due to the migratory flows from the Middle East, Asian and African countries to the West (içduygu 2006). Although the aims, final target destinations, and legal status of immigrants are very diverse, they get into the labor market in order to earn their living while they are in Turkey.

Considering the official statistics in Turkey, the number of foreigners who have obtained a work permit has increased continuously since 2003. While the number of foreigners who obtained a work permit was 855 in 2003, this figure reached 145,232 in 2019 (MoLSS 2009; 2019).

On the other hand, according to the data of ILO Office for Turkey (2017),

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(4) The gender-based gap has been reported to increase with age. While this figure is low (3.8%) at the beginning of working life, it rises significantly (25.9%) in the 40s and continues to rise later in older ages (ILO 2020: 10).

(5) It has been evaluated that the COVID-19 pandemic and the policies implemented in the fight against the pandemic in 2020 have a negative effect on informal employment. See. Gürsel, Uysal and Şahin (2021).

Turkey is the country with the lowest labor force participation rate of immigrants (50.2%) (2020:31). It is also shown in the same study that almost half of the immigrants, 46% in total, work under informal employment conditions. This was 52.3% for men and 31.8% for women (2020:31). Another striking data is that informality among the active labor force is higher among immigrant workers than citizens: only 17.2 percent of non-migrant wage workers in Turkey work in the informal economy, while approximately 43.1 percent of migrant wage workers are unregistered. (ibid. 2020:32).

The arrival of Syrians after 2011 has had significant effects on the labor market. According to the study of ILO (2019), 930 thousand of the 2 million working-age Syrian refugees are working, and 97% of them are employed informally. The studies of Ceritoglu et al. (2017) and Del Carpio and Wagner (2015) put forward that workers from Turkey, especially those who work informally, with low education and with low skills, are adversely affected by migration, however, women among the informal employees are affected the worst. With the entry of Syrians into the informal labor market, Turkish men have been unemployed, while women have been completely excluded from the labor market (Ceritoğlu et al. 2017:28). On the other hand, studies showing that the decrease in low-skilled employment due to this flow is very small and the negative effects of migration on domestic workers are exaggerated, suggesting that there is a complementarity rather than substitution between Syrian refugees and Turkish employment, and that the Turkish economy is positively affected by the arrival of Syrian refugees (Caro 2020; Tanrikulu 2020; Cengiz and Tekgüç 2021).

According to the 2019 labor force data, while the number of migrant women that are granted a work permit in Turkey is 50,690; it is seen that more than half of them are between the ages of 20-34 and nearly half of them have high school education. While the number of work permits given to Syrians is 63,789, it is seen that only 4,343 of them are given to women. In Gaziantep, one of the cities where this study was carried out, only 697 of the 6,127 people who were granted work permits were women; in Istanbul, approximately one-third of 60,583 permits, 18,580 were given to women (MoLSS 2019).

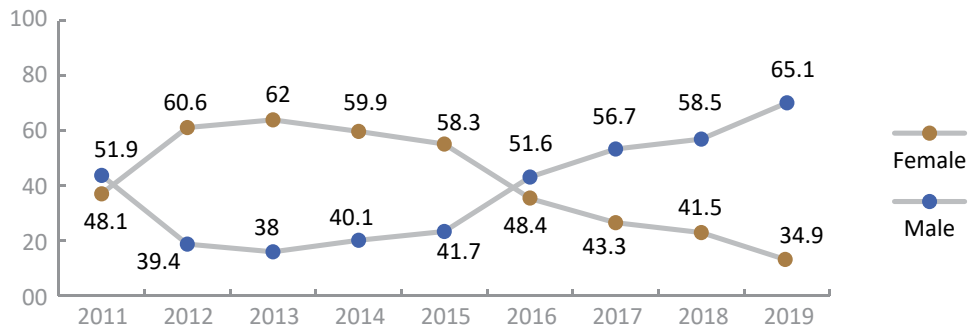


Chart 1 Proportional distribution of work permits granted to foreigners by year and gender

Source: MoLSS, 2019.

This report consists of four parts. In the first part, the aim of the research, its questions, method, and the profile of the participants were addressed. The section titled *“The Women’s Labor in the Grip of Market, Policies, and Social Norms”* focuses on the determinants of women’s participation and retention in the paid labor force. This section discusses women’s positionalities created by macro factors beyond women’s nationality ties, the cultural characteristics attributed to these ties, and women’s individual characteristics. The section titled *Labor, Gender and Hostility* addresses the processes that dissolve the ground of living together and increase racism. The potential and limitations of getting to know and living together are discussed in this section. In the conclusion part, there are *“Policy Recommendations”* developed on the basis of the findings of the research, focusing on the issues of living together on the basis of gender and rights.

## Research Method

This study was carried out in Istanbul and Gaziantep using qualitative research techniques. The cities were selected by the urban context in which Syrians and Turkish people work and live together. These are the two cities where the Syrians under temporary protection settled in the largest number. In addition the cities selected due to their economic and social features. Gaziantep has historically been one of Turkey’s major commercial and industrial centers and has historically been a city of migration. Domestic migratory flows from the 1950s (Uçar 2020) have also brought the labor source that provides its economic growth as well. Its economy is largely based on the textile, food, chemical-plastics and machinery-metal sectors. Istanbul also has been a city of migration. The city has a large and diverse economy which is connected to the industrial production in neighboring cities. It is also on the root of

migratory flows from East/South to West/North which leads the city to be a migrant hub.

All of the interviews were conducted by a female researcher. Interviews with Syrian women were conducted with the help of two different translators in Istanbul and Gaziantep.

All of the interviews were conducted by a female researcher. Interviews with Syrian women were conducted with the help of two different translators in Istanbul and Gaziantep. Several methods were used to overcome the ethical and methodological problems that may arise in the interviews conducted through the translator: first, the fact that the translators were women who immigrated from Syria facilitated the transfer of the dialogues about Syria and the context of migration and the culture- and context-specific expressions and information conveyed in the dialogues to the researcher. Secondly, the deficiencies and errors that may arise from the transmission through translation were tried to be eliminated through transcriptions of the interviews made by the translators and cross checked. The transcription of interviews in Turkish were made by the researcher.

This research aimed to understand the dynamics and relationships that affect the lives of Turkish and Syrian women, and therefore, it was not intended to be representative or generalized when designing the research. Accordingly qualitative research methodology was employed. Considering the size and diversity of the population of Turkish and Syrian women, as well as the small scope and methodology of the study, it should be noted that the research findings do not claim to be generalizing or representative. We paid attention to two criteria while forming the sample: first, there were participants from the textile industry as a business line where Turkish and Syrian women can work together indoors. The textile sector was also preferred because of the intense female labor. Secondly, we paid attention to the participants to be working in lines of business where social interaction is high, apart from their colleagues, during the execution of the work. Of course, these criteria also formed the class character of the findings of this study. We reached the women we interviewed through the networks of NGOs, translators, and the researcher.

Interviews were recorded with a voice recorder if the women interviewed allowed it; in cases where permission was not given, the researcher took notes during the interview and then transcribed them into text. Although this research was organized by civil society organizations working with immigrant and non-migrant women, no interviews were conducted at these organizations' venues, except for one, in order to minimize the spatial impact. The interview held at the venue of one of the organizations that organized

the research, was at the request of the interviewee. Interviews were held in women's homes and in public spaces. Although we tried to conduct the interviews with the women alone as much as possible, in some cases it was not possible for the women to leave the physical space; family members or colleagues of the interviewee were also present. In such cases, we did not insist on interviewing alone, since the houses or workplaces do not have the space to separate women to interview since such an effort may cause other concerns.

We carried out the focus group meetings at the venues of these organizations, except for one, that was held in a municipality-owned hall close to the places where women work. The hall was not in an institutional building like the town hall; it was a completely detached meeting room. No visual recordings were made during the interviews. The analysis of the interviews was carried out by the researcher.

Within the scope of the study, field visits were made in both cities, as well as in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. In addition to the two meetings held at the association working in the field of humanitarian aid in an area with a high Syrian population in Istanbul, we held informal meetings with employers and employees during the field visit. These interviews were not recorded and were not subject to analysis. These interviews were included in the findings section of the report, referred as informal interviews.

Within the framework of the fieldwork, in-depth interviews were conducted with 38 women in total. Two of these interviews were not subject to analysis because the quality of the interview was not suitable and one of them did not fit into the sample criteria. Therefore, 36 interviews with 16 Syrian and 20 Turkish women were included in the analysis. During the interviews, where it was not possible to interview with women alone, family and friends also talked about their own experiences. These contributions were not ignored in the writing of the report. The persons referenced in the text have been added to the list of participants in Annex 1 (6).

Focus group meetings were planned as six meetings attended by seven women each. The most important obstacles we faced were not being able to persuade the participants to come to places where they had not been before and far from where they lived and creating a calendar that the participants would mutually agree. In order to increase the participation, the taxi fee of those who came to the focus group meeting was covered. Ultimately, three meetings were carried out in each city (two with Syrian participants and one with Turkish participants) with the participation of 12 Turkish and 18

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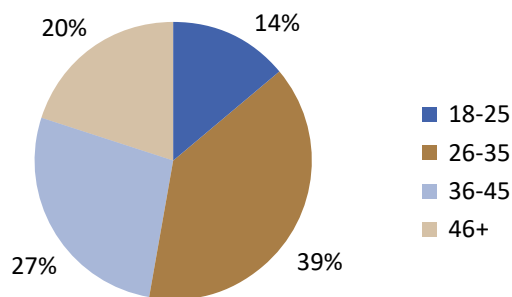
(6) The real names of the women interviewed were not used in the report.

Syrian refugee women. The profiles and the number of participants in each meeting can be seen in Appendix 1.

In focus group studies, we focused on only one of the aims of the research: hostility and racism. As a focus group technique, we learned about the experiences and ideas of the participants through story completion activities instead of asking direct questions about the topic. The activities can be seen in Appendix 2. This technique was used for the participants to feel more comfortable and understand their perspectives beyond their personal experiences. Finally, the participants shared their own stories, lives, ideas, and feelings related to the topic, not just talked about distant fictitious stories.

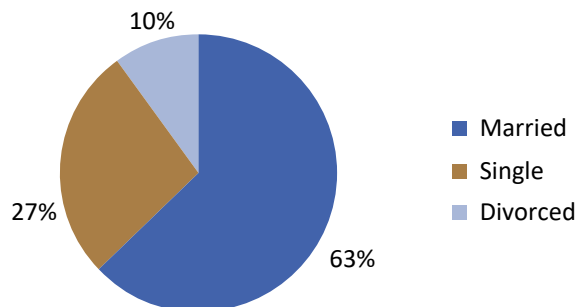
### Characteristics of the interviewees

The charts below include those who participated in the interviews and focus group discussions.



*Chart 2 Age distribution of participants*

As seen in the chart, there are no participants under the age of 18. Although the legal working age starts at 15, they have been excluded the scope due to the ethical and technical problems of interviewing children and the effects it may have on the participants.



*Chart 3 Marital status of the participants*



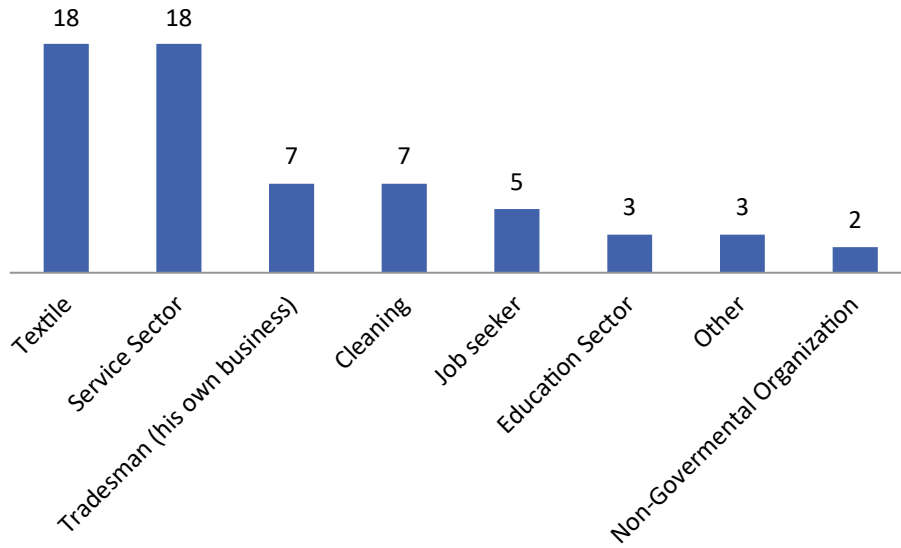


Chart 4 Sectors of Participants

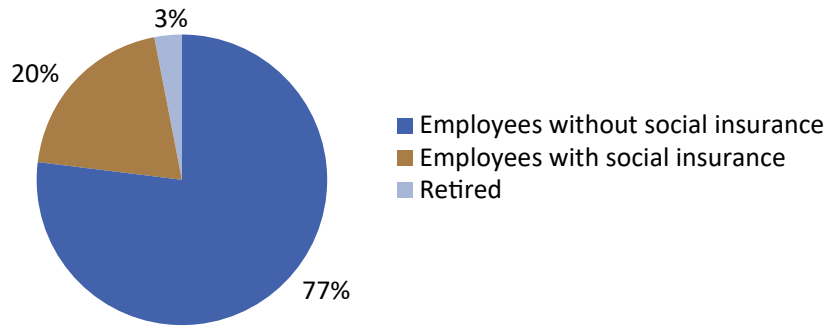
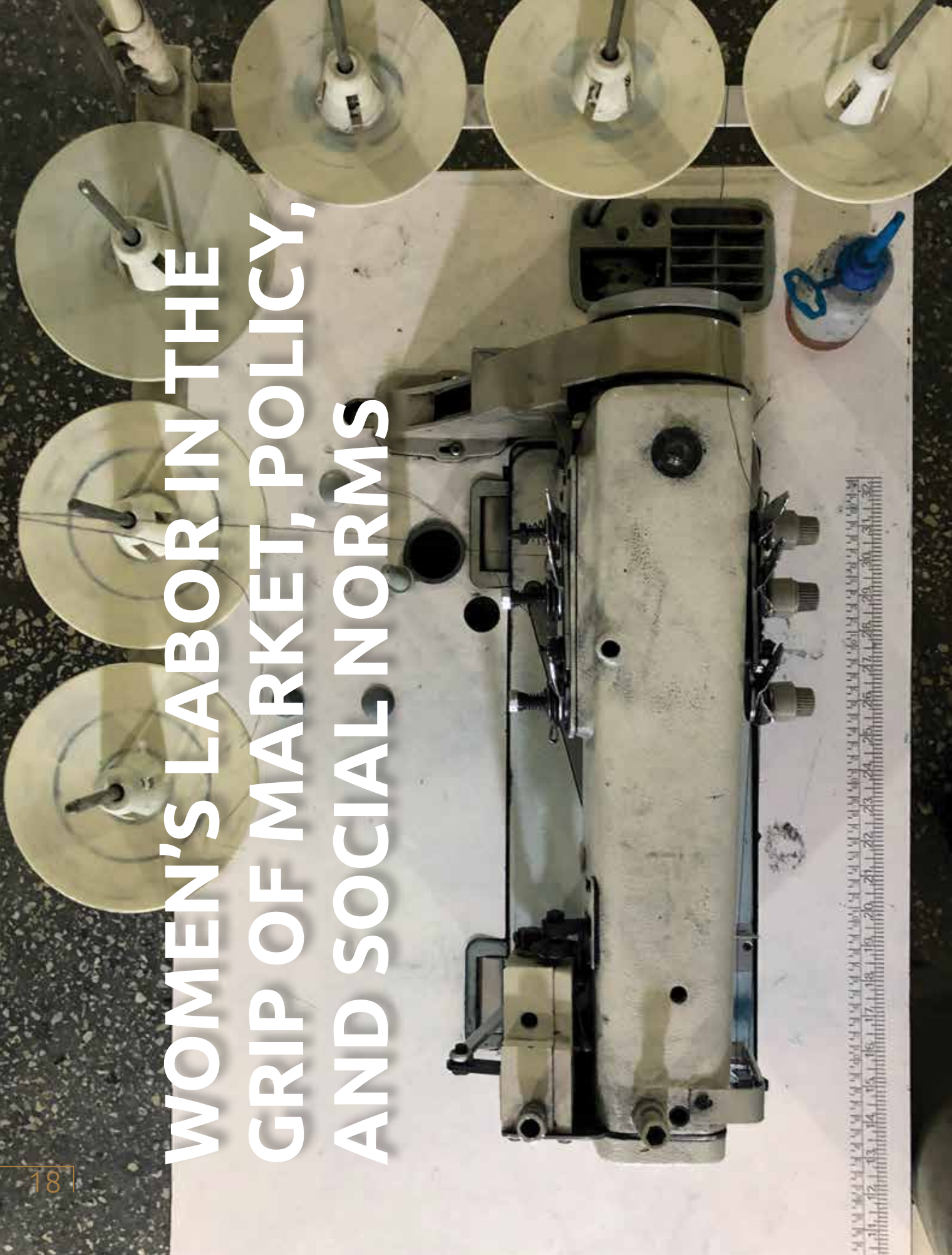


Chart 5 Insurance status of participants (7)

All of the insured employees and retired participants were Turkish women.

(7) This chart includes only in depth interview participants. Two of the participants are not represented in the chart as they work informally.

# WOMEN'S LABOR IN THE GRIP OF MARKET, POLICY, AND SOCIAL NORMS



Understanding the determinants of women's participation in paid work outside the home requires looking at macro and structural factors rather than individual-based explanations for Syrian refugee women, as is the case with different women's groups around the world. First of all, in pre-war Syria, the gender regime, the patriarchal social structure and the resulting unequal distribution of gender roles in domestic responsibilities and gender roles had a significant impact on women's participation in the workforce. (Erol et al. 2017; Öztürk, Serin & Altınöz, 2019; Wake & Barbelet, 2020). Indeed, in addition, the fact that paid work outside the home is not considered appropriate for women due to the rules and values of the religion of Islam, which is intertwined with the patriarchal social structure, is one of the factors explaining the low employment rate of Syrian women both before and after displacement. However, according to Moghadam (2003), the differences in the rights of women and men, low representation of women in political structures, and limited access to paid employment are seen in all Middle Eastern countries due to excessive gender stratification and discrimination. Moghadam underlines that it is necessary to consider the region's predominantly oil-based economy in addition to socio-cultural factors: The highly capital-intensive and masculine nature of oil production prevented the mass participation of women in the labor force for most of the twentieth century (2003:71). The high income sustained through the oil-based economy has also ensured the continuation of the traditional family model, in which the men are the breadwinner, the head of the family (İlkkaracan 2012: 4).

During the 1970s and 1980s, 'state feminism' in Syria continued to place the primary task of maintaining the traditional roles as mothers and wives on women while expanding the opportunities for educated women to work in the public sector (Gissi 2020: 308). The continuous increase in the education level and female labor force participation rates in Syria, the ratification of the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW) in 2003, and the regulation of discrimination against women in the penal code have not broken the ground for women to live as equal and free citizens (Kelly & Breslin, 2010). State feminism has increased patriarchy and women's oppression, as well as being a mechanism to hide the oppression of women (Abu-Assad 2017:17). In addition to the fact that spouses could legally prohibit women from working and male members of the family had the final say in working out of home, women could delegate decision-making on everyday matters to men for "family pressure and a lack of confidence or expertise" (Kelly & Breslin 2010:471). Moreover, the state could take a position that contradicts modernization ideals in times of economic and

political distress: In times of economic recession and population growth put pressure on the labor market, it strengthened the perspective that women's primary duty is the home and family, and intensified the discourse to detract women from employment. Moreover, when the regime experienced a crisis of political legitimacy, it was compelled to show tolerance to the Islamic revival and accept reconsideration of the concept of women's responsibilities (Gissi 2020: 309).

While Turkey is similar to the Middle East countries to some extent with its religious and traditional values and social structure, it differs from them because its economic resources are not based on oil and gas. While the modernist ideal, maintained since the founding of the country, encouraged women's participation in the public sphere, the man remained the head of the family and the breadwinner, and the woman the person responsible for the order of the house until the change in the Civil Code in 2003. While women's labor force participation was around 70% in the 1970s, this rate had fallen below 30% by the 2000s with the great shrinking in the agricultural sector, where women were predominantly employed (Aydın 2010); economic transformation and urbanization had different effects on men and women, and women had to "voluntarily" withdraw from the economy (Ecevit 2003:73). In other words, while the withdrawal of men from non-agricultural employment could be partially compensated by the newly created employment opportunities in cities and industry, this compensation did not occur for women. In addition, the adoption of export-based industrialization after 1980, small-scale service provision and manufacturing, which were previously offered by the informal sector, led to the expansion of the informal sector and informal employment practices through subcontracting and contract manufacturing. (Toksöz & Memiş 2020:45). İlkkaracan (2012), in her study emphasizing the interactions between patriarchy and capitalist growth and their gender-based results, focuses on the consequences for women of the combination of import-substituting industrialization and export-based industrialization, which strengthens the patriarchal family. Accordingly, the creation of an exclusionary institutional framework in women's employment, poor working conditions that did not support the employment of low-educated and unqualified women, caused women to prefer to stick to the patriarchal contract in order to protect their living standards (2012: 30). In other words, in the face of poor working conditions and low-paying jobs, women adhered and contributed to the strengthening of traditional gender relations. Thereupon it is possible to say that economic and political gender inequality as mechanisms that support each other is a vicious circle that leads to the continuity of a negative trend in gender inequality. (İlkkaracan 2019:205).

As it is seen, regardless of the political economy both in Turkey and Syria, patriarchy in women's participation in the paid labor force out of home carries the risk of being degraded to an obstacle maintained only by social relations. Moreover, such an interpretation can lead to the essentialization of refugee women under the influence of the gender regime of pre-displacement. However, both the statistical data and the analysis of gender regimes show that Turkish and Syrian women have commonalities. To put it differently, patriarchy in the private and public spheres (Walby 1990; Das 2017) are intertwined mechanisms in both countries. The findings we obtained from the interviews we conducted within the scope of the fieldwork also support this intertwining.

## ■ Entry into paid employment

The literature on Syrian refugee women's entry into paid labor shows that they start to work out of home when they had to because the male members of the family could not earn enough for the living of the household (Culcasi 2019; Şahin Mencütek & Nashwan 2020; Körükmez, Karakılıç & Daniş 2020). Studies show that exigency is an important factor in the employment of Turkish women with low education levels (Ünlütürk-Ulutaş & Durusoy-Öztepe 2021) in addition the studies reporting motivations such as personal satisfaction and gaining income and autonomy (İlkkaracan, 2012). In this research, we also aimed at understanding the reasons why Turkish and Syrian women entered out-of-home employment.

Özlem, 37, with whom we interviewed in Istanbul, started to look for a paid job out of home for the first time, after breaking up with her husband with whom she was married for 16 years, to earn a living with her two children. On the other hand, 31-year-old Saime started working after immigrating to Istanbul:

*First, I started working to support my father, then I worked to support my husband. (Saime, 31)*

Rama, 42 years old, also separated from her husband after coming to Turkey and lives with three of her four children. Rama, who lived in Aleppo before the displacement, has been working as cleaning lady for seven years since their arrival in Istanbul.

*When we arrived, we didn't have money to live on or to rent a house, so I had to work. Both he [her husband] and I worked, because when we got out of the war, we had nothing left. (Rama, 42)*

Among the Turkish women we interviewed, the reasons and ways of younger ones to start working differ. 18-year-old Özge, who lives in Gaziantep, started working because she wanted to support her family economically in addition to her getting “bored of sitting at home” after she could not get into high school due to not getting enough score in the high school entrance exams. Çiğdem, who has been working at a hairdresser since the age of 14 and is now 22 years old, explained how she started working with the following words:

• *My mother wanted to practice this profession a lot, but since we, her*  
 • *children, were too young, she could not practice it...both [for this reason]*  
 • *and for the fact that she wanted me to have a profession, [I started*  
 • *working at a hairdresser] because there is no profession that a woman can*  
 • *do without having an education. (Çiğdem, 22)*

Ayfer is 48 years old, married at the age of 15, and has three children. She could not work until the age of 40 despite all the poverty and difficulties they experienced due to the obstruction of her husband and her husband's family. Let alone work, she was not allowed to get out of the house. When one of her daughters passed the university exam and could not go to university due to financial shortcomings, she did not listen to her husband and family and started working in a house where she nursed for an old person and do the ironing. With the support of the family she worked for, she started working in a kindergarten of a public institution.

Despite the fact that all of the Turkish women we interviewed as part of the fieldwork were low educated and were working in precarious jobs, the majority of Syrian women even if they had a university education were working in similar jobs. The problems experienced in transferring skills and qualifications to the country of immigration (Sert 2016) seem to be the same for Syrian refugee women as well.

Teaching was one of the professions considered suitable for women in Syria. Four women (Waad, 28; Kinem, 45; Sana, 49; Manar, 45) we interviewed in-depth and one of the focus group participants in Gaziantep (Takiya, 34) worked as teachers in Syria. Four of the women, who could not find the opportunity to have an insured job after coming to Turkey, were able to teach through private lessons and civil society initiatives. Only one of these women could continue to teach. Two of them are unemployed and one of them was able to establish a business where she sells seasonal products with the capital she had received through a micro-credit program. Wadd (28), who came to Turkey a year ago, has not yet found a job in her field of expertise and works in the packaging department of a garment workshop.

Starting to work out of home is not a shocking experience for Turkish women as it is for Syrian refugee women who have not worked before. Hanifa, in her 50s, who lived in rural Homs, Syria, recalls what her daughters, who were children at the time, went through when they started working:

*I had a hard time at first, my blood dried up until my daughter returned home on the first day of her work. In the first days, her father ferried her around. It went on like this until our hearts took courage. Then we somehow got used to it. (Hanifa, in her 50s)*

It is understood that gender roles and expectations are important and decisive for both groups of women to start working. In the focus group study conducted with Turkish women, we asked questions about the fictitious figure Emine starting to work. According to the story, which is completely fictional: *Emine wants to work due to economic difficulties and her husband's insufficient income, but her husband does not allow her to work. Should Emine insist on working?*

In the focus group meeting held in Gaziantep, the women told based on their own experiences that Emine would have to convince not only her husband, but also her husband's family due to the social structure of Gaziantep, but she had to insist, and they did so. In the focus group meeting held in Istanbul, almost all women envisioned Emine as someone with a life similar to their own. Habibe, 48 years old and divorced, was among the participants and shared her own story:

*For example, my ex-husband did not allow me to work, we did not have anything financially... I would sit at home all day... For example, I really wanted to work. What [my husband] keeps telling me is "Are you going to be better than me?" Will you earn more than me?" Before I got married, I was working as an assistant accounting officer, and he made me leave my job as soon as we got engaged. I said "OK, so much the better, I could stay at home". He finally said "Ok, you can work". I started working, but he had a condition: You will never neglect your home, you will not neglect your husband. You will not miss the beating time, you will not miss the work hours, you will always please your husband, the voice will not be raised, no one will realize that you earn more than him. (Habibe, 48)*

After that we asked the participants following question: *Emine's friend tells that her children's future is more important. Her husband says it is more important to take care of the children at home. Which one should she listen to?* Participants of the focus group in Gaziantep answered that she should "listen to her husband" or "convince him" in order to prevent future problems. The

participants in Istanbul, on the other hand, said, from their own experiences, that even though there would be many obstacles and difficulties in front of them and would probably lead to divorce, Emine should do what she wants, not her spouse.

## Job... but what kind of a job?

30-year-old Maha, who lives in Gaziantep, studied engineering in Syria, however could practice her job neither in Syria nor in Turkey.

*My family did not allow me to work. I mean, I am an engineering institute graduate, but they saw it as a shame to work with men in an engineering office. But I worked as a teacher because I like to work and I want to have my own income. It was the most suitable profession for me in Syria, so when I worked in the workshop, the workers there were all women, and I was stubborn so they let me work. (Maha, 30)*

Maha is now doing photography with her husband. Before she got married, she could not do every job offered for security reasons, and her mother accompanied her to every job she did. The distinction between suitable occupations and unsuitable occupations for women is a common norm among Turkish people as well as Syrians. 23-year-old Ayşenur sets an example to this.

Ayşenur, like her siblings, started working at an early age after immigrating from Ağrı to Istanbul and has been working as a stallholder with her father and brothers since she was 12 years old. While women who own a market stall or work at the market booth in the neighborhood markets usually sell underwear and household items, Ayşenur sells vegetables. Although Ayşenur explains that both her acquaintances and the customers were surprised because she was doing a job “not suitable for women”, she says that she would not choose another job because she is “safe” with her father and siblings despite the physical fatigue of the job.

## To continue working

The duration and conditions of the working life of women who enter paid employment are closely related to work conditions and home-work balance. More than half of the women we interviewed were employed without social security. Those who work with social security were all Turkish women who work in non-governmental organizations and medium-large-sized companies or started their own businesses. It is known that precarity, long working hours, abuse, and unhealthy working conditions are common for women who have been “cheap, flexible and reliable/loyal labor force for the industry”



(Dedeoğlu 2010:266). Similarly, Syrian refugee women have to work under conditions such as low wages, long working hours, poor physical conditions, and discrimination (Erol et al. 2017; UN Women 2018; Canefe 2018). They are also adversely affected by the regulations and restrictions imposed by the Temporary Protection status regarding work permits (Yılmaz, Karatepe & Tören 2019; Tören 2018). For women working in the informal sector, working is not only exhausting physically and mentally, but also means doing jobs where they currently earn their living but do not provide future protection. As Davis (2007) argues, the informal sector, which lacks legal barriers to entry and does not require much skill and capital, was the only solution for many. This situation affects women's attitudes and behaviors about work and continuing to work.

Among the women with whom we interviewed, those working in the garment industry stated that they do not want to continue working at least in the garment industry regardless of whether they work with or without social security.

Aytül, 52, who is an employee with social security in a medium-sized workshop in Istanbul and has two children, introduced herself by saying "My husband works in the village, and I get reprimanded here." During the interview, four more colleagues of hers wanted to join us. All five women (8) complained of long working hours, fast-track work due to having to do a certain number of items, and dust. All of the women we interviewed both in Istanbul and Gaziantep, were working in contract manufacturing workshops. These workshops are able to exist in the market under the conditions of fast-track production and low cost within the fierce competition in the global ready-made clothing sector (Dedeoğlu 2010b, Daniş 2016) and this means employment in precarious and challenging conditions for employees.

••• *For God's sake, what would I do here if I didn't need it right now? Why would I come [to work]? (Aytül 52)*

Turkish women stated that even if they didn't want to, they were compelled to work in garment industry, due to the physical proximity of the workshops they work in, the availability of the job (or lack of access to other jobs) and their experience.

••• *Well, we don't have a profession, what are we going to do after this age! Just the textile. (Kerime, 53)*

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(8) Saime,31; Aytül, 52; Songül, 42; Kerime, 53; Berivan, 26.

One of the children of Güldane, who is 41 years old and has 4 children and works on a windowless basement floor in Istanbul, is still a baby. Güldane, whose husband is unemployed, was a piece-worker at home before and could earn 300 Turkish Liras per month. Since her little daughter could not go to school and stayed at home due to COVID-19, and took care of the baby, she has been able to work full time for 170 Liras a day for seven months. The fact that the education will be conducted face to face in the 2021-2022 academic year means that Güldane can work part-time. The proximity of the workplace is essential for her to be able to simultaneously do the childcare and support the household.

26-year-old Farah is a student at a university outside of Istanbul but worked in a textile workshop before starting university and still works during the summer holidays. She started working six months after her arrival in Istanbul. After working in the first workshop for two years, when her employer went bankrupt and he started not paying her wages, she left for working in another workshop recommended by her acquaintances as “having good environment”. Farah describes her ‘good environment’ as:

*There is obviously discrimination in some places, that is, they give you the difficult work and take the easy one for themselves, or they constantly put pressure on you... It's better for me to have more female workers [in the workshop]... I can't be comfortable if there are men around... just because I get uncomfortable [men would bother me]. (Farah, 26)*

Especially small-scale garment workshops pay their workers weekly, daily, or per piece of work. An employer we interviewed in Istanbul stated that hourly working is becoming more common now. The decline in wages from monthly to hourly gives clues about the structure of the textile industry: On the one hand, workshops cannot be sure of what type and amount of work will come from large companies. On the other hand, this situation traps the workers under increasingly flexible and unprotected working conditions. In the hourly or piecework regime, the amount of work done in a certain period of time becomes the main factor determining the income for both the employer and the worker. For this reason, it can be a matter of dispute and tension to whom the work described as “easy work”, that is, the work that does not require much effort to sew and takes shorter time is given in the workshops.

It should be noted that women are relatively rare among those working in workshops located outside the organized industrial zone, especially in Gaziantep. Child labor (Dayıoğlu-Tayfur, Kırdar & Koç 2021), which is already widespread in the informal sector, seems to have increased with the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the Turkish employees we spoke with during

our field visits stated that the children set back with the opening of the schools, which has put the workshops in a difficult position. Nevertheless, in all the workshops we visited or saw inside from the street, almost more than half of the workers were children. It is possible that the gap created by the withdrawal of at least some of the working children will be filled by women's labor.

The working lives of women who do not have a choice other than low-paid, exhausting and precarious jobs, in other words, women who cannot find a 'decent work', are also interrupted or short. The duration of working life was calculated as 19.1 years for women and 39.0 years for men in 2019 (TURKSTAT 2021b). This figure can be even lower in the informal sector. Women tend to quit their jobs when the economic distress is over. Although some of the women we interviewed emphasized the positive and empowering aspects of working, it is seen that the tendency to quit their job is higher when they are economically stable. Quitting job is possible by having children grow up and work, getting out of debt, or having a "good marriage". Despite working in a job with social security, 26-year-old Berivan says:

*I would work if I have to, but I'm not gonna lie, I wouldn't work if I didn't [have to]. I have to marry a rich man first [laughs]. (Berivan, 26)*

Fahriye is doing the job of separating the fibers by color on the ground floor of a building under construction opposite their house for a workshop with her daughters and neighbors in Gaziantep. In this job, each woman works eight hours a day, six days a week, and earns 300 Turkish Liras per week. She expressed another aspect of quitting job for marriage: She says that her twin daughters, who are about to turn 18, can save their lives only by making a good marriage. She was disappointed that one of her own sons and Melek's daughter, with whom they were working, could not find a job even though they were university graduates. For this reason, she sees 'lucky marriage' as the only way for her primary school graduate daughters to live without working and have a good life. While talking about working conditions and insurance, one of the twins (17) asked us what insurance was for. When we talked about the right to and possibility of health and retirement, it was clear that she didn't find it convincing or attractive.

Similarly, Hanifa, who has one daughter who worked in a garment workshop before and quit her job when she got married, and two daughters under the age of 18 still working in a garment workshop, says that women should not work after marriage. Her daughter Muna, who quit her job after getting married as well, explained her reason for quitting with words reminding the speed and exploitation cycle of the textile industry:

*I was exhausted; people get exhausted after working for 4-5 years. Even if it is difficult to quit the job, [people] do it due to exhaustion. (Muna, in her 20s)*

One of the Turkish participants of focus group meeting in Gaziantep, Güler, who does house cleaning, expressed her thoughts alike for not only staying in working life but also for education:

*I had my daughters educated first, but I don't want to have others educated because they can't find a job. I spent so much money, but they are unemployed. Two of them graduated from university, but they do not have a job. Previously, I didn't want them to be like me, I said that I would have them educated. In fact, I started working so that they could have education, I've work as a cleaning lady for 15 years,...Well, if they don't go to school, then they will get married... Also, we can call it fate, destiny. My other daughter didn't go to university, so I got her married. She dropped out of high school and got married. She is luckier than the other one who got educated. Her husband has a job as well as a very good house. Well, she's better, more comfortable. (Güler, 47)*

The experiences of Turkish and Syrian women working in two separate women's cooperatives in Istanbul show that relatively good conditions and jobs with social security positively affect women's tendency to stay in working life.

Afa, 32, married with four children, has never worked before. After coming to Turkey, she worked at her friend's hairdresser without insurance to learn the job. Afa says that hairdressing salons charge apprentices who want to learn the job and that her friend did not charge to do her a favor. Afa, who could not take care of her children while working from 8:00 am to 7:00 pm, constantly argued with her husband because she was working. For this reason, the cooperative, where she can arrange her work hours according to the school hours of her children and allows her to work several days a week, made it possible for her to work. The fact that the cooperative was close to her home and that she found the working environment suitable for her made her feel peaceful and well. Halise (29), who works once a week in the same cooperative, started to work due to financial difficulties despite her husband's objections. Since the cooperative is able to provide nursery services to women with children, Halise can feel that her children are safe while she is working. A tension line is eliminated as working hours allow her to return home before her husband returns from work. The flexibility and the nursery, which allows responsibilities and problems related to home, spouse and children to be eased and solved, brings to women feelings of pleasure, self-development and confidence.

*Working makes us feel stronger. We find our strength and we feel that we can take care of our home...I socialized more...before work, I was a very weak woman, and I was afraid of the future. Now, I feel like I can do anything. (Afa, 32)*

*I say that income is important for me here, but actually it's about learning and self-development. My biggest goal right now is to develop and improve myself. I can achieve that too here. (Halise, 29)*

Halise wants to work in professional companies in her field in the future. However, she plans to work a few days a week, as she does now, until her children grow up, as her husband object her to work otherwise. She hopes her husband will not prevent her when the children grow up.

Although most of the women want to meet the needs of their children, raise them in better conditions, and prepare their future, they cannot work because they cannot get support for childcare. The lack of kindergartens and other public services related to childcare and patriarchal ideology appear as barriers to women's access to work and public space (Gündüz-Hoşgör & Smits 2008:110; Ilkcaracan 2012).

36-year-old Syrian Katerina studied accounting and commerce in Syria and worked in the public sector on a contractual basis for three months. Since she came to Turkey, she has not been able to work because she did not have an identity card. She could get a job in the kitchen of a public institution which is provided within the scope of the job acquisition program after obtaining her identity card. Katerina, who has a child that just started primary school, leaves the house at seven in the morning and returns home at seven in the evening, and during this time she is stressed because she has to leave her daughter at home alone. Sometimes she takes her daughter to work with her, but this is not a solution either, as the work is very busy, and her daughter will now start face-to-face education. That's why she says she's going to quit this job where she works insured and earns minimum wage.

25-year-old Ola, who is married, works as a cleaner and serves tea and coffee in a public institution under a contract within the scope of a similar program. Since Ola has no children, it is easier for her to work.

*Working in a public institution is better than working in any workshop. I mean, the working hours are shorter, you have insurance, so if something bad happens to you, it won't cause much problem for you. It is also more guaranteed. (Ola, 25)*

## Labor, Gender, Politics, and the Market in Two Life Histories

### Zöhre

41-years-old Zöhre was born in a village of Gaziantep, got married 18 years ago and started to live in the city center. Since then, she has been sharing an Antep house with her husband's parents: a courtyard at the entrance, a 1+1 living space on the upper floor, which is accessed by stairs, and also separated by a courtyard in the middle. She lives here with her three children who are at school age. The neighborhood they live in has become a place where Syrian refugees have settled mostly. She could not graduate from primary school because there was no school in the village.

She started working for the first time 14 years ago with her husband, sewing socks.

*My husband has been doing this job since he was six years old. He was working with his brother, then they moved the shop from the market to here [to the courtyard of the house]. When my husband parted his company with his brother, he worked in other shops, and I worked at home... If you grew up in the village, you will definitely do something, you will contribute.*

Learning to use machines at home by herself, Zöhre decided to open a workshop with her husband, and then they agreed with various companies to get contract work.

*We bought a machine. First, it was one, then two, then the tables, and so... At the moment, there are 12-15 people here, they are at school right now, the children come at one o'clock.*

Zöhre, whose employees are all Syrian and Turkish children, says that the children come and work after school to earn their pocket money and cover their school expenses.

*For example, one of the children worked here during the primary school week and went back happily, saying "I will take that money, I will buy my school materials". Hasan is 12 years old, he went with 250 million liras and returned exultantly, saying "I bought my school uniform with my own money" ... At least, they learn something starting from an early age.*

She says that the children working in the workshop are the "children of the neighborhood" and that some of them started working with them when they were young and then entered the university. She says the employees are like her own children.

*The employee himself is coming, the children are wandering around and ask "we are here, do you need a worker?" I ask, "What can you do?" He says, "I can learn it, I need money, I can handle it" or his parents come and tell us "My child should not wander in the street, at least let him come here". For example, there is a Syrian boy. He has been with me for almost 3-4 years. "I am not sending him [to work] to the market," his mother says. At least there is a home atmosphere here and a woman is at the head. Are they dragooning me? Yes, they are [laughs]. They joke, then they rage with each other, so they do everything. Sometimes I get angry but believe me when I want a cup of tea, they bring it, when I ask them to bring something, they bring that.*

She expresses the reasons and obligations of the children working on piece work wage in the workshop as follows:

*They [children] already make contract manufacturing. The more they sew clothes, the more they get paid. For example, if they wish, their daily wage can exceed 200. If they feel like 40 liras is enough for them on that day, they can say " Well, I don't want to work today, that's enough for me". We are pushing them, but you know why, for example, Ali, who has just arrived, looks after the family with his brother. Under such difficult conditions. Do you know what this shows you in these districts, I mean my own life is very difficult, everything is difficult, it's not a bed of roses contrary to what it seems.*

In the mornings, after sending the children to school and having breakfast with her husband, she sits at the machine until his son, who is attending preschool, arrives. After feeding her child, she works again in the workshop until she cooks the dinner. She says that she makes her life easier by preparing the meals and putting them in the freezer the night before, and not delaying conserving. Still, she gets help from her daughter when she can't catch up. While telling what they do in the workshop, their working order, and mealtimes, Zöhre describes it as work with the "children" in home environment. Even if it is a "home environment", there is pressure to finish work on time in the workshop. At such times, although the shift ends at 7 pm, they can work until 11 pm with her husband, and from time to time they want the child workers to stay as well.

In addition to the children working in the workshop, Zöhre also has children of her own. She says that although her mother-in-law gets angry from time to time, her own children grew up in the workshop as she worked there, including during pregnancy.

*My mother-in-law used to tell me not to work, but [one wants] to contribute to her husband after a certain point, because financially, one person's work is not enough [to maintain the life]. Now my daughter is with me, for example, she helps out, sometimes she helps with the housework, my son works and earns his own pocket money. My son also does the ironing. For example, he earns his money to buy his school books.*

She says that she puts a lot of pressure on her children to study because she wants them to work “in a clean environment in a warm air under the air conditioner” instead of working in the workshop, and not to work in difficult conditions like their parents.

Since there are only a few Turkish families left in her neighborhood and her children have grown up, Zöhre now wants to move to another neighborhood. The former residents of the neighborhood sold their houses and moved to other places already as she explains. She plans to move the house and workshop to another location too, as they are able to buy a house with the money they earn and additional bank credit.

She continues by explaining how working conditions challenge her, even though running a workshop is financially and personally satisfying for her.

*Now I'm talking about cooking, working until the evening but sometimes I go out of my head. When I sit at the dinner table and eat, I can't get up for a certain period of time. After that, when I get back to normal, I go back to the shop. When I work, I gather myself up by God... still, there is nothing like working.*

*It's hard right now if your child wants something and can't get it!*

## **Sinem**

36-year-old Sinem immigrated to Istanbul with her family when she was young, from a city in the Black Sea region. She has lived in the same neighborhood ever since. The neighborhood has grown as a result of internal migration since the 1980s and has been a place where Syrian refugees have settled mostly for the last ten years. Sinem has been working in hosiery workshops since she graduated from primary school. In 2014, the owner of the workplace where she had worked for six years recommended her to open her own workshop, encouraged and promised to support her. She started the business with a friend by buying a machine with the credit she took out, and after a while Sinem dissolved her partnership. She has employed mostly Syrian refugee women in the workshop she has been running for seven years.

The first thing she said was “Small workshops employ Syrian women because Turks want insurance. Turks work in factories”. Then, when talking about



the process of establishing the workshop, the first thing she mentions is, of course, childcare:

*At that time, I had two children, they were young, but it was difficult for me. The house was elsewhere, the shop was elsewhere. Of course, it was very difficult with two children to wake them up in the morning, to dress them, to prepare their school supplies and food ... I mean it was very difficult, it was difficult for my children, it was more difficult for me. So, we went through a difficult process.*

Later, she rented the basement of the building where her house is located and turned it into a workshop. The fact that the house and shop are rented and her husband is a minimum wage worker put a lot of pressure on Sinem and led her to work by beating herself up. While Sinem developed her business by teaching the refugee women she hired to use machines, she also had problems in running the business.

*But everyone says, "Don't teach [how to use sewing machines], these [Syrians] are ungrateful!" Someone came and I taught her, she said immediately, "Okay, I'm a master, now you should pay me master wage!" Meanwhile, there were Turkish women I employed who couldn't go to the factory because they had young children. Then I got up <sup>(9)</sup> while they were sitting on the machine. I taught someone [how to sew] and bought another machine, I taught someone else [how to sew] and bought another machine. Now I have eight machines.*

Sinem's words about the financial operation of hosiery workshops allow us to understand the tensions among employees and between employees and employers:

*We work per dozen. There are 24 socks in a dozen, as one piece. We work per dozen, how much was a dozen, for example 50 kurus. If 3000 dozen socks were sewn, it would make 1.5 billion <sup>(10)</sup> from the perspective of the boss... The employee used to get half of the 50 kurus, it was 250 kurus at that time. Well, it includes yarn, electricity, etc. We earn 10 kurus from a worker. Of course, 500 dozen socks are produced a day and 3000 dozen socks produced a week by a worker. In other words, 250 million or so on average was left for me weekly from a machine.*

Sinem talks about the stress she experiences due to the disruption of her work, which runs on a tight and fast schedule, as a result of employees not

(9) She means that she started doing runner job instead of sewing on the machine.

(10) Sinem is talking by changing the old money value and the new money value.

coming to work with or without notice. The absence of a worker means that a machine remains idle, therefore production is reduced, and works are delayed, which can have a very negative impact on the company's future works in contract manufacturing.

Every day I was asking myself "I wonder which one will not come today?"

Sinem often expresses her anger at Syrian women. She said that Syrian women were "unfaithful" and "ungrateful" because although she had invested in them and taught them how to use sewing machines, they quit when they had a better opportunity. She says that teaching a worker how to use the machine is both costly and therefore slowing down production, and also mentally tiring without a common language. She also explained how these behaviors of the employees also changed the garment market:

*Now they have become the people who raise the hosiery market. How did they do this? For example, if there are 15 shops in the [neighborhood's name], they know all 15 of them. Maybe there are some that I don't even know, but they know them. Someone says them "Come here, the machine is idle", and gives them 300 kurus. They would never say that she spent time for me, taught me how to use a machine, I should not leave this person for 50 kurus (11). That employee would not be there the next day, because they were speaking a foreign language, her friend was coming here, for example, you don't know what that friend was talking about. She would be talking and talking about something there, after an hour passed, she would say "Sister, I'm going". "To where?" "Well, I had an appointment with the doctor and I forgot it". She was going there, working half a day, she would check and discover all of them saying "Let me see how their goods are, are they nice, how well are they sewn ". If it goes well, she continues the next day, if not, continues with Sinem again.*

Sinem explains that while she was experiencing the stress of getting the work done properly, she was also trying to keep the staff. She says she gave easy works to Syrian women and did not make them work on a broken machine, since the loss of the works that are sewn especially for the foreign market would be much greater than the gain if they were sewn incorrectly (12). This situation caused Sinem's earnings to decrease as well because the price for every work she sews was also left to herself. Another friend of hers who has a workshop could say there, "I am the boss, I will choose the best machine, I

(11) a monetary unit of Turkey, equal to one hundredth of a Turkish Lira.

(12) When the products they gave to the workshops were damaged, the companies that gave contract work force the workshop to pay them on the sales price of the product, not the production price.

will do the easiest work". In addition to the fact that her friend's house and workplace are not rented, the financial pressure on her is low, and her sons working with her in the workshop also reduce the pressure of the employees when they quit the job. Thus, Sinem says her friend was comfortable with the employees leaving the job, but she could not do it herself.

She says that another tension line within the workshop is about qualifications and wages of Turkish and Syrian employees. Turkish employees objected to receiving the same wages, stating that they have different experiences from Syrian employees. She says that she is starting to lose profits by paying more for these employees to stay.

Sinem started to sell machines one by one because she gave birth twice successively and could not get care support for the children. Her husband, on the other hand, started working as a stallholder. Sinem says that she kept her hope alive until the last moment because she loves her job. She only has one machine now, and she sews at night after the kids are asleep. During the pandemic period, she tried to earn a living for her family by taking works from factories she knew and working nights, since her husband could not work.

She says that it is no longer possible to open a workshop again, because even though her house and workplace are in the same building and are rented, the rent is lower than the market. The neighborhood they live in has been included within the scope of urban transformation and they will have to move soon. Within seven years, she was able to buy a piece of land as well as earning a living. They wanted to sell that land and buy a house, but due to the high real estate prices in Istanbul, they couldn't afford it. Even if they can buy a house, she thinks that it is difficult to find a suitable shop to run a workshop, because the shop has to low-rent and be close enough to her house so that she can continue to care for her children.

■ *It is impossible for me to open a workshop again!*

The stories of Zöhre and Sinem provide insightful perspectives on the nature and function of the informal market. First, as it is with all actors, the market is decisive in women's employment and entrepreneurial activities as well as men. Sinem and Zöhre's fast and flexible working efforts and precarious employment of workers enable and imprison them in an area where they can operate with small financial capital and intensive labor force in the global production chain. In addition, we see that the structure of the neighborhoods where women live and the transformation, they go through directly affect their positions. Therefore, the stories of two women demonstrate the need to analyze the meaning of women's participation in the labor force, working

regimes, and duration of work in the broader economic and social context. Another important point is that both women could only survive as long as they have access to a labor force that can work in precarious and bad conditions: Zöhre could only maintain her workshop by employing children and Sinem by employing uninsured female workers. Moreover, we can see the physical and mental effects of maintaining the responsibilities of women resulting from the gender-based division of labor in daily life in private sphere and maintaining the balance of work-and-home, as well as the length of stay of women in working life.

If we were only focusing on the participation of Turkish women in the economy, we could interpret Sinem and Zöhre's stories as 'empowerment', but we might overlook the fact that this empowerment is closely related to market and macro policy-making. On the other hand, if we focused on the entry of Syrian refugee women into the labor market by leaving the house within patriarchal social relations during the process of displacement and resettlement, we could also interpret the story of the dilemma of precarization and empowerment for these women. These interpretations would not be totally wrong. However, it is necessary to keep in mind that empowerment is not equal and the same thing with economic gain, nor is there a linear relationship between them, and to develop policies accordingly. High unemployment and informal employment, which increased as a result of the macro-economic transformations experienced in Turkey since the 1980s, also affected class mobility: the relationship between paid employment, getting rid of poverty, and upward mobility has been broken. Moreover, the fact that the societies where low paying job is common are also the societies where anti-poverty policies are not given importance, as shown in previous studies "low wages and poverty are phenomena arising from the same political and institutional environment" (Buğra & Sınmazdemir, 2005:7; Şentürk 2015).

There are quantitative studies and qualitative findings showing the place and the working regime of women in employment and the barriers to entry into employment in Turkey, as well as studies showing the situation of the Syrian refugee population in general and women in particular in the labor market, albeit in limited numbers. However, the tendency to address Turkish people and Syrian refugees as separate categories makes it difficult to understand the impact of macro dynamics on women as a whole, as well as where it positions workers. While it is, of course, important to consider intersectional positions rather than a broad category such as 'women', it should be noted that immigration, legal status, and culture are not essential and static categories. In this study, it has been aimed to understand the conditions of

entry and stay in paid employment of Syrian refugee women and Turkish women, taking into account the intersectionality and the decisiveness of macro policies.





# LABOR, GENDER & HOSTILITY

Discriminatory language and hate speech, xenophobic practices and racist attacks against Syrians are on the rise. (13) The prevalence of hate speech, homogenization and generalization, and the distinction between “us” and “them” indicate that Syrians are positioned outside of society. It is essential to understand the sources of anti-immigrant, anti-Syrian attitudes and behaviors and institutional structure in the establishment of coexistence. Therefore, this section of the report focuses on the manifestations of xenophobia and racism (14) through the experiences and words of Syrian refugee women and Turkish women. Specifically, it addresses the effects of the labor market and the discourse developed by the media and politicians to understand the social distance between the two groups.

## ■ Labor and hostility

In the previous section, it is aimed to show the decisiveness of the global markets, especially in the textile sector, in creating the antagonism and hostility between Turkish and Syrian women working in stuffy basements in the city's slums: on the one hand, workers who have nothing but bare labor to live on, and on the other hand, small and medium-sized businesses that are financially fragile to the utmost degree and dependent on large firms. This section focuses on manifests of enmity in a broader perspective.

Social and economic instability and uncertainty, unemployment, lack of access to insured work apply to both the Syrian and Turkish lower classes. Of course, the legal status of refugees, their uninsured position and the uncertainty that comes with them are important factors that determine the difference between the two groups. Syrians under the Temporary Protection regime (15), “neither as refugees nor as guests” (Baban, Ilcan and Rygiel 2016: 53), become vulnerable with restrictions on work and travel. In

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(13) According to the Syrians Barometer (2020), conducted by Murat Erdoğan, «While the most powerful option was the definition of «victims fleeing persecution/war» with 57.8% in 2017, it is observed that this definition fell to the fourth place with 35% in the last 2 years, namely in SB-2019, and the perceptions of threat, «alienation» and concerns highlighting widespread concerns have come to the fore in defining Syrians» (p.54).

(14) For discussions on the distinction between racism and xenophobia, see Balibar, E. and Wallerstein, I. M (1991). *Race, nation, class: Ambiguous identities*. Verso.; Romm, N. (2010). *New racism: Revisiting researcher accountabilities*. Springer Science & Business Media.; Wimmer, A. (1997). Explaining xenophobia and racism: A critical review of current research approaches. *Ethnic and racial studies*, 20(1), 17-41.

(15) In addition to the fact that not all Syrians in Turkey are under Temporary Protection, there are also those who are Turkish citizens and live in cities other than the cities where they are registered by not complying with the travel restriction arrangement for reasons such as work or being with family. Of course, this heterogeneous structure shows itself in the labor market.

terms of the subject of this study, the Temporary Protection regime creates a suitable environment for capital to benefit from, rather than an inclusive and consistent protection (Bélanger and Saraçoğlu 2018: 417).

23-year-old Awra works as a translator at a real estate agency in Istanbul, and previously worked as a cleaning lady and runner in a garment workshop. Awra has never been insured. When we asked her whether she has made an official complaint on this issue, she explained the results of the intertwined market and state policies:

• *What will happen if you submit a complaint from where I am?... Just like the*  
 • *answers we received when we applied for our rights many times before...*  
 • *“Who are you! Just go and work! Set out on your own! One day, you’ll*  
 • *return to your country!” It means that they [officials] know that we are*  
 • *in a situation like this... They also know that we work without insurance,*  
 • *otherwise, how would we make a living! (Awra, 23)*

After a tension due to the meal between the employees and the employer of the garment workshop where Awra worked before, the employer suddenly closed the workshop for fear of being inspected and disappeared. When they went to work on a Monday, the workshop was not there. Awra says that while Turkish employees can complain, she can't do anything. Awra also describes how her brother was physically assaulted with a stick by his employer for asking for a raise. Although his brother left the job after that incident, she continued to work there for a few more months because she had receivables from the employer and the difficulty she would have in finding a new job. In Awra's statement, it can be seen that the practices of the state and public institutions are effective not only in the spread of informal employment, but also in making it a norm (ibid. 418).

As a result of the increasing anti-Syrian sentiment in Turkey and its negative effects on the ruling party, Yasin Aktay, Advisor to the AKP Chairperson, made the following statement: “Employers [from Gaziantep] are very happy with the Syrians. They say “Remove the Syrians and Antep’s economy will collapse”. Antep had provided its workforce from the Southeast for years. People who had left the village used to go to Antep for work. In recent years, the old workforce has not come from the Southeast” (T24 2021). However, this claim, which caused a debate between the government and the opposition, was not mentioned for the first time and even caused unease among textile manufacturers in Denizli, who could not have the same “advantage” as Gaziantep industry due to the informal employment of Syrian refugees in 2015 (Hürriyet 2015). These examples show that due to the need of the Turkish economy for cheap and precarious labor, the state



policy has not turned its face towards improving employment and working conditions for neither Turks nor Syrian refugees in order to meet the market needs. Instead, it can be said that they are seen as disposable lives that turn the wheels of the economy. The accusation of “they are stealing our jobs” faced by refugees almost every day and the hatred built upon it, and maintaining of policy of ignorance and exploitation causes Awra and many other refugees to be exposed to practices of exclusion and hatred.

## Gender and hostility

During our interview with male workers from Turkey in the course of our visit to the workshops located in the old industrial zone of Gaziantep, where there are mostly tricotage and garment workshops, they said that Syrian men make everyone in their families, including children and women, work, but they do not make them work, so they can earn less than them. One of the workers proudly stated that he could not see his family well enough because he was working in two jobs due to financial difficulties, but he still did not let his wife work because it was not an “appropriate” behavior. This statement, which means that maintaining gender norms is preferable to poverty, also included a contemptuous narrative about the Syrians they worked with.

Among Turkish women, on the other hand, the impact of Syrians on the labor market was expressed by referring that the men in their families and acquaintances were unable to find jobs, rather than that they couldn't find work or receive low wages.

*So, as women, we get into everything. We should work and support our family, because our men can't find jobs. There weren't that many women out there. I mean, I don't like feminism or anything like that. For instance, I prefer to stay at home with my children. What I do is handicraft in the first place, you know, a product that I can make at home and sell. But all of the men are unemployed. Then they get angry and their family life disrupts. (Habibe, 48)*

*Another family life in a house opposite of mine, her husband doesn't work, he has a problem. He can't get anything from the state, can't pay his rent. And you think just a woman, I mean it's unfair. (Zekiye, 50)*

In addition, the hegemonic meaning -and sexist- construction of work (Routray 2021), in which women's workforce and income are not central, but subordinated as a 'contribution to the family', caused them to consider Syrians as a matter of their husbands and sons rather than as 'competitors'. On the other hand, they stated that they had encountered Syrian men rather than Syrian working women and that they had not had much communication.

During two focus group studies with Turkish participants, we asked them to think of themselves as employers who own a restaurant and which of the two fictitious figures, Turkish Fatma and Syrian Amina, would they hire (see. Annex 2). In both focus groups, the conversation started with the statements of the first speakers that included a needs-based empathetic approach (“whoever needs it most”). However, nationalist and discriminatory sentences immediately followed sentient statements in both groups. 40-years-old Serpil, who is a participant in Gaziantep, interrupted this process by saying “Well, I’ll prefer my country”. In Istanbul, 50-year-old Zekiye listed her negative judgments about Syrians:

*I’m a bit of a nationalist in that regard. I would definitely hire Fatma. So, I think of the women of my own country first. There are so many of them right now. First, we’ll employ our people, find jobs, only after that we can think of their children or whatever. I mean, they didn’t serve their own country. They came here. Their spouses should work. Or they are already in all the elementary occupations now. The paper collectors used to be Turkish, now they are all Syrians. They can’t do their job now... because they do it cheaper. All the jobs. Half of the textile workers are foreigners because they work cheaper. They’re everywhere. I am a nationalist. (Serpil, 40)*

In both groups, it was emphasized that Syrians work without insurance and for lower wages.

*...I will generalize them, it’s generally like that: since the Syrians work for lower wages, the boss wants to hire the Syrian woman and pay less money, because Ms. Fatma’s knowledge level is a little higher, but the Syrian will accept whatever you pay. Ms. Fatma will defend her rights, saying, “I need this, I need insurance, minimum wage,” but the Syrians cannot say this, she says, “whatever you give.” (Cansu, 38)*

*I used to get angry with them all the time, saying, “because of you, we have to work here for almost nothing.” They were getting a much lower wage than us, we couldn’t raise our wage because they were getting paid less. But there has never been a problem between us, we did everything together (Habibe, 48).*

One of the remarkable points in Cansu’s speech was that she started to refer to Fatma as “Miss” but did not use this title for Amina. After a while in the discussion, they were arguing that Amina had little children and whether she could work or not. However, there was no information about Amina’s children in the story. The nuances in the statements give clues of entrenched stereotypes Turkish women have in their minds.

During the discussion in Istanbul, the conversation about Fatma and Amina

was very short, and the focus of the subject was generally the effects of Syrians on the labor market. Although they admitted that Turkish employers employ the refugees for lower wages “because it suits their book” upon the words of 51-year-old Zeynep, they repeated that the Syrians have to leave Turkey for the problem to be resolved.

*[Employers] got used to it, they got used to it. They pay little, employers got used to it. It suits their books. But I think the policy is wrong, they have to go. (Zekiye, 50)*

For Syrian women, working meant a constant struggle between the restrictions imposed by the Temporary Protection regime on the one hand and the market on the other. Katerina (Istanbul, 36) talks about the impact of the control and deportation practice in 2019 on Syrians who are not registered or live in cities other than their registered cities:

*I don't normally work. I tried to obtain an ID, I didn't have an ID before. Two years ago, we had a problem about that. Something about IDs, not everyone has IDs, [those without an ID] were sent to Syria. I just couldn't change my husband's ID, we don't have a family registry anyway (16). That's it. (Katerina, 36)*

Katerina's husband did not leave the house and could not work during the frequent controls. She says that he did not get on the radar of the police “because he didn't look like a Syrian”, so he can go to work now even though he is afraid. The limitations of the Temporary Protection regime, having to get a job and earn a living causes refugees, who have to move to other cities, to be “illegal” once again within the country, but also makes their deportability (De Genova 2002) permanent.

After the war, some of the Syrians were able to move their financial capital to Turkey. Official figures show that Syrian capital has started to flow to the country since 2010. Further, small- or medium-sized businesses have been established as an example of refugee entrepreneurship in a more classical sense (Atasü-Topçuoğlu 2019: 202; Kişman and Yalçın 2020). In addition to their social capital and networks, refugee entrepreneurs can emerge as actors that have managed in taking advantage of the gap in the market (Betts et al. 2017) and created job opportunities for other refugees. However, it does

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(16) Christian Katerina's husband is a Yazidi. Since her husband is registered as a Muslim in official records in Syria, they have difficulty obtaining their family registry. Turkish authorities are requesting the marriage certificate from Syria, while the Syrian authorities require Katerina go to Syria to convert to Islam by reciting the Kalima Shahadah, to issue a marriage certificate.

not necessarily mean better and safer working conditions for employees. The 49-year-old Sana worked as an advertising salesperson for a newspaper, the owner of which was Syrian, who found asylum in Palestine. Although she started to work with the principle of fixed wage + premium, she could not even get the fixed wage at the end of the first month. Later, she started to work as an English teacher for a wage of 1200 TL in a private school with a Syrian partner. She told that when UNICEF started to give 900 TL in addition to their wages within the scope of the program it started to support Syrian teachers, the school confiscated that fee. Sana says the school threatened to fire teachers who refused to leave 900 TL to the school, and she believes UNICEF has done nothing although she's sure it knew about the situation. She currently works as an Arabic teacher for children, which is common among refugees with university degrees and teaching experience.

## ■ Hostile discourse of media and politicians

According to the Hate Speech and Discriminatory Discourse in Media 2019 Report (2020) published annually by Hrant Dink Foundation, Syrian refugees were “Systematically associated with criminal actions such as murder, theft and harassment, and thus coded as potential criminals and identified with security concerns and terrorism; targeted because of their presence in Turkey, in articles and columns on Operation Olive Branch; blamed for unfavorable economic conditions and unemployment in Turkey; labeled as a threat against Turkey’s demographic structure and generally as a source of unease and tension” (2020: 11). In addition, after Armenians, Syrians are the second group that was targeted by the highest amount of hate content (ibid. 18). Analysis of both traditional media and social media content (Karataş 2015; Bozdağ 2019; Ozduzen, Korkut and Ozduzen 2020) shows that perceptions and representations of Syrians are widely negative. Atasü-Topçuoğlu (2018), analyzed the contents of the traditional media following the then Prime Minister Erdoğan’s announcement in July 2016 that Syrians would be granted citizenship and suggested with the findings that the newspaper contents in the discussion of the issue showed the polarization in the axis of Islam and Secularism in the country. Syrian women, whom we interviewed with, often interpret this tension through political parties and experience reflections of hatred discourse in their daily lives.

*For instance, Kılıçdaroğlu was shown in the news saying “We’ll send the Syrians back, they should return”. They [my colleagues] were overjoyed at that news. I asked them “Did I hurt you that much so that you want us to leave?” They said “No, you’re not among all those Syrians.” I am one of them. (Awra, 23)*

*I mean, his colleagues who are opponents of AKP says that... So, they're those who are against the Syrian refugees... They say to me that "We don't have any problems with you, but your presence here is neither right nor good". (Katerina, 36)*

In the interviews and focus group studies we conducted, Turkish participants commonly repeated the definitions and stigmatization commonly used in the media. "lazy", "they unfurled their flag on the beach in Alanya", "buses are free for them", "their children go to school without passing exams", "they are all so rich...", "they have so many rights here", "they are people who do not help their society and expect us to help them", "our soldiers are fighting there", "We live in modern times, they should update their culture". More examples can be given. However, the remarkable point is that the participants ignored the contradictory points while they were expressing and reproducing the labels developed in the mainstream discourse in their own language. For example, while they were criticizing that the Turkish soldiers are at war in Syria, but the Syrians are living a comfortable life here, on the other hand, they could say that the war in Syria is over and they should return (Sinem, 36). Another example is that they consider Syrians living in the same house in large families, employing children and collecting solid waste as a sign of welfare.

Turkish women's attributes to Syrian women and men also differ. Contextually, they refer to men as 'responsible' and women as 'dependents'. Regarding the presence of Syrians in Turkey, it was stated that Syrian men should go and fight to defend their country, that women can stay in Turkey during this period, but that ultimately they should return to their spouses when peace is established in the country.

In the focus group meetings we held in both Istanbul and Gaziantep, while the number of children of Syrian women is emphasized, they criticize them for "not doing well" in childcare and home care which is traditionally expected from women.

*For example, you see that she's walking with 5 or 6 children near her, plus one in the stroller. (Eda, 32)*

*They don't have a care. Those who live in our neighborhood, for example, always sitting in the park. They don't like to do things much. They're always sitting in the park, I mean, they don't want to do cleaning or something like that. For example, cleaning is important for our women, but not for them. (Güler, 47)*

*I used to think that they strictly follow the Islamic rules. They walk barefoot in the workshop. We walk here in our shoes. They are very dirty (Sinem, 36).*

Following the home care and cleaning, the critiques regarding the personal care of Syrian women were listed:

*They don't clean their houses. Just make-up and night... But they are beautiful, they have very nice skins. Indeed, their skins are from another world. No matter what we do, their skins are more beautiful. I see them a lot. For example, those who goes to our organization. They are incredibly beautiful. (Guldem, 35).*

Turkish and Syrians, who are enforced to compete in the market to earn their lives, reproduce the stereotypes, hate speech and xenophobia produced and spread by politicians and the media. In other words, hate speech, stigmatizing and racist expressions against Syrians becomes mainstream and widespread through politicians and media. Furthermore, consequences of hostility shadow the daily relationship.

## (Is) the solution to problem is more contact (?)

In social science studies, the assumption that intergroup contact will change and eliminate the prejudice and threat perception against the minority group is quite common. Similarly, providing social contact is a method frequently used by non-governmental organizations to reduce the distance and exclusion practices between immigrants and non-immigrants. However, although the contribution of social contact to the realization of these goals is highly controversial, studies show that the distance between groups will be reduced if at least four criteria are met: 1) equal status between members of different groups, 2) having common goals, 3) cooperation, and 4) receiving support from authorities and organizations to establish intergroup contact (Berg 2020:3).

Both in Istanbul and Gaziantep, our fieldwork was carried out in neighborhoods where Syrians and Turkish people live together, in other words, where there is no spatial segregation at the neighborhood level. However, we have observed that social relations are at a rather low level. The number of women who have Syrian/Turkish friends is quite low, and the frequency of meeting with these friends is also rare. It is necessary to mention Syrian women who say that they have good relations with their Turkish neighbors in their neighborhood, building or workplace, and that they receive help in difficult situations, as well as women who are exposed to negative and exclusionary behaviors. Experiences such as being taken to the hospital in an emergency, receiving help to find a job, and practices such as maintaining daily neighborly relations are the most frequently cited

positive relationships. On the other hand, women who stated that they had no contact with their neighbors and colleagues or that their relationships were negative, expressed their experiences such as exclusionary behavior towards their children on the street, being exposed to hostile words on the street, accusations and verbal abuse. Berivan (26) whom we interviewed in Istanbul answered “why should we have a relationship?” when we asked her if she had relations with Syrians at the workplace, while Awra (23) expressed their lack of relationship at the workplace by saying “they have relationships among themselves and we among ourselves”.

It is also common for Turkish women to refuse to have relationships as a result of prejudices and hostility becoming mainstream and widespread. Saliha, a 44-year-old stallholder, opens a stall in the bazaar six days a week in another district of Istanbul, which has grown with domestic migration and where Syrian refugees have settled in recent years. Neighborhood markets are places where everyone living around stops by and interaction between stallholders and customers is high. Although Saliha said that she didn't know her Syrian neighbors or heard anything about them because she worked six days a week and cleaned her house on her off-day, later on during the interview she said that she tolerated the Syrians being in Turkey and explained the reason for this as follows:

*Would I want them to come? I wouldn't. But they're here. Educated people say that their ancestors helped ours, so they have been allowed to come here. Just one of those things. (Saliha, 44)*

Saliha says that she has observed the change of Syrians over the years through her customers, and that they continue to be demanding despite the fact that they came out of poor and needy situations and have reached wealth. What Saliha meant by being demanding was that they wanted a discount by bargaining. That's why she doesn't want Syrians as customers. Esma, 46 years old, started to open a stall where she sells underwear in the bazaar after running a garment workshop for many years. Esma says “I wouldn't want them at all, they didn't make any profits for me”, emphasizing not only an individual but also a social ‘profit’. Saying “They also have elite and cultured people, but this is a poor region. They are not like that, but they appear to be poor” for Syrian women who are her customers, she underlines that they couldn't be the kind of customers she would want. Continuing by saying Syrian refugees, especially women, do not work and therefore do not benefit “us”, Sema's statement also coincides with her expectations from Syrians as producers and consumers.

In the focus group study, when we asked them to imagine two imaginary figures', Fatma and Amina's, experience of working together and think about

what could happen in this relationship, the answers we received showed the depth of the disintegration and hierarchy.

*Since Amine seems a little more foreigner, Fatma will try to rule over her. I mean, in my opinion, she could tell her to bring this, take that. (Cansu, 38)*

Cansu continued to explain the reason that prevented Fatma and Amina being friends in work place and neighborliness as follows:

*We have a prejudice, "We don't want Syrians", "I can never be friendly with them", "I don't want Syrians in my country, I can't be a friend with them"... "I can't visit her in their home and drink their cup of tea." That's what I have in my mind, so Syrians must go. That's it. (Cansu, 38)*

The cooperative where 32-year-old Afa works, attentive to make Turkish and Syrian women work together while preparing its work program. Women mentioned the positive effects of this method. Both groups of women stated that they had warm, sincere and equal relationships and developed friendships, unlike their experiences with their neighbors or in the public sphere. Although Afa stated that she is friends with the people she works with in the cooperative and that she is happy about this, their relationship has not yet gone beyond the boundaries of the cooperative. The Turkish women we interviewed in the same cooperative also stated that they made plans together but they have not realized them yet. Language is a major barrier even if they want to make friends among neighbors and co-workers. Both during training and work, there is always a translator in the cooperative which makes it possible for women to establish relationships. Therefore, the four criteria mentioned above seemed to be met in the cooperative environment, and its positive effects were evident in the relationships.

In the focus group studies, we asked the participants in all groups to state three commonalities and three differences of Turkish and Syrian women. Only one reference made by Turkish women for the commonalities in the sessions held in both cities: "being a woman". Womanhood was stated with reference to both sex and gender. Responsibility for children and fighting for them coincided with the idea of womanhood equated with motherhood, which found itself in the phrase "Woman is the mother who is the maternal everywhere" (Zeynep, 51). Following the short discussion on being woman as the only commonality, the differences were discussed for a longer time. The differences mentioned were related to gender roles, the characteristics attributed to the broad group of which they are a part (Syrians), and cultural perception: "They aren't diligent enough in home care and childcare", "They work for low wages", "They have caused rental fees to rise", "They marry at an early age", and "They wear headscarves". In order to understand the source



of negative thoughts both in the interviews and in the focus group studies, we asked whether they have been at the homes of Syrians. Except for the situations described as “stopping-by” by only a few of the participants, none of them had ever been to a Syrian person’s home. However, as the source of attributions such as cleanliness, smell, order, etc., they gave answers, not including direct contact such as “I see it when I’m walking on the street”, “I look inside the houses”, “A friend of mine told me”, “She’s a neighbor/co-worker of an acquaintance”. Turkish women tend to regard the examples they count as “positive” experiences as exceptions.

*For example, my brother-in-law’s tenant is Syrian. They are very clean. I mean, it would be very nice if they all were that clean. The woman is so clean. They have a shop. I went to their shop and it was very clean. I don’t eat anywhere else, but I eat the meal they cook. But others smells. (Serpil, 40)*

Saliha (44) thinks that there is an insoluble difference between Turkish and Syrian people, eventually.

*You can’t make friends with someone else as you do with your country’s people. You can’t trust them. Someone else can’t be like your country’s people! (Saliha, 44)*

Syrian women, on the other hand, talked more about similarities and commonalities and less about differences. Home care and child care responsibilities related to gender roles, financial difficulties, the subordination and suppression of women in relations between men and women, and the prevalence of violence against women were mentioned as common points. While the laws in Turkey protect and empower women, the absence of this in Syrian law was the only point that was mentioned as a difference except for discriminatory and racist practices. Thereafter they started to discuss the discrimination they face.

Rania (32) strongly expressed the difference and also showed the effects of the guest discourse.

*After all, this is the Turks’ homeland. The difference between us is that we are guests, they are the hosts...It’s like the difference between being in your own home and being a guest in someone else’s home. (Rania, 32)*

At this point, it can be said that Syrian women experience ‘difference’ in the form of discrimination.

Their answers to our question when they would feel this country as their homeland, could be interpreted in a wide range from daily discrimination to structural racism:

*When would I feel like this is my homeland? When other people know that I have rights like them, and the law protects me as well as them, when there is no difference between the duties, when the law treats us equally. (Hana, 42)*

Focus group participants Hiba (21) and Badia (21) worked in workplaces where Syrians mostly work, after completing a high school for Syrians. To our questions about social contact, they answered “We have never had Turkish friends”. These answers may be a sign of avoiding discussing the issue, as well as showing the need for more reflection and study on social contact by younger generations.

## What should we do to live together?

During the interviews within the scope of the fieldwork, we also tried to talk about what needs to change in order to establish coexistence and to eliminate discrimination, hostility and racism. In the meetings held with the Turkish people, they did not set any responsibilities and duties for themselves. The Syrians, on the other hand, set only two tasks for the Turkish people and mostly talked about responsibilities and strategies for themselves. The first of the expectation of Syrian women from Turkish people was not to generalize the bad examples, and the other one was to be careful about the media.

*They don't follow the media, it's essential. We recently held a protest for Idlib and I had photos of people whose arms and legs were smashed in the bombardment. I was printing photos as posters in a stationery shop. Turks asked me, "Where is this Idlib?" "In Syria," I said. And they asked me "Why? Wasn't the war in Syria over?" I answered "No, this bombardment [in the photo] was a bombardment that happened yesterday. Just 24 hours ago." I mean, they were shocked when they heard that the war is not over... The most important thing is that they need to see the real media. (Kalah, 32)*

The women told that they may encounter discriminatory and hostile words and behaviors on the street, in the hospital, at school, on the bus and in the buildings they live in. Women who can speak Turkish said that although they sometimes responded to harassment, they preferred to remain silent in most cases. Silence can be used as a strategy not to escalate tension because refugees think the consequences would be more negative for them. On the other hand, Syrian women think that continuing to behave positively and remaining silent despite all negative behaviors they face will increase their social acceptance. For instance;

*I We have a neighbor, a public officer. Wherever my husband parks his car,*

*that man also wants to park his car there. He knocks on our door, saying "Come and get your car out of here". After a while, he became ill, had a heart problem. His daughter came to us and asked us to take her father to the hospital. He has a car, of course, but no one to drive. My husband took him to the hospital, then they have started to be close with us. He started to tell us, "I've been in Aleppo, I visited there, I know the people of Aleppo". (Halimah, 35)*

Rania says she trusts the power of social media and that these tools can be used to create dialogue. She thinks it would be helpful to prepare documentaries using these tools and give the following message to Turkish people:

*We live in Turkey, but we are not a burden for Turkey and I don't think it will have a big impact on Turks. (Rania, 32)*

The strategies and suggestions that Syrian women develop in their lives are shaped by the belief in hierarchy and gender (silence and good behavior) and that the message will reach the goal with the right tools and style. In the conclusion section, the Policy Recommendations of the research team are included in order to establish an equal life together on the basis of the findings of the fieldwork.



A close-up photograph of industrial machinery, possibly a lathe or mill, showing a metal workpiece being machined. The background is a blurred blue and yellow. A large, white, sans-serif text 'CONCLUSION' is overlaid vertically on the left side of the image.

# CONCLUSION

This report includes the findings and discussions of the research, which aims to contribute to the improvement of the living conditions of Syrian and Turkish women by trying to understand the working regime and the effects of xenophobia and racism from a gender perspective. In this direction, one of the aims of the research is to reveal the determinants of paid employment and duration of working life of Syrian refugee women and Turkish women. The second aim is to examine in depth the sources and manifestations of xenophobia and racism as obstacles to the establishment of coexistence. It tries to achieve these aims by placing them at the intersection of macro dynamics and gender regimes.

The report draws attention to the artificial decomposition, essentialization and normalization risks created by the ways in which the categories of citizen and non-citizen are used and tries to discuss the subject by moving beyond the limitations of these categories. Such a perspective made it necessary to consider the gender attitudes and the labor market not in terms of factors arising from the fixed and essential characteristics of the groups which are the subject of the study, but at the macro and structural processes that determine them. In addition, it is necessary to be aware of the fact that neither Turkish nor Syrian refugee women are homogenous, and to underline that the most fundamental difference between the two groups in terms of the subjects covered in this study is the legal status: and rights and limitations resulting from it.

Likewise, it aims to show that discriminatory, xenophobic and racist attitudes and practices do not stem from the essential and static characteristics of neither Syrian refugees nor Turkish people. In addition, it looks at the effects of discourse produced by political figures and the media as the source of mainstream discourse. Finally, the possibilities of social contact, which are frequently referenced and around which projects are realized, are evaluated regarding the high disintegration.

The first finding of the study is related to the factors affecting the entry of women to the paid labor market outside the home and their duration of working life. According to the research findings, the main reason for women to start working is the necessity of coping with economic difficulties. The fact that the jobs they can access are precarious and/or labor-intensive with low wages, and the difficulty of working conditions result in women working only as long as they have to. While the impact of women's being seen as the main responsible for home care and child care due to the gender roles is an important factor, it is equally important that the global production chain and regimes position women as cheap labor. Social norms on the one hand and the poor conditions of the jobs they can access on the other hand make it

preferable to work outside the home only when there is a financial problem. The very same reason also determines the duration of women's working life. Both Syrian and Turkish women work until they get married or have children. Married women with children start working again when they have financial difficulties. The statements of the women we interviewed with such as "I had to go back to work after marriage", "I worked even when I was pregnant", "I left my children at home and worked" show that working in such situations is not considered standard and desirable.

The research findings also show that although women want to work especially for the needs of their children and their future, due to the lack of public and free childcare services, they can either work when other female members of the family takes this responsibility or they are forced to give up working. It may cause women, who do not have the possibility of retirement due to their precarious work and who wouldn't save because of their low salaries, and thus who wouldn't make a difference in their lives in the long term through employment, see children as their only investment.

Increasing unemployment in Turkey, especially the increase in youth unemployment, causes education not to be considered as a factor that will provide vertical social mobility for young people. Therefore, families seem to have given up insisting on having their children educated for a better future, since education is an expensive business, but ultimately does not provide financial income and does not bring to work in professional jobs. Especially Turkish families think that a good marriage for girls and getting a job at an early age for boys is the best opportunity for their children's future. In addition to the disappointment of families caused by the rupture of the relationship between education and having a good job, the number of children and youth dropping out of education due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is another common problem for both Turkish and Syrians.

Frameworks for the empowerment of both refugee and non-refugee women through increased labor force participation and income assume that the barrier to women's empowerment stems from their qualifications. Economic empowerment brought by providing women with various skills that are supposed to enable them to work in the market, by supporting them to start a business with direct cash support or by creating physical work areas where women transform their existing skills into products and market them is expected to produce the following results: autonomization, changing gender-based power relations in the family and the immediate environment, and ultimately transforming gender relations in larger social environment. However, as this study shows, the main and only problem is not the qualifications of women. The qualifications and experience gained

through such empowerment programs and working in the market lead women to work in poor conditions when they have to at best due to the current market relations and unsupportive government policies. Obviously, there are women who can make economic profit through such programs and create change in their own lives and around them. However, the transformation of gender relations and the improvement of women's lives at the individual level seem to depend on the change in state and market relations. In this context, the problems of the "self-reliance" framework, which used to target refugees and immigrants, but now includes "host" communities, can be seen more clearly.

The discourse of "self-reliance" and policy practices related to it have started to come to the fore as a remedy to improve the situation of refugees, as a result of the criticism of the policy of helping refugees, the protracted and proliferating crises and the inadequacy of the related support funds, the inadequacy and flaws of international asylum and refugee mechanisms (Easton-Calabria and Omata 2018). Of course, it is important to correct the deficiencies and flaws of the programs that turn refugees into dependent masses; it is also a very functional method to provide refugees or other groups with various skills. However, the "self-reliance" discourse assumes that when refugees are provided with certain skills, they will be successful regardless of any other variables. However, skills training alone cannot be sufficient for the "success" of refugees in market conditions. Another point is what is the condition of being "successful": it enough to earn adequate income to ensure their survival or to earn income that will ensure access to living conditions suitable for human dignity? This framework has also begun to be expanded to cover the poorer segments of "host" communities as a remedy to address the hostility and racism that has arisen between refugees and citizens, which we discussed in the second part of the report.

In the second part of the report, it is aimed to reveal how xenophobia and racism towards Syrians have become daily. In connection with the subordination of women's labor, the research findings show that the competition and exclusion experienced in the labor market between Turkish and Syrians is interpreted more on the male workforce than on the female workforce. Therefore, it was seen that men were considered as "those who were unemployed due to Syrians" in the market, not women. While the work regime in precarious and bad conditions covers both Turkish and Syrian people, the restrictive regulations of the Temporary Protection regime on work and mobility place additional pressure on refugees. In labor markets, every structural pressure on the workforce causes the people to work in worse and more difficult conditions and to increase exploitation.

The findings showed that the most important source of hostility and racism is the discourse produced and disseminated by politicians and the media rather than direct contact between groups. The fact that almost all negative references and statements about Syrians are expressed with the same words and with the same pattern, the lack of awareness of consecutive contradictory statements and the exception of direct and positive experiences prove this argument. The expression "Syrians don't have a care" is one of the examples that are stereotyped and repeated as a single discourse that is different from each other and spreads over a wide area, such as their women don't act in accordance with gender roles, they earn higher incomes than Turkish people, they don't defend their country according to the militarist expectations, they occupy places on the beaches although don't suffer as an indicator of the realization of social hierarchy.

Finally, the report addressed the issue of social contact, which is a frequently used framework to reduce tensions and establish coexistence. Although the fieldwork was carried out in the two cities where Syrian refugees live the most, it has been revealed that the contact was extremely limited. Practices such as living in the same neighborhood and working together in the same workplace do not mean direct contact, and can lead to opposite results when such contacts take place under difficult living conditions. Ultimately, among the women interviewed within the scope of the research, work experiences that create conditions that are relatively secure and supportive of working together show that relationships can have positive results. Although there are many people from Turkey, Syria, Afghanistan and many other countries working together in precarious jobs where work pressure and competition are high, it seems that there are no relations that will contribute to establishing a life together. Therefore, it is essential to improve job, work and general living conditions for everyone, so that social contact, which is extremely important, can be a positive and constructive experience.





# POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The policy recommendations below are based on data obtained from the fieldwork and observations during the study.

1. The source of hostile and racist discourses does not originate from lived experiences or daily encounters, but from discourses and representations of politicians and media as well as content with unknown origin but repeated and circulated in social media. Therefore, alternative discourse should be developed and content should be produced against racist, xenophobic and discriminatory ones by the NGOs.
2. Due to the height of social segregation and polarization in Turkey, egalitarian voices demanding the establishment of coexistence are attributed to one of these poles. Therefore, content that is not anti-migrant/refugee, contains accurate information and is free of racism needs to be produced through mainstream content producers and mainstream channels, in addition to people and institutions that are seen as the 'usual suspects', that is, those who have already been advocating. One of the important points in mainstreaming the advocacy is the inclusion of opposition parties in the mainstreaming.
3. Social media tools, which are the advocacy tool of civil society and the channel where the general news circulation takes place, are platforms where it is almost impossible to control the content of the messages. Despite its effectiveness and power, social media also has structural problems. The most important of these problems is the "echo chambers" created by algorithms: echo chambers can be described as algorithms exposing people to repetitive messages by bringing content similar to the content they were previously interested in. Considering the above-mentioned high polarization in Turkey, it results in messages squeezing into certain circles. Therefore, it is essential to work with experts in the field of new technologies to seek ways to overcome the social environment determined by these algorithms. In addition to experts such as technologists, designers and software developers, professional communication specialists should be included in this field in order to produce content suitable for the linguistic and representational flow of social media. Such expansion means not only the expansion of professional staff, but also the expansion of the advocacy area.
4. One of the important pillars of mainstreaming is the role of non-governmental organizations. Non-governmental organizations that have already been operating in the field of rights-based advocacy need to work together in a wide network, not limited to non-

governmental organizations working only in the field of asylum/immigration. Namely, considering that every non-governmental organization works together and/or has access to target groups, the importance of organizations working together in different positions for mainstreaming becomes evident. Organizations can take the initiative more effectively in disseminating the 'works' in which they are involved. On the other hand, in addition to this instrumental benefit, it is expected to make a wider contribution to the work of organizations in this field and to raise awareness.

5. Increasing the coordination between the non-governmental organizations and initiatives established by refugees and Turkish organizations, and carrying out studies on the basis of institutional equality regardless of their nationality or other relativities will be highly functional in order to meet the needs of women.
6. Research and policy development should be done on the ways and consequences of implementing international policy frameworks through government and NGOs. For example, the "self-reliance" assumptions of refugees, which are frequently used in the framework of international policies, should not diminish the strengthening and protection efforts. Racism and exclusion rise from this point, especially in countries like Turkey the level of poverty and unemployment are high. Therefore, self-reliance framework expose refugees to intense exploitation and discrimination in their workplaces, as well as a negative attitude from Turkish people. The fact that locals and refugees are positioned as two opposing groups competing in market conditions does not diminish hostility and racism, even if they work together and have daily interactions. Therefore, it deeply shakes the culture of living together. From this point of view, market conditions should not be ignored while implementing protection and empowerment activities for both Turkish and Syrian women and projects aimed at helping them stand on their feet. In order to ensure women's access to safe and secure jobs, pressure and lobbying should be made against national and international institutions, more stringent measures should be implemented to formalize employment.
7. Lobbying and advocacy should be done to facilitate the obtaining of work permits for Syrian women refugees.
8. As the research findings show availability of job opportunities in nearby to women's homes, and flexible working hours would encourage participation in the labor force. Therefore, national and local

authorities should channel their resources to create job opportunities in provinces where lower class Turkish and Syrian women inhabit.

9. 9. Due to the ongoing patriarchal gender roles, women hold the responsibility to take care of the children, vocational programs of I/NGOs should consider providing childcare services to women. In addition, national authorities should foster policies that expand the public childcare services.
10. Accessible legal services and mechanisms to apply for rights and violations of rights should be provided to Syrian refugee women and Turkish women. These legal services will play a key role due to the fear of stigmatization and exclusion despite the fact that women may be exposed to more sexual abuse under poor working conditions and increased risk perception for Syrian refugees to have relations with official institutions (fear of being deported due to the prevalence of working without a work permit).
11. Efforts should be made to ensure that Syrian and Turkish women take an active role and work together in the fight against discrimination, hostility, racism and the suppression of gender norms. At this point, it is essential that the Turkish women's movement and feminist circles take an active role.
12. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many non-governmental organizations and initiatives largely withdrew from the "field"; offices were closed, applications and communication were made via telephone or digital media. For refugees and many Turkish women, it meant the disappearance of places they could reach in a very difficult time. The necessity for civil society which caught unprepared for this pandemic, to develop strategies to continue to function in times of crisis when they are most needed, has emerged. In order for civil society actors to continue to serve the people and communities they have undertaken to protect and support in an organized manner, they should seek ways to work in an organized manner with each other and among themselves, and international institutions should support them regarding this issue.

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# ANNEX 1. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

| PARTICIPANTS OF IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW |           |          |                                  |                |
|------------------------------------|-----------|----------|----------------------------------|----------------|
| Name                               | City      | Age      | Job                              | Marital status |
| Özge                               | Gaziantep | 18       | Tricotage                        | Single         |
| Maha                               | Gaziantep | 30       | Photographer                     | Married        |
| Rayya                              | Gaziantep | 25       | Clerk                            | Married        |
| Zöhre                              | Gaziantep | 41       | Owner of tricotage workshop      | Married        |
| Aslı                               | Gaziantep | 28       | Waitress                         | Married        |
| Fahriye                            | Gaziantep | 50s      | Garment-fiber separation         | Married        |
| Manar                              | Gaziantep | 45       | Micro nursery-business           | Married        |
| Wadd                               | Gaziantep | 28       | Garment                          | Single         |
| Hanifa                             | Gaziantep | 50s      | doesn't work                     | Married        |
| Muna                               | Gaziantep | late 20s | doesn't work                     | Married        |
| Kinem                              | Gaziantep | 45       | Teacher                          | Married        |
| Çiğdem                             | Gaziantep | 22       | Hairdresser                      | Married        |
| Seyhan                             | Gaziantep | 35       | Cleaning lady                    | Married        |
| Ayfer                              | Gaziantep | 48       | Nursery worker                   | Married        |
| Farah                              | Istanbul  | 26       | Garment-student                  | Single         |
| Rama                               | Istanbul  | 42       | Cleaning lady                    | Divorced       |
| Ayşenur                            | Istanbul  | 23       | Stallholder                      | Single         |
| Aytül                              | Istanbul  | 52       | Garment                          | Married        |
| Berivan                            | Istanbul  | 26       | Garment                          | Single         |
| Esmâ                               | Istanbul  | 46       | Stallholder                      | Married        |
| Özlem                              | Istanbul  | 37       | Worker in a factory              | Divorced       |
| Güldane                            | Istanbul  | 41       | Garment                          | Married        |
| Awra                               | Istanbul  | 23       | Employee of a real estate office | Single         |
| Halise                             | Istanbul  | 29       | Cooperative                      | Married        |
| Ola                                | Istanbul  | 23       | Cleaning and service             | Married        |
| Kerime                             | Istanbul  | 53       | Garment                          | Married        |
| Zelmira                            | Istanbul  | 40       | Store owner                      | Married        |
| Nermin                             | Istanbul  | 32       | Garment                          | Single         |
| Berfin                             | Istanbul  | 32       | Garment                          | Married        |
| Saliha                             | Istanbul  | 44       | Stallholder                      | Married        |
| Afa                                | Istanbul  | 32       | Cooperative                      | Married        |
| Saime                              | Istanbul  | 31       | Garment                          | Married        |
| Songül                             | Istanbul  | 42       | Garment                          | Married        |
| Sana                               | Istanbul  | 49       | Teacher                          | Divorced       |
| Sinem                              | Istanbul  | 36       | Owner of tricotage workshop      | Married        |
| Katerina                           | Istanbul  | 36       | Food handler                     | Married        |

| FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS  |     |                                    |                |
|---------------------------|-----|------------------------------------|----------------|
| ISTANBUL                  |     |                                    |                |
| TURKISH WOMEN             |     |                                    |                |
| Name                      | Age | Job                                | Marital status |
| Habibe                    | 48  | Cooperative                        | Divorced       |
| Hande                     | 55  | Cooperative                        | Divorced       |
| Zekiye                    | 50  | Cooperative                        | Married        |
| Zeynep                    | 51  | Cooperative                        | Married        |
| Dilek                     | 27  | Barmaid                            | Single         |
| SYRIAN REFUGEES 1st GROUP |     |                                    |                |
| Fatima                    | 20  | Coordinator at a transport company | Single         |
| Oma                       | 33  | Garment                            | Single         |
| Uri                       | 37  | Garment/student                    | Single         |
| Layal                     | 33  | Garment                            | Married        |
| Reem                      | 26  | Social media director              | Single         |
| SYRIAN REFUGEES 2nd GROUP |     |                                    |                |
| Aleena                    | 37  | Cleaning lady at a school          | Married        |
| Hiba                      | 21  | Office worker                      | Single         |
| Badis                     | 21  | Waitress/hostess                   | Single         |
| Rida                      | 27  | Cleaning lady at a school          | Married        |
| GAZIANTEP                 |     |                                    |                |
| TURKISH WOMEN             |     |                                    |                |
| Güler                     | 47  | Cleaning lady                      | Married        |
| Hülya                     | 39  |                                    |                |
| Eda                       | 32  | Clerk                              | Divorced       |
| Canan                     | 39  | Clerk                              | Married        |
| Cansu                     | 38  | Cafe manager                       | Married        |
| Güldem                    | 35  | Hairdresser                        | Married        |
| Serpil                    | 40  | Cleaning and service (unemployed)  | Married        |
| SYRIAN REFUGEES 1st GROUP |     |                                    |                |
| Naila                     | 32  | Journalist                         | Single         |
| Rabia                     | 35  | Communication Coordinator          | Single         |
| Halimah                   | 35  | NGO employee                       | Married        |
| Wajiha                    | 34  | Designer                           | Divorced       |
| Asma                      | 40  |                                    | Married        |
| SYRIAN REFUGEES 2nd GROUP |     |                                    |                |
| Takiya                    | 34  | Teacher (unemployed)               | Single         |
| Hana                      | 42  | Unemployed                         | Married        |
| Rania                     | 32  | Training center manager            | Married        |
| Kalah                     | 32  | NGO employee                       | Married        |

# ANNEX 2. FOCUS GROUP STUDY MATERIALS

## 1. Focus group study with Syrian women

### Activity

Hala came to Turkey with her family when she was 5 years old. Hala has a magical power. Whatever she wishes for herself comes true, everything that is good for her happens. Now let's imagine what kind of girl Hala is.

- Which city do you think Hala lives in in Turkey?
- Hala is now 15 years old. What did Hala do by the age of 15? How was her life?
- And what do you think Hala will do until she turns 20?
- How do you think Hala's life will be after the age of 20?

### Activity

Arwa is 32 years old. She graduated from an institute in Aleppo and has been a kindergarten teacher since she was a student. Then they moved to Antep and have been living in Antep for 7 years. Arwa does not have magical power like Hala. She lives a normal, ordinary life for better or worse like all of us.

- What do you think Arwa is doing now?
- What kind of job does she have?
- What does she experience at work?
- Who are her friends?
- Is she married? When did she get married?
- Does she live in Antep/Istanbul or has she moved?
- And what will Arwa be doing 10 years from now?
- How do you think Arwa's old ages will be?

### Activity

- If you were to list 3 common characteristics of Turkish and Syrian women, what would you say?
- If you were to list 3 differences between Turkish and Syrian women, what would you say?

## Activity

You have a magical power. Just like a magic flute, every word that comes out of your mouth will come true.

- What problems would you like to solve when you wear that hat?
- How would you solve it?

## 2. Focus group study with Turkish women

### Activity

There is a woman who lives in Antep/Istanbul. Let her name be Emine. Emine is about 30 years old.

- Is she married or single? How many children does she have?
- This woman is experiencing economic difficulties. Her husband's income is not enough. However, her husband does not allow her to work. Should this woman insist on working? How should she talk to her husband?
- Her friend says her children's future is more important. But her husband says it is more important to take care of the children at home. Which one should she listen to?
- What should the woman do to get a job?
- What kind of jobs can this woman find? Are there any barriers for her to work in these jobs?
- How should the woman spend her money?

### Activity

Suppose you have a restaurant. You will hire a cook. Two women have applied for this job and you will hire one of them. The first woman's name is Fatma. Fatma's children have grown up, but they continue to school. She wants to start working for their education and future. The second woman is Amina. Amina, on the other hand, is a very poor Syrian. She wants to work to bring home the bacon.

- Which one of these women would you hire?
- What criteria would you consider to hire one of these women?

## **Activity**

- Do you have any Syrian colleagues?
- Do you have any Syrian neighbors?
- If you were to list 3 common characteristics of Turkish and Syrian women, what would you say?
- If you were to list 3 differences between Turkish and Syrian women, what would you say?

## **Activity**

You have a magical power. Just like a magic flute, every word that comes out of your mouth will come true.

- What problems would you like to solve when you wear that hat?
- How would you solve it?



**MINISTRY OF  
FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
OF DENMARK**  
*Danida*

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