

**Contraceptive Use in Turkey After Economic Transitions:
An Analysis of 1978 and 1998**

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Extended Abstract

Since the 1920s, Turkey has gone through various economic eras. At the same time, contraceptive practices had also been changing. From the mid-1950s to early 1960s, the economy had slow-moving growth and trade imbalances. Starting in 1963, Turkey had developed three five-year plans, resulting in a forceful economic recovery. In the first five-year program, family planning programs were introduced; the sale and use of contraceptives were legalized and “education of the public concerning the need for, and the purpose of, family planning and contraceptive methods” were begun (Tezcan, Carpenter-Yaman, & Fisek, 1980). However, the use of birth control was increasing even before these policies took effect (Ozbay & Shorter, 1970). Through the early 1970s, domestic output continued to grow, but by the end of the decade Turkey was dealing with another economic crisis together with political instability and social unrest.

In 1980, stabilization and adjustment programs were introduced with the goal to transition the economy to export-oriented growth. The outcome was positive growth rates, growth in exports, and a reduction of inflation. Contraceptive use also increased greatly during this time. From 1978 to 1988, the percentage of married women reporting current use of any family planning method rose from 38% to 63% (Goldberg & Toros, 1994).

Despite the increased use of contraception, women were still using traditional methods that have high failure rates, such as withdrawal. This was the most widely used

method in 1998 with 24.4% of women practicing this birth control method (Ministry of Health [Turkey], Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies, and Macro International Inc., 1999). However, the percentage of women using modern methods, such as the IUD and birth control pills, has increased from 31% in 1988 to 37.7% in 1998. Over this time period, the economy once again faced more economic crisis from the Persian Gulf War and high government spending.

In this study, we will examine the changes in contraceptive prevalence between 1978 and 1998 in Turkish women and how the economic periods prior may have impacted contraceptive choice of the different generations. Specifically, we will look at various geographic, economic and socio-demographic differentials in women who use modern versus traditional methods or no contraceptive method at all and how these determinants have shifted regionally through time.

The 1978 Turkish Fertility Survey (TFS) and the 1998 Turkish Demographic and Health Survey (TDHS) will be used for these analyses. These are cross-sectional studies carried out by the Hacettepe Institute of Population Studies (HIPS), which employed a self-weighting, multistage cluster design (Ministry of Health [Turkey], Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies, and Macro International Inc., 1999). The surveys are designed to provide information on fertility trends, maternal and child health, as well as family planning. Only currently exposed women were asked questions regarding current contraceptive use. Exposed women are defined as “currently married, non-pregnant and physically able to have a child” by HIPS. In both surveys, women who fit the criteria are asked if they are “currently doing something or using any method to

delay or avoid getting pregnant” and if so, which method they are using. Women are later classified as using modern, traditional, or no method.

Preliminary analysis shows that while traditional method use has remained constant in the examined years, there has been an increase in modern method use and a substantial decrease in the proportion of women who are not using any method to prevent pregnancy (Table 1). These trends provide evidence that more women desired smaller families, and are taking further precautions to limit or space childbirths.

Examining these two years will allow us to look at age-specific proportions for a cross-section of women of different birth cohorts found in a survey. As Ozbay and Shorter (1970) found in their study using 1963 and 1968 surveys, it is expected that if each cohort had been exposed to the same determinants during the life course, the proportion of women who have ever used a method would increase with age.

Geographic variations are determined by examining the region (North, East, West, South, and Central) and place of residence. Evidence from previous studies show those women who live in rural areas, or in less developed regions such as the East, are more likely to use either no method or traditional contraceptive methods (Koc, 2000). We expect to see similar results in this research; however these differences will decrease over the twenty year time period and will not be a large predictor of contraceptive use or method choice.

Another significant determinant of contraceptive use and method type to be examined is women’s education level. Evidence looking at the 1988 Turkish Population and Health Survey found that there were large differences in contraceptive use; as education increased, the proportion of users also increases (Goldberg & Toros, 1994).

However, even the well-educated women were using traditional methods, specifically withdrawal.

While there are many factors than can influence whether a woman uses a method to avoid or delay pregnancy, this research is aimed at examining the trends in 1978 and 1998 and how the culmination of the two economically historical periods have affected contraceptive choice. After further analyses, results may show the need for population policies to be re-evaluated over time. The economic and social standing of a country can change drastically over a small time period, this providing the need to possibly update policies.

Table

TABLE 1: Percent distribution of currently married Turkish women aged 15-49 by contraceptive method type, 1978-1998

	<i>1978</i>	<i>1983</i>	<i>1988</i>	<i>1993</i>	<i>1998</i>
<i>Modern Methods</i>	13.4	23.9	31.1	34.5	37.7
<i>Traditional Methods</i>	24.6	29.1	32.3	28.1	26.1
<i>Do not use</i>	72.0	47.0	36.6	37.4	36.2

Source: Goldberg (1994) and HIPS (1999)

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