

POPULATION PYRAMIDS

According to US Census Bureau, the population of Turkey in 2000 was approximately 66.5 million and it is expected to rise to almost 83 million in 2025 with an increase of 25 percent. The interpretations made in this paper should be approached with great care given that the population data in terms of age groups is not parallel to school ages and it goes in a series of four years. The paper will pay attention to the age groups of 5-9, 10-14, and 15-19 and will exclude the population group of 20-24 -namely the college age group- at this stage since, like the US, there is a group of college students whose ages exceed 24 -known as nontraditional students- and it is hard to assume to which age group these nontraditional students belong.

Here are some key points regarding the population projections in Turkey during the first quarter of the 21st century (*all the numbers and percentages are approximate terms*).

1. Year of 2000

1.a. Total male population is 33.4 million and total female population is 33.1 million.

1.b. The total number of males between the ages of 5-19 is 10 million, which makes up 30 percent of males and 15 percent of total population.

1.c. The total number of females between the ages of 5-19 is 9.75 million, which makes up 30 percent of females and 15 percent of total population, similar to male group because of nearly-almost symmetrical structure of gender distribution of population.

2. Year of 2025

2.a. Total male population is 41.45 million and total female population is 41.5 million.

2.b. The total number of males between the ages of 5-19 is 8.25 million, which makes up 20 percent of males and 10 percent of total population.

2.c. The total number of females between the ages of 5-19 is 8.05 million, which makes up 19 percent of females and 10 percent of total population.

3. Comparisons

While there is a total increase of 8.05 million in male population between 2000 and 2025, the number of 5-19 age group decreases by as many as 1.75 million.

Likewise, for females the number of 5-19 age group decreases by 1.7 million despite the fact that female population rises by 8.4 million.

As a result, according to US Census Bureau, the population of Turkey is projected to increase by a total of 16.45 million during the first quarter of the century while the number of 5-19 age group will decrease by as many as 3.45 million.

Indeed, even if the age group of 20-24 would be taken into consideration the decreasing trend would still continue. The population for this group is also projected to decrease by as many as 0.75 million. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, the age group for college students may (or may not) change for college attendance, which is difficult to predict at present.

4. Implications

A population projection for school age of 5-19 as a decrease of 3.45 million is actually a different kind of trend Turkey prepares itself to face. The significant percentage increase over the last 30 years (between 1.5 to 2 percent) in population changed its place with a somewhat decent increase rate and it is now under 1 percent. Nevertheless, because of aging factor which mainly the developed nations have been and will be experiencing, the population of Turkey's school age group will make it easier for policy-makers to adjust to demographic changes in terms of physical investment needs.

To make it more concrete, the *percentage* of age groups of 0-4, 5-9, 10-14, 15-19, 20-24, 25-29, and 30-34 in total population will decrease in the year of 2025. The *number* of people in these age groups will also decrease except the age groups of 25-29 and 30-34. Thus, the current need to build as many schools as possible will be replaced with another challenge in a different context. There will be an unnecessary number of schools then and some schools might be closed, or their physical assets might be sold to private sector, or they can be used for other public needs by that time.

Another challenge is that, due to a decrease in school age children's population, the total number of primary and secondary school teachers should not be more than sufficient. That is, unless the number of slots in education faculties are calculated in this direction today, there might be a serious problem of **overemployment** by the year of 2025.

Less need for physical investments and a similar situation for the number of teachers could help government to invest more in the quality of education, something which the ministry was not able to do in the last couple of decades. Due to the fact that nearly almost the whole education budget had to be spent to cover teachers' salaries and the physical needs of schools, the Ministry of National Education has not found a maneuver space for itself in terms of budget flexibility to invest in the quality of education. The projected decrease in school age group between 2000 and 2025 should therefore encourage the ministry to use the "never-adequate" education budget for longly awaited qualitative issues.

The projected trend will hopefully make the teachers see their life standards increased due to the fact that the number of teachers paid by the government budget will decrease. In other words, the number of people benefiting from the same pie will decrease; which in turn, will make their shares bigger as long as appropriations in education budget will not decrease in real terms. There are several studies with

findings that salary increases in the salaries of teachers have positive effects on the outcome of education from the stand point of productivity of instruction.

Instead of spending nearly all of investment appropriations for building schools, policy makers will have a chance to invest more on technology, which will lead the Turkish public schools to a different direction, *learning with technology*, which could currently only be realized in rich-neighborhood schools thanks to the volunteer efforts of community. The savings coming from lesser amount of physical investment expenditures can also help the public schools keep up with the competition of private institutions.

A quality improvement in education due to the decreasing number of school age children might also help the policy makers consider new offerings for especially public school children. Currently, unlike the American public schools children, Turkish students are not offered free public transportation, which increases the lower-income families' concerns as an additional expense. Improvements in education budget might help government officials create new social policies, at least for children at financial disadvantages.

In conclusion, the projections of decreasing population in Turkey according to US Census Bureau will positively affect the educational services as a whole. With the number of enrollments decreasing, even if the resources keep their current level in terms of constant monetary value, the number of people benefiting from the same level of resources will be offered a higher standard of education provided that educational spending (cost) per student will increase over the time.



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APPENDIX

Graph 1: Population pyramid summary for Turkey between 2000 and 2025.

