



DE-EP

POVERTY AS A
HUMAN RIGHTS
ISSUE,
MONITORING
KURDISH WOMEN'S
POVERTY IN VAN



DE-EP: POVERTY AS A HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE, MONITORING KURDISH WOMEN'S POVERTY IN VAN

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We dedicate this report to all women and girls in Van who cannot access the right to education in order to create a world where gender equality and human rights are realized.



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International human rights law also requires States to take measures to eliminate harmful cultural and traditional practices and all other practices that are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either sex, or on stereotyped roles for women and men. These practices increase the social exclusion of women and girls, impede their access to resources and education and perpetuate poverty and discrimination.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As Van Star Women's Association, we decided in 2019 to mainstream gender equality to combat gender-based violence and to carry out this with a bottom-up approach.

Although poverty has been measured, defined and explained using both national and international criteria, it is still a difficult concept to define. This difficulty comes from the limitations of societies, space and time.¹ In this report, we have used the concept of "Women's Poverty", which is defined as a more systematic and successive violation of rights than economic violence, one of the types of violence against women. We have included in our report what we mean by women's poverty and how it manifests itself in the identity of Kurdish women through our applications for information, human rights indicators and face-to-face interviews. We tried to underline that this deep poverty is a violation of human rights. Our report aims to make visible the poverty of Kurdish women living in Van, where our association was founded and is located, and offers solutions to prevent this violation.

The United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) human development index, gender equality index and indices related to poverty² and Amartya Sen's definition of poverty and its theoretical framework reveal the importance of understanding women's poverty. We have prepared this report to show the projection of poverty, which Sen defines not only as "lack of income" or "income inadequacy" but also as "deprivation in the capability"³, on women.

In 2023, we published "Testimonies of Women Applying to Van Star Women's Association: Monitoring Report on Combating Violence against Women"⁴ The report also showed that violations related to women's poverty prevented the use of mechanisms to combat violence against women. Van is one of the poorest provinces according to Turkish Statistical Institute (TURKSTAT) data, which increases women's poverty in particular. However, since this critical issue is often not on the agenda, these violations of women's rights are not sufficiently discussed and necessary solutions are not produced.

Our report shows that with poverty, forced marriages at an early age increase, access to basic food is restricted and the possibility of completing basic education through formal or open education is gradually decreasing. During the interviews, many participants said "I wish I could go to the park" or "I wish I could feed my children", revealing that women are unable to realize even basic life practices.

When defining poverty, the interviewees described it as "behind the curtain" and "unhappiness without end", which not only shows that poverty has deepened in terms of data and numbers, but also shows that a widespread feeling of hopelessness and otherness has deepened in terms of definitions.

¹ https://tepav.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/upload/files/1271312994r5658.Kadin_Yoksullugu.pdf

² <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2024-03/hdr23-24-turkiye-country-note-tr.pdf>

³ Sen, A. (2004). Özgürlükle Kalkınma. İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları.

⁴ https://insanhaklarizleme.org/vt/yayin_view.php?editid1=2782

Van has been living in political tensions and uncertainties for many years. Trustees appointed to local administrations have led to the violation of democratic processes. This situation has reinforced the practice of governing with undemocratic methods and further strained the political climate.

This report has also been prepared to present to national and international mechanisms that Kurdish women's poverty is deepening and that this situation prevents women from accessing basic human rights.

The findings we share in this report reveal that Kurdish women face serious obstacles in accessing basic rights and services such as education, health and employment due to historical and socio-economic dynamics. This situation prevents Kurdish women from accessing these rights, leading to inequality and discrimination against them. It restricts women's economic independence, prevents their participation in the labour force and their access to education and health. The report aims to show how inequality and discrimination in access to these rights affect poverty. Our report emphasizes the need for state and local administrations to develop human rights-based solutions to break this cycle of poverty. Key recommendations include increasing education and employment opportunities for Kurdish women, providing free health services, expanding the scope of social assistance and women's entrepreneurship support programs, opening women's support centres that provide services in Kurdish, and conducting public awareness campaigns. These steps will emphasize the importance of human rights-oriented approaches in the struggle of Kurdish women against poverty in Van, and will produce effective results for social equality and women's empowerment.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

“How poverty is defined is crucial in determining how to combat poverty. While poverty is the basic condition that determines the living conditions of the poor, those working on poverty propose different definitions of poverty and measurement methods based on objective and subjective criteria. In this framework, many concepts such as absolute poverty, relative poverty, income poverty, human poverty, chronic poverty, urban poverty and working poor are used. The basic needs for a healthy life of normal length, such as clean water, food, shelter, clothing, medicines and treatment in case of illness, are generally agreed upon poverty criteria.”⁵

Kurdish women living in Turkey are disadvantaged by socio-economic and socio-political inequalities. At the Beijing 4th World Conference, the concept of “feminization of poverty” was used to express that women are more at risk of poverty than men. With the intersection of gender and ethnic discrimination, Kurdish women have been systematically pushed into poverty and the concept of the feminization of poverty has become even more pronounced with the poverty of Kurdish women.

To look at important international standards on poverty;

- Poverty systematically violates the right to life as enshrined in Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the fundamental rights to adequate living conditions, health and education as enshrined in Articles 25 and 26.⁶
- In addition, according to Article 3 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), one of the cornerstones of women’s rights, “States Parties shall take in all fields, in particular in the political, social, economic and cultural fields, all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men.”⁷ CEDAW entered into force in Turkey in 1986.
- At the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, it was recognized that the widespread existence of severe poverty is an obstacle to the full and effective enjoyment of human rights. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action also recognized that severe poverty and social exclusion constitute a violation of human dignity.

In national legislation, the Law No. 6701 on the Human Rights and Equality Institution of Turkey states the commitment to equality in Article 3 under the heading “Combating Discrimination” in the second section.⁸

⁵ Pinar Uyan Semerci (2010), “Dev ve Cüce Aynı Yolda: Yoksulluk ve Pozitif Özgürlükler”, *İnsan Hakları İhlali olarak Yoksulluk* (der. Pinar Uyan Semerci), İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları.

⁶ <https://www.ihd.org.tr/insan-haklari-evrensel-beyannames/>

⁷ <https://www.ihd.org.tr/kadinlara-kar-her-tlayrimcilin-lenmesuluslararasi-slees/>

⁸ Kanun kapsamında “cinsiyet, ırk, renk, dil, din, inanç, mezhep, felsefi ve siyasi görüş, etnik köken, servet, doğum, medeni hâl, sağlık durumu, engellilik ve yaş temellerine dayalı ayrımcılık yasaktır.”

<https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/MevzuatMetin/1.5.6701.pdf>

Poverty is a social problem. While the concept of poverty, which does not have a clear definition that is generally accepted, was previously expressed only in terms of income poverty, this definition has changed with the United Nations' multidimensional poverty approach. According to this approach, poverty is expressed not only by monetary indicators but also by indicators such as school enrolment rate, literacy rate, age at marriage, life expectancy, infant and child mortality.⁹ As Star Women's Association, we have included both approaches in this study. We have endeavoured to monitor Kurdish women's poverty both in terms of income inadequacy and in its multidimensional form.

In 2023, Star Women's Association published "Testimonies of Women Applying to Van Star Women's Association: Rights Monitoring Report on Combating Violence against Women"¹⁰ indicators published by Star Women's Association in 2023, it was finally decided to conduct a deep poverty monitoring study in 2024 and subsequently to write the report you are reading. In our 2023 report, it was understood that the most significant obstacle in accessing mechanisms to combat violence against women is the economic violence women are exposed to and the resulting violations of rights. In addition, Kurdish women's lack of access to Kurdish language services stands out as a secondary obstacle to their effective use of these mechanisms.

This monitoring report was prepared by Van Star Women's Association within the scope of the Etkiniz EU Program's Human Rights Monitoring Support. The aim of our report is to make visible the dimensions and causes of the deep poverty experienced by Kurdish women living in Van and to address poverty as a human rights violation in this context. Within the scope of our monitoring work, we tried to determine the income levels of Kurdish women, their employment status, the economic difficulties they experience and what causes these difficulties. In this direction, we tried to determine the women's education levels, whether they have experienced migration, the physical structure of the houses they live in and their living conditions accordingly, whether they have social security and whether they receive any social assistance. This report also includes how women define poverty and their methods of coping with poverty.

In order to understand economic violence, which is one of the forms of violence against women, we need to properly address the systematic and deepening poverty. For this reason, we should first examine the definitions and scopes of these concepts and start by drawing the framework of poverty as a violation of human rights.

**Both desperation and sacrifice.
The effort to exist in the absence.**

(24 years old, single, response to the question "How do you define poverty?")

⁹ <https://www.undp.org/tr/turkiye/publications/2010-insani-gelisme-raporu>

¹⁰ https://ugc.production.linktr.ee/680a9d54-1269-4e7f-8933-1c4c3d8b2f35_VAN-STAR-KADIN-DERNEG-I--NE-BAS-VURAN-KADINLARIN-TANIKLIKLARI-KADINA-YO-NELI-K-S-I-DDETTLE-MU-CADELE-.pdf

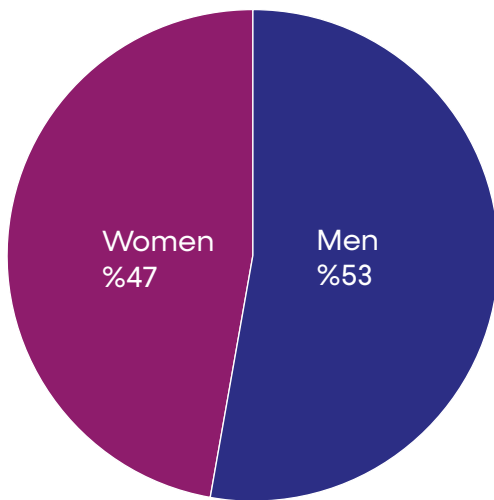
What is poverty?

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) “defines poverty as the deprivation of opportunities essential for human development (lifelong health, a creative life, an average standard of living, freedom, self-reliance, dignity), thus preventing the concept from being confined to a monetary context.” To this end, the UNDP “uses indicators such as life expectancy, literacy, child mortality rates and real purchasing power.”¹¹ According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), there is no universally accepted definition of poverty. Poverty is not only about economic factors such as insufficient income and assets, especially land, and lack of access to decent work. Poverty also refers to social, political and cultural factors such as discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, caste, age, disability; lack of access to education and training; poor health conditions; lack of representation, lack of empowerment; and vulnerability to shocks and crises.¹²

What is deep poverty?

According to the Deep Poverty Network, poverty is a state of social exclusion and systematic inequality as well as economic indicators, while deep poverty is a state of living below the hunger threshold and not being able to afford basic nutrition, care, shelter, health and psychosocial support. In other words, deep poverty means that every day a person thinks about how the day will go, what s/he will eat, where he/she will sleep, where he/she will get clean water, the new diaper to change the baby, the milk to give to the child, the payment for the medicine to be bought from the pharmacy, and these thoughts are constantly circulating in the minds of every family member, from children to the elderly.¹³

The concept of “feminization of poverty” was first used in the 1970s. It came into the limelight after the 4th World Conference on Women in 1995, when it was announced that women make up 70% of the world’s poor. The feminization of poverty has many dimensions with various factors such as low income, precarious working environment, limited job opportunities, lack of access to education, lack of effective access to health services and lack of other social advantages.¹⁴ At the root of this is, of course, gender inequality, as we would like to underline in our report.



The Distribution Of Population In Van

■ Number Of Men %53 ■ Number Of Women %47

According to the results of the Address Based Population Registration System, the women’s population in Van in 2023 is 552,619 and the male population is 574,993.

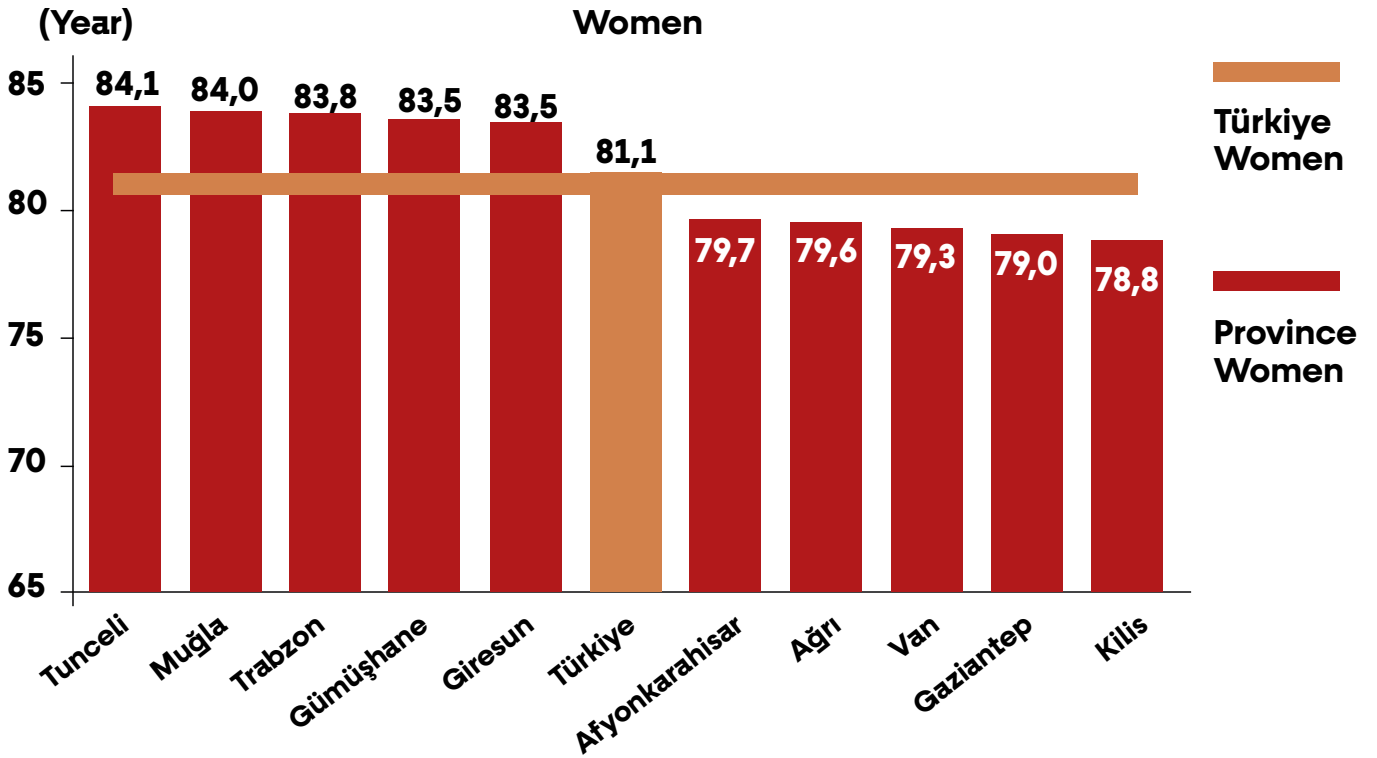
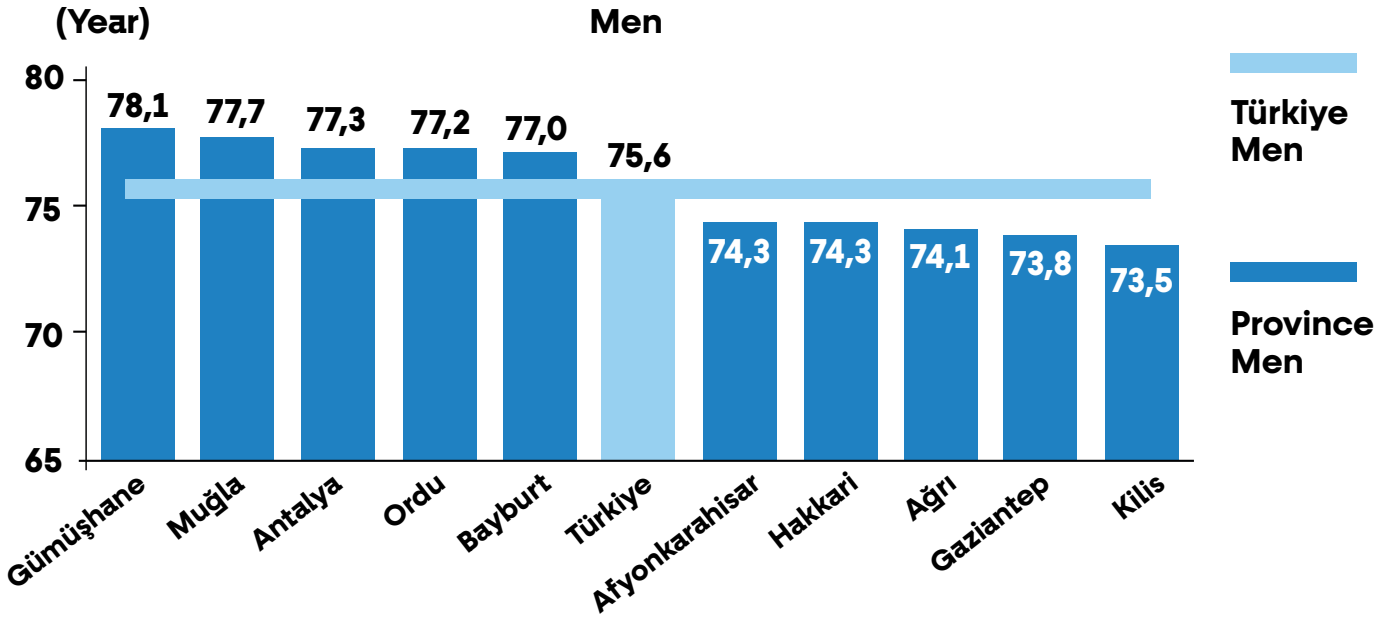
¹¹ Ayşe Meral Uzun (2003), “Yoksulluk Olgusu ve Dünya Bankası”, C.Ü. İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Dergisi, Cilt 4, Sayı 2.

¹² ILO, <https://www.ilo.org/media/320011/download>

¹³ Adalet Çavdar’ın Hacer Foggo ile söyleşi: “İfade Özgürlüğü de, Bir Bebeğin Doğru Mamayla Beslenmesi de Haktır”, Birikim Dergisi, 6 Nisan 2021. Ayrıca bkz. Derin Yoksulluk Ağı, <https://derinyoksullukagi.org/>

¹⁴ Gülsüm Çamur Duyan (2010), “Yoksulluğun Kadınlaşması: Altındağ Örneği”, *Aile ve Toplum*, Yıl: 11 Cilt: 6 Sayı: 22.

According to the 2018-2020 life expectancy data of the Turkish Statistical Institute (TURKSTAT), Van is among the 5 provinces with the lowest life expectancy for women. The province with the lowest life expectancy for women is Kilis with 78.8 years, followed by Gaziantep with 79 years and Van with 79.3 years.¹⁵



¹⁵ TÜİK, *Hayat Tabloları*, 2018-2020, <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Hayat-Tablolari-2018-2020-37226>

Provinces with the highest life expectancy	Men	Provinces with the highest life expectancy	Women	Provinces with the lowest life expectancy	Men	Provinces with the lowest life expectancy	Women
Gümüşhane	78,1	Tunceli	84,1	Kilis	73,5	Kilis	78,8
Muğla	77,7	Muğla	84,0	Gaziantep	73,8	Gaziantep	79,0
Antalya	77,3	Trabzon	83,8	Ağrı	74,1	Van	79,3
Ordu	77,2	Gümüşhane	83,5	Hakkari	74,3	Ağrı	79,6
Bayburt	77,0	Giresun	83,5	Afyonkarahisar	74,3	Afyonkarahisar	79,7

Recognizing that the United Nations (UN) Human Development Index (HDI) does not capture gender-based inequalities in income and opportunity, the Gender Development Index was developed to measure inequality between women and men. This index is calculated based on three main criteria:¹⁶

- Health, measured by female and male life expectancy at birth;
- Education, measured by female and male expected years of schooling for children and female and male mean years of Schooling for adults ages 25 years and older;
- Command over economic resources, measured by female and male estimated earned income.

The United Nations Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) is an important index for empowering women and achieving gender equality. It specifically measures women's participation in economic and political decision-making, access to senior positions and inequalities in income distribution. Although the GEM does not directly address poverty, it measures women's economic independence and empowerment. In this context, it is indirectly linked to poverty because lack of economic independence prevents women from breaking out of the cycle of poverty.

The common point of these two indices assessing gender inequality is economic data. In this context, according to 2023 TURKSTAT data, the employment rate of men in the TRB2 region, which includes Van, Bitlis, Hakkari and Muş, is 56.7%, while the employment rate of women is only 23.5%. This significant difference not only shows that women in the region have difficulty in participating in economic life, but is also a reflection of gender inequality.

¹⁶ UNDP, <https://hdr.undp.org/gender-development-index#/indicies/GDI>

2. THE METHOD

This report examines poverty as a human rights violation in the context of Kurdish women's poverty in Van. In order to collect data for the monitoring study, we prepared a Google Forms questionnaire titled "Interview form for the human rights monitoring report on the poverty of women living in Van" for women between the ages of 18-28 living in Van and shared it via e-mail and other digital methods. In Turkey, the definition of youth is generally defined as the age range 15-24. However, we targeted the 18-28 age range for our study because this age range offers a broad perspective that provides opportunities for young people to take an active role in social and economic life. This digital questionnaire, which takes about 25 minutes, was answered by 53 women between July 25 and August 22, 2024. 4 of the participants were married, 49 were single, and when we look at their educational status, 18 were bachelor's degree graduates, 24 were high school graduates, 5 were associate degree graduates, 1 had never been to school and 1 was a primary school graduate. According to the answers given to the question "Have you worked in an income-generating job in the last 1 year?", 32 people said "no" and 16 people said "yes". Detailed statistical data are presented in Annex-2. Three unsuitable forms were excluded and 50 forms were included in the analysis. The answers were evaluated in digital environment and made ready for the report.

Face-to-face in-depth interviews were conducted with 10 women in Hacibekir (Xaçort) neighbourhood of Van on August 14, 2024 by two members of the association using a semi-structured interview form. The data collected during the interviews were transcribed on computer, analysed and tabulated. Attention was paid to repetitive statements in the analysis. Eight of the interviews were conducted in Kurdish and two in Turkish. The reviews were grouped under overarching themes and analysed descriptively with direct quotations. The analyses are presented with direct quotations, remaining faithful to the original form of the data in the interview transcripts. Interviewees are included in the report anonymously. After the survey and face-to-face interview data were analysed using Microsoft Office tools, they were visualized and added to the report.

Another data collection method for our monitoring study was to make information requests. On July 23, 2024, a face-to-face application for access to information was made to the Van TURKSTAT representative office. The responses to the request for information were sent to us by TURKSTAT via email.

Within the scope of the desk research, 2023 UN Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), UN Special Rapporteur's Notes, Council of Europe Committee on Social Rights Notes, Universal Periodic Review Notes and Deep Poverty Network, Association for Monitoring Equal Rights, Istanbul Bar Association Human Rights Centre's Deep Poverty Sub Working Group and Istanbul Bilgi University Human Rights Law Research Center were used.

The main problem and limitation we faced during the monitoring process was to categorize the multidimensional human rights violations caused by poverty in Van into sub-headings. In addition to this difficulty, another obstacle was that our requests for information were often not evaluated or we learned that the requested data was not available. The lack of disaggregation of Van-specific data in our information requests to TURKSTAT and the fact that Van is located in the TRB2 region were important factors limiting our data analysis.

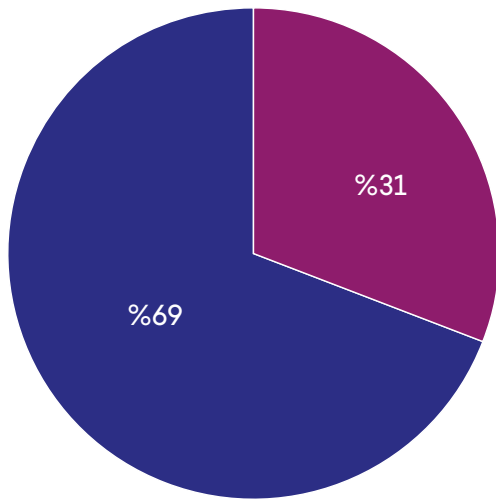
In addition, filling out the questionnaire in a digital environment resulted in accessing only the information of women with these opportunities and skills. This situation prevented access to the knowledge and experiences of women without digital literacy, computer and internet access. Therefore, this limitation is an important factor affecting the representativeness of the data obtained. To overcome this limitation and problem, face-to-face interviews were also conducted. In addition, many women do not believe in change and do not want to be interviewed for security reasons.

In summary, despite these limitations, this report is a monitoring report on the extent and current situation of human rights violations.

3. THE FINDINGS

There are many national and international legal grounds and basis for combating women's poverty. The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) places obligations on states to ensure that women enjoy equal rights in all areas, while the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) focus specifically on gender equality and women's empowerment. International Labor Organization (ILO) conventions regulate women's participation in the workforce and equal pay. In addition, the European Convention on Human Rights prohibits discrimination and emphasizes that everyone has equal rights. Countries also have provisions on women's rights in their constitutions and laws; for example, in Turkey, Law No. 6284 includes provisions for the prevention and protection of violence against women. These legal foundations form an important basis for women's struggle against poverty and the protection of their rights.

The Data from TURKSTAT



Labor force participation rate

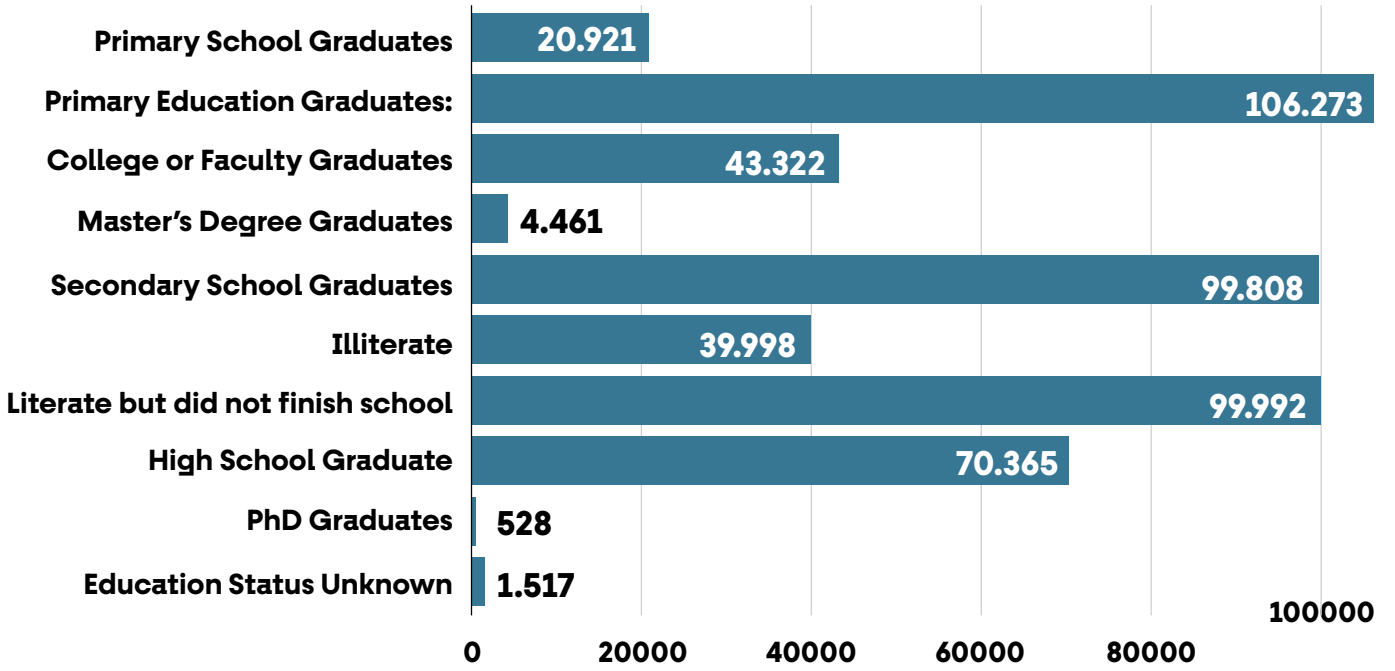


Van, Muş, Bitlis, Hakkari-TRB2 2023 labour force participation rate. Obtained through the information request of Van Star Women's Association.

According to TURKSTAT data, there is a serious disparity between male and female labour force participation rates in the provinces of Van, Muş, Bitlis and Hakkâri. European Social Charter¹⁷ emphasizes that everyone has the opportunity to earn a living through freely available employment and the right to equal opportunities and equal treatment without discrimination on the basis of sex in employment. Women's low labour force participation rate of 31% is contrary to the principle of gender equality. This situation indicates the existence of discriminatory practices that prevent women from participating in economic life.

¹⁷ <https://www.anayasa.gov.tr/media/3680/avrupasosyalsarti.pdf>

Completed Education Level



2023 data on the education level of women living in Van by TURKSTAT. Obtained through Van Star Women's Association's application for information.

According to TURKSTAT data, the distribution of education levels of women living in Van is as follows:

- **Primary School Graduates:** 20,921 women (19.23%)
- **Primary Education Graduates:** 3,785 women (3.79%)
- **College or Faculty Graduates:** 43,322 women (7.84%)
- **Master's Degree Graduates:** 4,461 women (0.81%)
- **Secondary School Graduates:** 99,808 women (18.06%)
- **Illiterate:** 39,988 women (7.24%)
- **Literate but did not finish school:** 99,992 women (18.09%)
- **High School Graduate:** 70,365 women (12.73%)
- **PhD Graduates:** 526 women (0.10%)
- **Education Status Unknown:** 1,517 women (0.27%)

According to the results of the Address Based Population Registration System, the women's population in Van in 2023 is 552,619.

Turkey became a party to CEDAW in 1985. CEDAW requires that all appropriate measures be taken to prevent discrimination against women in order to ensure that women have equal rights to education as men. In Van, while the illiteracy rate for men is 1.4%, it is 8.2% for women, which¹⁸ indicates that women's right to education is not fully ensured. The emphasis on ensuring women's access to the right to education is directly linked to poverty. The presence of illiterate women and women with unknown educational status in Van indicates that this situation is related to broader socio-economic problems.

As a result of our information request to TURKSTAT and direct searches on their website, we have observed a lack of important data on women's unemployment in Van, the number of women who have to continue their education in open education, and women's average salaries. This lack of data not only makes women's economic and social situation less visible, but also prevents policy makers from adequately understanding the challenges and needs of women. This leads to a deepening of gender inequality.

¹⁸ <https://nip.tuik.gov.tr/?value=EgitimDurumu>

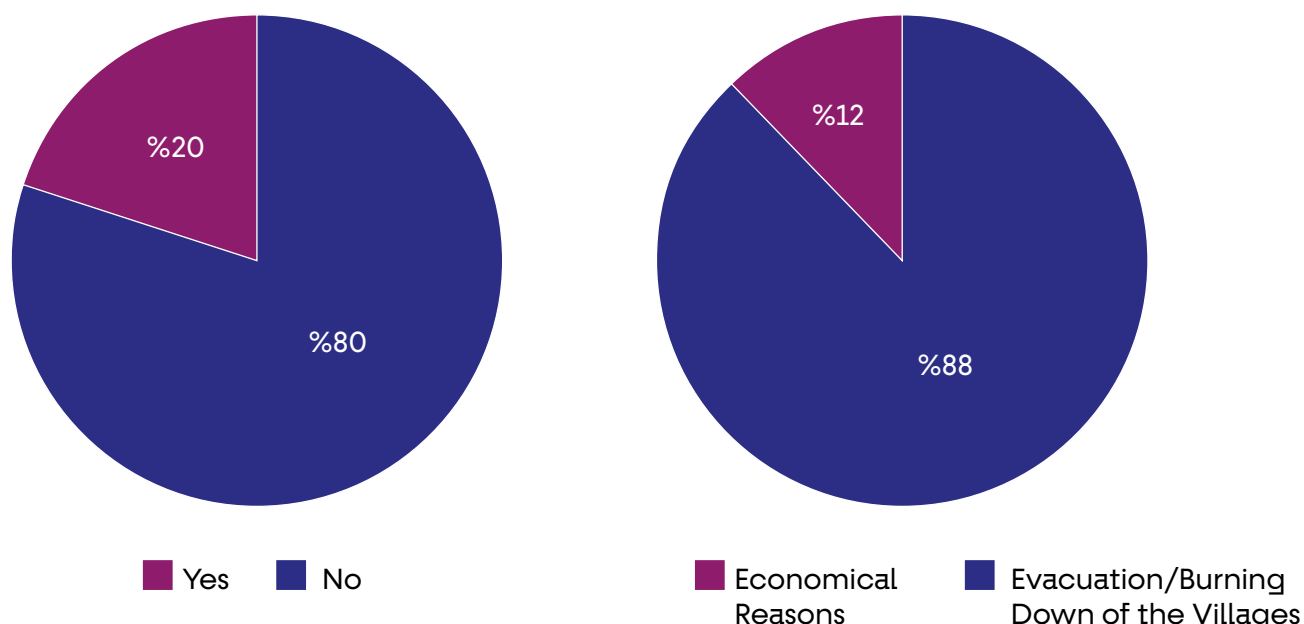
The Migration Phenomenon

After presenting the TURKSTAT data, and before moving on to the findings of the interviews we conducted, we would like to emphasize important points about the meaning and importance of this data. Although the historical dimension of deepening poverty among Kurdish women is beyond the scope of this report, we have included additional questions in our interview forms and online survey, as we believe that women's migration history is critical to understanding these phenomena and developing solutions. Migration is a process that shapes not only economic hardship, but also cultural and social identity dynamics. Therefore, examining migration history is considered a vital step in developing effective policy recommendations.

80% of the women who participated in face-to-face interviews stated that they had migration experience. This leads to poverty in various ways. Forced displacement causes people to lose their economic and social networks, reducing their employment opportunities and income. In addition, they face inadequate resources and support systems in their new settlements, causing individuals and families to struggle to meet their basic needs. As a result, the migration experience deepens the cycle of poverty, significantly limiting individuals' opportunities for social and economic development.

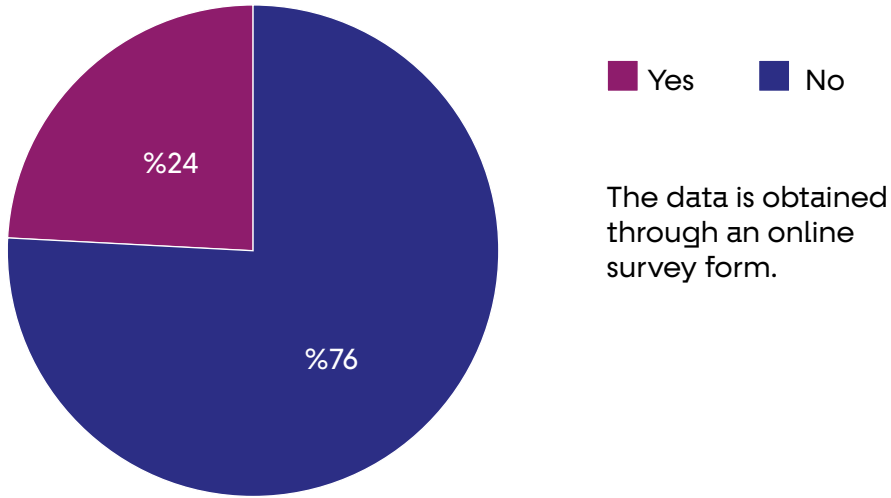
One of the important reasons for the poverty experienced by Kurdish women living in Van is the situation resulting from the forced displacement, rural-urban migration and securitization policies that started in the 1980s and continued to diminish.

Responses to the questions "Have you experienced migration?" and "What is the reason for migration?"



Face-to-face in-depth interviews were conducted with 10 women in the Hacibekir (Xaçort) neighbourhood of Van through a semi-structured interview form.

Have you experienced forced displacement, experienced internal or external migration?

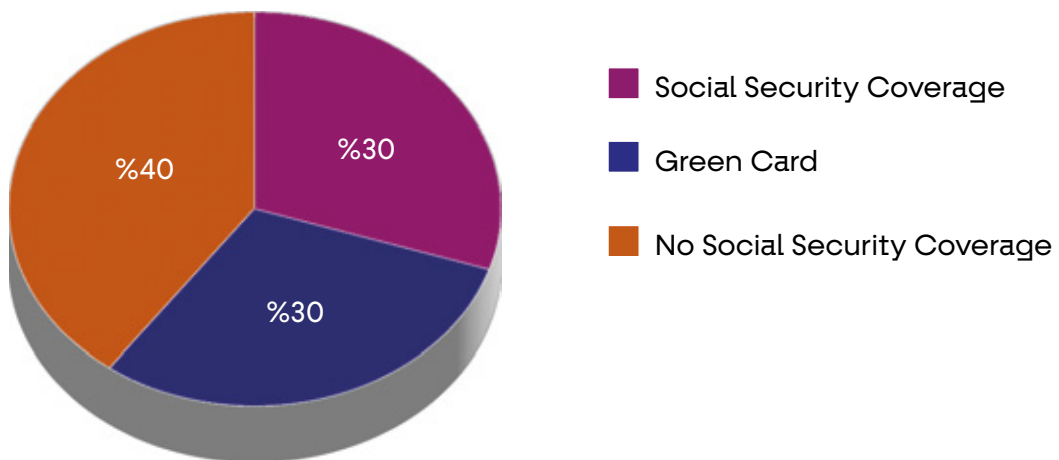


Findings from Face-to-Face In-Depth Interviews

When the interviewees were asked about their level of education, it was found that 2 were primary school graduates, 2 were high school graduates, 5 had never attended school and 1 had a bachelor’s degree. The 5 people who never went to school could not read, write or speak Turkish. Therefore, interviews with these participants were conducted in Kurdish. 8 of the interviews were conducted in Kurdish.

Experiences and perceptions of poverty are directly related to factors such as household size, food consumption and social security. Women’s poverty is a complex problem that leads to many human rights violations.

Social security status of the respondents



The fact that most of the participants in the interviews did not have any social security is particularly noteworthy in terms of women's poverty. Access to social security is a mechanism that improves the living standards of individuals by protecting them against risks such as health, retirement and unemployment. The fact that women do not have this security further deepens gender inequalities and leads them to lead a more precarious and uncertain life.



**Not being enough for the children.
Not getting what they want.
We used to be able to consume meat.
Now it is very difficult.**

(24 years old, married, 2 children)



Answers to the question "What is the most common meal cooked in your home, how often do you consume meat, legumes and fruit?"



These results show that even in its most basic form, nutrition is perceived as a luxury for women. Consumption of legumes, meat and fruit is almost non-existent. This is because these foods are generally more costly. Pasta is mostly consumed at home because it is cheap. This shows that women's right to a healthy and balanced diet is violated under conditions of poverty.

Article 11 of the UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights¹⁹ guarantees the right of individuals to adequate food.

Women's poverty and dietary habits have a mutually reinforcing relationship. Declining diet quality and lack of access to healthy food negatively affect women's participation in economic and social life as well as their health. Poverty reduces the quality of women's nutrition and causes them to move away from healthy living standards, and the problems caused by this situation prevent women from taking a more active role in social and economic life. In this context, strengthening the state's social assistance policies would be an important way to reduce women's poverty and build healthier societies. Thus, both the physical health and social participation of women will be supported.

¹⁹ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
<https://unmik.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/regulations/06turkish/TIntCovEcSocCulRights.pdf>

The Survey Findings

My mother... Raising dozens of children on her own... and trying to offer life to all of them. And crying all the time on the way. Because everyone around us had every opportunity that she couldn't offer us, and while we were suffering this poverty, my mother couldn't do anything. As they say, women woke up before the sun rose here. Women gave birth to the sun. My mother was always a woman who gave birth to the sun. She started her struggle for life by waking up at 5 a.m. every day.²⁰

("What does Kurdish women's poverty mean to you?", 24 years old, bachelor's degree, single)

In the survey study we conducted, we prepared an online survey for women between the ages of 18-28 in order to reach a wider audience than the neighbourhood residents we focused on in face-to-face interviews. In this study, we tried to understand more deeply how young Kurdish women define poverty, what they expect from the future and their hopes. The survey questions focused on the necessity of starting work at a young age, the responsibility of providing for the family and how their hopes for the future are shaped by these difficulties.

Rather than making the survey public through an open announcement, we disseminated it through civil society organizations, teachers and members of the Star Women's Association, who are in direct contact with young people. In this way, we aimed to reach our target audience more effectively. The fact that the education level of the respondents was higher than the Van average was an important source of data for us to understand the perception and interpretations of poverty among this demographic group.

In our survey, we also reached out to individuals outside of the target age group,²¹ which allowed us to receive feedback from different age groups, rather than limiting our research to a certain segment of the population. While this expanded the scope of our study, it also enabled the data we obtained to have a multidimensional structure.

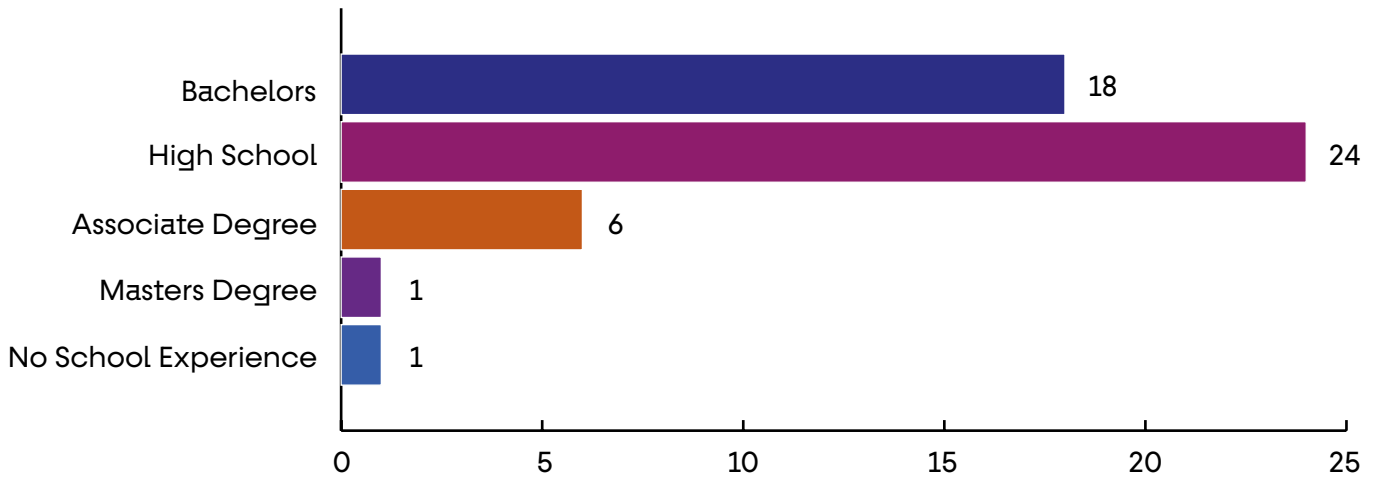
The answers to the question "**Which of the following do you think you have to struggle against as a Kurdish young woman?**", which we asked to 50 women who participated in our survey, are as follows:

1. **Inequality between men and women:** %84
2. **Discrimination on the basis of language:** %64
3. **Discrimination on grounds of race, colour and ethnic origin:** %62
4. **Inequality of opportunity:** %54
5. **Poverty:** %46
6. **Inadequate education and work opportunities:** %46

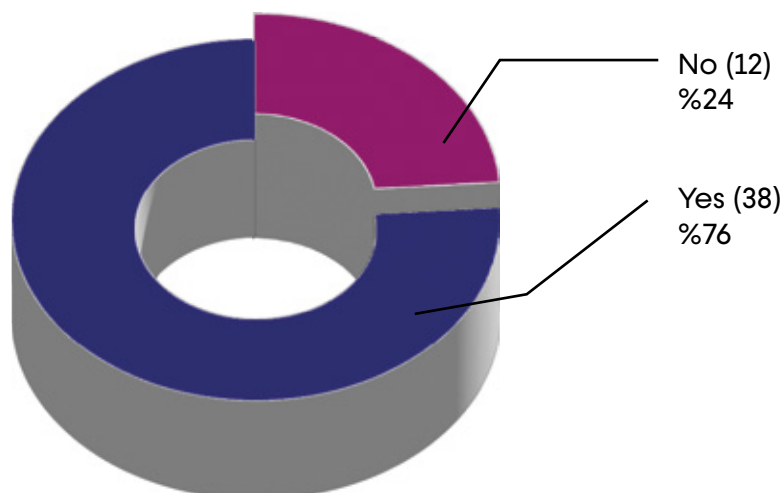
²⁰ The responses of the survey participants are reflected in the report without any corrections.

²¹ In the survey, 4 people outside the targeted 18-28 age range participated in the survey. Their ages ranged between 31-43 years.

The education level of the participans



Have you ever earned money through work?



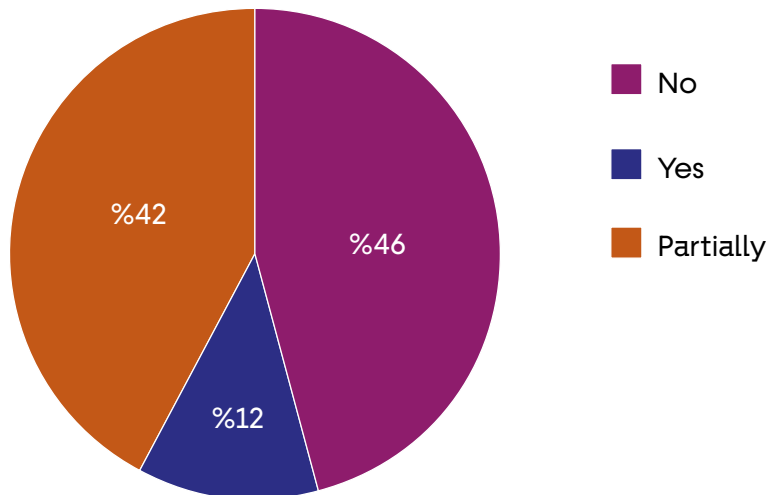
In our survey, since the poverty of Kurdish young women is not sufficiently visible in TURKSTAT data, we focused on understanding how deep poverty is transmitted as a legacy and how the younger generation experiences it. Among the main problems frequently encountered in youth poverty, deprivation of education, working in low-paid and precarious jobs, increased family obligations and hopelessness about the future stand out. We have included these issues in our survey in order to analyse these situations in more depth.

Our aim was to make the effects of this poverty on young Kurdish women more visible and to understand the conditions that shape their hopes for their future. To this end, the data we received from the participants aimed to reveal the difficulties faced by young women both economically and socially. The 84% “yes” response to the question “Do you think that economic conditions determine your education?” in our survey shows that the majority of the participants consider it a necessity to have favourable financial conditions in order to continue their education. This response strikingly demonstrates that economic hardship, in other words poverty, limits young people’s educational opportunities and negatively affects their future.

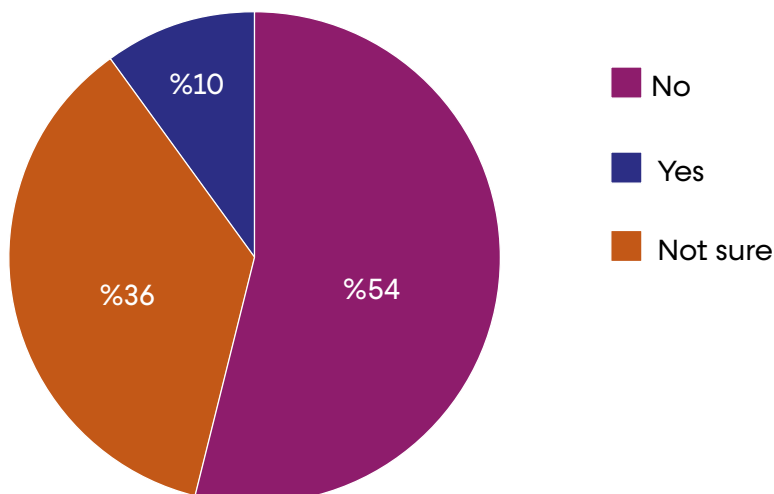
I think that not being able to access the basic needs necessary to live is doubly difficult both as a Kurd and as a woman. Unfortunately, it is a problem that we have observed that the conditions as a Kurdish woman continue with more difficult processes on top of our gender roles. These processes continue.

(26 years old, master's degree, single)

Are you satisfied with your social life



Do you think you will get retired?



In our study, the fact that only 12% of women answered “yes” to the question “Are you satisfied with your social life?” clearly reveals the dissatisfaction of young Kurdish women in social life. Similarly, the fact that 27 out of 50 respondents answered “no” to the question “Do you think you will get retired?” shows how widespread economic insecurity and uncertainty about the future are. The fact that these 27 people believe that they will have to work for the rest of their lives confirms the concept of “feminization of poverty”. The inequalities Kurdish women face in social and economic life both reduce their quality of life and perpetuate the cycle of poverty.

We asked the women who participated in our survey the open-ended questions “How do you define poverty?” and “What does Kurdish women’s poverty mean to you?” In this way, we aimed to understand the thoughts and experiences of the participants about poverty in more depth. The answers we received reflect the different dimensions and personal experiences of poverty, while also revealing the perception that exists in society on this issue.



I can describe it as a grey colour

(23 years old, bachelor’s degree, single)



It is behind the curtain

(22 years old, undergraduate student, single)



As the 11th child in a crowded family, I experienced it to the fullest. Going to school hungry, not being able to feed myself, never being helped when I was open to any help. Poverty was the lack of that joy that made our eyes shine, maybe even being deprived of a dry loaf of bread.

(24 years old, undergraduate student, single)



The data we gathered through face-to-face interviews and a survey enabled us to analyse Kurdish women’s poverty in depth, the details of which can be found in the annex of this report.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although the historical dimension of deepening poverty among Kurdish women is beyond the scope of this report, it is of critical importance for understanding women's migration history and developing solutions to these phenomena. Within the scope of the questions posed to the participants in our report, it was observed that access to nutrition and healthy food and the difficulties women experience in obtaining healthy food are directly related to poverty.

In addition, the relationship between migration and poverty is also one of the important findings of the report; it has been observed that forced migration or migration based on economic reasons deepens women's poverty, especially for Kurdish women. Therefore, it is important that the impact of migration on women's poverty is not ignored in terms of the effectiveness of the policies and strategies proposed.

Kurdish women's poverty in Turkey manifests itself in various human rights violations. Poverty restricts women's rights in areas such as education, health and access to healthy food, and prevents their participation in social life. In this context, it is of utmost importance that the following recommendations are implemented in order to overcome the difficulties faced by Kurdish women and to secure their rights;

The violations we identified in our monitoring work are as follows;

- 1. Access to Education:** Due to inequalities in the education system, Kurdish women are unable to access the right to education and receive adequate education, which limits their economic independence.
- 2. Employment Opportunities:** Kurdish women find it difficult to participate in the labour force and are often forced to work in low-paid jobs. This situation leads to economic poverty.
- 3. Access to Health Services:** Poverty can hinder Kurdish women's access to health rights, which can lead to health problems, especially during critical periods such as pregnancy and childbirth.
- 4. Discrimination and Violence:** Kurdish women may be more exposed to discrimination and gender-based violence due to their ethnic origin.
- 5. Participation in Decision-Making Processes:** Economic poverty and social exclusion limit Kurdish women's opportunities to influence decision-making processes within the family and community.
- 6. Social Support and Solidarity:** Kurdish women are not aware of social support mechanisms and cannot benefit from them sufficiently, which leads to the deepening of their poverty.

These violations lead to the marginalization of Kurdish women in social and economic life. Various policies and programs need to be developed to reduce poverty and protect rights.

Kurdish women face various social and economic challenges, deepening the poverty spiral. Barriers to education, employment, health and access to basic services prevent Kurdish women from participating more effectively in social life and limit their economic independence. In this context, it is crucial that state institutions and local administrations take an active role in Kurdish women's fight against poverty. The recommendations presented below include concrete steps to help overcome the challenges faced by Kurdish women. In addition to combating poverty, these recommendations aim to empower women and ensure their more active participation in social life.

Recommendations for Government Policies

1. Increasing Access to Education:

- **Scholarships and Incentives:** Scholarships should be provided to girls who want to continue their education.

2. Access to Health Services:

- **Free Health Services:** Free health services should be provided for women and health checks should be organized.
- **Hygiene Products Subsidy:** The state should provide regular hygiene product subsidies to poor women and girls.

3. Employment and Economic Support:

- **Promoting Women Entrepreneurship:** Grants and low-interest loans should be offered to women entrepreneurs, and cooperation should be established with CSOs on business plan preparation.
- **Vocational Training Programs:** Vocational training courses for women should be organized to increase their participation in the workforce.

4. Social Security and Support Programs:

- **Targeted Social Assistance:** Special social assistance programs should be developed for poor women to ensure effective delivery of such assistance.
- **Family Support Programs:** Support mechanisms should be established to meet the nutritional, health and educational needs of women and children.

5. Mechanisms of Protection from Violence:

- **Women Support Centres:** Support centres should be established where women can apply in cases of violence, and these centres should provide services in Kurdish. Poor women should have easy access to existing legal aid procedures and practices that guarantee women's right to access to justice should be developed.
- The capacities of centres providing legal and psychological support should be strengthened. The activities of support centres that provide preventive and protective measures specified in the Istanbul Convention and Law No. 6284 should be monitored.
- **Legal Support:** Legal information and support services for women should be provided.

6. Social Awareness and Education:

- **Gender Equality Training:** Trainings on gender equality and women's rights should be organized for public officials and community members.
- **Awareness Campaigns:** Campaigns should be organized to raise public awareness on women's rights, violence and poverty.

7. Providing Access to School by Shuttle:

- Safe and regular shuttle services should be provided to all students in transport education to facilitate their access to educational institutions. This service should be planned to ensure that students reach school safely and on time.

Recommendations for Local Administrations

1. Women's Cooperatives and Entrepreneurship Support:

- Local administrations should increase women's economic independence by establishing women's cooperatives and support them with grants or low-interest loan programs. For example, local handcraft or agriculture cooperatives could be established.

2. Training and Awareness Seminars:

- Local administrations should organize vocational skills development courses for women. These courses should be in Kurdish and increase women's opportunities of finding a job.

3. Transportation Support for Children:

- Free school shuttles should be provided for children going to school and their routes should be determined according to the needs of poor families.

4. Women Support Centres:

- Women's support centres should be established to provide social, psychological and legal support for poor women. In these centres, women should be able to receive services in Kurdish language and find solutions to their needs.

5. Public Markets and Product Sales Supports:

- Local administrations can help women entrepreneurs promote their products and generate income by organizing public markets where women's products can be sold.

In the fight against poverty, Turkey should comply with the provisions of international and regional human rights protection instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, CEDAW, the European Social Charter, and protect everyone's right to a standard of living, housing and social security. For example, free shuttle services could be provided for children in rural areas to access school and housing assistance could be provided to disadvantaged families. In line with CEDAW, women's poverty should be tackled and the rights of rural women in particular should be strengthened. In this context, women's participation in the workforce can be increased and micro credit support programs can be implemented. In addition, access to secure employment and social security should be ensured in line with ILO Conventions, for instance, through expanding pension and health insurance coverage for women in low-paid and precarious jobs. Policies in line with these obligations will contribute to poverty reduction and social equality.



APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Face-to-Face In-depth Interview Results and Graphs

Appendix 2: Survey Results and Graphs

Appendix 3: Survey Questionnaire

Appendix 4: Face-to-Face In-depth Interview Questionnaire

Appendix 5: Request for Information Questionnaire



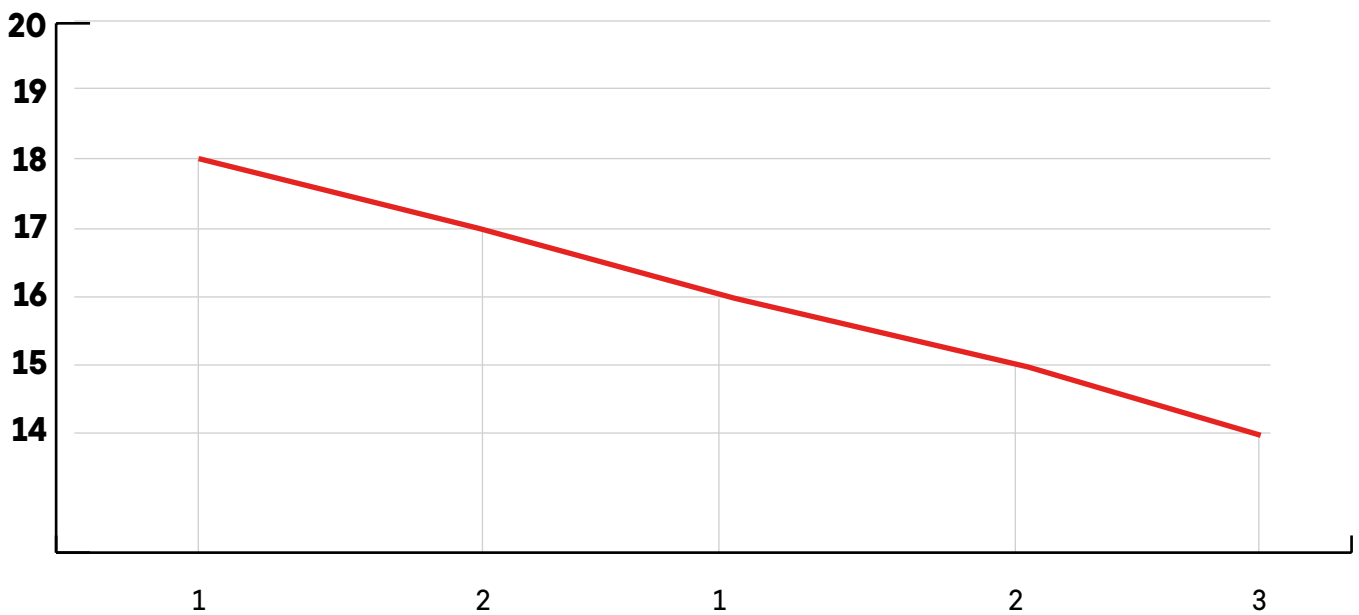


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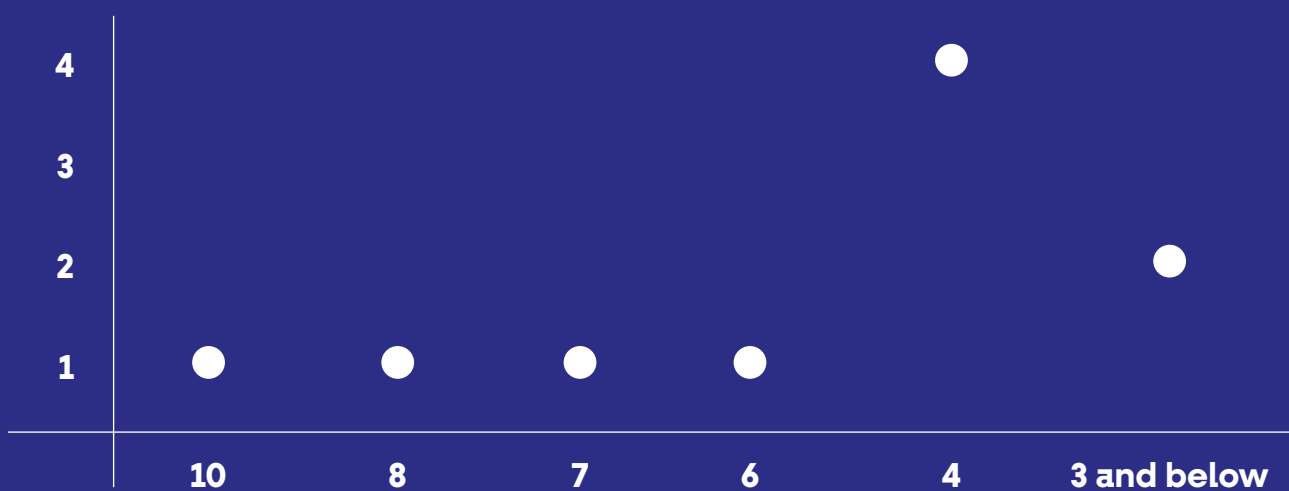


Findings From Semi-Structured Face-to-Face Interviews

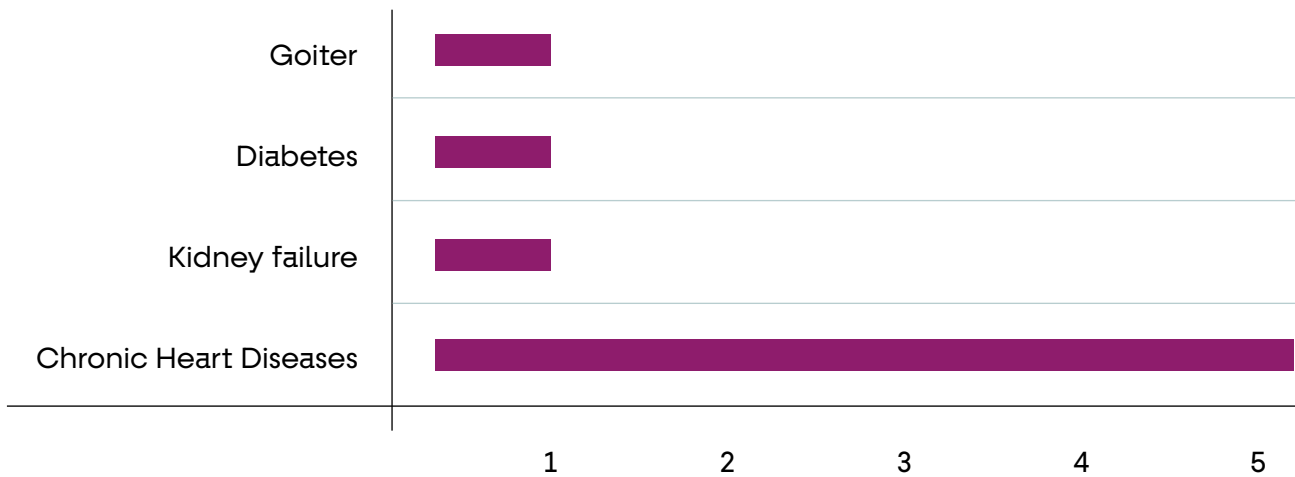
Interviewees Age at the Time of the Marriage



Number of people living in the household

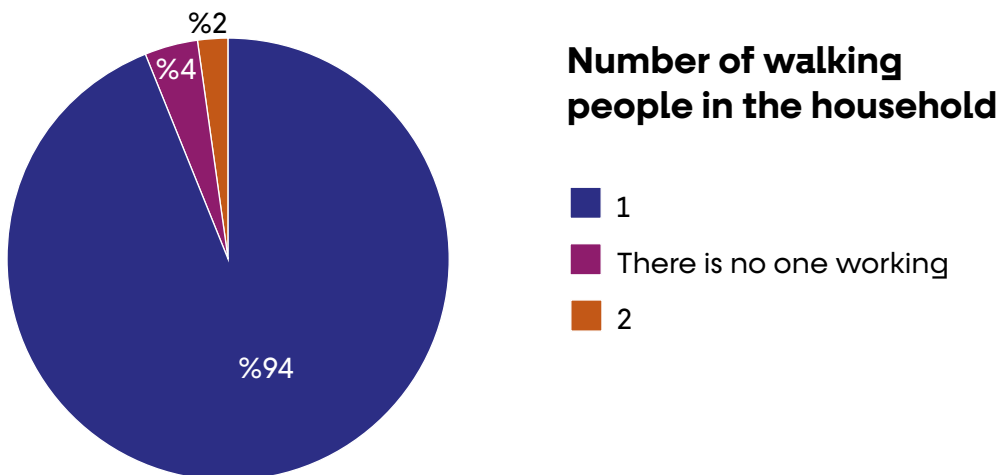
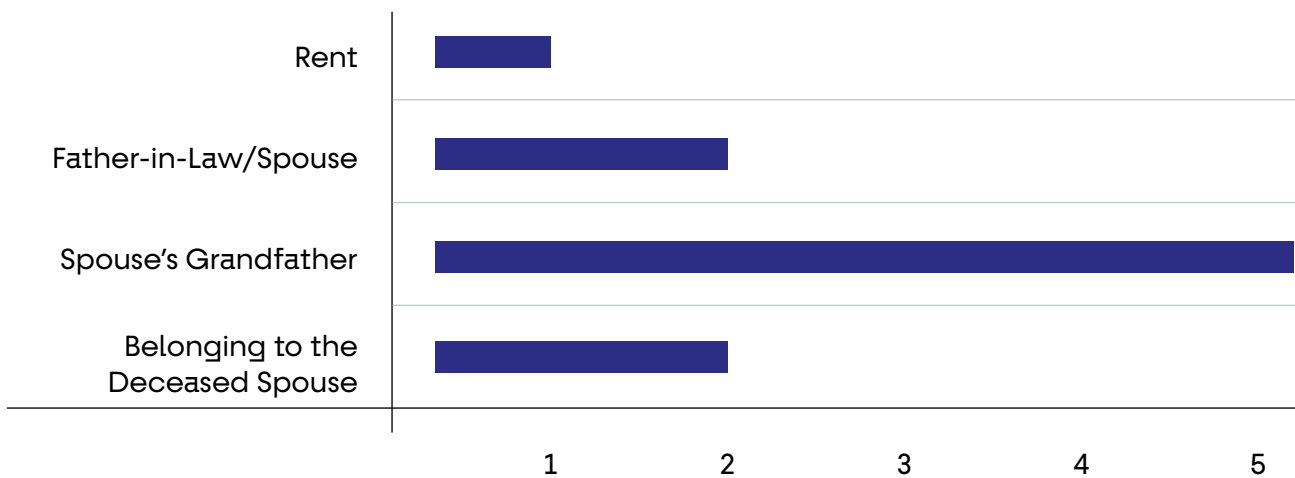


Chronic Diseases

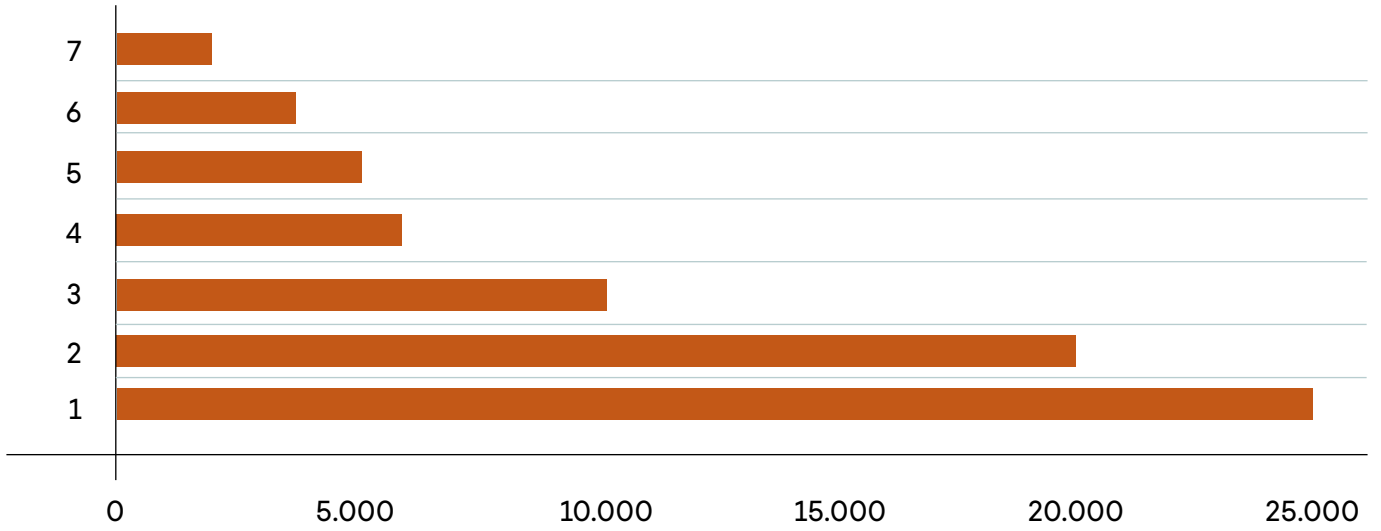


Within the scope of our study, 8 out of 10 migrants we interviewed were found to have chronic diseases.

Ownership status of the dwelling where the interviewees reside

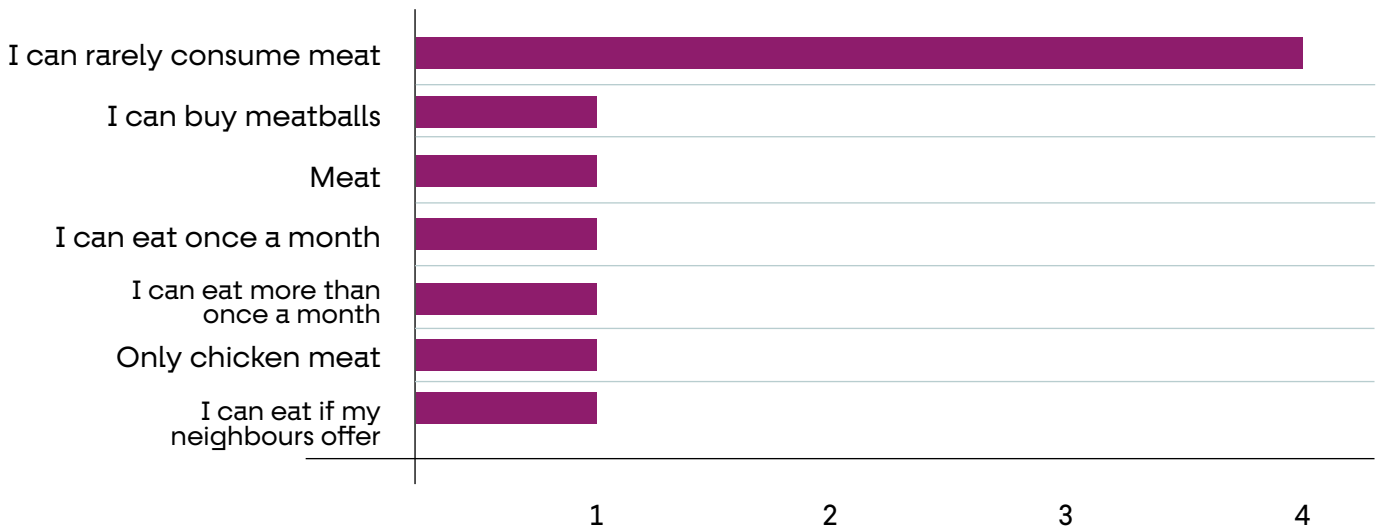


Interviewees monthly income indicator

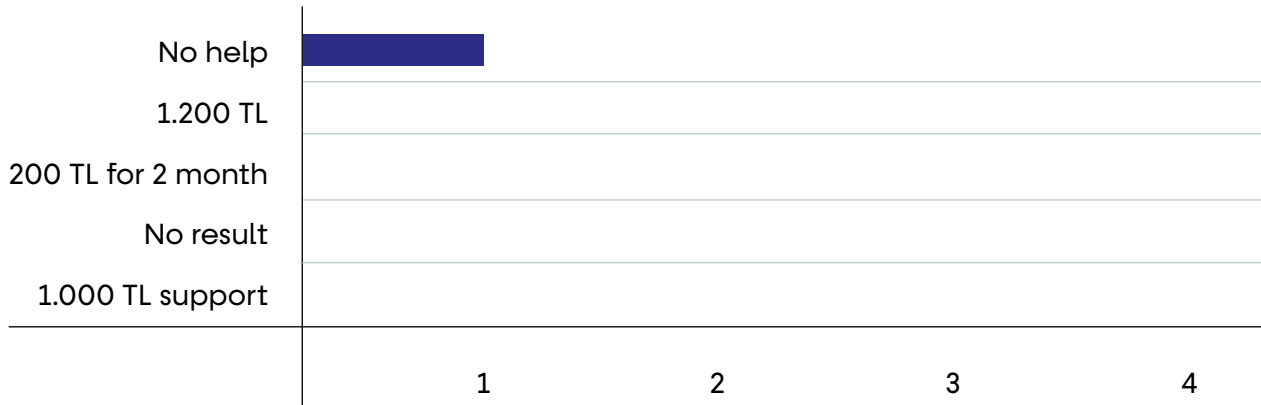


For 10 people, the average household income is 7,100 TL.

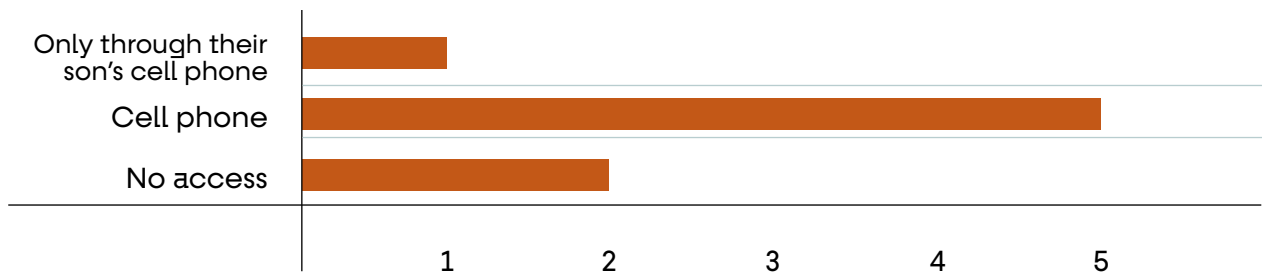
Meat consumption of the interviewees



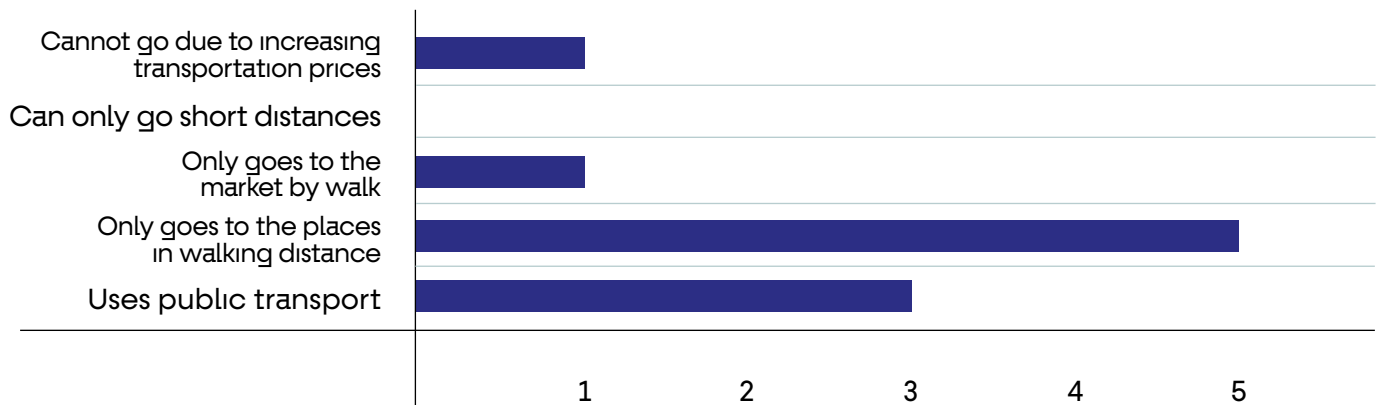
Beneficiary status of the interviewees from social assistance



How do they access the internet?



How do they get to their destination, to their relatives



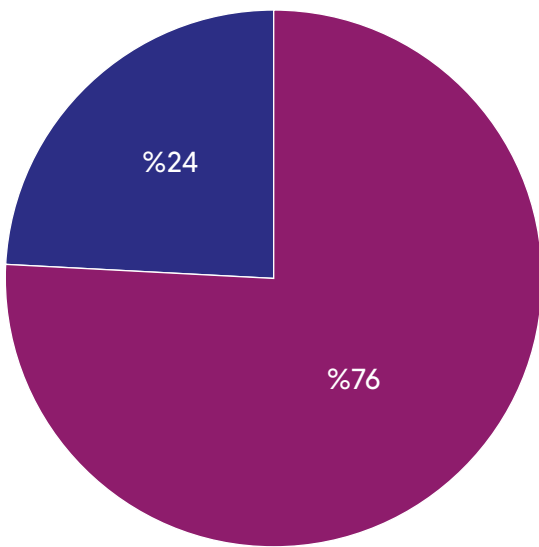


DE-EP Appendix-2



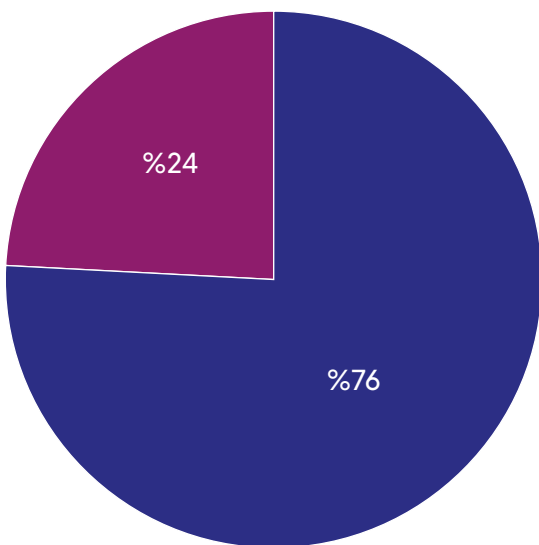
Survey Results and Graphs

50 women responded to the survey titled "Poverty of the women living in Van", which was administered via Google Forms between July 25 and August 22, 2024:



Number of people working in a job that generates income

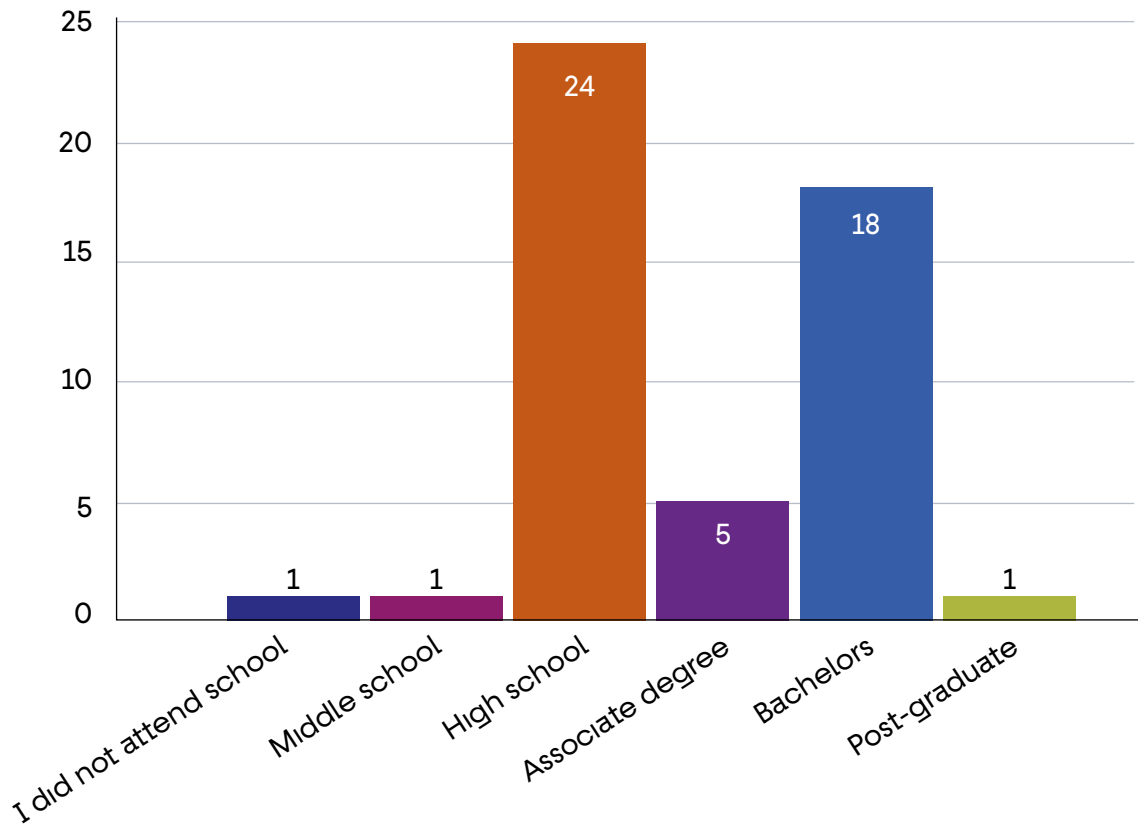
- No %24
- Yes %76



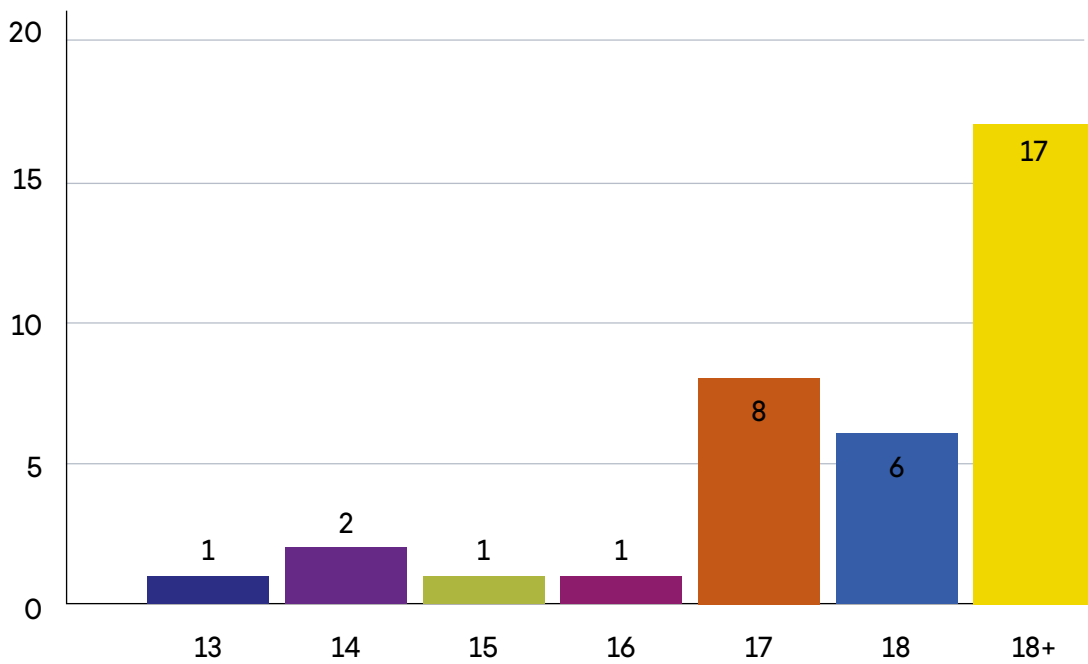
MIGRATION STORY: "Have you experienced forced displacement, internal or external migration?"

- No %76
- Yes %24

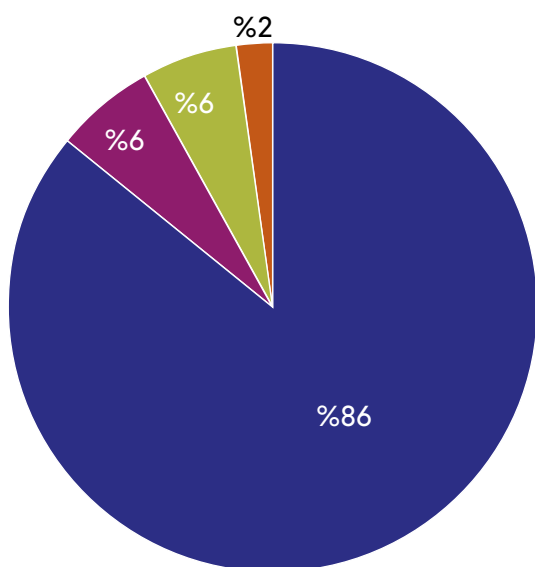
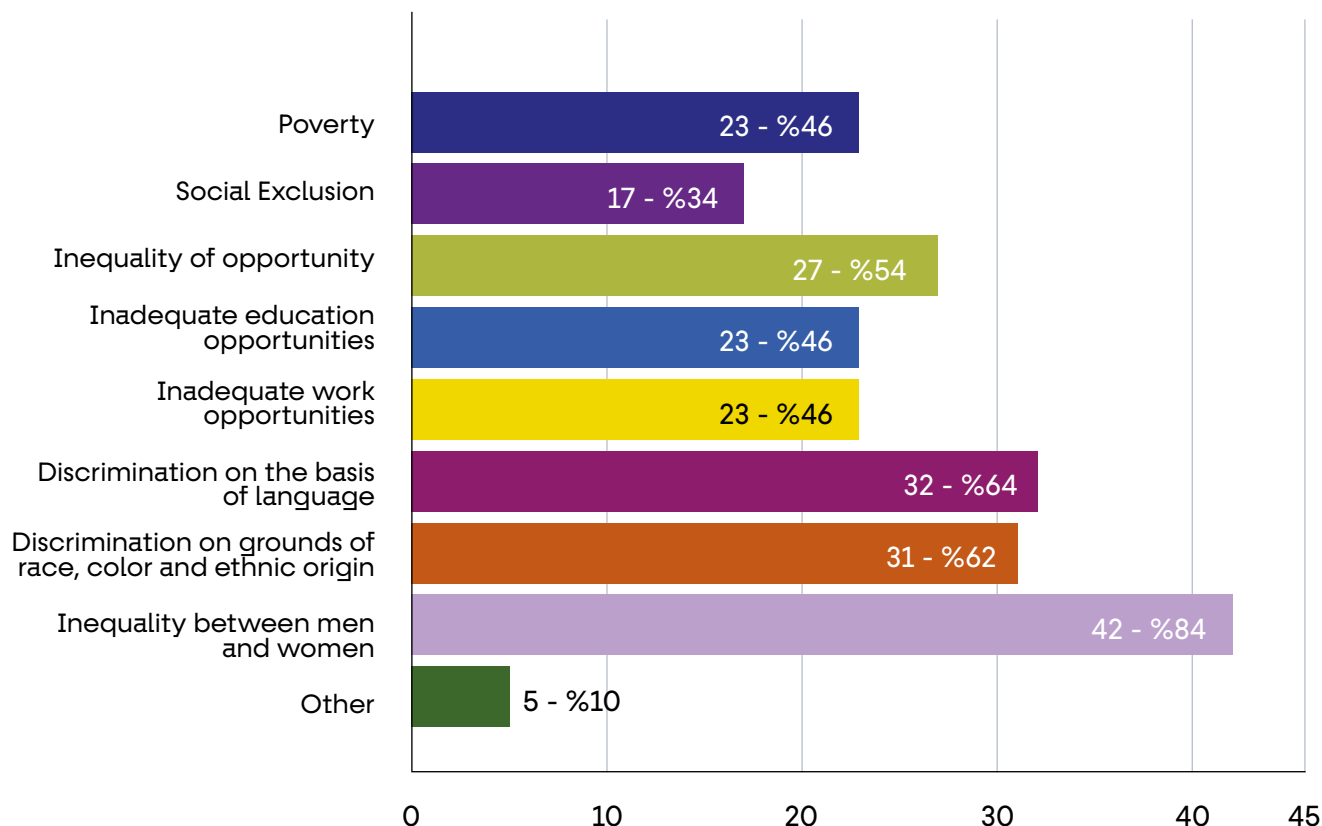
Participant's Last Completed School



Age at First Employment of Those Who Had Previously Gained Work



Which of the following do you think you have to struggle against as a Kurdish young woman?



Do you think economic conditions determine your educational status?

- Yes %86
- No %6
- Partially %6
- Not sure %2

The answers to the open-ended question **“What does Kurdish women’s poverty mean to you?”** are summarized below. In addition to answers such as racism, discrimination, inequality, exclusion, helplessness, indifference, the following were also expressed;



The concept of poverty is difficult, and when you add the difficulties of being Kurdish and a woman, life becomes insufferable.

A poverty of education caused by poverty

Poverty based on ethnicity and gender. In cases where access to resources is problematic, I can say that this is due to being a woman and Kurdish.

Adding disadvantages in terms of social understanding and especially the difficulty of being a woman

My mother... raising dozens of children on her own... and trying to give them all a life. And crying all the time along the way. Because everyone around us had every opportunity that she couldn't offer us, and while we were suffering this poverty, my mother couldn't do anything. As they say, women woke up before the sun rose here. Women gave birth to the sun. My mother was always a woman who gave birth to the sun. She started her struggle for life by waking up at 5 am every day.

It is a great rottenness that even this survey is not in Kurdish.

Our poverty is not only caused by economic conditions, but also by our ethnic identity and the fact that we are women deprives us of many things, so despair dominates us the most.



The answers to the open-ended question **“How can you define poverty?”** are summarized below.



Poverty is a concept that restricts the individual in social, educational, cultural and many other aspects and affects a large part of the individual’s life by making him/her feel worthless and inadequate.

It is the greed and profit-seeking exploitation of labor by some people, and the limited access of the exploited people to the resources to sustain their lives.

As the 11th child of a crowded family, I lived it to the fullest. Going to school hungry, not being able to feed myself, never being helped when I was open to any help that might come. Poverty was the lack of that joy that made our eyes shine, maybe even a dry loaf of bread.

Inadequacy not only financially but in every aspect

Poverty or destitution is the state of not having enough income to meet all or most of the basic daily needs.

Lack of financial means that hinder my dreams

Having an income that is insufficient even for one's own self-current and that prevents one from even socializing

Disgraceful

The absence of something we want in our lives. It is not just money. Poverty of opportunity, poverty of love, poverty of rights, etc.

I can define it as not having access to the basic needs necessary to live. Failure to meet even basic needs leads to insecurity, hopelessness and a loss of the joy of living. In such a situation it is very difficult and meaningless to enjoy life. We also spend on many things in every aspect of life. Even the education we want to receive for our own development is very costly.

Limiting the prospects of future.





DE-EP Appendix-3



Survey Questionnaire

Greetings,

This form was prepared for online interviews with women aged 18-28 for the 2024 human rights monitoring report to be prepared by VAN STAR WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION on poverty experienced by women living in Van.

Our aim is to understand the poverty of Kurdish women living in Van and to develop our monitoring work on this issue. We aim to get your views on poverty.

While answering the questions, you can pause if you wish; you can stop answering the questions or all of them.

1. Do you consent to participate in this study?

- Yes
- No

2. What is your age?

3. What is your marital status?

4. Do you have children?

- Yes
- No

5. If your answer is "Yes", how many children do you have?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4 and above

6. Do you have any other dependents (mother, father, sibling, elderly, disabled family member, etc.)?

7. What is your most recently completed level of education?

- Never went to school
- Primary
- Secondary
- High school
- Associate
- Bachelor
- Master
- Doctorate
- Other

8. If you are currently still studying, at what level are you studying?

9. Have you experienced forced displacement, internal migration or external migration?

- Yes
- No

10. If your answer is "Yes", can you write your reason for migration? (Education, work, marriage, etc.)

11. Do you live alone?

- Yes
- No

12. If your answer is “No”, can you share the number of people living in the household?

- 1-4
- 4-9
- 9-15
- 16 and above

13. Have you ever worked in a job to earn income?

- Yes
- No

14. If you have worked before, at what age did you start your first job?

15. Have you worked in an income-generating job in the last 1 year?

- Yes
- No

If your answer is “Yes”, do you work with social security?

16. What job have you worked or are working at?

17. Can you share with us your monthly net salary and working hours in your last job?

18. Which of the following do you think you have to struggle with as a Kurdish young woman?

- Poverty
- Social exclusion
- Inequality of opportunity
- Inadequate educational opportunities
- Inadequate employment opportunities
- Discrimination on the basis of language
- Discrimination on the basis of race, color and ethnic origin
- Inequality between men and women
- Other

19. Are you satisfied with your social life?

- Yes
- No
- Partially

20. Do you think that economic conditions determine your educational life?

- Yes
- No
- Partially
- Not sure

21. Do you think you will retire?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

22. How can you define poverty?

23. What does Kurdish women’s poverty mean to you?

24. Is there anything you would like to add about the topic of this study?



DE-EP Appendix-4



Face-to-Face In-depth Interview Questionnaire

This form was prepared for the field interviews to be conducted in Hacibekir neighborhood for the human rights monitoring report to be prepared on the poverty experienced by women living in Van in 2024.

1. Do you consent participating in the interview?

- Yes
- No

2. May we learn your age?

3. What is your marital status?

4. Have you experienced migration? If yes, can you tell us for which reason?

5. Who do you live with? What is the number of households?

6. Is your residence rented? Or if you live in family property, who owns it? Does the house you live in have problems? If yes, what are they?

7. Do you work in an income-generating job? If so, could you please specify the net salary and working hours?

8. Do you know the total household income? Can you share it?

9. What is your education level? Up to what grade did you last study?

10. What is your first working age?

11. Have you applied for social assistance? If yes, where: Municipality, District Governorate, Foundations, etc.?

12. Can you tell us about the assistance you receive, if any? What is the exact cost? How long, how often, is it enough?

13. What made you decide to apply for assistance?

14. Where did you get this information? Who did you hear it from?

15. Do you have any social security?

16. How do you define poverty?

17. What do you think would be different if your financial situation was better?

18. What is your education level? To what extent did you study?



DE-EP Appendix-5



TUIK Information Request Questions

TUIK VAN REGIONAL DIRECTORATE

REQUESTED BY: Star Women's Association

Address: Milli Egemenlik Caddesi Karizma Business Center Kat:4 No:

SUBJECT: This is an application to obtain information in order for our association to fulfill its data collection, research and reporting obligations within the scope of human rights monitoring activities.

REMARKS

On behalf of Van Star Women's Association, of which I act as the Chairperson of the Board of Directors, we are reaching out to you in order to access the data we need for the human rights monitoring work we are conducting in the context of women's poverty within the scope of our association's activities.

The data we could not access on the official website of TUIK are as follows.

1. What is the number of women living in Van by age group?
2. What is the average income of women living in Van by age groups?
3. What is the rate of female unemployment in Van?
4. What are the number of female employees and the sectors where women work in Van?
5. What is the labor force participation rate of women in Van?
6. What is the literacy rate and education level of women in Van?
7. What is the number of girls and women in Van who did not attend or continue basic education, that is, did not continue formal education after the 8th grade, or were discontinued from school between 2021 and 2024?
8. What is the number of girls under the age of 18 enrolled in open primary education in Van between 2021-2024?
9. What is the number of families, individuals and women living at the "hunger limit" and "poverty line" in Van?
10. What is the ratio of women and men who own a house registered in their own name in Van?
11. What is the number and rate of poverty of "single women" and "single parent families consisting of women and children" in Van?
12. What is the proportion of women at risk of poverty or social exclusion by age groups in Van?

Since our report must be prepared within a certain period of time, we respectfully request that the answers to the questions asked above within the framework of the monitoring activity be sent to us in writing.

