

Are there gender effects of 'gender-neutral' compulsory schooling laws in Turkey?

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Turkey increased compulsory schooling from five to eight years in 1997. Though compulsory schooling requirements are not gender specific, the change may have had asymmetric effects on boys and girls. Especially in rural parts of Turkey, sons often receive more schooling than daughters. If the previous compulsory schooling law was binding for girls but not for boys, then girls may have benefited disproportionately by the increase in compulsory schooling.

I use Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) data for Turkey from 1993 and 1998. I present a descriptive picture of school enrollment for boys and for girls in both periods, and analyze the change in enrollment for boys and girls at various ages over time using household-level data. I control for important family characteristics, and for region and urban/rural residence in order to ascertain the extent to which migration to urban areas contributed to changes in enrollment over the period.

Table 1 shows school enrollment statistics for boys and girls at various ages from household reports in DHS data. Children enter school at or after age six. If a child enters at age six, he or she would complete the compulsory level of education at age ten under the rules in 1993, or at age 13 under the rules in 1998.

Note that boys have an advantage over girls in terms of the percentage enrolled at every age in both 1993 and 1998, with one exception at age six in 1993¹. At and after age twelve, enrollment rates for boys are considerably higher than that for girls in both periods. Prior to age fifteen, the percentage difference between girls' and boys' enrollment is actually larger in 1998 than in 1993 for most ages. This does not seem to suggest that girls made disproportionate gains

¹ I am checking whether this may be a data error

over this period. However, at and above age fifteen the percentage difference in enrollment for boys and girls has fallen as of 1998. However, there are relatively few of either gender enrolled at these ages in both periods.

Table 2 shows growth in enrollment, both in percentage points and as growth rates, for girls and boys at each age between 1993 and 1998. Here we see that there was actually some backsliding in enrollment at several ages for girls and at 3 ages for boys. Using household-level data, I will analyze what these declines in enrollment, coupled with increases at other ages, imply for educational attainment for girls and boys. Further, I will estimate the determinants of enrollment at each age, controlling for attainment, location of residence, and other family characteristics, including sib-ship composition. In order to formulate policy or outreach programs that are successful at both raising enrollment, and closing the gender gap in enrollment, an understanding of the determinants of school enrollment in the context of Turkey is needed.

The paper will also discuss programs aimed at increasing enrollment among rural and poor children that occurred after 1998, and possibilities for future research on the effects of these programs.

Table 1: School Enrollment Statistics from DHS Data

Age	1993				1998			
	% girls in school	% boys in school	difference (pctg pts)	% difference	% girls in school	% boys in school	difference (pctg pts)	% difference
6	20.5	18.9	-1.6	-7.9	27.9	29.4	1.4	5.2
7	60.0	64.3	4.3	7.2	69.0	70.4	1.4	2.0
8	90.5	92.0	1.5	1.7	82.0	91.4	9.4	11.4
9	92.9	94.2	1.3	1.4	89.8	94.4	4.6	5.1
10	91.4	93.6	2.2	2.4	82.2	91.6	9.3	11.4
11	79.0	89.7	10.7	13.5	78.6	91.5	12.9	16.4
12	58.1	79.4	21.4	36.8	57.4	86.7	29.2	50.9
13	49.2	73.4	24.2	49.1	53.1	76.4	23.3	43.9
14	43.0	60.9	17.9	41.7	40.8	62.1	21.2	52.1
15	38.7	56.3	17.6	45.5	47.2	57.2	10.0	21.2
16	28.9	51.3	22.4	77.4	35.5	52.9	17.4	48.8
17	21.6	41.5	19.8	91.7	22.0	32.6	10.6	48.1

Table 2: Growth in Enrollment, 1993-1998

Age	Percentage Point growth		Difference (percentage pts)	%growth	
	Girls	Boys		girls	boys
6	7.4	10.5	3.1	36.1	55.4
7	9.0	6.1	-3.0	15.1	9.4
8	-8.5	-0.6	7.8	-9.4	-0.7
9	-3.1	0.2	3.2	-3.3	0.2
10	-9.2	-2.1	7.1	-10.1	-2.2
11	-0.4	1.8	2.2	-0.6	2.0
12	-0.6	7.2	7.9	-1.1	9.1
13	3.8	2.9	-0.9	7.8	4.0
14	-2.2	1.2	3.3	-5.0	2.0
15	8.5	0.9	-7.6	22.0	1.6
16	6.6	1.6	-5.0	23.0	3.2
17	0.4	-8.8	-9.3	1.9	-21.4