

# Women’s Murders and the Economy in Turkey: A Subnational Analysis (Non-Technical Summary)<sup>1</sup>

Kerim Can Kavakli, Bocconi University<sup>2</sup>

**Motivation:** Violence against women, and its most extreme form, murder, are common problems in many countries including Turkey. Understanding the factors that contribute to this problem and why more women are murdered in some places than others can help us combat the problem effectively.

**Contribution:** In this paper I conduct the first systematic analysis on why more women are killed in some provinces of Turkey than in others. Although there are many studies on violence against women in Turkey, systematic studies on women’s murder (femicide) are rare. I investigate the relationship between various socio-economic, cultural and political factors and the frequency of women’s murders.

**Statistical research design:** To study the correlates of women’s murders I use a dataset where the unit of analysis is province-year. I use the Negative-Binomial estimator in my analysis and correct for province population.<sup>3</sup>

My data on women’s murders come from the Male Violence Tally (*Erkek Şiddeti Çetelesi*) compiled by Bianet and include the years 2010-2017, which gives me a total of 648 observations. Although this data is probably incomplete, I argue that it captures most of the women’s murders committed across country and probably very little bias results from using it. **Figure 1** shows the geographical distribution of women’s murders (population-adjusted) and **Figure 2** shows the yearly totals.

**Summary of findings:** My analysis shows that *a province’s ethnic composition, economic development, divorce rate, and gender equality in education* have statistically significant associations with the number of women’s murders.<sup>4</sup>

**My main finding is that economic development (captured by *GDP per capita*) can mitigate the effects of other risk factors.** Higher *divorce rates* and greater *gender equality in education* are associated with a greater number of women’s murders. However, in richer provinces these effects are significantly weaker. In other words, **all else equal, the greatest number of women are murdered in provinces that are poor and have a high divorce rate or gender equality in education.**

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<sup>2</sup>Author email: [kerim.kavakli@unibocconi.it](mailto:kerim.kavakli@unibocconi.it). I thank Atakan Yenel for excellent research assistance. All remaining errors are mine.

<sup>3</sup>Further details on the analysis including variable descriptions and data sources are in the full paper.

<sup>4</sup>After controlling for other factors, I do not find a relationship between women’s murders and the *number of mosques* or *civil war exposure* in a province.

Figure 1: Number of Women’s Murders per 100,000 (2010-2017)

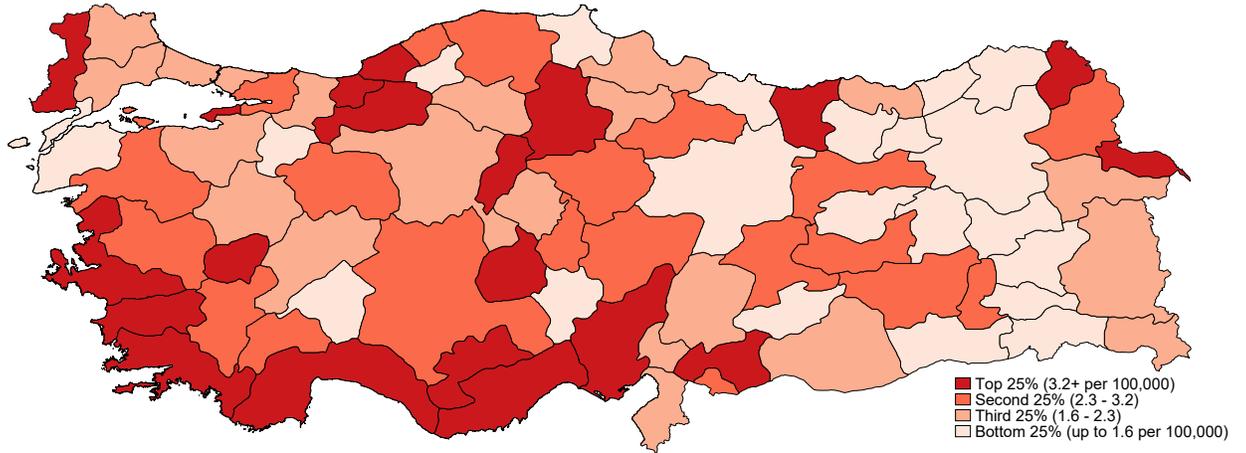
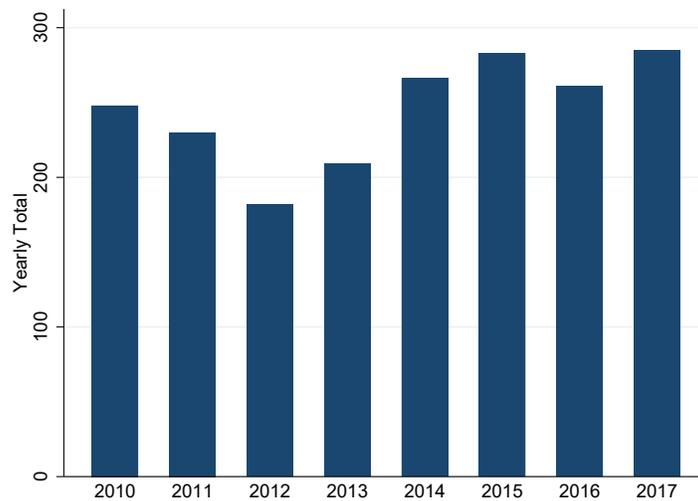


Figure 2: Number of Women’s Murders Across Years



**How much does each factor matter?** To answer this question **Figure 3** predicts the total number of women’s murders in Turkey under different hypothetical scenarios.

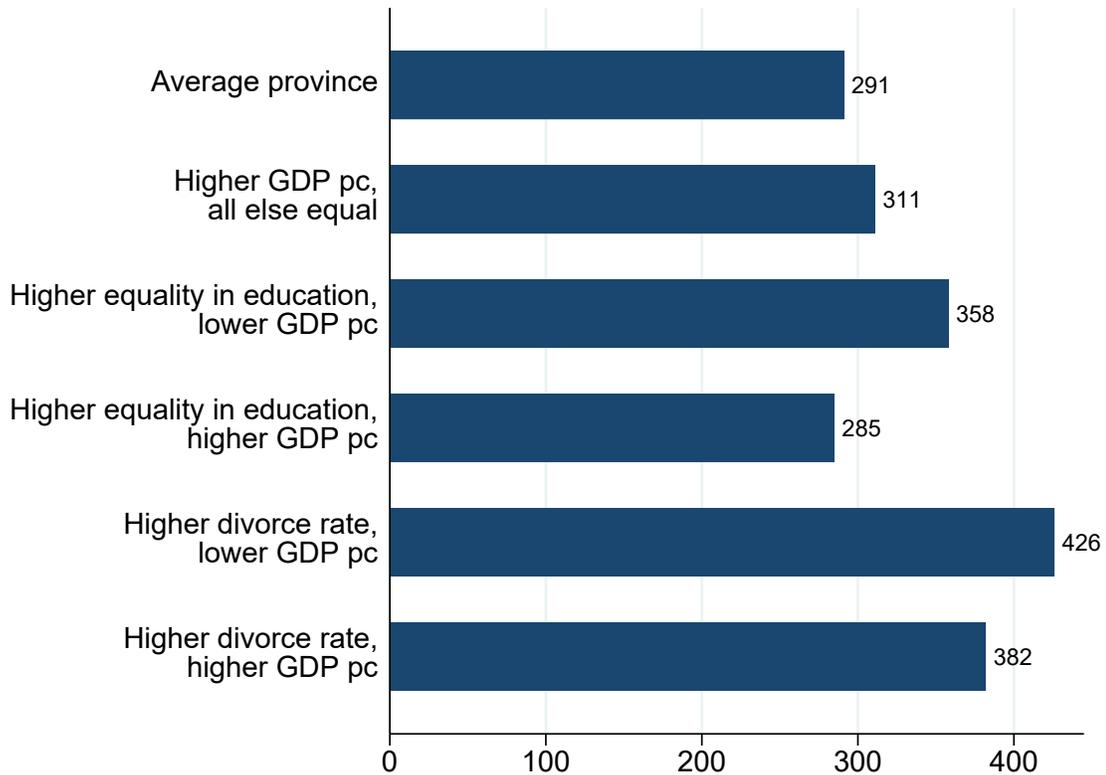
The top bar in Figure 3 shows that, when all variables are at their national mean in 2017, the model predicts 291 murders, which is very close to the actual total (285). The second bar (from the top) shows that if we raise the national GDP per capita to the level of a relatively rich province, then the predicted number of murders rises to 311. In other words, **promoting development by itself may not prevent women’s murders.**

The third and fourth bars show that **greater educational equality is positively correlated with femicide, but the strength of that relationship depends on economic development.** If equality in education and GDP per capita both increase, then my model predicts 285 murders, but if equality in education increases while GDP per capita falls, then it predicts 358 murders. **In other words, economic development seems to mollify**

**the effects of educational equality and reduce women’s murders by about 20%.**

The last two bars tell a similar story, but here development has a smaller effect. If divorce rates and GDP per capita both increase, then my model predicts 382 murders, but if divorce rates increase while GDP per capita falls, then it predicts 426 murders. **Again, economic development seems to mitigate the effect of a risk factor (higher divorce rate).**

Figure 3: Number of Women’s Murders for Hypothetical Scenarios of Turkey



**Important caveat:** My analysis reveals **correlations, not causal relations** between different factors. More research is necessary to understand *why* these empirical patterns (e.g. a positive correlation between educational equality and femicide) exist.

**Main implication of the study:** Effective interventions against women’s murders need to consider multiple factors simultaneously. Policies that address poverty can save many more lives if they are implemented in places that carry additional risk factors such as a high divorce rate. In other words, not all poor provinces are equally dangerous for women. It is possible to design pro-development policies that have a bigger impact on the problem of femicide in Turkey.