



WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Women Leaders *Business Council* Report

PREPARER

Hilal Vatansever

2025

www.aticturkiye.org



Dear Members and Valued Business Partners,
Our partners,

As the Women Leaders Business Council, our goal with this report is to comprehensively analyze the current situation regarding women's entrepreneurship, identify areas of need and opportunity, and offer strategic recommendations to decision-makers and stakeholders.

This report aims to provide a data-based contribution to policy development processes that will support women's entrepreneurship and to determine future strategies.



The concept of gender equality is no longer just an ideal but has become the main force of economic and social development, and women's entrepreneurship is not only an individual career choice but also a locomotive of economic development, innovation, employment and social transformation.

Our Council carries out its activities in line with our business model, which we have created in an integrated structure with our sustainability strategy and short-medium-long term goals.

This not only served as a goal of economic empowerment, but also laid the foundation for social transformation. ATIC operates with the belief that women should have a voice and increase their representation not only in the business world but also in all aspects of society.

As the President of the ATIC Women Leaders Business Council, I develop projects that will contribute to employment, women's entrepreneurship and gender equality in line with this goal of our council.

In this context, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) determined by the United Nations, which constitute an important framework for promoting social, economic and environmental sustainability at the global level, offer us an important roadmap.

As ATIC, we will continue to maintain our commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in our projects and work and our efforts to contribute to the achievement of these goals; by embracing sustainability principles, we will continue to contribute to gender equality in order to empower women in employment and entrepreneurship.

The ATIC Women Leaders Business Council is working resolutely to pave the way for women's entrepreneurship. We will continue our work for a more equitable and sustainable future.

Hilal Vatansever

President of the Women Leaders Business Council

ATIC

American Turkish Trade and Investment Council, Women Leaders Business Council;

It is a council of business professionals focused on providing stronger representation of women in the business world, sharing experiences and providing networking opportunities.

It aims to create collaboration opportunities for members, support gender development in the business world, ensure intellectual leadership and ensure that women play an active role in the workforce and are in leading positions in the sectors in which they operate.

In line with the vision and mission of the Women Leaders Business Council, it provides training, guidance and mentoring support to empower women entrepreneurs, and develops and carries out projects and studies aimed at strengthening the economic position of women and equal opportunities for men and women.

WOMEN LEADERS BUSINESS COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

- To increase the number of female employees in working life and to encourage the support of female entrepreneurs.
- To support the personal and business development of ATIC women members and to support their impact and growth.
- To support women's working life and entrepreneurship and to be a reference point
- To encourage young women to continue their education, participate in working life and become entrepreneurs.
- To provide training and mentoring to women so that they can enter the workforce and become entrepreneurs.

WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP: THE RISE OF QUIET POWER

Women Leaders Business Council Report - Women's Entrepreneurship Report -2025

1. INTRODUCTION

The 21st century is witnessing a beautiful era of women's leadership and women's entrepreneurship.

The world is facing a reality where gender equality is no longer just an ideal but a fundamental force for economic and social development. In this context, women's entrepreneurship is becoming not just an individual career choice but also a driver of economic development, innovation, employment, and social transformation.

Women entrepreneurs don't evaluate processes solely in terms of economic gain; they also focus on social impact, environmental sustainability, and people-centered management styles. This report explores this transformation and aims to reveal the opportunities, obstacles, contributions, and future potential of women entrepreneurs.

As the Women Leaders Business Council, our goal with this report is to comprehensively analyze the current state of women's entrepreneurship, identify areas of need and opportunity, and offer strategic recommendations to decision-makers and stakeholders. This report aims to provide a data-based contribution to policy development processes that will support women's entrepreneurship.

This report demonstrates women's power with full force, featuring data, case studies, industry analysis, and policy recommendations. It not only describes today but also aims to shape tomorrow's potential.

2. OVERVIEW: TRENDS IN GLOBAL WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Women's entrepreneurship plays a critical role in reshaping economic structures around the world. Recent international research reveals that women-founded businesses stand out not only for their economic returns but also for their capacity to create social benefits. By rewriting the traditional definition of entrepreneurship, women are playing an active role in building a more environmentally friendly, participatory, and effective business world.

Global Female Entrepreneurship Rates: According to the GEM (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor) 2023/2024 data, the global average rate of women in early-stage entrepreneurship **has reached 10.4%, and** the rate of registered business ownership has reached **5.9%**. These rates vary by region; higher rates are observed in regions such as Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa, while rates are lower in some developed countries in Europe and Asia. However, the general trend is that female entrepreneurship continues to strengthen and expand globally.

Sectors Where Female Entrepreneurs Concentrate: While women entrepreneurs have traditionally concentrated in areas such as the service sector, retail, food, and education, in recent years they have begun to enter more male-dominated fields such as technology, fintech, green energy, healthcare technologies, artificial intelligence, mobile applications, and the defense industry. The increasing proportion of female founders, particularly in the startup ecosystem, is noteworthy.

Factors Affecting Women's Entrepreneurship:

Women's entrepreneurial journeys are challenged by obstacles such as gender stereotypes, access to capital, lack of mentorship, difficulties establishing a life-life balance, and inadequate representation in decision-making mechanisms. However, through women's solidarity networks, national and international support programs, digitalization, and online platforms, these obstacles are being broken down and transformation is taking shape.

Global Most Striking Fact:

According to McKinsey, if women participated in economic life on an equal footing with men, the global economy could generate an additional \$28 trillion in revenue by 2025. This demonstrates that women's entrepreneurship is not only a social and impactful issue but also represents a tremendous economic potential. This clearly demonstrates that women's entrepreneurship is not merely a social issue to be supported but, on the contrary, an indispensable element for global economic stability, innovation, and inclusive development.

3. WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP ECOSYSTEM IN TÜRKİYE

The women's entrepreneurship ecosystem in Turkey has been undergoing a significant transformation in recent years. Government policies, NGO initiatives, funds, and grants have steadily increased women's representation in business. Despite this growth, however, current rates remain well below potential. Increasing support mechanisms for women entrepreneurs, awareness-raising activities and structural transformations will further strengthen this field.

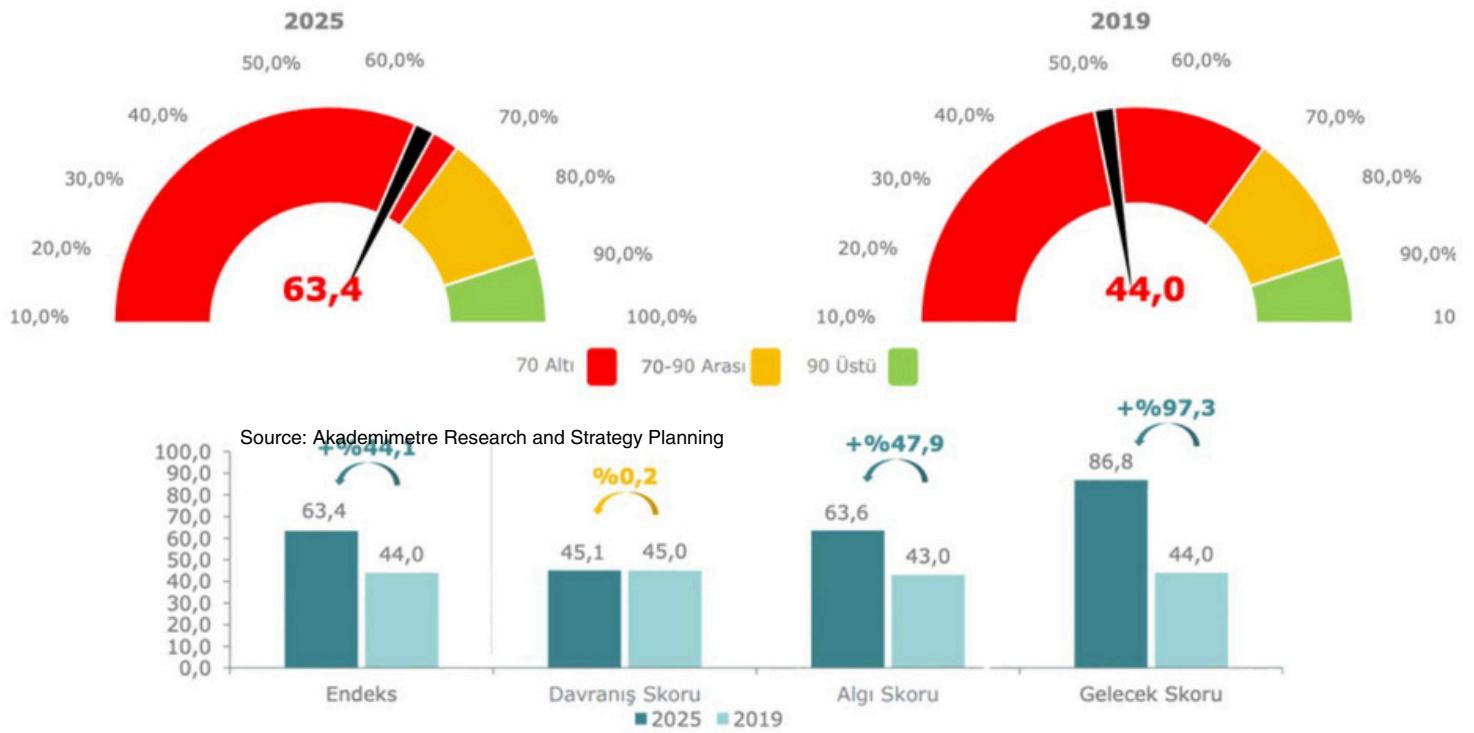
3.1. Female Entrepreneurship Rates

According to data from TÜYK and KAGIDER, approximately 18.2% of total entrepreneurs in Turkey are women. This rate was 13.1% in 2002. Although there has been a 5% increase over the last 20 years, this increase is still below the OECD average. The female employment rate is 32.5%, and the labor force participation rate is projected to reach 36.8% by 2024.

3.2. Sectoral Distribution: Women entrepreneurs in Turkey are most active in sectors such as services, food, textiles, and education. In recent years, increasing female participation has also been observed in areas such as technology, digital marketing, logistics, small-scale manufacturing, and social entrepreneurship. However, women's presence remains limited in areas such as industry, defense, and advanced technology. This highlights the need for new strategies to facilitate women's access to fields perceived as "male-dominated."

3.3. Regional Distribution and City-Based Data According to TUIK data, women's entrepreneurship exhibits an unbalanced structure regionally. According to 2023 data, the Istanbul region (TR10) hosts 22.4% of all women entrepreneurs, followed by the Black Sea region (TR90) with 9.2% and the Marmara region (TR42) with 6.6%.

Women Entrepreneurship Index



3.4. Accessing Finance and Using Credit

The most fundamental challenge women entrepreneurs face is accessing capital. While banks offer discriminatory loan programs, they are often unable to fully utilize these programs due to a lack of collateral or information. According to the 2023 third-quarter report of the Banks Association of Turkey, a total of **41 billion TL in loans** were provided to approximately 64,000 women entrepreneurs between July and September; the number of women entrepreneurs using credit during this period was reported as approximately **297,000**. In the distribution of loans, the services sector is in first place with 46%, while industry is in second place with around 30%.

3.5. Support Mechanisms and Policy Recommendations

There are various support mechanisms for women entrepreneurs in Turkey:

- **KOSGEB:** Provides grants and special support for women entrepreneurs (e.g. +150,000TL establishment and business support)
- **TÜBİTAK:** Implementing women-focused R&D and technology support programs.
- **Development Agencies:** Support women's cooperatives and social initiatives through regional development and training projects.
- **Halkbank and Other Banks:** Loans for women entrepreneurs are offered with low interest and unsecured options.
- **NGOs:** Structures such as KAGIDER, TOBB Women Entrepreneurs Board, TÜRKONFED Women Platform provide mentoring, networking and training support.
- **ATIC – American Turkish Trade & Investment Council:** Strengthening cooperation between Turkey and the US, ATIC supports women entrepreneurs with specialized programs and services aimed at bringing them into international markets. ATIC's "KOBİPORT" digital platform offers guidance to women-owned businesses on market entry, legal and tax expertise, financial consulting, e-commerce strategies, and access to the US market.

In addition , within the framework of **the 12th Development Plan (2024–2028)** , it is aimed to increase the female labor force participation rate to 40.1% and the employment rate to 36.2%.

3.6. Assessment

The women's entrepreneurship ecosystem in Turkey has promising momentum. However, structural challenges, financial barriers, and societal perceptions make it difficult to realize this potential. It is clear that Turkey will raise the bar in the field of women's entrepreneurship if inclusive policies, targeted support, and women's leadership are fostered.

4. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPACT OF WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

Female leadership is not simply a matter of position or title; it emerges as the face of a force that drives structural transformations in society, fosters economic development, and ensures social justice and inclusiveness. The presence of women in leadership positions not only increases diversity within institutions but also makes decision-making mechanisms more effective, more empathetic, and more manageable with long-term perspectives.

4.1. Economic Contribution of Women Leaders

- According to a 2023 report by **McKinsey & Company**, companies led by women show 21% higher profitability than companies led by men.
- **The Boston Consulting Group** has shown that startups led by female founders generate higher returns per investment. Female founders add more value to every dollar invested.
- Women generally stand out with their management styles that are people-oriented, place importance on long-term growth plans, and are prone to transparency and corporate social responsibility.

4.2. Social Impact and Transformation

Structures with female leaders achieve higher scores not only in economic performance but also in areas such as **employee satisfaction, social impact, environmental awareness and equality in education**.

- In the areas of **ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance)**: The IFC report highlights that women-led companies have significantly better ESG performance, which strengthens shareholder trust and corporate reputation.
- **Social entrepreneurship**: According to data from the Harvard Kennedy School, women can focus on projects that impact disadvantaged segments of society, thus increasing social impact by investing in family, education, and the local community.
- Detailed academic analyses have also shown that female social entrepreneurs **have a lower risk of "misconduct" and that they make impact-oriented progress** without deviating from their subsidiary goals.

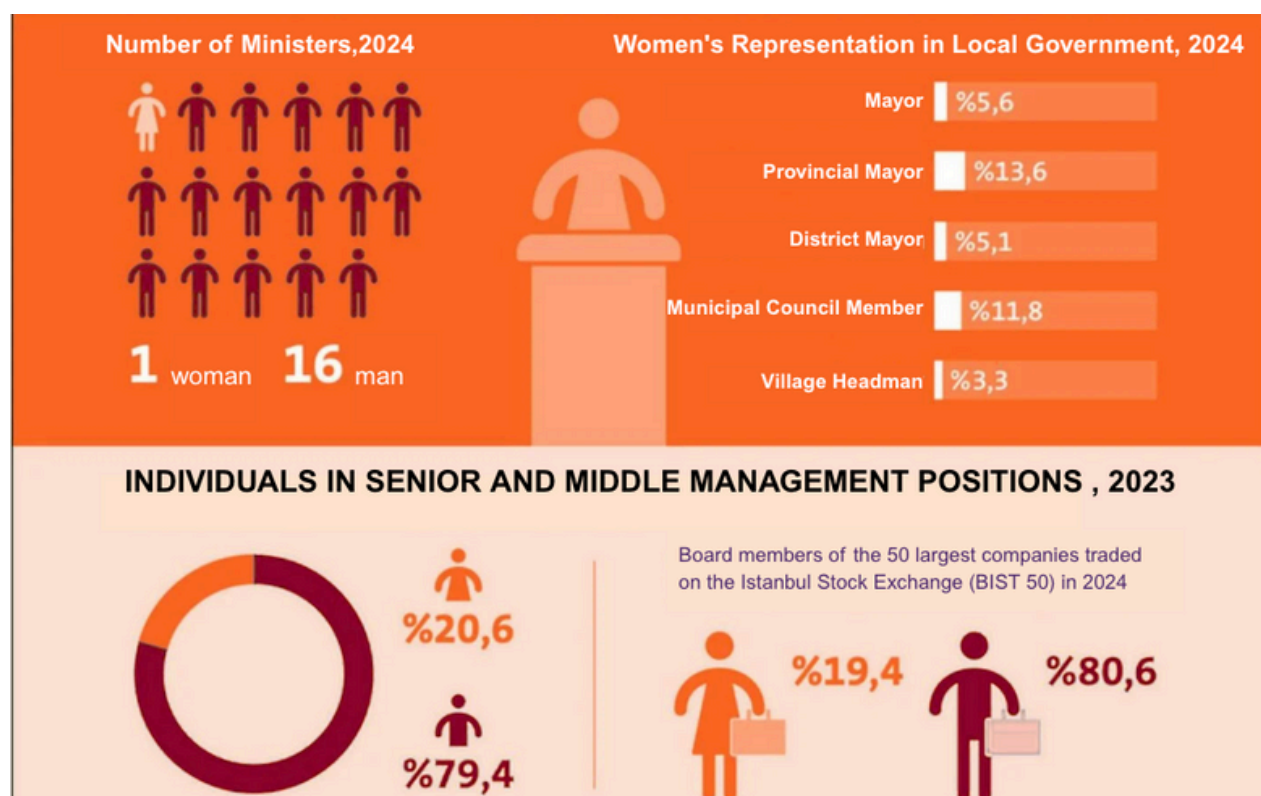
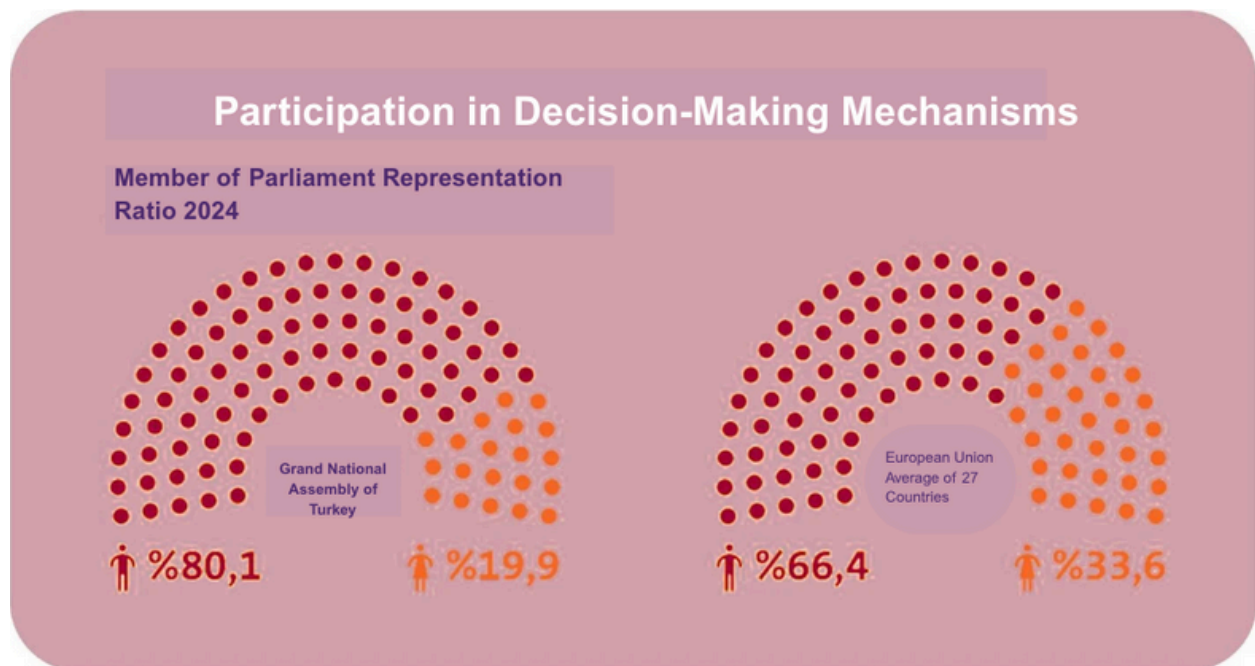
4.3. Role Model Influence and New Generation Inspiration:

Women leaders play a critical role not only in today's economic and social order but also in shaping the vision of tomorrow. As **role models** for young women and girls, these leaders increase the new generation's belief in their own potential and strengthen their sense of "**can do**." Research shows that female leadership figures positively impact the self-confidence, academic performance, and entrepreneurial tendencies of young women in particular. The increasing visibility of women leaders disrupts social norms, strengthens women's presence in decision-making mechanisms, and inspires future leadership positions.

4.4. Assessment:

Women's leadership not only increases economic efficiency; it also fosters social justice, effective values, and inclusive development. Women's active participation in decision-making mechanisms enables societies to develop more resilient and creative solutions not only to today's problems but also to the uncertainties of tomorrow. In this context, women's leadership is much more than just a representation. This is **the mind of development, the body of justice, the heart of sustainability.**

4.5. Data



Professions

RATIO OF PROSECUTORS TO JUDGES

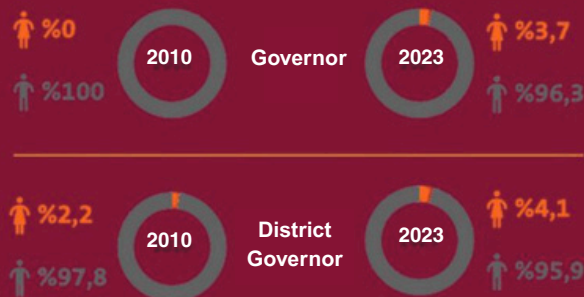
Prosecutor Ratio



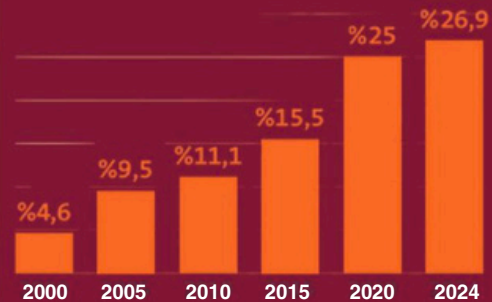
Ratio of Judges



RATIO OF GOVERNORS AND DISTRICT GOVERNORS

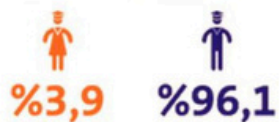


PERCENTAGE OF FEMALE AMBASSADORS



RATIOS OF RECTORS AND ACADEMICS EMPLOYED IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Rector ratio at state universities,
2023-2024



Rector ratio at foundation
universities, 2023-2024



(in the 2023-2024 academic year)

Percentage of women among
professors in higher education

%34,6

Percentage of women among
associate professors in higher education

%42,1



Sources: Ministry of Justice, Justice Statistics, 2006 - 2023, Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2010, 2023, Higher Education Council, 2015, 2023

5. POLICY AND SUPPORT MECHANISMS

The continuity and expansion of women's entrepreneurship is only possible with structural policies and effective support mechanisms. While Turkey has made significant strides in this area in recent years, there are still structural challenges for women entrepreneurs in accessing financing, training opportunities, mentoring, and commercialization. Therefore, the continuity, comprehensiveness, and alignment of support with strategic goals are crucial.

5.1. Existing Public Supports

- ✓ **KOSGEB:** Offers special support for women entrepreneurs; priority is given to providing **non-refundable support of up to 375,000 TL** under the "Advanced Entrepreneur Support Program." Women entrepreneurs receive an additional bonus of 10,000 TL for their applications.
- ✓ **TÜBİTAK:** The "BIGG" program provides special R&D and mentoring support for women. As of 2023, 501 women entrepreneurs had benefited from this program.
- ✓ **Development Agencies:** Provide training and feasibility support to women's cooperatives and rural/social initiatives through projects targeting regional development.
- ✓ **Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry:** Provides agricultural grants and support to women farmers through TKDK/IPARD programs.
- ✓ **Ministry of Commerce:** Runs programs that facilitate access for women's businesses in areas such as exports, international fair participation, and e-commerce.

5.2. Financial Institutions and Bank Programs

- ✓ **Halkbank Women Entrepreneurs Loan:** Loans of up to 600,000–1,000,000 TL are offered to women-owned businesses, either without collateral or with low collateral.
- ✓ **Garanti BBVA, VakıfBank, Ziraat Bank:** Provides special low-interest loan packages, mentoring, training and market access support for women entrepreneurs.
- ✓ **Angel investor networks and funds:** Thanks to the proliferation of structures such as the Arya Women's Investment Platform, investment opportunities specifically for female founders are increasing.

5.3. NGOs, Platforms and International Initiatives

- ✓ **KAGIDER:** Conducts mentoring, training, data tracking systems (KAGYDER Compass) and lobbying activities.
- ✓ **TOBB Women Entrepreneurs Board:** Supports local entrepreneurs across Turkey.
- ✓ **TÜRKONFED Women's Platform:** Develops private sector and women-focused development projects.
- ✓ **UN Women, World Bank, EU Delegation:** Provides funds and joint projects that support women's entrepreneurship.

- ✓ **American Turkish Trade & Investment Council (ATIC):** Aiming to strengthen economic cooperation between Turkey and the US, ATIC runs special programs to support women entrepreneurs' access to global markets. Services offered to women entrepreneurs include export guidance, investor meetings, sector-focused US market information, consulting, and mentoring. Additionally, through the KOBİPORT platform, women entrepreneurs are provided guidance in digital transformation, international trade, and market research.

5.4. Policy Recommendations

- Interest-free and collateral-free credit systems should be expanded.
- A National Women's Entrepreneurship Database should be created.
- Mentoring networks should be institutionalized with legal support.
- Quotas should be applied to women-owned businesses in public procurement.
- Interview programs specifically for women in rural areas should be increased.

5.5. ATIC Women Leaders Business Council: Corporate Representation of Silent Power in the Business World

The Women Leaders Business Council, operating under the American Turkish Trade & Investment Council (ATIC), is a high-level platform that focuses on leadership development, international networking, knowledge sharing and strategic partnerships to support women's stronger and more visible participation in the business world.

It is a high-level platform focused on leadership development, international networking, knowledge sharing, and strategic collaborations that supports women's participation. The Council aims to increase the effectiveness of women entrepreneurs and professionals in economic relations between Turkey and the United States and to contribute to a vision of sustainable and inclusive development across sectors.

The Council's priority objectives are:

- To encourage the active and sustainable participation of women in the workforce,
- To strengthen the leadership roles of our members in the sectors in which they operate,
- To develop strategic business partnerships and commercial opportunities at national and international levels,
- To disseminate policies and discourses that support gender equality in the business world,
- To increase the effectiveness of women think-leaders in decision-making processes.

ATIC Women Leaders Business Council is not only a representative body but also a strategic power unit that supports the presence of women in high value-added fields, contributes to policy production and shapes the new generation of women leadership.

6. MAP OF THE FUTURE IN WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The second quarter of the 21st century is not just a period of change for women's entrepreneurship, but a period of complete transformation. Technological breakthroughs, the proliferation of digital infrastructure, sustainability demands, and rifts in social awareness offer women entrepreneurs a broader playing field than ever before. The economy of the future will be shaped by smart, agile, socially beneficial, and digital actors, and this definition clearly speaks to women.

Under this heading, trends, potential areas and strategic breaking points that will shape the future vision of women's entrepreneurship are discussed.

6.1. Digital and Technological Transformation :

Women entrepreneurs place technology not merely as a tool but **at the center of a transformational vision** . From e-commerce to artificial intelligence, from digital consulting to blockchain technologies, women are no longer just users but also **constructors** in many areas .

Artificial intelligence (AI), SaaS solutions, online platforms, mobile applications and digital service-based models offer high scalability and low-cost growth opportunities for women.

Models such as "technology access funds for women," "digital skills academies," and "Tech for Her" initiatives will be strategic tools in the coming period. In particular, hybrid working models and remotely manageable business structures allow women to more easily access global markets while maintaining a work-life balance.

The increased involvement of women entrepreneurs in the technology ecosystem means not only economic growth but also the construction of **a more inclusive, effective and sustainable digital future** .

6.2. Green Economy and Sustainability

The 21st-century sustainability paradigm opens a unique window of opportunity for women's entrepreneurship. Women leaders who are highly sensitive to environmental impact and create long-term value are among the most powerful actors in the green transformation.

Organic farming, environmentally friendly production technologies, circular economy practices, ecological fashion and zero waste initiatives have become the main areas led by women entrepreneurs.

- Mechanisms to integrate women's entrepreneurship **into climate-focused development strategies**
 - such as zero-carbon funds, green entrepreneurship grants and environmental impact measurement systems
 - should be central to government policies and private sector investments.
- Startup accelerator programs themed “Green Future for Women” will be the leveraging force for this transformation.

The economy of the future will be defined not just by growth, but **by growth responsibly** . And the leaders who feel this responsibility most deeply are women.

6.3. New Generation Leadership and Social Impact

Women entrepreneurs are not only starting businesses; they are also becoming **architects of a new understanding of leadership** . Beyond traditional hierarchical and profit-oriented models, a brand new management vision is emerging that centers on empathy, social benefit, and stakeholder focus.

- Concepts such as “community-based businesses,” “value-driven business models,” and “stakeholder capitalism” are gaining popularity under women leadership.
- New generation female entrepreneurs measure success not only by economic metrics, but also **by the benefits they provide to society, the transformation they create, and the stories they inspire** .
- This understanding brings about higher employee engagement, customer loyalty and social impact generation in the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Women's leadership is no longer the direction determinant of only the business world but also **the collective future of society** .

6.4. Strategic Areas Where Women Can Rise in the Future

In the future economy , **high-value-added, technology-focused, and global-scale** fields offer strategic growth opportunities for women entrepreneurs. Increasing women's representation in these fields will directly impact not only social balance but also the quality of innovation.

Cyber Security & Artificial Intelligence: Today, the female employment rate in these sectors is below 15%. Introducing women to these critical fields will contribute to the rise of effective technology.

Aerospace and Defense Industries: The presence of female entrepreneurs and engineers is increasing in these sectors, which are traditionally considered male-dominated structures. The female mind adds a human dimension to strategic technologies.

Women on Boards of Directors: Increasing female representation at leadership tables, decision-making. It will enable working processes to become more inclusive and sustainable.

Internationalization & Export-Based Start-ups: Women entrepreneurs' opening up to global markets will also contribute to the foreign trade vision of the Turkish economy.

Digitalization of Women's Cooperatives: Women's cooperatives expanding from local to global. Empowerment with technology will lead to social transformation starting from the bottom up.

6.5. Evaluation: Women's Traces in the Future Economy

The future of women's entrepreneurship will represent not just a numerical increase but **also a qualitative transformation** . In this transformation, women will be involved not only as business founders but also as actors establishing a new economic understanding.

This new generation leadership style, centered on effective values, sustainability, social sensitivity and a long-term perspective, will rewrite the structural codes of the economic order.

Because:

Anyone who wants to shape the future must build women's power from today.

Public policies, private sector investments and social projects should be the accelerators of this transformation.

Women are not just a part of change, **they are the force that determines the direction of change.**

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Women's entrepreneurship is no longer merely a tool for economic development; **it is a vehicle for effective leadership, social transformation, and a vision for a sustainable future.** This report reveals that women's presence in the business world is not merely a superficial representation; on the contrary, it is **a quiet but powerful movement** that resonates deeply within the entire economic structure.

Women entrepreneurs do not just establish

- companies;
- they plant hope in the soil, guide ideas,
- rebuild societies.

Continuity, transparency, effective values, and social benefit are not only principles but also **the hallmarks of women's leadership.** Therefore, supporting women's entrepreneurship is not a "women's issue" but **a development strategy and even a vision for the future.**

7.1. Strategic Recommendations

- 1. A National Women's Entrepreneurship Strategy Document** should be prepared and this document should be implemented with common sense by the public, private sector, NGOs and academia.
- 2. Data-Based Policy Development:** A sustainable and up-to-date data infrastructure should be established within the women's entrepreneurship ecosystem, and decision-making processes should be based on real-time data.
- 3. Mentoring & Network Ecosystem:** Mentoring, coaching and networking structures that will increase the sharing of knowledge and experience among women should be encouraged both legally and financially.
- 4. Innovation Centers Specific to Women:** Incubation centers, technology offices and digital production areas for women entrepreneurs should be expanded and integrated into regional development plans.
- 5. Positive Discrimination in Public Procurement:** Legal regulations that will ensure that women are given priority in public procurement should be put into effect quickly.
- 6. Local Support Structures:** Flexible support mechanisms should be established through municipalities and development agencies for women's cooperatives, social initiatives and local initiatives.
- 7. Leadership in Education:** Girls should be given a vision at an early age by integrating entrepreneurship, financial literacy and leadership training into the curriculum from primary school to university.

It should not be forgotten: Women's empowerment is not a choice, it is the future itself.

Every supported female entrepreneur builds not only herself, but also a new economic model, a more just society and a more livable world.

7.2. Closing: The Manifesto of Silent Power

Women leave their mark not with their words but with their existence.

Their voice is sometimes like a whisper; but this whisper turns into a power that transforms systems.

Their stance is a strategy, their production is a vision, their silence is a revolution.

This report is not just a text consisting of data, but a declaration of will that will be engraved in the collective memory of women's entrepreneurship.

It is a manifesto.

It is a call. This is a road map.

"Women's entrepreneurship builds not only today's economy, but also tomorrow's dream. We will grow this dream with our intelligence, our hard work, and our unwavering faith."

As the Women Leaders Business Council, we present this document

as a strategic vision,

a social contract,

and the voice of a movement.

It's important to remember: Women's strong and visible participation in the economy is key not only to social justice but also to a sustainable future. The issue is no longer just equality; it's about building a smarter, more resilient, and more visionary world together with women.

We call out to everyone who wants to reshape the future:

Invest in women's power.

Because women don't just start businesses.

It builds a new future.

"Women should be present not only on stage, but also between the lines of history, at the pulse of the economy, and at the heart of life.

Even while we remain silent, we are rebuilding the world."

ATIC Women Leaders Business Council