

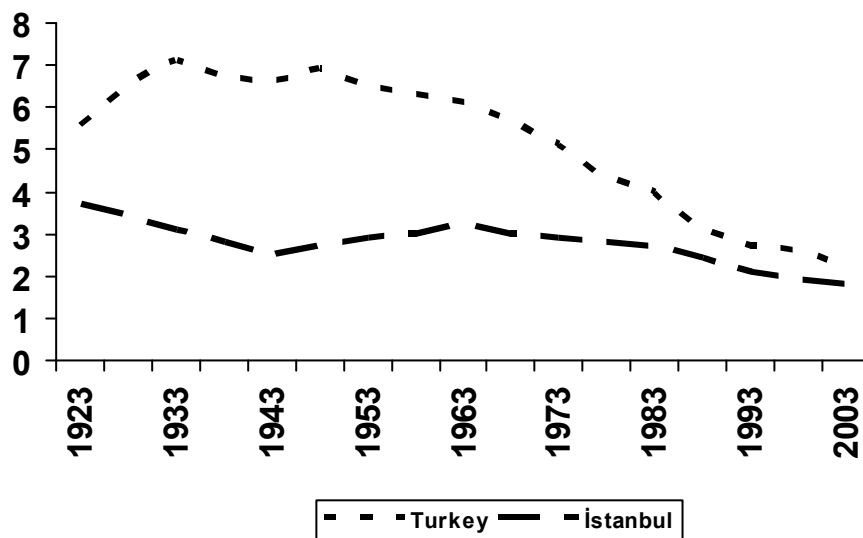
The persistence of low fertility in a high fertility regime: The case of Istanbul

As early as the late 19th century, fertility levels in Istanbul were much lower than the rest of the country. Reliable estimates for the first decade of the 20th century show that Istanbul had comparable fertility levels with the rest of Europe at the time; less reliable estimates for the late 19th century indicate even lower fertility. Furthermore, there is also evidence suggesting that fertility decline in Istanbul had begun much earlier than these dates. In summary, Istanbul stood out as having a very low level of fertility during the early years of the 20th century compared with the rest of the country, which had pre-transitional levels of fertility. The average fertility level of the national population equalled that of early 20th century Istanbul during the late 1980s.

During the mid-20th century, however, Istanbul and the national population experienced adverse fertility trends. By then, the national population had begun to undergo fertility decline, albeit gradually, but fertility was increasing in Istanbul. Istanbul's fertility stabilized around 2.5 children per woman during the 1960s and 1970s, when fertility decline gained unprecedented pace elsewhere. Currently, although differences between Istanbul and the rest of the country have narrowed in absolute terms, there is still a significant differential; while Istanbul has below-replacement period fertility (1.83), the rate for the rest of the country is close to 2.34 live births per woman.

The paper will attempt to provide a detailed account of and explanations for the comparative levels of and trends in fertility in Istanbul and the rest of Turkey, beginning from the early decades of the 20th century until the 2000s, in conjunction with the initial significant presence and subsequent out-migration of non-Muslim groups from Istanbul during the early decades of the 20th century, rapid migration of high fertility populations to Istanbul from 1950s onwards and the current composition of Istanbul's population. The final section of the paper will be devoted to the analysis of current fertility differentials, including patterns of fertility control: the Istanbul-born population will be analyzed separately from the migrants, so as to examine whether the current below-replacement fertility in Istanbul is only attained due to the relatively higher fertility among the latter, and whether the differences between Istanbul and the rest of the country would actually be larger if not for the contribution of the migrants to Istanbul's period fertility.

Total Fertility Rates, 1923-2003



Age-specific Fertility Rates, 1923 and 2003

