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From foes to friends? Fighting against women's 'half-citizenship' through gender-mainstreaming citizenship

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ABSTRACT

As a complex concept, translating the formal and practical relationship between individuals and the state, citizenship reveals gender-based foundations. A clear result of this foundationalist division of human nature was the exclusion of women from the public sphere. This article theorizes gender-blind citizenship as a long-standing problem of women's 'half-citizenship' system. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with women in Turkey, this study proposes to analyzes women's citizenship from three angles: full access to democracy, economic participation, and intimate and sexual rights, while challenging mainstream presumptions about the public/private divide. Instead, *gender-mainstreaming citizenship*, as we call it, emerges to relaunch the debate on feminism and citizenship, moving forward on the quest for gender equality.

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KEYWORDS Gender-mainstreaming citizenship; half-citizenship; women in politics; intimacy; economic participation; public/private divide

Introduction

Citizenship has been developed through frameworks that centre on male experiences, often overlooking the perspectives of women. As feminist scholars have demonstrated, gendered citizenship experiences imply more than inequalities in accessing services, resources, rights, and opportunities (Gilas and Parcero 2021); they produce unequal experiences of democracy (Behl 2019). Nowadays, only fourteen countries provide full equality for men and women (World Bank 2023). Biased laws and social norms constrain women

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even when they are legally recognized with self-determination (Fernandes 2024), setting the scene for the double burden of gender inequality (Moghadam 2013).

To situate our argument, we emphasize that the gender-based foundations of citizenship are rooted in a public/private divide that originates in Western political thought. This division assigned men to the public sphere – associated with reason, agency, and political participation – and restricted women to the private sphere, related to care and domesticity (Cobo 1995). Thus, when Marshall (1950) conceptualized citizenship as a set of civic, political, and social rights culminating in universality, he did so from a perspective that assumed man as the default citizen, revealing how a seemingly universal model was built on gender-exclusive practices. In practical terms, men were assigned the role of agency with full access to the public sphere, while women were limited to the private realm, deprived of full citizenship.

Such gender-oriented influence on citizenship has been analysed in feminist theoretical production (Lister 1990, 1997, 2012; Pateman 1988, 2005; Voet 1998; Walby 1994). However, the debate between liberal and radical approaches (integration vs. difference) tends to reproduce the public/private divide rather than to overcome it. Alternatively, we propose a gender-mainstreaming citizenship framework that integrates political (Bagchi 2000; Janoski and Brian 2002), economic (Kessler-Harris 2003; Moghadam 2013), and intimate (Bonjour and de Hart 2021; Plummer 2001) dimensions of citizenship. The study also draws on Behl's (2019) and Tripp's (2013) arguments that unidimensional analyses are insufficient to understand the relationships between the state, citizenship, and gender equality. Hence, it encompasses multiple dimensions of gender experiences related to citizenship.

From this perspective, our analysis is built through a feminist lens, whether when we utilize feminist critiques of the public/private divide to trace women's exclusion, or when we employ feminist intersectional reasoning to explain differences in women's experiences. Feminism is central to our analysis because it provides the only theoretical lens capable of revealing how apparently neutral citizenship norms are in fact structured around gendered assumptions. Feminist theory demonstrates that citizenship is not merely a legal status but a social and political practice shaped by the constructed division between the public and private spheres.

Such division, accompanied by an anti-feminist lens on gender, is evident in de-democratizing contexts, and the Turkish case well illustrates how this divide became institutionalized. Turkey is among the most rapidly de-democratizing competitive authoritarian regimes[1] (V-Dem Institute 2025), with women showing one of the lowest rates regarding ministerial positions and economic participation, and earning

one-third less than men. In Turkey, the right to abortion is denied to most women (O'Neil et al. 2020), and nearly 45% of women living in Southeast Anatolia are illiterate (Taşkent 2012). But Turkey is more than a case study to understand gendered citizenship. It also provides meaningful insights applicable to other competitive authoritarian regimes. The mechanisms we identify, such as economic dependence, control of intimacy and weak welfare states, are not unique to Turkey but represent broader global trends.

Gender blindness vs. gender essentialism? Where to locate the Turkish case?

Mainstream citizenship literature has long centred on men's experiences. Marshall's approach is useful precisely because it reveals the contrast between its universalist aspirations and exclusionary dynamics. As Lister (2002) notes, women were noncitizens in many societies when this theoretical framework was articulated. Hence, we engage Marshall as an example of how liberal citizenship was constructed through gender-blind assumptions that obscured structural inequalities.

Similarly, Turner's (1990) model is defective by gender blindness at it downplays the impact of the structural relationship between the public and private spheres on women's citizenship. By perceiving the family as a singular, male-oriented unit shielded from state intervention (Walby 1994), Turner limits women's citizenship by naturalizing their confinement to domesticity. Accordingly, women had no access to full citizenship (Freidenberg and Karolina 2021). This confirms the idea that by developing citizenship as a tool of inclusion in a male-dominated public space (Voet 1998), it created a mechanism for excluding these (e.g. women) who were omitted (Tremblay 2000). And, consequently, citizenship beame aligned with a foundalist division of the society predicated on biological prejudices, according to which women would take on domestic and caregiving duties, because of the 'dependence on the human infant', the 'disabilities of pregnancy, and 'breastfeeding' (Parsons 1991, 109), while freeing men to enter the public sphere and become single income providers.

Drawing on this exclusion from citizenship, feminism has developed alternative approaches based on multiple ways. These perspectives contend that citizenship has been 'hijacked to serve the interests of men' (Lister 2012, 374) and bring the equality-difference dilemma to the discussion. Thus, while liberal feminism advocates for *gender-neutral citizenship*, arguing for entry into a male-dominated public sphere (Okin 1989), radical feminism highlights the limitations of this model and emphasizes *differentiated citizenship* (Pateman 1988). These represent two constrained views, with the later

criticizing the former as a hegemonic approach (Elshtain 1993) while the former denounces the latter for its essentialism (Bjørnholt 2013).

Turkish scholars have also made contributions to the study of gendered citizenship. Sancar (2012) offers one of the most comphrehensive analysis, showing how modernization produced a male-centred citizenship model and arguing that the formation of the nation-state relied on a deeply gendered division of roles: while the male citizen was as the agent of politics and secular rationality, women, by contrast, were incorporated into the Republican project as reproducers and symbolic representatives of the nation. Y. Arat (1996) similarly demonstrated that, despite its formal neutrality, citizenship operates through gendered hierarchies, and formal citizenship rights have not translated into political inclusion for many women. As Y. Arat (1996) noted, 'women's experiences of citizenship reveal, in Turkey, that the seemingly neutral concept of citizenship is indeed gendered'. By examining women's political practices and their efforts to claim rights, Y. Arat (1996) shows how women simultaneously encounter the limits of formal citizenship and reshape actively the meaning of democratic citizenship in Turkey.

Examining the Turkish context, we found two different state stances: one is influenced by an essentialist (and foundationalist) view of citizenship, and the other is partial and gender-blind. When the Republic of Turkey was established, the Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP) – which ruled as a single party from 1925 to 1930 and from 1930 to 1946 – was associated with women's rights. Indeed, early reforms shaped contemporary state–society relations, particularly in terms of secularism and societal transformations (Saraçgil 2013). The CHP was moved by the idea that the state was the (male) bodyguard of women's rights, which is illustrated by the 1926 polygamy ban, the mandatory civil marriage, and equal legislation on parenting, divorce, inheritance, and property (Adak 2019). In 1935, however, there was a step back. Political rights propagated the myth of women's full citizenship, demonstrating that the CHP's focus was on integrating women in the public sphere (Z. F. K. Arat 1997). This rendered modernization an attempt at emancipation devoid of gendered intentions. Women's citizenship was not the cause but the effect of modernization (Kandiyoti 1991). As Sancar's (2012) concluded, modernization did not dismantle patriarchy; rather, it reconfigured it in a new state-centred form, granting women public rights while preserving male dominance in public and private spheres. Although reforms expanded women's access to education, divorce, and certain public roles, women's inclusion remained tied to motherhood and national representation. This is where Sancar's (2012) subtitle 'Men build the state; women make the family' originates, as women's primary duty remained safeguarding the cultural and moral boundaries of the nation, not participating as autonomous political actors. Kemalist reforms did not eliminate the patriarchal family; they

modernized it. As Sancar clearly notes: 'Women's rights, which came in the modernization period under the influence of feminism, have been forgotten, and even the discussions on "understanding of women's reform in Islam", have been left far behind' (2012, 21).

The main criticisms were classism, bodily control, and state feminism. First, believing that reactionary views of Islam dominated the society, women's role in the public sphere was restricted to those who could keep up with modernization (Çağatay 2018). While the CHP and Kemalism[2] brought changes to the citizenship of upper and middle-class urban women, these were insufficient for low-class rural women. Second, since women were permitted to wear what they pleased, this was not a blow to bodily autonomy. On a sociocultural level, however, support for wearing non-Islamic clothing and removing the veil reduced women's bodies to a division between those leading a Western lifestyle and those following religious codes. Another form of bodily control was related to the private sphere, which is why we argue that women in the First Republic had a partial gender-blind citizenship. In the private sphere, the CHP followed 'a traditional definition of female roles emphasizing reproduction and childcare' (Z. F. K. Arat 1994, 72).

Nevertheless, women's experiences in the public sphere were quite different. This leads us to state feminism, coined in 1987 by Helga Hernes 'to put a name to the idea that governments could pursue feminist aims through policy and also that individuals and actors within the state could promote a 'women-friendly' approach to policy and state action (McBride and Mazur 2010, 4). Contrary to Western understandings, when applied to Turkey, state feminism is often associated with authoritarian approaches to secularism (Badran 2005). Even though women received political rights, the state held exclusive control over them, who were forced to uphold secular values and give up their womanhood; the state forced women to participate in the public sphere without having a choice in the private one (McBride and Mazur 2010). This is consistent with the CHP's principles, which include statism and secularism, but notably, reformism (Eslen-Ziya and Korkut 2010), as it sought to replace traditional institutions with modern ones, requiring women's public sphere integration. While reforms were unavailable to rural areas, women in urban areas participated in politics and the economy (Öncü and Unat 1981), resulting in a hybrid citizenship. Turkey's modernization was not a monolithic process, and even though ambitiously progressive (Saraçgil 2013), the recognition of political rights contrasted with a traditional definition of women focusing on reproduction and childcare.

Gender essentialism, however, did not become the state's approach to citizenship until the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) came into power in 2002. Conservative family policies, cash-for-care schemes, narrowed access to abortion, expanded religious marriages, and the ideological promotion of motherhood served to reinstate

the private sphere as women's primary domain. The lack of gender-redistributive policies and the overemphasis on the weak welfare state on the family (i.e. women) prevent them from engaging in economic participation (Fernandes 2024). Also, it appears to adhere to the rationale articulated by Hochschild (2003) regarding the correlation between the lack of welfare policies and social norms that designate caregiving responsibilities to women. The veil became a symbol of integration and valorization of those who deserve protection from the state (Kandiyoti 2016) as previously done in the 1990s (Göle 1997), and the polarization based on body politics was the reverse of the Kemalist approach. The strategy was not new; however, it served different purposes. Thus, both Kemalist and conservative politics share the common logic that women's citizenship is not mediated through individual autonomy, reinforcing the continuum from 'gender-blind citizenship' to later essentialist gender policies.

Because women's rights were never rooted in strong feminist and democratic participation, they remained vulnerable to reversal. Thus, when conservative politics emerged, it could easily reclaim women for the family. While the regime protects women's political rights, it falls short of protecting their social and civic rights because it denies access to opportunities and services that would allow them to exercise the right to work. Moreover, it relegates them to the private sphere. These distinctions are central to our analysis, not only because they illuminate Turkey's trajectory, but also they illustrate how competitive authoritarian regimes use gender policy to shape citizenship, which is observable in multiple international contexts.

Methodological choices and data analysis

Turkey provides extensive empirical evidence on the topic. First, the country has a strong women's political culture, as evidenced by their entry into the public sphere in the 1930s and demands for recognition of the veil in the 1990s (Badran 2005; Göle 1997). Second, there is a lack of bodily autonomy and sexual and intimate rights that support a sense of 'half-citizenship'. Third, Turkey has a low rate of women's economic participation, directly related to a low level of autonomy (Bárcena 2021). In Turkey, women's employment rates are around 30%, and their labour force participation is no higher than 32% (Turkish Statistical Institute 20245).

The methodology for this article included an extensive analysis of semi-structured interviews conducted by the first author with Turkish women. The interviews took place between October 2020 and July 2022, and the sample comprises fifty-three interviewees from diverse age groups, locations (five out of the seven regions), ethnicities,[3] perceived income adequacy, educational background and party identification. Participants were recruited through networks, direct contact with target groups, and the snowball sampling

technique, which involves asking participants to identify other potential subjects. The interviews sought to explore the differences in democratic experiences among women, taking into account their economic, political, and cultural backgrounds. While other factors, such as religion, are excluded from the analytical categories due to the prevalence of Muslim women among participants, they are not ignored in our analysis, and previous studies have already highlighted the negative correlation between veiled women and voting for the CHP (e.g. Fernandes 2024).

The first author's identity as a well-educated, non-Muslim, Western woman influenced the dynamics of the interviews. This became clear when the assistant of the far-right Nationalist Movement Party's MP labelled the first author as 'Western girl' to justify why she would not agree to an interview. Nevertheless, we felt this barrier, which made an essentialist representation of the first author, was established for nationalist rather than religious reasons. Although there was less of a trend to identify commonalities among religious women (e.g. the pronoun 'we' was used recurrently by secular women to refer to themselves and the first author as part of a secular subject), the interviews went very well, and participants were open and eager to learn about the results.

Considering our qualitative approach, the interviews were semi-structured, with open-ended and theory-based questions (see the interview guide in Annex). We identified three higher-level concepts – politics, economy, and intimacy – and coded lower-level concepts related to these categories using NVIVO software to interpret the experiences of democracy and define the problem of women's citizenship. Politics primarily analyzes experiences of representation and participation. Conversely, the main economic lower-level concepts (and key prompts) are the labour market, the welfare state, the household, and education. The lower-level concepts of divorce, abortion, contraception, and violence illustrate the intimate category. Despite conducting mass interviews with 13 randomly selected average women to learn about women on the street, elite interviews were conducted with 15 activists, 11 politicians, and 14 academicians representing 13 women's rights organizations, 9 political parties, and 9 universities.

Revising citizenship and aligning it with gender-mainstreaming

Adding to *differentiated citizenship* and *gender-neutral citizenship*, there is a third feminist approach to citizenship. *Pluralist citizenship* rejects standard views of motherhood and avoids reducing gender to a single position, recognizing that not all women have the same experiences (Mouffe 1995). Thus, it deviates from previous feminist approaches to citizenship and Young's (1981) notion of group difference, which associated gender experiences to those shared by all women, resembling gender essentialism. This

perspective reinterprets the public/private divide. It is maintained, but does not correspond to separate spheres, and the duties and rights of citizens are extended to the private sphere (Mouffe 1995). This echoes Lister's (2012) call for rethinking the public/private divide so that men and women can balance economic participation, paid work, and caring responsibilities.

Drawing on this perspective and using data-driven evidence, this article proposes rethinking the public/private divide in a broader context, focusing on intimacy and gender-egalitarian family policies as part of integrating into the public sphere. Analysing women's citizenship implies considering not only political participation and economic empowerment but also how much public experiences are both the cause and effect of women's private sphere, acknowledging that they have different experiences of democracy based on varying access to resources and opportunities. In Turkey, ethnicity, as well as social class and religion, has an impact on women's experiences, which follows Nelson's (1974) examination of the public–private division in Middle Eastern societies. Nelson (1974) emphasizes how women negotiate imposed constraints while criticizing the perspectives that tend to universalize women's experiences. In this context, the idea of a shared private sphere becomes very relevant as it allows women's expression at other levels, but it implies that women are entitled to the capacity to engage in public policy.

The value of integrating a gender perspective into the definition of citizenship, encompassing political inclusion of all genders, economic participation, and intimate and sexual rights, stems from this. Introducing a gender perspective becomes a powerful tool in planning and correcting public policies that can help women fully live their citizenship, feeling that they do not need to abandon their gender (and private) identity to be more accepted in the public sphere. However, this article presents the analysis as feminist rather than merely gender-based, emphasizing the feminist contribution in comprehending the structural power dynamics in citizenship and interpreting the Turkish experience through a feminist perspective. We broaden the discussion on pluralist citizenship (Mouffe 1995) and explicitly connect it to intersectional reasoning and the diverse experiences of democracy in Turkey.

Discussing data findings

Political citizenship

Political citizenship has evolved significantly to comprise a set of personal (e.g. the right to vote), organizational (e.g. the right to form a political party), and membership rights, such as asylum and free access to government information (Janoski and Brian 2002). Similarly, Bagchi's (2000) approach to political citizenship as involvement in electoral politics and the political scene was consistent with Lister's (1998) approach to citizenship as an action (act as

a citizen) rather than an attribute (be a citizen). More recently, the concept has been defined from a gender perspective, under four models: liberal, republican, corporatist-consociational and hybrid/social democratic citizenship (Krook, Lovenduski, and Squires 2009).

Political citizenship is more than the right to participate in politics (e.g. voting or holding office); it is also the right that participation may happen free of prejudice based on gender, ethnicity, or income groups. Otherwise, if the gender dimension is ignored, this may lead to unbalanced political participation in disfavour of women. Let us think of the underrepresentation of women in well-paid jobs; this may later be related to greater difficulty in funding high costs for electioneering. These concerns are part of what Walby (2009) defined as presence-democracy and broad democracy. Additionally, in terms of personal rights, while women have gained the right to vote, there are still social conventions preventing their political integration. This is why defining democracy as holding elections and defining political citizenship as the right to vote is unsatisfactory, and may help to explain what some interviewees called a feeling of 'half-citizen:

> To be a woman is to be a 'half-citizen'. We have no reign over fundamental liberties and are subjected to the mercy of our father, brother, husband … Subjected to the mercy of the police, the mercy of the President. We are not independent (…) and we are not fully equipped with citizenship rights.
>
> Ava (fictitious name), lawyer, Istanbul, 29

Along with the 'half-citizen', interviewees use the expressions 'secondary citizens' (Gökçe, advisor, Ankara, 46) and 'secondary status' (Zehra, social worker, Istanbul, 28). The denial of sexual and intimate rights – divorce and abortion being the most common lower-level concepts – and femicide reinforces this sense of partial inclusion, with interviewees arguing that the latter 'is the highest violation of women's rights' (Ivy [fictitious name], preschool teacher, Gaziantep, 32). As these are expressions of citizenship exclusively impacting women, they are ignored and left out of a universal concept of citizenship. This wider lens on the meaning of political citizenship also reveals the relevance of democratic innovations (Jacquet, Ryan, and van der Does 2023) and new forms of political participation outside formal politics (Klingemann and Fuchs 1995), including online activism and street politics as important venues for women's active political citizenship.

Delving into the data, we found evidence of how the women's rights movements represent other womenFreya (fictitious name), a 39-year-old academic from Ankara, noted that many political reforms occurred after the women's rights movement requested changes to the Civil Code and the Penal Code in the early 2000s, a conquer that, according to another Ankara-based academic, Olivia (fictitious name), 37, brought gains for women. Olivia's account shows the demand for balanced representation

and lower electioneering costs, demonstrating the link between gender and income:

> Representation of women in politics is low, and we do not have gender quotas (. . .). In any case, if you are rich and donate enough money, you can be a candidate. But, if you do not have contacts and are not rich, you cannot be a candidate.

Our findings suggesting that income has an impact on women's political citizenship are aligned with the literature showing that women's representation in the public sphere is higher the higher their education and job levels (Knutsen 2001, among others). Lily (fictitious name), a 54-year-old MP from Ankara, underlined this point by stating that while many women are in 'academia and white-collar jobs', there are also low-income groups where women are employed 'without health insurance'. This indicates that women in lower socioeconomic groups are disproportionately affected by unemployment, which hinders their participation and representation. Addressing the problem of women's political citizenship implies getting more women into politics, considering that

> Governors are men, rectors are men, and mayors are mostly men. Kahramanmaraş elects eight MPs; one of them is a woman. You see this male hegemonic structure, and politics and law can't be changed because they are male-oriented.
>
> Kibar, business manager, Kahramanmaraş, 61[4]

This may be achieved by gender quotas, as several studies explored (Lépinard and Rubio-Marín 2018; Weeks 2022), among other strategies. But lowering the cost of electioneering is one of the most relevant. Indeed, the high costs for electioneering reinforce the effect that economic citizenship has on political rights, hindering the political participation of low-income women and their feelings of belonging. So, on the one hand, the higher the presence of women in parliaments, the higher the possibility of gender equality awareness (Wängnerud 2009). On the other hand, overcoming the negative impact of economic citizenship is not that simple, and as long as it exists, the political citizenship can be compromised.

Philips's (1995) politics of presence, which supports an inclusive, even-handed polity and equal representation, is significant in this setting. Representation is not a given, but responsiveness, or 'fair representation' in Phillips' words (Philips 1995, 4), has the potential to lead to reforms. This means that the more opportunities for political citizenship, the more evident will be the progress towards the quest for gender equality and stronger democracy. However, that implies state action to address the vulnerability of women's economic citizenship, as this is not a settled

conquer in non-democratic regimes (and neither in many democratic ones, we dare to say).

Economic citizenship

Women's political and economic rights are intimately related. Women were able to challenge economic non-participation (e.g. the right to protest) and to regulate employment (e.g. presence in parliament and ministerial positions) after achieving political citizenship. Similarly, as women demonstrated their relevance in the market, the struggle for political rights became more organized and successful (Macpherson 1962). These two forms of citizenship are thus related, with a tendency for a positive correlation between the two.

To understand economic citizenship, which Kessler-Harris defines as the 'right to work at the occupation of one's choice', to a suitable wage, and access to education and health care (Kessler-Harris 2003, 158–59), we must consider economic gender relations in both the public and private spheres. Thus, economic participation means transitioning from domesticity without ignoring the 'site of production' outside the market, including domestic and care work (Walby 2009; 2020). Even though housework is not free wage labour, it is still considered a form of labour because of the similarities with paid employment (Cox 2013; Eichler and Matthews 2004).

However, such valuing does not ignore that unpaid domestic work is a correlate of gender inequality. Indeed, data indicate that gender inequality takes many different forms because of the public/private divide and the ensuing gender division of labour. One example seems to be the positive correlation between intimate partner violence and unemployment (Anderberg et al. 2016; Tarshis 2022). Interviewees who said they were unemployed and admitted suffering from intimate partner violence, assumed that economic dependence forced them into abusive relationships. Sultan, a 50-year-old clinical assistant from Kahramanmaraş, was subjected to domestic violence for twelve years because, in her own words, 'without economic independence, I couldn't take care of myself'.

Another component of this conceptualization of economic citizenship is the welfare state, as it plays a critical role in addressing the problem of women's citizenship and covers family policies promoting economic participation. One of the family policies in constant demand among the interviewees was the state-funded childcare facilities, which promote gender equality by addressing the consequences of the public/private divide and the ensuing gender division of labour. Income limits citizenship experiences in that area as well. Semsa, a 67-year-old retired Professor of Economics from Istanbul, explains this ambivalence by outlining the difficulties that low-income women encounter:

> If you have money, you can use private kindergartens and care facilities. Otherwise, there are almost no public care services (. . .). The government has increased the social expenditures. However, it closed childcare facilities, saying they were very costly, and pay relatives, usually women, to care for the children.

Semsa's argument is reinforced by Hochschild (2014) by linking global care chains to women. Indeed, Hochschild (2003, 45) had linked the absence of welfare policies to social norms that assign women, based on 'how to look feminine', these rules. This approach is shared by Emma (fictitious name), a 51-year-old academic from Istanbul, who explained the relationship between social transfers and an ideological agenda seeking the exclusivity of women into the private sphere:

> Care has never received that attention in the history of the Turkish Republic (. . .). The ruling party provides cash to the mothers to take care of their children. This is part of a global trend being implemented in Turkey; however, the government does it to support its ideological position.

Contrary to economic citizenship, social citizenship may limit women's capacity for participation rather than enhance it (Kessler-Harris 2003). Furthermore, economic citizenship emphasizes economic participation in addition to social rights, thereby reaffirming women's roles as providers rather than recipients. Because the economy includes not only monetary values but also tasks produced at home and welfare activities, economic and social rights can be combined into a single component of citizenship that does not limit women's participation and productivity based on the public/private divide. Solving the problem of women's economic citizenship may benefit from family policies promoting economic participation, such as state-funded childcare facilities, which are not commonly found in cash-for-care schemes and other social citizenship programs. Economic citizenship underlines socio-economic rights (Moghadam 2013) and promotes the right to work, equal pay, education, health care, social insurance, and parental protection (e.g. parental leave). Evidence shows that father-specific leave is related to higher women's economic participation, with Australia, Iceland, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, and Portugal illustrating this (Bettelli 2020).

Interviewees generally agreed that domestic and caring responsibilities are the primary reasons for low economic participation. They also agree that education is the most effective strategy for increasing women's economic participation, being clear that 'when women graduate, economic participation rises', said Emma. Therefore, many of them revealed to have been in disagreement with the 2012 Educational Reform, which allowed domestic education starting at the age of 10. 'Boys have to study to get jobs allowing them to support their families, contrary to girls, who will be housewives', blurted out Gökçe. Interviewees were also aware of

the challenges that Kurdish girls in Southeast Anatolia face when attempting to exercise their right to an education, which is consistent with the link between socioeconomic status and ethnic minorities, who are more exposed to lower incomes and lower educational attainment. Turkey is illustrative of how ethnicity affects educational opportunities and experiences of economic citizenship:

> Girls are the ones who are most denied the opportunity to receive an education (. . .) Girls' illiteracy is higher in Southeast Anatolia, and Kurds mainly populate Southeast Anatolia.
>
> Gülistan, MP, Izmir, 44

Education is a gender-redistributive policy that promotes economic participation. More employed women means less economic gender inequality. This speaks to the literature on education, gross domestic product (Elks 2020), and economic development (Bloom, Kuhn, and Prettner 2018). Given the interdependence of the various components of citizenship, we must consider the relationship of education with political citizenship and intimate citizenship, as studies of political participation (Bhalotra, Clots, and Iyer 2013) and access to health care (Feinstein et al. 2006) show.

Intimate citizenship

The third and final dimension of *gender-mainstreaming citizenship* is intimate citizenship, which requires a perspective of citizenship extending beyond the public sphere. While researching various experiences, such as reproductive rights and family law, intimate citizenship suggests a relationship between the public and private spheres. While literature proposes the idea of sexual citizenship (Lister 2002; Richardson 2000), we use intimate citizenship because it addresses Plummer's (2003) 'intimate troubles' – marriage, divorce, and parenting, among others – in addition to sexual rights (e.g. abortion, contraception and the HPV vaccine). Intimate citizenship focuses on intimacy while refocusing an analysis on the institutions and structures that give rise to forms of sexuality. Intimate citizenship, like other aspects of *gender-mainstreaming citizenship*, is related to the depth of democracy; deeper democracies have more women-friendly body policies (Krizsan and Roggeband 2018).

The regulation of practices influencing bodily autonomy, such as access to contraception, the ability to have an abortion, and the capacity to get divorced, is a power structure limiting sexual rights. Delving into the data, the majority of our interviewees share similar views on divorce and are concerned about access to abortion. Worries were expressed by Sophia (fictitious name), a 44-year-old project staff member from Ankara:

> Although it is not illegal, women cannot get an abortion. Also, religious marriages have been highly encouraged. There is a normative and a legal sphere, and although the legal seems to be intact, the normative has been changed. People are becoming accustomed to having religious marriages, which leads to violations of women's rights because they have no economic rights when they divorce.

Interviewees also tend to hold the government responsible for violence, given the lack of action against perpetrators. This seems to be related to the 'privatization of the domestic' (Shire and Nemoto 2020) and is consistent with the literature on so-called honour crimes (Sakallı-Uğurlu and Akbaş 2013) and divorce (Brownridge 2009): gender-based violence is motivated by victim blaming and legal and discursive exculpation of the perpetrators. Divorce is the leading cause of femicide in Turkey (We Will Stop Femicide Platform, KCDP 2024), which is reinforced by Mia (fictitious name), a 50-year-old academic from Ankara. Other interviewees shared this acknowledgement:

> Violence against women mostly take place within the domestic sphere. There is a systematic killing of women by their intimate partners, and it is the most important and the bloodiest problem.
>
> Alev, academic, Ankara, 53

> Violence against women is a very prevalent issue in Turkey. This has been the case for a long time but has become much more visible right now.
>
> Elif, program coordinator, Istanbul, 33

Violence is the most prominent manifestation of gender inequality in Turkey and the topic the participants most agreed. This is the most common pattern identified. State non-intervention in these crimes is influenced by traditional approaches to the public/private divide as well as a religious-conservative understanding of the nation, which is upheld by the traditional family (threatened by divorce) rather than by the individual. By limiting women to the private sphere and granting citizenship only to those who participate in public life, mainstream citizenship largely excludes intimate citizenship and assesses intimacy as incompatible with it. But the data we found shed new light on revising the public-private divide and on re-addressing women's citizenship.

Conclusion

The spread of a universal idea of citizenship left little room for thinking about the problem of women's citizenship, as the universality principle implied a false extension of citizenship rights. When analysing contemporary political regimes, the failure to recognize women's rights is deep-rooted. Due to social norms, the public/private divide and development

challenges, men and women cannot be said to have equal access to citizenship. To address this issue, this article contends that *gender-mainstreaming citizenship*—public sphere integration and private sphere valorization – is the missing link in the current efforts to advance women's citizenship.

This research leads us to some conclusions. One is that political citizenship involves exercising balanced representation and participation in addition to the right to vote. One cause of feeling 'half-citizen' is the absence of political exercise. Furthermore, our data confirm that also income affects women's capacity to live fully their political citizenship. This is consistent with previous research that showed women's representation in the public sphere increases with higher levels of education and employment. While it is quite obvious that more women need to enter the political sphere if we are to reinforce women's political citizenship, one cannot ignore the high costs of electioneering, especially for low-income women, making it more difficult for them to participate in politics and have a sense of belonging.

The fact that our conception of citizenship incorporates women into the public sphere while recognizing the private sphere does not ignore the fact that unpaid domestic work is a correlate of gender inequality. Our findings suggest that women in situations of economic dependence are more likely to get stuck in abusive relationships. Interviewees also highlighted that the low number of state-funded childcare facilities limits women's experiences of economic citizenship. They are aware as well of the challenges that Kurdish girls in Southeast Anatolia face in accessing education.

Lastly, 'half-citizenship' has consequences for bodily autonomy, including access to contraception, the right to abortion, and the capacity to divorce. This research also revealed that Turkish women share views on divorce and bodily autonomy, and are concerned about access to abortion. According to our findings, violence appears to be the most prevalent example of gender inequality in Turkey and the lower-level concept where participants agreed the most. For mainstream gender-blind citizenship, citizenship and intimacy are conflicting; however, data sheds new light on revising the public/private divide and defining the theoretical problem of women's citizenship.

Gender-mainstreaming citizenship reveals how political, economic, and intimate dimensions intersect to produce women's half-citizenship. Turkey demonstrates that de-democratization and patriarchy undermine women's agency across all dimensions – patterns increasingly visible worldwide. Thus, it exemplifies broader global patterns in which competitive authoritarian regimes restrict women's rights through a combination of legal measures and normative pressures (as seen in Hungary), draw on religious-conservatism to shape intimate citizenship and bodily autonomy (as in India), and implement economic policies that reinforce women's return to the private sphere (as in Morocco).

Ultimately, this study may help to identify common patterns in women's sense of 'half-citizenship' and assist global governance in setting gender equality practices, policies, and laws through the use of a gender mainstreaming lens. On the quest for gender equality, we hope to relaunch the debate on feminism and citizenship, transforming old foes into close friends.

Notes

1. This article draws on Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017) and Levitsky and Way's (2010) types of political regimes.
2. It refers to Mustafa Kemal's sociopolitical thought. See Heper, Metin. 2012. 'Kemalism/Atatürkism', in *The Routledge Handbook of Modern Turkey*, edited by M. Heper & S. Sayari, 139–148. Abingdon: Routledge.
3. We follow Gabbert's (2006, 90) definition of ethnicity as a method of classifying 'individuals of both sexes and all age groups organized into several kin groups using a (socially constructed) common origin as its primary reference'.
4. In memory of Kibar Daşcı Özdemir, who passed away in the earthquakes of 6 February 2023.

Author contributions

CRediT: **Raquel Santos Fernandes:** Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Supervision, Writing – review & editing.

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ANNEX

Semi-structured interview guide

The goal of this interview is to recognize how women interact with politics in Turkey, as well as their experiences and perspectives on political issues. Topics such as violence, employment, education, women's health, and representativeness will be discussed. There are no correct or incorrect answers; the interviewee may end the interview at any time or decline to answer any question.

The interview will take approximately 45 minutes.

Verbal consent:

Asking permission to voice-record the interview.

Framework	Key Questions	Key Prompts
Interviewee background Information about the participant Participant's views	Can you introduce yourself? What set of political values do you support? • How did you become part of the women's rights movement? • How did you get involved? Why did you join the X party? Did you ever feel discriminated for being a woman? In your opinion, what problems do women still face in Turkey?	Political stance Hiring; promotion; harassment; property; inheritance; divorce… Femicide; violence; education; unemployment; underrepresentation …
Gender Policies Violence Sexual and reproductive health	What is your opinion about the withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention? Why do you think that violence is widespread throughout the country? What is your opinion about the ongoing women's healthcare program?	Istanbul Convention; Law no. 6284 … HPV vaccine; contraception; pap smear; c-sections …
Employment Education Politics	Do women still face difficulties in terms of participation in the labour market? Are there still barriers to girls' education in Turkey? How do you exercise political rights? Do you feel represented by any political institution, political party, or politician?	Division of labor; informal economy CEFMU; 4+4+4 system … Ministry of Family, Labour, and Social Services; TBMM …
Political Regime Gender regime	How do you assess the last two decades in Turkish politics? What consequences in terms of women's issues?	