

Inequality of Opportunity in Asia and the Pacific



TURKMENISTAN

"Turkmenistan is one of the first countries that nationalized the global Goals for Sustainable Development indicators based on a three-stage strategy developed jointly with the UN. The social component of the sustainability of economic development is focused on people and is aimed at maintaining a consistently high standard of living of citizens."

H.E. Mr. Batyr Bazarov,
Minister of Finance and Economy, Turkmenistan
74th Annual Session of UNESCAP

Country Background

5.8	million, total population	0.41	GINI coefficient (income inequality)
16,898	GDP per capita, 2011 PPP \$	0.12	D-index (inequality of opportunity)
21.8%	people in poverty (below the national poverty line)	68	years of life expectancy at birth
4.9%	people in extreme poverty (below \$1.90 a day)	12.6	expected years of schooling at birth

Source: ESCAP, World Bank Open Data, UNDP

Leaving no one behind by ensuring a level playing field

Inequality of opportunity refers to the unequal access to fundamental rights and services, required for individuals to sustain and improve their livelihoods.¹

In Turkmenistan, gaps remain between the *best-off* and the *furthest behind* groups in access to different opportunities. Access to bank accounts and full-time employment are the most unequally distributed opportunities, with gaps of at least 50 percentage points between the *best-off* and the *furthest behind* groups. Less than 20 per cent of people in the *furthest behind* group have access to bank accounts or have completed higher education.

Identifying the characteristics of the *best-off* and the *furthest behind* group in access to bank accounts reveals how 7 out of 10 households with a higher educated member have access. This blue box represents the *best-off* group. The green box shows the *furthest behind* group with the lowest access to bank accounts: households in the bottom 40 with primary or secondary education, where only 16 per cent have access.

Figure 1. How wide are the gaps in access to opportunities?

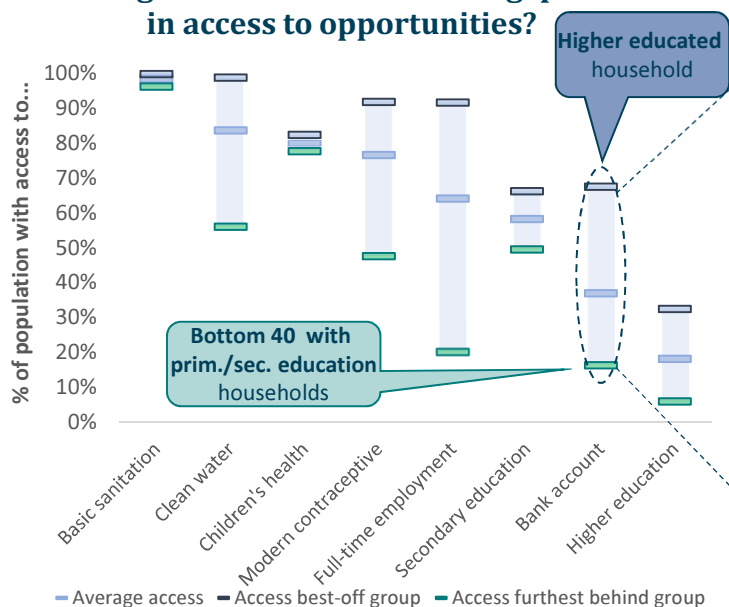
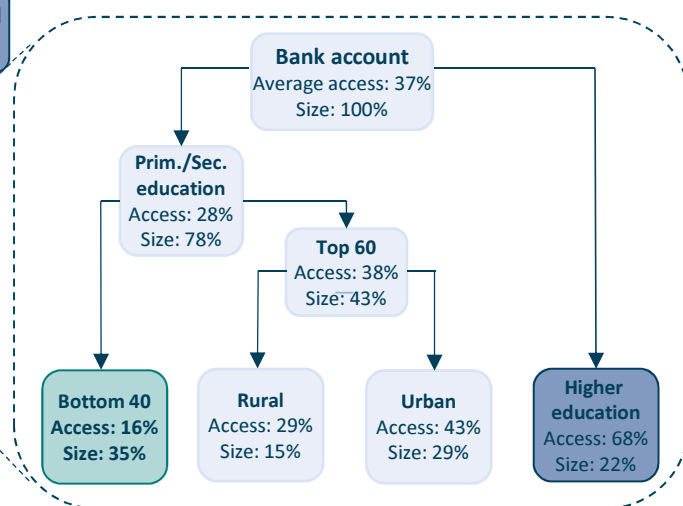
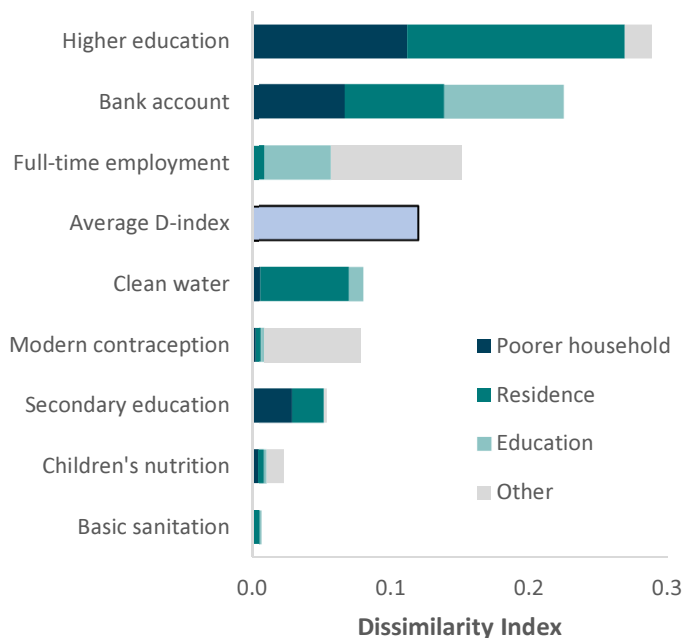


Figure 2. Who are the furthest behind?



Source: ESCAP calculations, using data from MICS 2015 and the Gallup World Poll

Figure 3: Drivers of inequality in access to different opportunities



Household wealth, the place of residence and educational level are behind most of the inequality in access to opportunities.

Other circumstances, however, also appear relevant in explaining unequal access to opportunities.

For example, women, youth and single people have limited access to full-time employment in Turkmenistan. Also, young women between 15 and 24 years of age and those without children under the age of 5 in the household, have lower access to modern contraception. The number of children in the household explains, together with mother's education, inequality in children's nutritional outcomes.

*Source: ESCAP calculations, using data from MICS 2015 and the Gallup World Poll
Note: A Dissimilarity index (D- Index) is used to examine which circumstance contributes most to overall inequality among different population groups..*

Key Takeaways

In Turkmenistan, the first and second largest opportunity gap between the *best-off* and the *furthest behind* group are in full-time employment and access to bank accounts respectively. While 68 per cent of households with a higher educated member have access to bank accounts, only 16 per cent of households among the bottom 40 with at most secondary education do. Financial literacy and national strategies for financial inclusion, along with accompanying action plans and monitoring frameworks, should be prioritized.

Less than 7 per cent of Turkmen in the *furthest behind* groups have completed higher education. Closing the gaps in education would help reduce inequalities in financial inclusion and decent work opportunities, while allowing broader development gains through sustained human capital accumulation.

Among all groups, inequality of opportunity is explained by distinct circumstances. Living in rural areas appear as the most important circumstances shaping inequality in 3 out of 8 opportunities. Since Turkmen living in rural areas face unequal access to basic services, investing for a more even socioeconomic development of the country, both in urban and rural areas, is a must in ensuring equal opportunities.

¹ The opportunities considered in this country brief are education, women's health, children's nutrition, decent employment, basic water and sanitation, access to clean energy, and financial inclusion. In Turkmenistan, access to clean fuels, electricity and professional help during childbirth are universal. Therefore, these opportunities are not reported in the graphs.

Cover photo by Daniel Crocetti

For more information and thematic reports on these data and analysis, please visit: <https://www.unescap.org/our-work/social-development/poverty-and-inequality/resources>

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