

Türkiye

*Committed Democrats Yet
Ardent Nationalists: Turkey's Youth
at the Crossroads*

2024










Authors

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About FES Youth Studies

What are young people afraid of or hopeful about? In a rapidly changing world that is challenged by the climate crisis and inequalities, and in many parts aging societies and democratic decline, **FES Youth Studies** investigate how young generations perceive the development of their societies and their personal future. Our aim is to foster informed debate about young people's views on politics and democracy against the background of their life circumstances and values. This includes key issues such as education, employment and mobility, family and friends, and their overall attitudes and perceptions. We focus on young people aged 14 to 29 to understand their perspectives on these critical topics.

FES has conducted numerous youth studies around the world since 2009. In 2024, young people in Türkiye were surveyed along with youth in other Southeastern Europe and Central Eastern Europe countries.

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Executive Summary

Youth Study Southeast Europe 2024 offers important insights for understanding young people in the region in an era of polycrisis, i.e. multiple crises that occur all at once. The 2024 study is the first study in which Turkey is included as one of the countries under analysis. Its inclusion in the study has not only aimed to strengthen comparative analysis but also to open up critical avenues for further discussion and research since young people in Turkey share some important common issues with their peers in the region, while also revealing some unique attitudes and value orientations. A representative survey was conducted in Turkey with 1233 young people (all residents) aged between 14 and 29. The interviews were held during 9 February 2024 and 25 March 2024; one year after the deadly 6 February 2023 earthquakes which struck southeastern Turkey and northern Syria, only a few months after the Presidential and general elections on 14 May 2023, and right before the local elections on 31 March 2024.

- 1.** While discussing young people in Turkey, one needs to keep in mind that compared to their parents and compared to older generations, they are more urban and educated (approximately 70 % of survey participants stated that they live in cities and 74 % are in formal education). Even though education statistics demonstrate that there is an important massification of education (including higher education), Turkey's number of NEETs (Not in Education Employment or Training) remains notoriously high, and gender plays an important role in this share. We see that 15.4 % of young people are currently not enrolled in any kind of education or training and the share of females (18.7 %) who are not enrolled in any kind of education or training is much higher than males (12.3 %).
- 2.** Dissatisfaction with the quality of education – a trend common to many countries included in the study – is also prevalent among Turkey's youth. Overall, the highly educated appear as the most critical and skeptical about the education system. However, one exceptional result for Turkey is that the perception of corruption in education is low compared to other countries. Despite the problems identified about the quality of education, centralized examination systems in Turkey – both for high school and university admissions – seem to create a perception of justice among youth regarding fair access to education.

3. The results regarding the life satisfaction and future expectations as well as fears and concerns of young people in Turkey is somehow alarming. Turkey's youth reveal the lowest life satisfaction levels; they are the most pessimist about their personal future in 10 years; and they also have very negative opinions about their country's future in 10 years (similar to youth in Greece). Unemployment and inequalities in society emerge as the major sources of concern for Turkey's youth. Besides, as climate issues are perceived as alarming especially for the youngest age group and females, young females also express great concern about gender-based discrimination and violence. It is important to note that young females are more anxious about every (potential) individual or country-wide problem compared to young males. These results demonstrate that political authorities as well as civil society organizations in Turkey should prioritize social policies and projects aiming to increase the psychological resilience of young people in Turkey.

4. Rising fears and concerns of young people in Turkey lead them to consider "exit" as one of the most viable options. Turkey emerges as the third country in the survey (after North Macedonia and Albania), where the desire to emigrate among youth is the strongest.

5. Even though "exit" appears as the most viable option, it is important to underline that young people in Turkey (together with young people in Greece) are more interested in politics than their peers in the region. To the question "How much are you personally interested in politics?", we see that those who state to be "very interested" and "mostly interested" are the highest in Greece (36 %) and in Turkey (33 %) which are of course low in comparison to the whole population of youth. Similarly, the answers to the question "Would you be willing to take a political function?" also demonstrate that an important percentage of young people in the SEE region respond negatively to this question. Turkey is the country with the highest percentage of young people responding "Yes" to this question (42 %), followed by Romania (37 %) and by Montenegro (33 %). Combined with Turkey's youth's higher interest in politics, it is safe to conclude that young people in Turkey are more into politics compared to their peers in the region.

6. Young people in Turkey desire to live abroad, but they hold strongly negative opinions about refugees in the country. "Too many refugees" emerges as the top fear and concern of youth, as survey respondents also express immigration as one of the biggest issues facing the country in the next decade. Prolonged and severe economic crisis has rendered adulthood transitions more challenging than ever. Under these conditions, young people tend to scapegoat refugees in the country as the source of unemployment and inequalities. Parallel to anti-refugee sentiments, nationalistic attitudes are also strong among survey respondents. The majority of young people tend to prioritize the "real native population" in the country.

7. Turkey's trajectory of EU membership has been complicated and fraught with tensions. Even though survey respondents seem not to identify with being European (only a total of 17.7 % of youth stated to feel very much and completely European), young people in Turkey still display high levels of trust for the EU and a strong desire for Turkey to become an EU member.

Finally,

the findings from both cross-country and Turkey-specific questions in the survey show that young people in Turkey tend to value democratic rights and are concerned about repressive policies, but they have weaker empathy and tolerance towards "others"- groups with different ethnic, religious, and gender identities. It is critical to note, there is a broad consensus regarding intolerance against LGBTQIA+ people. Regardless of gender, age group, and education level, the majority of survey participants hold negative opinions about the LGBTQIA+ community.

Key Facts



Support for democracy does not translate to recognition of minority rights

Youth in Türkiye highly value democracy and democratic rights but respect for democracy does not translate into recognition of minority rights. Specifically, the majority of youth hold negative feelings about LGBTQIA+ people and refugees.

56%
think same-sex couples shouldn't have the right to marry



Do young people in Türkiye want to join the EU?

57%
Yes

27%
No

Youth in Türkiye identify as Turkish, but want a future in the EU

Despite not identifying with being European, young people in Türkiye manifest relatively high levels of trust for the European Union and support Türkiye's EU membership.





Politically engaged despite desires to leave

Despite strong desires to leave the country, Türkiye's youth (alongside their peers in Greece) are the most interested in politics and follow the political agenda closely.

33 %

identify as very or mostly interested in politics

Deeply dissatisfied and pessimistic about the future

Türkiye's youth are the least satisfied with their lives and the most pessimistic about their personal future in 10 years. They express fears and concerns particularly about unemployment, inequalities in society, refugees in the country, and climate issues.

Rising nationalism fuels strong anti-refugee sentiments

Anti-refugee sentiments are very prevalent and strong among Türkiye's youth and grow in tandem with the rise of nationalistic attitudes.

34 %

desire to emigrate for more than 6 months

47 %

think it would be best if Türkiye was inhabited only by real native populations

Looking elsewhere for a better life

Young people in Türkiye also reveal a strong desire to live abroad.

1 Introduction

Youth Study Southeast Europe 2024 makes an important contribution to youth studies at a time of polycrises/multiple crises in which youth transitions to adulthood are becoming more complicated and challenging. The 2024 study is also the first study in which Türkiye is included as one of the countries under analysis. We believe that inclusion of Türkiye in the study has strengthened comparative analysis and opened up critical avenues for further discussion and research, as young people in Türkiye share some important common issues with their peers in the region, while also revealing some unique attitudes and value orientations.

Türkiye is a country with a sizeable and important young population. According to the statistics of the Turkish Statistical Institute (TURKSAT 2022) in 2022, there are close to 13 million (13.949.817) young people at the age group of 15–24, constituting 15.2% of the whole population. This proportion (15.2%) is in fact higher than that of the 27 European Union (EU) member countries, since the EU average of the proportion of youth population in 2022 is 10.5% with the highest percentage in Ireland (12.8%), the Netherlands (12.3%) and Denmark (12.2%), and the lowest proportion in Bulgaria (9.1%), the Czech Republic (9.3%), and Slovenia and Latvia (9.4%).

The current generation of Türkiye's youth has gone through challenging times. On the one hand, they have witnessed the erosion of Türkiye's already fragile democracy with increasing restrictions on individual liberties and political rights (Esen, Gumuscu, and Yavuzylmaz 2024). On the other hand, they have experienced a severe economic crisis, which has left young people financially insecure and uncertain about their future (SODEV 2022). The double crisis of politics and economy alongside global climate crisis and pandemics has put young people at a greater risk for mental problems, economic uncertainty, and political repression. Besides, they also experienced the deadly earthquakes of 6 February 2023 hitting 11 provinces. The survey results well document the impact of these risks on Türkiye's youth, while also underlining opportunities for a better future. Young people in Türkiye are resourceful, concerned about their country's future, and are on the way to internalize democratic norms and values.

During the last decade, important discussions have been going on around youth in Türkiye, resulting in a growing number of surveys highlighting various aspects of young lives and the political behavior of young people. The importance of the Youth Study Southeast Europe 2024 is that not only do we see a thorough picture of youth in Türkiye but we also see this picture in a regional, comparative perspective. Analyzing youth in Türkiye reconciling global, regional and national perspectives helps us to confirm the findings of some previous studies, while discovering novel patterns in youth values and perceptions.

This analysis of survey results pays particular attention to how the indicators of age, gender, and education level influence the unfolding of youth attitudes. Even though young people from different age groups, gender categories, and education levels converge around some critical issues such as anti-refugee sentiments, nationalistic values, and desire to emigrate, these indicators highlight some important differences between young people. For example, the youngest age group (14–18 years olds) are relatively more progressive in attitudes; young females are more uncertain about their future and more anxious about every individual or country-level problem; and the highly educated are more critical and pessimistic. Alongside socio-economic differences, these findings re-confirm that youth is not a homogeneous category in Türkiye which can be analyzed through general and non-nuanced perspectives.

This report starts by a brief discussion of the methodology and the sample of the study and then continues by describing the basic demographic characteristics and trends reflected in the study. For the discussion of the findings, we start by discussing young people and education; continuing with employment and mobility; family and future plans; general values, attitudes and perceptions; we continue with political attitudes and participation; and finally we also specifically analyze attitudes towards democracy and perceptions of "others". In the conclusion part, we highlight major findings and their significance.

2. Methodology

IPSOS conducted representative surveys in the SEE region in different countries including Türkiye. A representative survey of the population aged between 14 and 29 was conducted and the interviews were conducted with Computer Assisted Online Interviews (CAWI) via the Ipsos Online Access Panel. In Türkiye, single mode of Computer Assisted Web Interviewing (CAWI) was used.

In all the countries (including Türkiye) quota selection according to age, gender, and region was adopted and additional soft quota on education in all countries was also applied. The CAWI sample was drawn from the Ipsos Online Panels by quota selection according to the characteristics of age, gender, and region. These central socio-demographics had been pre-defined so that we could directly target respondents via invitation email to achieve a representative distribution of these features.

1233 young people were interviewed in Türkiye, the target population being all residents of Türkiye aged 14 to 29 years. The online surveys were conducted during 9 February 2024 and 25 March 2024. The research was conducted one year after the deadly 6 February 2023 earthquakes which struck southeastern Türkiye and northern Syria; only a few months after the Presidential and general elections in May 2023; and right before the local elections on 31 March 2024. The timing of the survey also coincided with a severe economic crisis (Demiralp 2024).



3 Basic demographic characteristics and trends

A total of 1233 young people participated in the study. 631 out of 1233 are young males (51.2%) and 602 out of 1233 are young females (48.8%).

Education

25% of young people participating in the survey are “undergraduate students” and 12.3% are students in a graduate program (MA or PhD level). 36.5% are in secondary school education (general or vocational lycées). In other words, a total of 73.8% are enrolled in formal education (secondary or high levels of education). 6.4% stated that they are enrolled in some other form of education training, whereas 15.4% of young people in Türkiye are NEETs: not enrolled in any kind of education or training. The share of females (18.7%) who are not enrolled in any kind of education or training was higher than males (12.3%). It is important to underline that Türkiye is known as a with the high number of NEETs (Not in Education Employment or Training) and gender playing an important role and that the percentage of women is much higher than men (Lüküslü & Çelik 2022).

Parents’ education

Young people were also asked about their mothers’s education. A total of 30.2% of the survey participants’ mothers have university/bachelor degree and higher education (MA and doctoral and postdoctoral degrees): 20.9% have university level/bachelor degrees, 8% have masters’ degrees and 1.3% have doctoral or postdoctoral degrees. 7.8% of mothers have no formal education (or they have not completed primary education meaning that they do not have primary school diplomas).

22.4% of mothers have primary school education. This means that almost 1/3 of young people’s mothers have low levels of education whereas

15% of young people in Türkiye are NEETs: not enrolled in any kind of education or training

another 1/3 have high levels of education. 35.6% of mothers have secondary school (‘lise’ – either general or vocational) diplomas: 23% have secondary (general) school diplomas and 12.6% have technical/vocational secondary school diplomas.

The study shows that fathers are more educated than mothers. 3.5% of young people’s fathers have no formal education or they have not completed their primary school education which is less than half of the mothers with no formal education (7.8%). 21.9% of fathers have university level education whereas 10.2% have master’s level education and 1.9% have doctoral or postdoctoral degrees. In other words, 34% of fathers have university level and higher levels of education (whereas this percentage is 30.2% among mothers). The majority of young people who participated in the survey are single (66.7%) whereas approximately 1/4 are married (26.3%) and only a small minority lives with a partner (not married) (2.4%). The percentage of married women (32.7%) is much higher than married young men (20.2%).



Fig. 1 Current education status of youth in Türkiye by gender (in %)

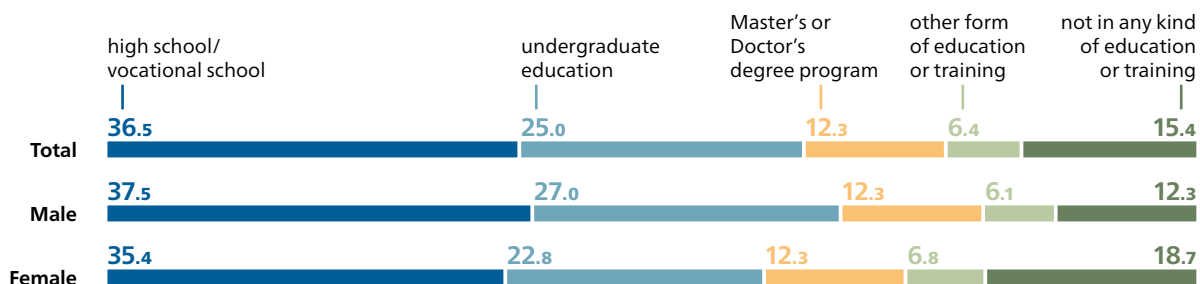


Fig. 2 Current relationship status of youth in Türkiye by gender (in %)

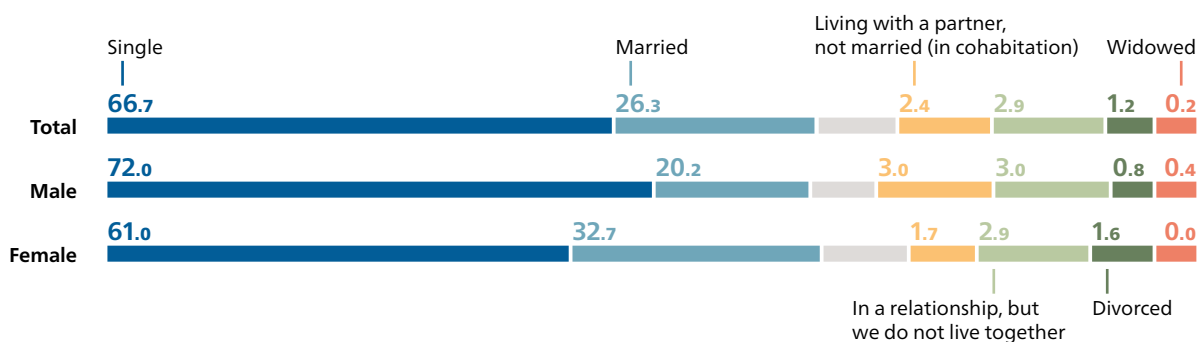
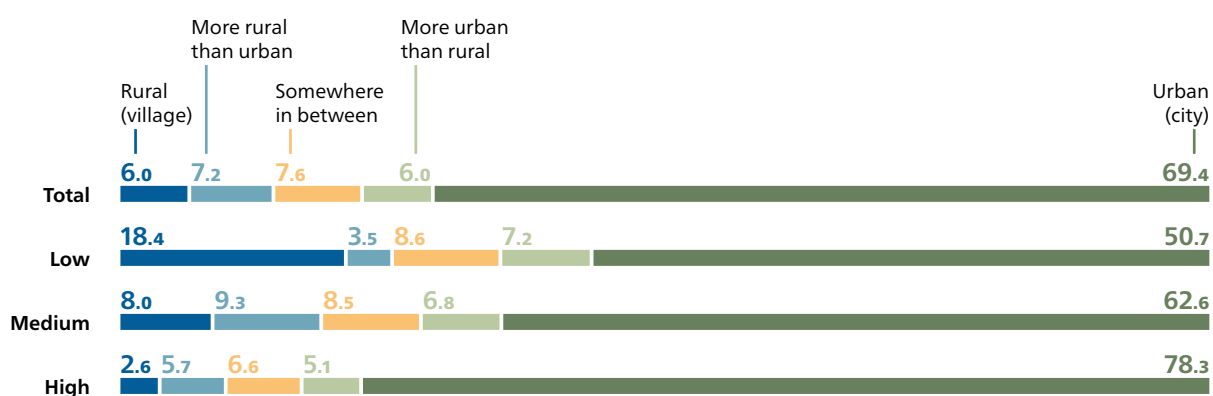


Fig. 3 Education levels and places of residence among young people in Türkiye (in %)



Living situation

The question on the household information also demonstrates that majority of the young people participating in the survey live with their parents (with mothers 60.2 %; with fathers 54.4 %) and siblings (42.9 %) and the percentage of those who live alone (6.8 %) is rather low. The survey also demonstrates that those living with their grandparents (3.7 %) is also low which is confirmed by the statistics and also research on the institution of family in Türkiye (Sirman 2013). ¼ (25.0 %) of survey participants state that they live with their partner or spouse.

Most of the young people stated that they live in cities (69.4 %) and the percentage of those who live in the rural parts (village) is only 6 % and those who stated that they live in a place which is “more rural than urban” is 7.2 %. It is important to note that the percentage of young people living in the village is higher among the low educated (18.4 %) whereas the percentage of high educated living in the village is only 2.6 %.

Main Takeaways

This section has highlighted that Türkiye’s youth are overwhelmingly urban today and have high levels of access to formal education. Despite these prevalent trends, however, the number of NEETs is alarming. Compared to previous generations, youth also have more educated mothers. Even though the majority of the survey participants are single, the percentage of married women (32.7 %) is much higher than married young men (20.2 %). Finally, the majority of youth live with their parents and/or siblings demonstrating a lower tendency for independent livelihoods.

4. Young people and education

This survey shows that when young people are asked about their satisfaction about the quality of education in their country ("How satisfied are you generally with the quality of education in your country?"), the percentage of those who answered "very satisfied" or "mostly satisfied" is rather low (the lowest 9% in North Macedonia, 17% in Greece, 18% in Romania and 20% in Türkiye, 21% in Bulgaria and 22% in Bosnia and Herzegovina). The highest score belongs to Slovenia with 53%, whereas the other countries like Croatia follow with 38% and Kosovo with 37% and Albania with 32%. Thus, Türkiye is among the countries in which only 1/5 finds the quality of education in the country as very satisfied or satisfied which demonstrates that young people have further demands about the quality system of education provided to them.

It is therefore important to make a further analysis according to gender and education level of young people participating in the survey in order to understand the dissatisfaction expressed about the education system. The survey results show that a total of 55.8% of young people are dissatisfied ("not satisfied at all" 31.8% and "mostly dissatisfied" 24.0%) with the education system in Türkiye.

Young males demonstrate a stronger dissatisfaction (34.7% are "not satisfied at all" and 24.5% are "mostly dissatisfied" adding up to a total of 59.2% of dissatisfaction) compared to females (28.7% are "not satisfied at all" and 23.5% are "mostly dissatisfied" adding up to 52.2% of dissatisfaction). The dissatisfaction is also stronger among the youngest age group (14–18) as those who stated to be "not satisfied at all" (31.4%) and "mostly dissatisfied" (28.6%) add up to a total of 60%, a total of 58.3% among 19–24-year-olds and 48.1%

20 % of young people in Türkiye are satisfied with the quality of education in their country

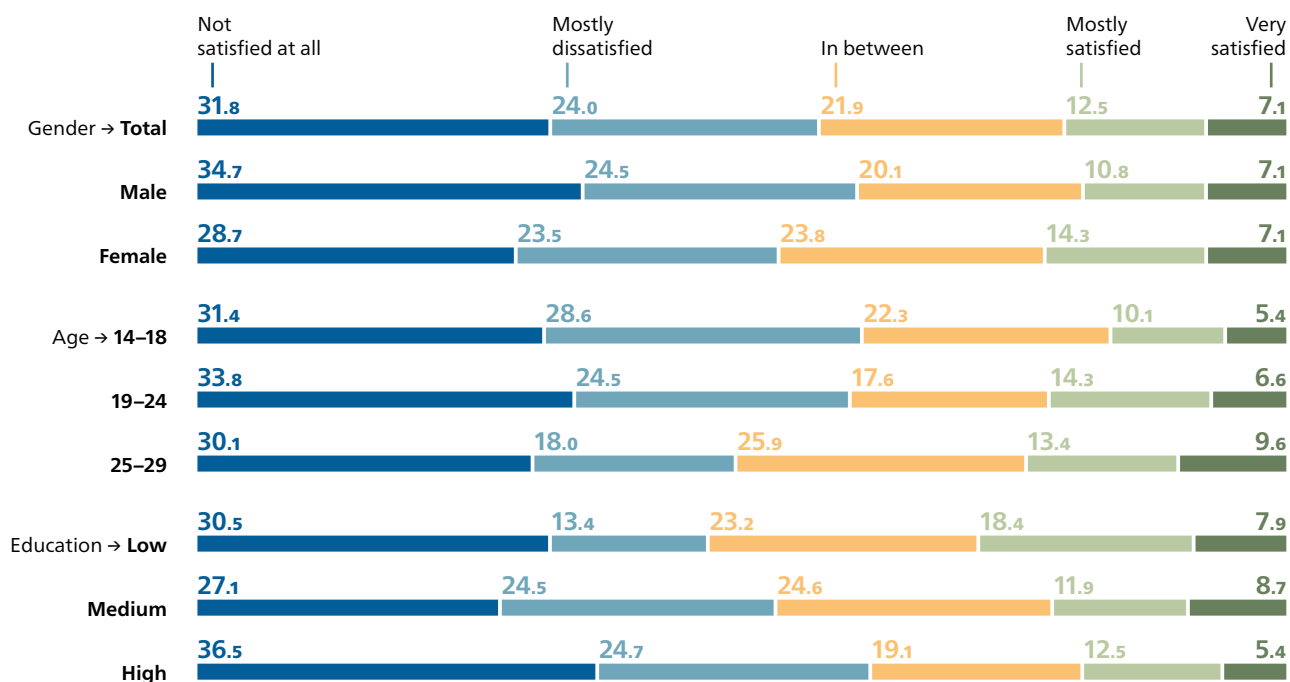
among 25–29-year-olds. It is also important to note that the survey participants with the high education level are more dissatisfied with the education system in comparison to those with medium and low level of education. 36.5% of highly educated people stated that they are "not at all satisfied" and 24.7% are "mostly dissatisfied" which adds up to a total of 61.2%. 27.1% of those with a medium level of education are "not at all satisfied" and 24.5% are "mostly dissatisfied" which adds up to a total of 51.6%. 30.5% of survey participants with low levels of education state that they are "not at all satisfied" and 13.4% are "mostly dissatisfied" which adds up to a total of 43.9%. It is seen that young men are more dissatisfied with the education system compared to women; the youngest age group (14–18 year-olds) is the most dissatisfied; Only 20% of youth in Türkiye are satisfied with the quality of education in their country.



Corruption in the education system

Another important question of the survey regarding education was related to corruption in education and the survey participants were asked: "Do you agree that there are cases where grades and exams are 'bought' in institutes/universities in the country?". 42% of Türkiye's youth think that grades and exams can be 'bought'. We see that these numbers are quite significant in all the countries, including even the ones with the lowest percentage.

Fig. 4 Satisfaction among young people in Türkiye with the quality of education (in %)



For the Turkish case, it is also important to highlight that even though satisfaction with the quality of education is low (the lowest percentage in the region is in Greece followed by Türkiye), the perceived corruption in education is lowest

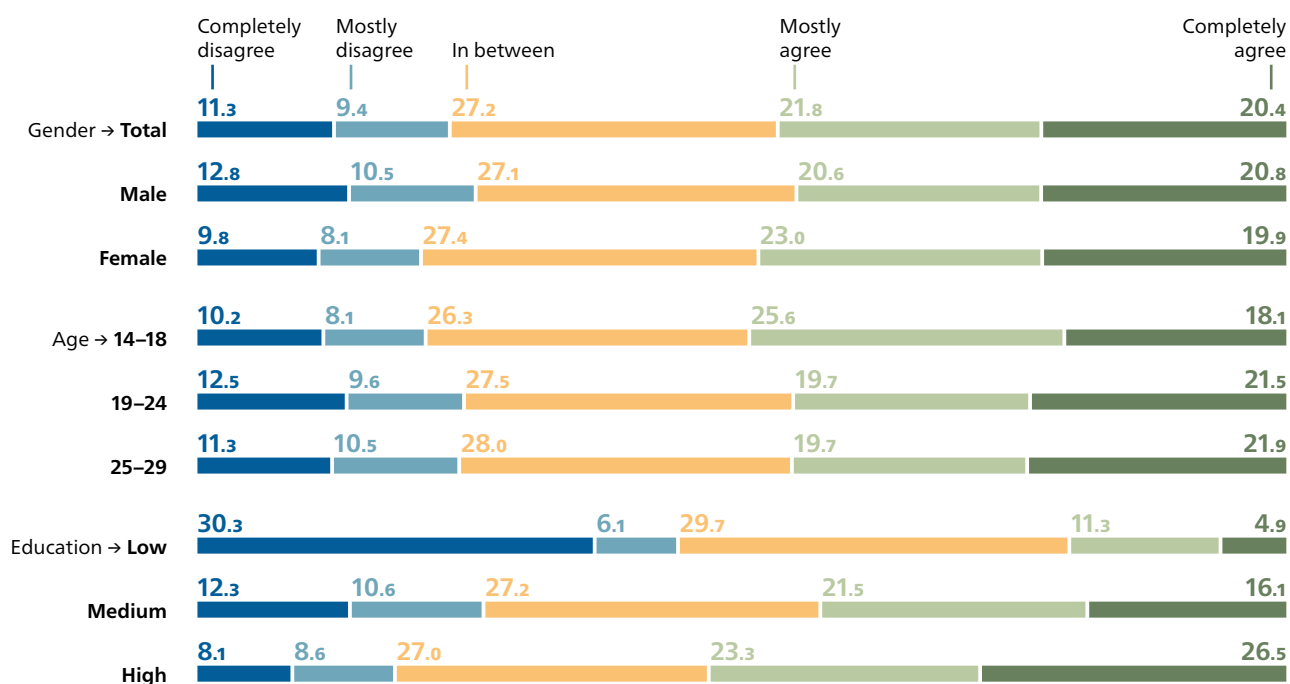
Looking at the results of the survey closely, it is seen that young males are only slightly more critical (about corruption in the education system) than the young females. Those who “completely agree” with the statement and agree that there are cases where the grades and exams are bought is 20.8% among young males whereas it is 19.9% among young females. Those who “mostly agree” are 20.6% among young males and 23.0% among young females. In short, those who completely or mostly agree sums up to a total of 41.4% among young males and 42.9% among young females.

42% of young people in Türkiye think that grades and exams can be ‘bought’

in Kosovo followed by Türkiye. Thus we can argue that young people in Türkiye have criticisms about the quality of education whereas they still think that the education system (which is shaped by central examinations for the entrance to high school and university) is perceived to be less corrupted compared to the answers of young people in the region.

The survey also demonstrates that the youngest age group is most critical about the corruption in the education system even though differences between age groups is very small. Those who “completely agree” with this statement about the corruption in education is 18.1% among the 14–18 age group; 21.5% among the 19–24 age group and 21.9% among the 25–29 age group.

Fig. 5 Young people’s views on the suspicion that grades and exams are sometimes ‘bought’ in institutes/universities in Türkiye (in %)



Those who “mostly agree” with the statement is 25.6 % among the 14–18 age group; 19.7 % among the 19–24 age group and 19.7 % among the 25–29 age group. In sum, those who “completely” and “mostly” agree sum up to 43.7 % in the 14–18 age group; 41.2 % in the 19–24 age group and 41.6 % in the 25–29 age group.

The study also demonstrates that those who are more educated are more critical about the corruption in the education system. Those who “completely” agree with the statement is 4.9 % among the low educated, 16.1 % among the medium educated and 26.5 % among the highly educated (4.9 % and 26.5 % respectively). It is also important to underline that there is a big difference between the percentages of low and high educated young people about the issue. Those who “mostly” agree is 11.3 % among the low educated, 21.5 % among the medium education level and 23.3 % among the highly educated. Those who completely and mostly agree with the statement sums up to a total of 16.2 % among the low educated, 37.6 % among the medium education level and 49.8 % among the highly educated.

Main Takeaways

Similar to their peers in the countries included in this study, young people are not satisfied with the quality of education in Türkiye. Only 1/5 of the survey respondents revealed overall satisfaction. Among the most dissatisfied are the youngest age group (14–18), the males, and the most educated. 42 % of young people are also concerned about corruption in the education system. However, it is important to note that compared to other countries, Türkiye’s youth are among the least concerned about the corruption aspect.

5. Employment and mobility

Türkiye is struck by a high rate of youth unemployment (19.4 % in 2022 according to Turkish Statistical Institute) discussed in the public debates as one of the chronic problems of Türkiye (Çelik & Lüküslü 2018). That is why it is important to reflect upon what the survey shows about young people and employment in Türkiye. When asked about important factors for finding employment, young people responded that 58 % of youth in Türkiye think that connections with people in power is the most important factor for finding a job: 34.4 % stated that it is “very important” and 23.6 % “mostly important” which adds up to 58 % together. “Expertise” only comes after “connections with people in power: 26.9 % state that expertise is “very important” and 27.1 % state that it is “mostly important” adding up to a total of 54 %.

“Connections with people in power” is stated as the most important factor and “expertise” as the second most important factor when the survey is analyzed according to gender, age groups and education level (with the exception of the low educated young people as they slightly favor “expertise” (32.4 %) over the “connections with people in power (31.2 %).

The desire to emigrate

Besides employment, emigration and desire of emigration of young people is also discussed as an important public debate in Türkiye. The country has been a land of flows and classified as a land of receiving and sending migration. During the 1960s and 1970s, Türkiye had witnessed rural to urban flows but also flows from Türkiye to Europe (in particular Germany) mostly classified as the first wave of migration of guest workers.

58 % of young people think that connections with people in power is the most important factor for finding a job

During the last decade, Türkiye has also received important flows from Syria but also from other countries such as Afghanistan and Iraq. Türkiye is “the world’s leading refugee-hosting country giving shelter to approximately 3.6 million forcibly displaced people” (UNHCR 2024; see also Kaya 2023). Recently, there is also a rising trend in the emigration of highly educated and highly skilled individuals (see TURKSTAT 2023; Daniş 2024). Besides, recent surveys show that young people desire to live abroad (Germany being the most popular destination) (Lüküslü 2024).

This survey also demonstrates (as underlined by previous studies on youth in Europe) that the desire to emigrate is high in Türkiye. 34 % of Türkiye’s youth want to move to another country for more than 6 months. Türkiye is one of the countries with the highest percentage among all the countries: The highest percentage is in North Macedonia (39 %), followed by Albania (36 %), Türkiye (34 %), Bosnia and Herzegovina (29 %) and Greece (29 %).



Fig. 6 Views among youth in Türkiye on important factors for finding a job (in %)

| | Total | Gender ↓ | | Low | Education ↓ | |
|----------------------------------|-------|-------------|--------|------|----------------|------|
| | | Male | Female | | Medium | High |
| Expertise | 54.0 | 48.5 | 59.7 | 32.4 | 51.2 | 59.2 |
| Connections with people in power | 58.0 | 53.7 | 62.5 | 31.3 | 54.9 | 64.2 |
| Membership in a political party | 42.7 | 42.7 | 42.6 | 22.8 | 39.0 | 48.6 |
| Experience from abroad | 42.9 | 37.3 | 48.9 | 25.8 | 40.4 | 47.5 |

The survey results demonstrate that those who respond “I do not desire to emigrate” is 21.1% in total which is higher among females (22.8%) in comparison to males (19.6%). Those who state to have a “very strong” (16.3%) and “strong” (19.8%) desire to emigrate is higher among males (total of 36.1%). Among females, those who respond to

When the results are analyzed according to age groups, it is observed that the youngest age group (14–18) state to have stronger desire in comparison to 19–24 and 25–29 age groups. It is seen that the desire to emigrate descends with age even though the percentages between the 14–18 and 19–24 age groups are very close to each other. Those who state to have a “very strong” desire is 17.1% in the 14–18 age group; 15.6% in the 19–24 age group and 12.7% in the 25–29 age group. Those who state that they do not intend to emigrate are highest among the 25–29 age group (27.8%) whereas it descends to 22.3% in the 14–18 age group and 13.4% in the 19–24 age group.

34% of Türkiye’s youth want to move to another country for more than 6 months

have a “very strong” (14.2%) and “strong” (16.8%) desire compose a total of 31%. It is possible to see that young males state a stronger desire to emigrate compared to females.

Fig. 7 Young people’s desire in Türkiye to move to another country for more than 6 months (in %)

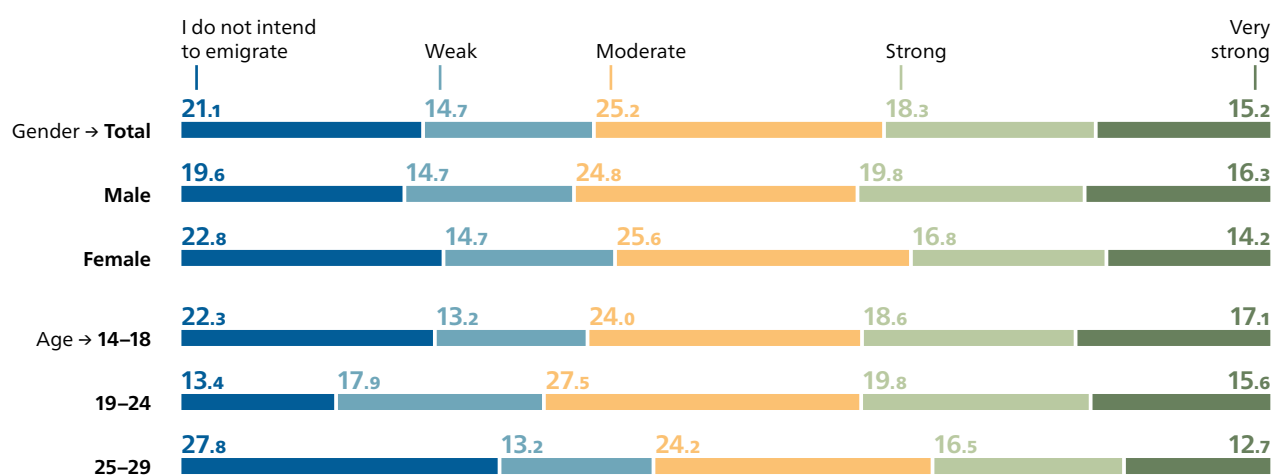
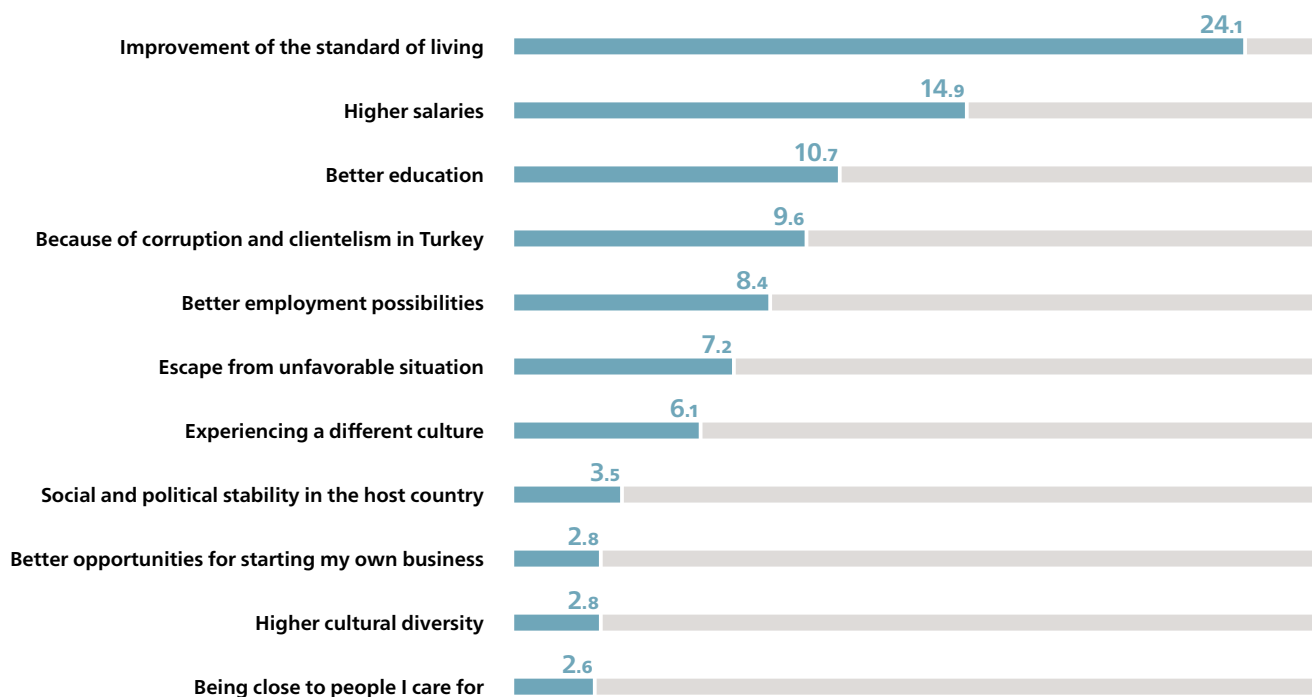


Fig. 8 Main reasons to move to another country for young people in Türkiye (in %)



Reasons to emigrate

In order to understand the main reasons behind this desire to move to another country, young people were asked the question: “What is the main reason for which you would move to another country?” The main reason for wanting to emigrate is to improve the standard of living (24 %)

These results are also similar to the surveys conducted on youth in Türkiye recently. For example, according to the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS 2023) survey, Turkish Youth Study 2023 — conducted between 5 December 2022 and 20 January 2023, with young people aged 18 to 25 from 16 different provinces — 63 % of young people stated that if they had the means, they would like to live in another country. The top choice of country was Germany, followed by the United States and the United Kingdom. When asked for the reasons behind their desire to move abroad, the desire to improve participants’ living conditions (47.8 %) was at the top of the list (KAS 2023, p. 50).

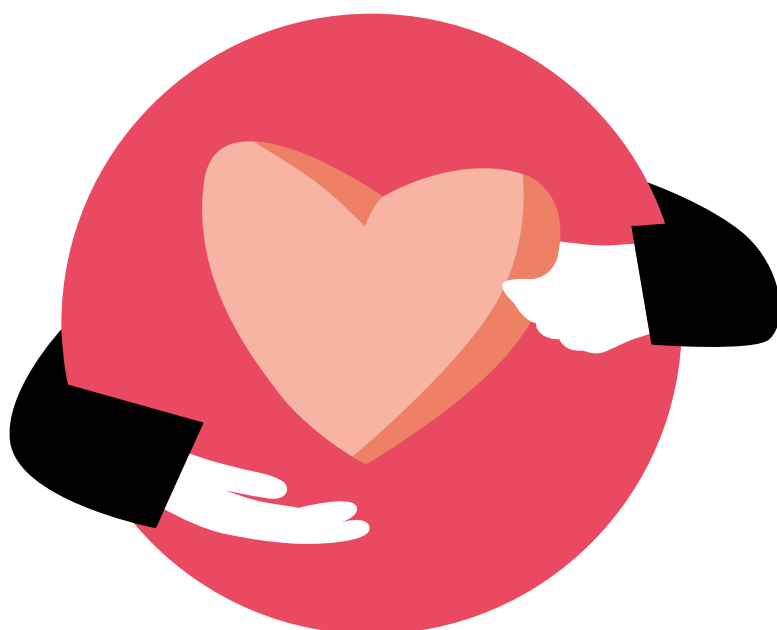
Main Takeaways

Since youth unemployment constitutes a critical and chronic problem in Türkiye, we focused on the perceptions about the factors for finding a job. Survey results show that young people have low levels of trust for meritocracy in the job market, because the majority of the respondents identify “connections with people in power” as the most important factor for finding a job. Relatedly, Türkiye’s youth reveal a very strong desire to move to another country (after North Macedonia and Albania, Türkiye comes third) with the youngest age group stating the strongest desire. Employment problems in Türkiye lead young people to consider emigrating, as “improvement of standard of living” emerges as the number one reason for living abroad.

6 Family and plans for the future

In the study, while discussing the profile of the young people, we underlined that the majority of the young people participating in the survey live with their parents (with mothers 60.2%; with fathers 54.4%) and siblings (42.9%). Only 6.8% of youth in Türkiye live alone. As discussed by previous research, young people in Türkiye tend to live in their parents' home till marriage which also raises the question of dependency of young people on their parents (Yurttagüler 2014). It is important to underline that family is an important institution and the welfare regime in Türkiye is based mostly on family (Yazıcı 2012). The last two decades shaped by the AKP governments saw "the marriage of convenience between neo-liberal welfare and employment policies with a neo-conservative familism that cements ideals of female domesticity (Kandiyoti 2016, p. 111)". This strong familism did not only come up with a gender regime but also a perspective which sees youth as dependent on the family institution and a "new" myth of youth aiming to create a pious generation (Lüküslü 2018).

When asked about their living situation, the majority of young people who live with their parents stated that "I live with my parents because it is the simplest and most comfortable solution." 28.1% of youth in Türkiye want to live alone, but can't.



It is important to note that 19–24 and 25–29 age groups have a higher tendency to state the financial circumstances (8.5% for 14–18 age group; 29.6% for 19–24 age group and 25.7% for 25–29 age group).

When asked about how they are getting along with their parents, 33.5% responded "We get along very well" and 56.8% responded "We get along, although sometimes we have differences in opinion". Only 1.3% responded "We have a very conflictual relationship". Those who respond "In general, we do not get along, we often argue" compose 7.4% of young people participating in the survey.

Young people were asked about what they give importance to while choosing a partner. The education level (of the partner) is stated to be the most important response: 38.4% stated that the education level is very important and 18.1% stated that it is important. In other words, 56.5% stated that the education level is important for them. The study shows that the family's approval of the partner is the second most important thing for young people in Türkiye: approximately 1/3 of survey participants (33.3%) stated that family approval is "very important" and for 16.7% it is "important". In other words, for 50% family approval is important. Religious beliefs are also important for 44.3% of young people: 32.7% find them to be "very important" and 11.6% find them "important". Economic standing is stated to be "very important" for 27.3% and "important" for 16.4% adding up to a total of 43.7%. For 42.9% of Türkiye's youth, virginity is important when choosing a partner. Compared to these other answers, national origin is perceived to be less important: 23.8% state that it is "very important" and 13.1% state that it is "important", adding up to a total of 36.9%.

Life satisfaction among Youth in Türkiye

When young people were asked "To what extent are you satisfied with your life in general?", those who answered "very satisfied" or "satisfied" were lowest in Türkiye with 45% followed by Greece (51%); the highest percentage was 75% in Montenegro, 69% in Slovenia, and 64% in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Even though young people who state to be very satisfied are only a small percentage, young females state to be slightly more satisfied with their lives in comparison to young males. Young females who rate their life satisfaction 10/10

When the study is analyzed according to age groups, it is seen that 14–18 age group rate their life satisfaction the highest whereas it decreases with the 19–24 age group and increases with the 25–29 age group. Among the 14–18 age group, those who rate their life satisfaction 10/10 (11.9%) and 9/10 (6.4%) adds up to a total of 18.3% whereas among the 19–24 age group, those who rate their life satisfaction 10/10 (6.2%) and 9/10 (4.4%) adds up to a total of 10.6% and among the 25–29 age group, those who rate their life satisfaction 10/10 (11%) and 9/10 (4.8%) adds up to a total of 15.8%. The study also shows that 18.9% of young people with the lowest education rate their life satisfaction 10/10, whereas this percentage falls to 11.5% for the ones with medium level of education and 7% for the ones with the high education level. Similarly, those who rate their lives 9/10 are 8% for the low educated, 5.3% for the medium level of educated and 4.9% for the high educated. Young people in Türkiye have the lowest life satisfaction.

28% of Türkiye's youth want to live alone, but can't

(10.5%) and 9/10 (5.6%) make up a total of 16.1% whereas for young males, those who rate their life satisfaction 10/10 (9.0%) and 9/10 (4.9%) make up a total of 13.9%. Similarly, among young males those who rate their satisfaction 1/10 (or rather state that they are very dissatisfied) (9.6%) and 2/10 (4.4%) make up a total of 14%, whereas among young females those who rate their life satisfaction 1/10 (8.4%) and 2/10 (3.5%) make a total of 11.9%.

Fig. 9 Important factors for choosing a partner among young people in Türkiye (in %)

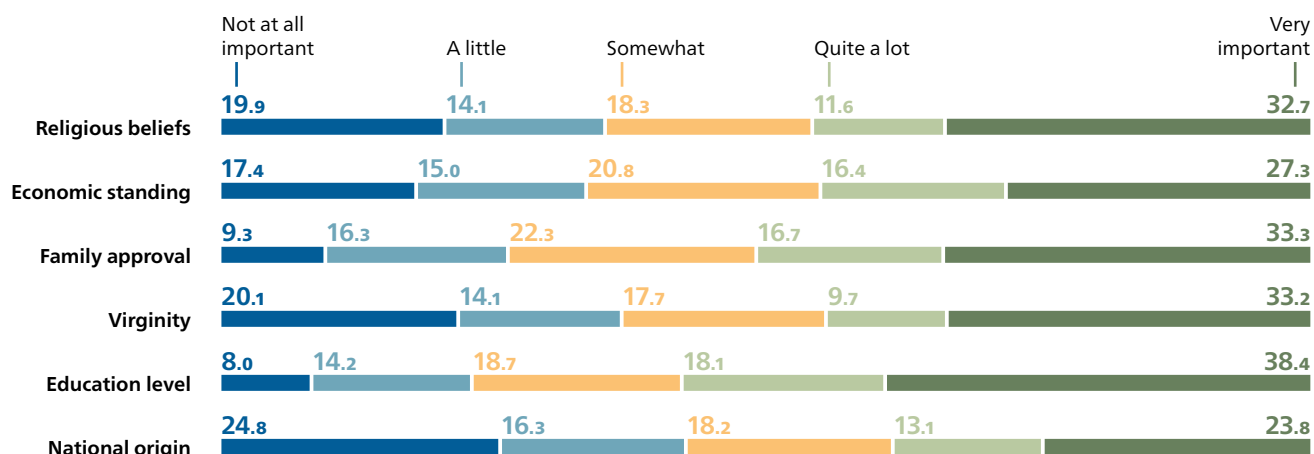
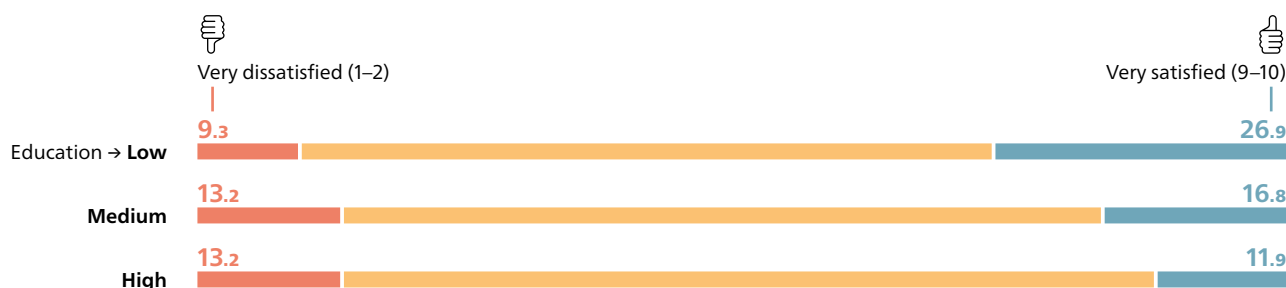


Fig. 10 Life satisfaction among young people in Türkiye (By level of education, on a scale from 1–10, in %)



What the future holds

43.7 % of youth in Türkiye see their future in 10 years as better than now – the lowest value across 13 countries and Greece with 57 %. The highest percentage was in Kosovo with 87 %, followed by Albania with 84 %, 82 % in Bosnia and Herzegovina and 81 % in Montenegro.

The study also demonstrates that education level is an important factor and that those who are highly educated state that their personal future is going to be “better than now”: Approximately ½ of the highly educated (48.4 %) respond “better than now” whereas this share descends to 40.3 % among the medium educated and 31.8 % among the low educated.

44 % of Türkiye’s youth see their future in 10 years as better than now – the lowest value across 13 countries

When the answers of young people in Türkiye are analyzed according to gender, it is important to underline that ¼ (10.2 %) of young females answered “Don’t know” which demonstrates the uncertainties in their lives. “Don’t know” answers descend to 7.6 % among young males. The young people who answered “better than now” is comparatively slightly higher among young males (44.4 %) in comparison to young females (42.9 %). However, those who answer “worse than now” are also higher among the males (27.3 %) in comparison to young females (22.8 %). It is important to note that ¼ (25.1 %) of the people participating in the survey responded “worse than now” to this question.

The study demonstrates that young people in the 19–24 age group are more optimistic about their personal future in 10 years: 47.8 % of 19–24-year-olds respond “better than now” in contrast to 43.9 % of 25–29-year-olds and 39.8 % of 14–18-year-olds.

Young people in Southeast Europe were also asked to state their perceptions of the future of the country (“How do you see the future of the country/society in general”) and the lowest percentage of those stating the answer “better than now” was in Greece with 19 % followed by Türkiye with 20 %, by Croatia with 24 %, by Romania with 25 %. The highest percentage was 77 % in Kosovo and 58 % in Albania and 51 % in Montenegro.

Young males are more pessimistic about the future of Türkiye: 52.5 % of young males respond “worse than now” whereas 46.1 % of young females give this answer.

Highly educated respondents are more pessimistic about the future of the country. 51.8 % of the highly educated choose the “worse than now” response whereas 47.3 % of the medium educated and 45.7 % of the low educated give this response. For the above discussed two questions relating to life satisfaction and views of the personal future, two countries stand out: In Greece and Türkiye (with the latter leading the percentages), young people demonstrate their pessimism. Similarly, only ⅓ of young people in Greece and Türkiye had perceptions of a better than now future of the country.

Fig. 11 Türkiye's youth's views on their personal future in 10 years (in %)

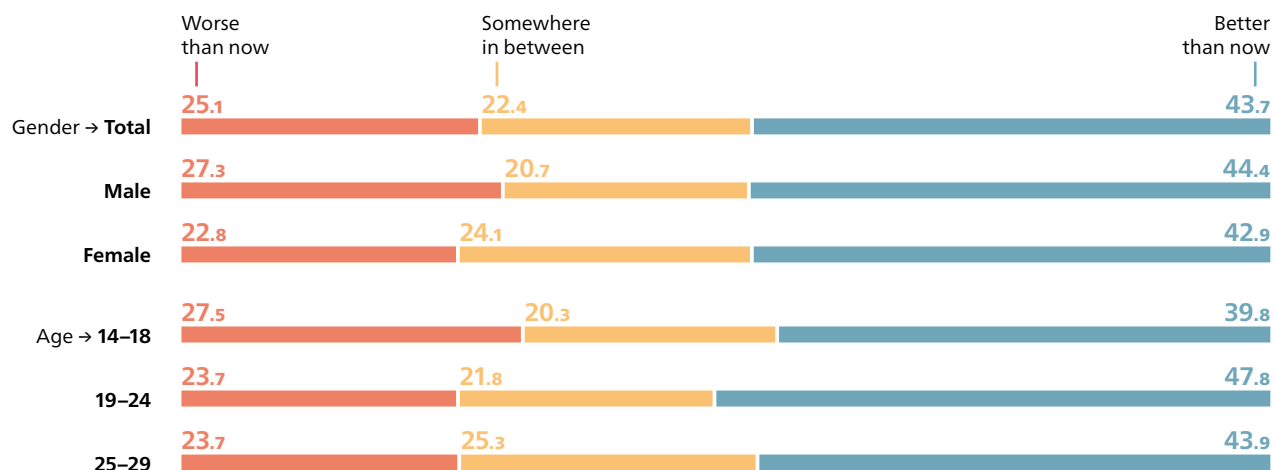
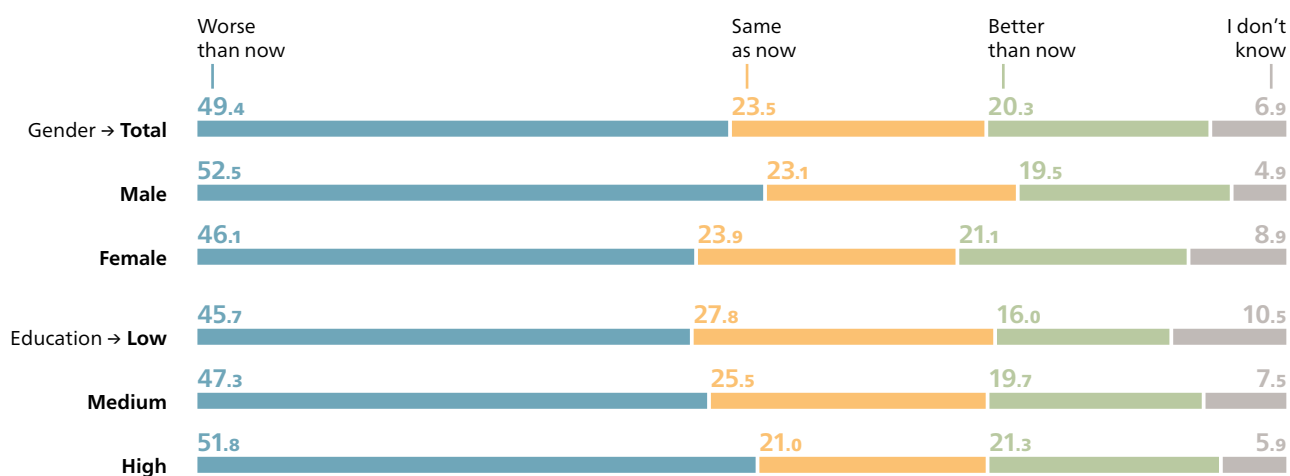


Fig. 12 Türkiye's youth's views on the future of Turkish society (in %)



Main Takeaways

The majority of Türkiye's youth live in the family home. Actually, this has been the default experience for young people in Türkiye until marriage, raising concerns for lack of youth autonomy and independence. When asked about the reasons for living with parents, the majority identified it being the simplest and most comfortable arrangement. When asked about their relationship with parents, 56.8% responded "We get along, although sometimes we have differences in opinion".

The important factors for choosing a partner are education, family approval, religious beliefs, and virginity, respectively. Young people in Türkiye have the lowest life satisfaction in the study and life satisfaction decreases with the education level, pointing out that the highly educated youth have more unmet demands in life. Türkiye's youth are also the most pessimistic about their personal future in 10 years. Following Greece, they are also the most pessimistic about the future of the country with young males and the highly educated revealing higher levels of pessimism.

7 General values, attitudes and perceptions

Young people were asked their opinions about what matters in life (ex. taking responsibility, having a successful career, doing sports, having children, etc.). For young people in Türkiye, 53 % stated that “being independent” is “very important” whereas 50 % stated that “having a successful career” is “very important”. It is very interesting to see that “healthy eating” is the third “very important” thing in what matters in life as 45 % state that it is very important, followed by “taking responsibility” (43 %) and “graduating from university” (43 %). “Looking good” is perceived to be “very important” by 39 % followed by “doing sports” (38 %). “Being active in politics” and “participating in civic actions/initiatives” is perceived to be very important only by 13 %, and “wearing branded clothes” by 15 % and “having children” by 23 %. Once we add “very important” and “important” responses together, the most popular two answers (with only slight differences) are “having a successful career” (72.2 %) and “being independent” (71.4 %). “Healthy eating” (69.9 %) is the most popular third answer followed by “taking responsibilities” (69.4 %). It is very interesting to note that only 25.1 % sees “being active in politics” and only 25.7 % answers “participating in civic actions/initiatives”.



Nationalistic Attitudes

In the study, some statements regarding nationalistic attitudes were given and young people were asked whether they agree or disagree with these statements. A significant percentage (70.5 % in total) agree with the statement “I am proud to be a citizen of Türkiye”, 53.4 % stated that they “agree” whereas 17.1 % stated that they “mostly agree”. Those who disagree with the statement are in total 12.9 % (6.1 % “disagree” whereas 6.8 % “mostly disagree”).

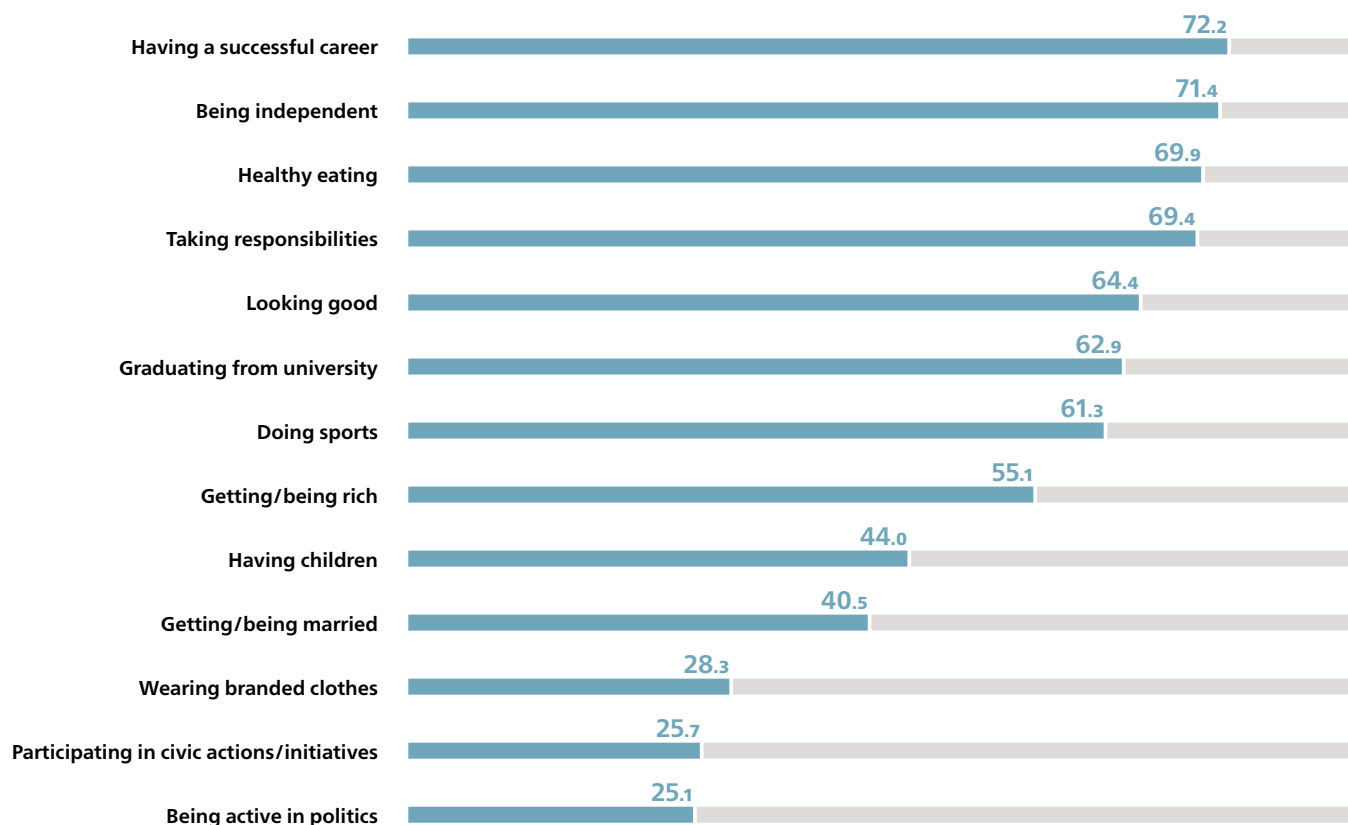
47.4 % of Türkiye’s youth think it would be best if Türkiye was inhabited only by real native populations: 31.1 % stated that they “agree” with the statement whereas 16.3 % states that they “mostly agree”. A total of 29.9 % of young people disagreed with the statement (18.6 % stated that they “disagree” whereas 11.3 % stated that they “mostly disagree”). A total of 39.6 % agreed with the statement “The real native population is only a person who has native land blood”: 24.3 % responded to “agree” with the statement and 15.3 % responded that they “mostly agree”. It is important to note, however, that a total of 38.3 % disagree with the statement (25.7 % “disagreed” and 12.6 % “mostly disagreed”).

Only **13.5 % of young people agreed with the statement “Türkiye should accept/receive more immigrants”** (7.4 % agreed and 6.1 % “mostly agreed” with the statement) whereas 73.3 % disagreed with it (64 % “disagreed” and 9.3 % “mostly disagreed”). 60.7 % stated that they agree with the statement “Non-native populations living in Türkiye should adopt native land customs and values” (40.4 % “agreed” and 20.3 % “mostly agreed”).

Views on gender-based violence

On 20 March 2021, it was announced via Presidential decree that Türkiye would withdraw from the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combatting violence against women, also known as the Istanbul Convention. Withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention has been one of the heated debates in Türkiye.

Fig. 13 What youth in Türkiye find 'important' and 'very important' (in %)



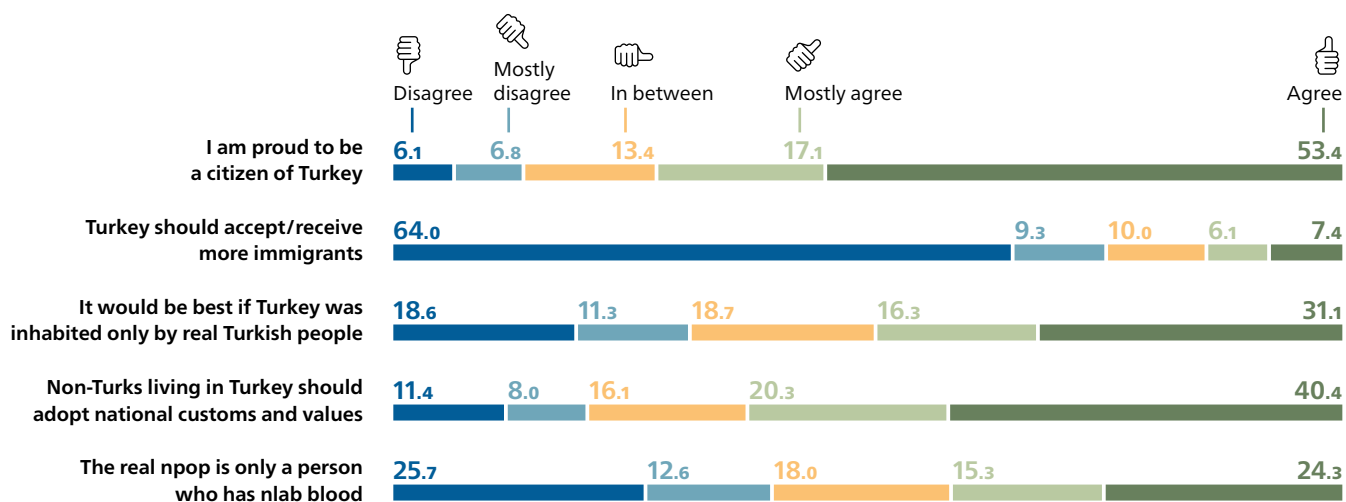
That is why as a Türkiye specific question, we aimed to ask young people their ideas regarding this withdrawal with the following question: "What do you think about Türkiye's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention?". 35 % of Türkiye's youth disagree with Türkiye's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention, 20.3 % agree with it. Those who stated their full agreement is approximately 1/10 of the population (9.6 %) and those who stated that they "agree" is also approximately 1/10 (10.7 %). In other words, those who state that they agree with the withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention is 20.3 % in total whereas those who disagree are 35 % in total.

Gender is an important factor affecting the responses to this question. The percentage of those who stated that "they do not agree at all" with the withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention is 21.9 % among males and 26.9 % among females and those who "do not agree" is 14.2 % among females and 13.1 % among males.

Thus, the percentages of those who disagree sums up to 41.1 % among females and to 35 %. The level of education affects these responses: the percentage of disagreement with the withdrawal rises with the education level: 11 % of young people with low level of education state that they "do not agree at all" whereas 20.8 % among medium educated and 29.5 % of the high educated stated that they "do not agree at all" with this withdrawal.

Young people were also asked their ideas regarding the prevention of violence against women and an important percentage of young people underlined the importance of structural issues (related with the judicial system, gender equity policies and the education system): 63.3 % responded "Severe penalties for perpetrators of violence"; 55.6 % responded "Policies to ensure equality between women and men and 51.8 % responded "Raising the level of education in Türkiye".

Fig. 14 Nationalistic Attitudes among Türkiye's youth (in %)



Fears and concerns

Young people were also asked about their fears and concerns and it is seen that young people demonstrated high degrees of fears and concerns about every issue demanded in the survey. At the top of the list (those who have the highest percentage of "a lot" responses) are (with 60%: "too many immigrants and refugees" (68.5%); "terrorist attack" (62%); "pollution and climate change" (61.9%); "having no job" (61.6%) and getting seriously ill (60.8%).

Analysis by gender

When we analyze the responses according to gender, we see that gender plays an important role in fears and concerns and that females (in comparison to males) are more concerned about every issue. For example:

→ Regarding being a "victim of physical violence", it is seen that 45.9% of young males gave the response "a lot" whereas 62.2% of females gave this answer.

→ Similarly, regarding the fear/concern of being a "victim of sexual violence". 48% of young males stated that they are concerned "a lot" whereas 64.4% of young females gave the same response.

→ 66.2% of young females responded that they are concerned "a lot" about "getting seriously ill" whereas among males, this percentage is 55.7%.

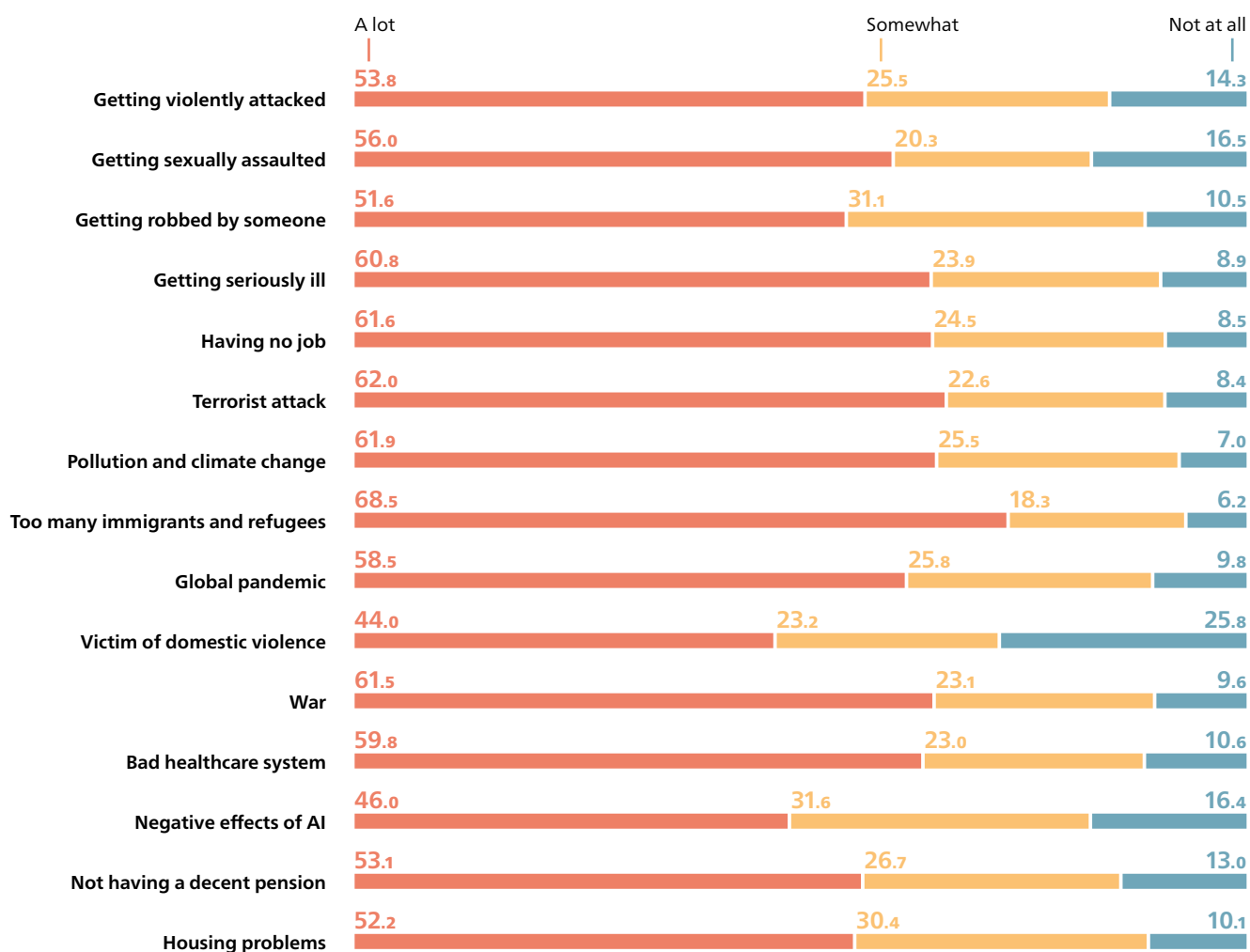
→ Young females are also more insecure about employment prospects. 66.2% of young females responded that they are concerned "a lot" about "having no job" in comparison to 57.1% of young males.

→ 51.7% of young females stated that they are concerned "a lot" about being a "victim of domestic violence" whereas the percentage of young males giving the same response is 36.7%.

→ Those who stated to be concerned "a lot" about war is 67.9% among females and 55.4% among males.

→ Those concerned "a lot" about bad healthcare system make up 65.2% among females and 54.6% among males.

Fig. 15 Fears and concerns among young people in Türkiye (in %)



Main Takeaways

“Having a successful career” and “being independent” emerge as the most important achievements in life. When we consider the high tendency to live with parents, it is important to note the dilemma here: Young people in Türkiye value autonomy and independence as well, and under convenient conditions they would be more willing to build autonomous lives. Second, survey results show that nationalism is on the rise among youth: the majority feel proud to be a citizen of Türkiye; they prefer Türkiye to be inhabited only by real native populations; almost 40 % tend to conceive the real native population as a person with native land blood; an overwhelming majority does not

want Türkiye to accept more immigrants; and the majority also think non-native populations should adopt native land customs and values. Third, young people are somehow progressive about gender rights. 35 % disagree with Türkiye’s withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention with the highest level of disagreement among young females. Finally, top fears and concerns of youth are the following: “too many immigrants and refugees”; “terrorist attack”; “pollution and climate change”; “having no job”, and “getting seriously ill”. Young females tend to feel more concerned about every other issue included in the questionnaire.

8 Political attitudes and participation

Young people's interest/disinterest in politics has been a heated debate in political discussions and in the youth scholarly literature. In the survey, young people were asked the following question: "How much are you personally interested in politics?" and we see that young people in Türkiye (together with young people in Greece) are more interested in politics than their peers in the region. 36 % of young Greeks and 33 % of young Turks are "very interested" and "mostly interested". The lowest share is in Kosovo (11 %), followed by Albania (13 %), North Macedonia (17 %), Romania (18 %) and Serbia (19 %).

The study demonstrates that young females state a stronger interest than young males. Young females are more interested in politics than men. 29.5 % of young males and 26.3 % of young females state that they are "not interested at all" and "mostly not interested".

The interest in politics decreases by age: The youngest age group (14–18 age group) is also the group who state to be "not interested at all" and "mostly disinterested" (31.2 %) in contrast to 19–24 age group (29 %) and 25–29 age group (23 %).

Interest in politics increases with education level: A total of 36.9 % of highly educated young people state that they are "very" and "mostly" interested whereas 31.5 % of medium educated and 20.2 % of low educated state to be very and mostly interested.

Self-identifying on a scale from left to right

Young people were also asked about their political orientation with the question "When people talk about their political beliefs, they mostly speak about left-wing and right-wing. How would you place your views on this scale, generally speaking?". Through a cross country analysis, it is possible to observe that "Don't know/No answer" responses in all countries is high (even reaching to 39 % of survey participants in North Macedonia, 33 % in Albania, 29 % in Serbia and 24 % in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Montenegro and 23 % in Romania. The lowest percentages (Don't know/No answer" response to the question about political beliefs) are in Türkiye (12 %) and in Greece (16 %).

Another important finding of the study is to show that in almost all countries, an important number of young people situate themselves in the middle: 47 % in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 41 % in Bulgaria, 40 % in Croatia, 39 % in Greece and 37 % in Serbia, Slovenia and Türkiye. Left-right ideological dichotomies occupy less meaning for the current generation of young people elsewhere.

In Türkiye, 6 % of survey participants self-identify as far left and 12 % as far right, 15 % self-identify as left and 19 % as right. In other words, those who self-identify as the left compose 21 % and those self-identifying in the right compose 31 % of the survey participants, while 37 % situate themselves in the middle and 12 % choose no answer and/or are hesitant to specify their political orientation. The more educated a person is, the more likely they can place themselves on the left-right scale.

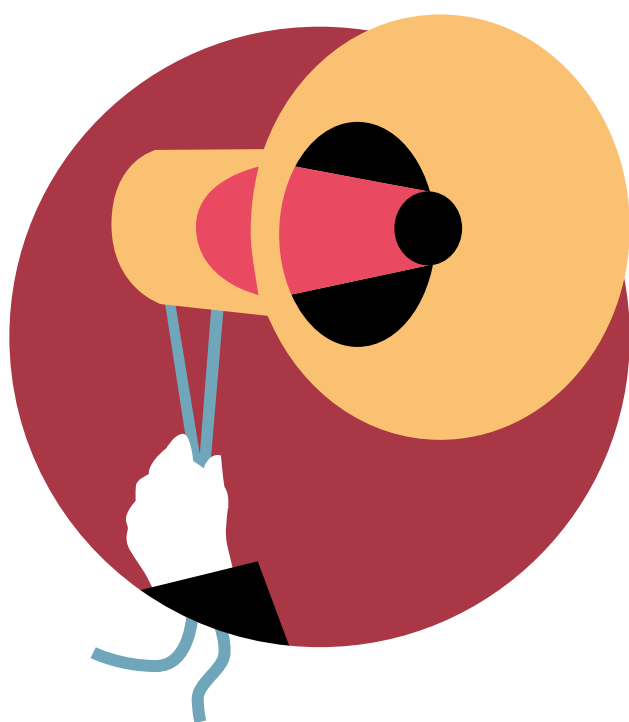
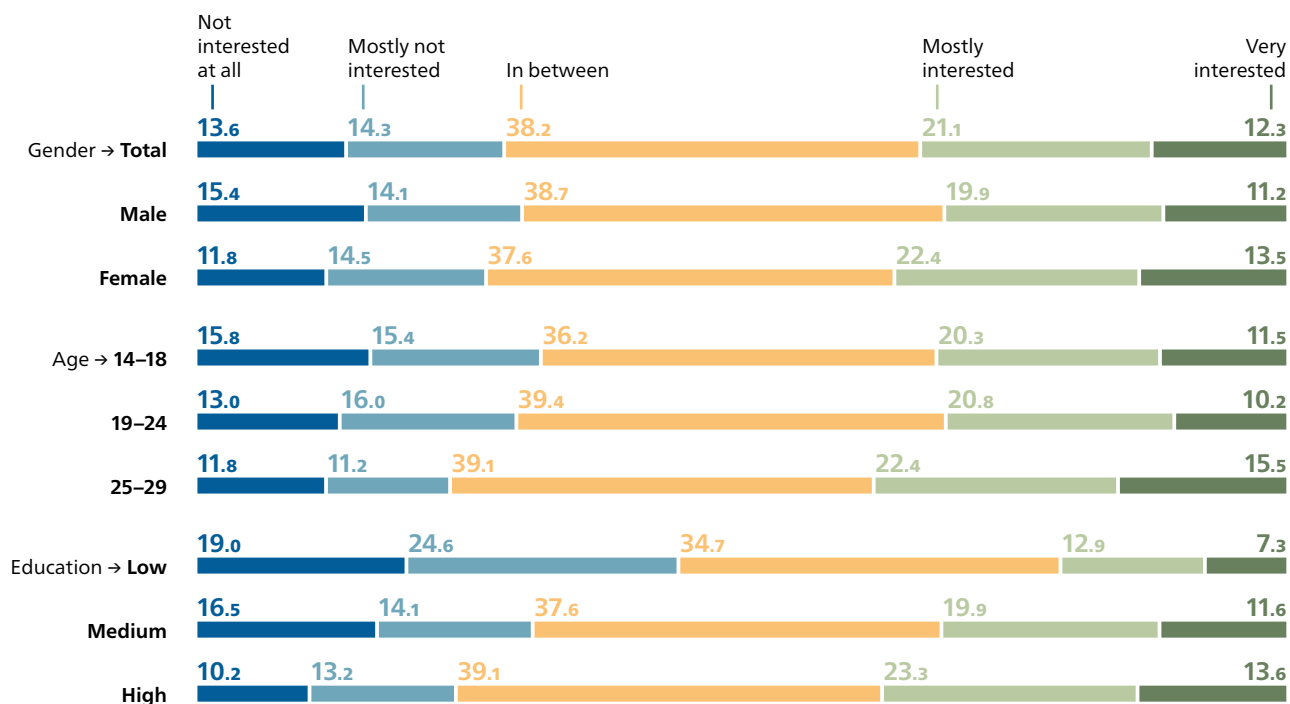


Fig. 16 Interest in politics among young people in Türkiye (in %)



Trust and the EU

The survey demonstrates how young people’s trust in national governments is low in the whole region. Young people were asked the question “On the whole, how far do you trust the entities listed below?” and those who answer “fully” and “quite a lot” are all below 35 % (the highest one is 31 %): 31 % in Kosovo, 26 % in Türkiye, 23 % in Montenegro, 19 % in Slovenia and 17 % in Albania and Greece. Even though the trust in the na-

Trust in national government decreases with education level. The share of those who state that they trust “fully” and “quite a lot” is lowest among the highly educated (22.6 %). 28.5 % of the medium educated state that they trust the national government “fully” and “quite a lot”. The trust in national government is highest among the low educated young people (36.2 %).

An important finding of the research is that it shows that young people’s trust in the European Union is stronger than their trust in their national governments (except for Türkiye (where it is equally 26 % for the national government and the EU). The highest trust in the EU is stated by young people in Kosovo with 60 %, followed by 46 % by young people in Albania and 39 % in Romania.

57 % of young people in Türkiye want to join the EU, 27% don't

tional government is low since only approximately ¼ of young people in Türkiye (26 % in Türkiye), this percentage is the second highest among other countries. Trust in the national government increase by age: Those who state that they trust it “fully” and “quite a lot” is highest in the 25–29 age group (31.2 %) in contrast to the 19–24 age group (23.6 %) and the 14–18 age group (24.1 %).



Recent surveys on the perceptions of the EU in Türkiye demonstrate that young people have more positive ideas about the EU compared to the whole population. The latest “Turkish Perceptions of the European Union 2022” survey, conducted in March 2022 by the German Marshall Fund (GMF 2022, p. 19) of the United States, confirmed the positive image of Europe and the European Union among young people in Türkiye. The survey shows that individuals aged 18–24 had positive ideas about Europe/Europeans and the European Union, and 72.8% of those in this age group stated that they believed that EU membership would be good for Türkiye, compared to 58.6% of the general population who expressed this view. However, it is important to note that confidence that Türkiye will become an EU member is rather low. The support for the political reforms that Türkiye needs to make in order to achieve visa liberalization with the European Union is also high and is steadily increasing. Additionally, the 18–24 age group appears to have a much more positive opinion of Europeans than the general population: 76.6% of the respondents in this age group had a positive opinion of Europeans, as opposed to 60.2% in the general population.

Fig. 17 Self-assessment of Türkiye’s youth on a left-right political scale (in %)

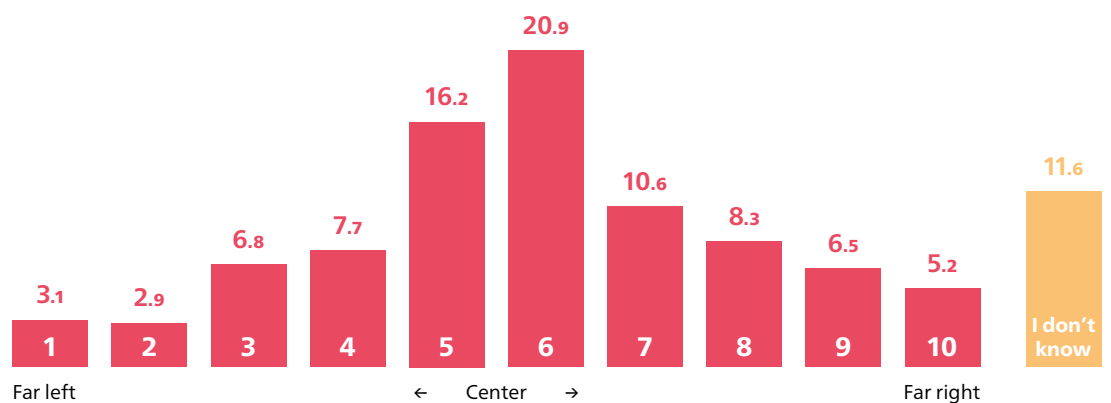
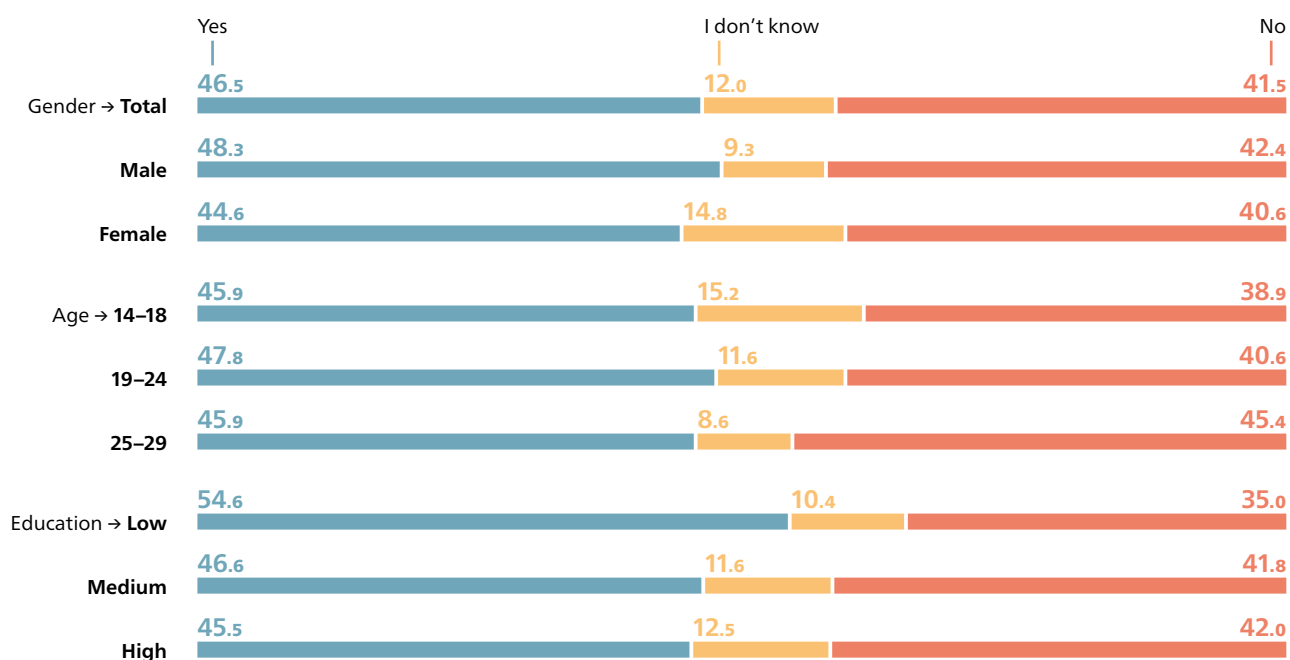


Fig. 18 Willingness among Turkey's youth to take on a political function (in %)



Our study confirms these findings. Young people were asked “On the whole how much do you trust the EU?” and 11.9% of young people in Türkiye stated that they trust “fully” the EU and 14.5% stated that they trust “quite a lot”. The study demonstrates that there are not many differences according to gender (that young males and females give similar responses).

When the survey results are analyzed according to age groups, it is seen that approximately 1/3 (32.3%) of the oldest age group (25–29) state that they “do not trust EU at all”, whereas this percentage is 24.7% among the 19–24 age group and 28.3% among the 14–18 age group. Besides, it is important to note that those who are highly educated are the ones who state in highest percentage that they “do not trust at all” the EU (30.4%) whereas it decreases to 26.6% with the medium educated and 26.1% with the low educated.

The survey demonstrates that 57% of young people in Türkiye want to join the EU, 27% don't. The share of positive answers to the question is slightly higher among the youngest (14–18 age group) (59%) compared to the 19–24 age group (56%) and 25–29 age group (56%). It is important to note that Türkiye is not a member of the EU and has a problematic relation with it (Müftüler Bac 1998; Aydın Düzgüt & Tocci 2015). Young people were also asked “How much do you see yourself as European”. The 14–18 age group see themselves as more European (22%) compared to the 19–24-year-old group (14%) and the 25–29-year-old-group (17%).

Young people were also asked about whether young people's interests are represented in national politics (How well do you think young people's interests are represented in national politics?), those who give the answer “very well” and “quite well” are very low across all countries. Türkiye is the country with the highest percentage with a total of 19% of survey participants (followed by 15% in Romania, 14% in Slovenia). The most popular response to this question among young people in Türkiye is “in between” (33%) followed by “poorly” (32.9%). Those who responded “not at all” is 12.8%.

Feeling represented

The study shows that young females in Türkiye are more positive about young people's interests represented in national politics. 5.2 % of young males respond "very well" and 10.7 % "quite well" adding up to a total of 15.9 % whereas among young females those who respond "very well" is 6.2 % and "quite well" is 15 % adding up to a total of 21.2 %.

When the results of the survey are analyzed according to age groups, those who respond that young people's interests are "not at all" represented and "poorly" represented are higher among the youngest 14–18 age group (50.6 %), in comparison to 19–24 age group (43.7 %) and 25–29 age group (42.0 %).

42 % of youth in Türkiye would be willing to take a political function – the highest value across 13 countries

When the results of the survey are analyzed according to education level of participants, it is seen that those who state that young people's interests are not represented "at all" and are "poorly" represented are higher among the highly educated (a total of 50.3 %) in comparison to medium (42.5 %) and low (33.1 %) educated.

42 % of youth in Türkiye would be willing to take a political function – the highest value across 13 countries. (41.5 %), followed by Romania (37 %) and Montenegro (33 %). Combined with Türkiye's youth's higher interest in politics, it is safe to conclude that young people in Türkiye are more into politics compared to their peers in the region.

Young men (42.4 %) are more willing to take a political function compared to young women (40.6 %). It is also seen that older age groups respond more positively about willing to take a political function compared to younger ones: 38.9 % of 14–18 age group respond "yes" to the question, whereas 40.6 % of 19–24 age group and 45.4 % of the 25–29 age group respond positively to the question. Education also seems a factor as we see that higher and medium educated young people are more willing to take a political function compared to low educated. 35 % of low educated answered that they would be willing to take a political function whereas this percentage rises to 41.8 % among medium educated and to 42 % among highly educated.

Young people were also asked whether they are a member of a trade union. The study shows that there is only a small percentage of young people who are members of a trade union (ranging between 2 and 10 %). Albania (2 %), Kosovo (3 %) and Greece (4 %) are the countries with the lowest percentages of trade union members. Türkiye is among the countries with the highest trade union membership: Slovenia has the highest percentage (10 %) followed by Türkiye (9 %). It is also important to note that 1/5 (20 %) of young people in Türkiye gave the answer "No, but I would be interested in joining". Türkiye and Bulgaria are the two countries where this response (No, but I would be interested in joining) is the highest (20 %), followed by Romania (19 %), Greece (15 %) and Bosnia Herzegovina (15 %). Trade union membership is higher among young men (10 %) compared to young women (8.3 %). 25–29 age group is also the highest age group with trade union membership (11.1 %) compared to 19–24 (8.3 %) and 14–18 age group (8.3 %). High educated are also the ones with higher percentages of trade union membership (10.2 %) compared to medium (8.2 %) and low (8.5 %) educated.

Fig. 19 Biggest issues facing Türkiye in the next decade according to young people (in %)

| | Total | Gender ↓ | | Age ↓ | | | Education ↓ | | |
|---|-------|-------------|--------|----------|-------|-------|----------------|--------|------|
| | | Male | Female | 14–18 | 19–24 | 25–29 | Low | Medium | High |
| Climate change | 43.7 | 37.3 | 50.4 | 51.4 | 37.3 | 41.3 | 29.8 | 41.7 | 47.2 |
| Immigration | 54.6 | 55.1 | 54.2 | 54.8 | 56.4 | 52.7 | 44.5 | 49.8 | 60.6 |
| Inequalities | 54.8 | 54.0 | 55.7 | 54.5 | 54.0 | 56.0 | 51.1 | 52.4 | 57.6 |
| Robotization and transformation of employment | 21.8 | 19.7 | 24.1 | 23.0 | 20.4 | 22.0 | 17.3 | 21.3 | 23.0 |
| Weakening of the religious and traditional values | 33.2 | 33.4 | 33.0 | 30.6 | 37.0 | 32.4 | 25.5 | 35.1 | 32.3 |
| Weakening of democracy | 44.1 | 44.3 | 44.0 | 50.4 | 41.6 | 39.4 | 42.4 | 38.4 | 50.0 |
| Corruption | 54.9 | 55.9 | 53.9 | 52.4 | 56.8 | 55.9 | 38.3 | 54.7 | 57.1 |
| Terrorism | 44.2 | 44.9 | 43.4 | 46.6 | 44.6 | 40.9 | 29.5 | 43.0 | 47.0 |
| Unemployment | 64.8 | 65.9 | 63.5 | 65.7 | 63.9 | 64.5 | 55.8 | 62.7 | 67.9 |
| Skilled workforce leaving the country | 51.2 | 51.3 | 51.1 | 53.4 | 50.2 | 49.6 | 33.1 | 44.3 | 60.1 |
| Demographic decline | 22.7 | 22.7 | 22.6 | 21.9 | 22.9 | 23.3 | 16.6 | 18.4 | 27.6 |
| Quality of public services (health, education) | 39.4 | 36.8 | 42.1 | 41.9 | 38.2 | 37.8 | 31.1 | 32.5 | 47.3 |
| I don't know | 3.8 | 4.2 | 3.3 | 2.3 | 6.0 | 3.3 | 10.9 | 5.0 | 1.7 |

The biggest issues facing Türkiye

Young people were also asked about the biggest issues facing their country in the next decade (a question with multiple answers) and at the top of the list for young people in Türkiye was unemployment (64.8%). Corruption (54.9%), inequalities (54.8%) and immigration (54.6%) all had similar percentages and stated equally as important issues (approximately 55%) followed by skilled workforce leaving the country (51.2%). A detailed reading of the study shows that **there are not many differences linked with gender**. For example, unemployment is at the top of the list for young males (65.9%) and young females (63.5%) whereas corruption, inequalities and immigration are seen as top issues for young people of both males and females.

The big difference between young males and females is in the prioritization of climate change (37.3% for young males and 50.4% for young females), quality of public services (health, education, etc.) (36.8% for young males and 42.1% for young females) and robotization and transformation of employment (19.7% for young males and 24.1% for young females) where young females state their concern more than young males.

Half of Türkiye's youth see unemployment, corruption, inequalities and immigration as the top issues facing Türkiye in the next decade. An important point to highlight is that climate change is also an important issue for the 14–18 age group and classified as a big issue by 51.4% while it is stated by only 37.3% for the 19–24 age group and 41.3% of the 25–29 age group. Similarly, the 14–18 age group is more concerned about the weakening of democracy (50.4%) in contrast to the 19–24 age group (41.6%) and to the 25–29 age group (32.4%).

When the survey results are analyzed according to education level, it is observed that highly educated young people are more concerned about “skilled workforce leaving the country” (60.1%) in contrast to medium educated (44.3%) and low educated (33.1%). Highly educated are also more concerned about immigration and perceive it as a big issue (60.6%) in comparison to medium educated (49.8%) and low educated (44.5%). Perceiving climate change as a big issue also rises with education level: the share of those stating climate change as a big issue is 29.8% among the low educated, 41.7% among the medium educated and 47.2% among the highly educated.

Political orientation

In May 2023, Türkiye witnessed one of the most critical elections, which coincided with the 100th anniversary of the foundation of the republican regime. The ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) that was in power for twenty-first years and faces criticisms for starting a process of autocratization competed against a united opposition in the presidential and parliamentary elections. The opposition parties that united around the common presidential candidacy of Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu promised to restore democracy and put an end to accelerated polarization in the country. Despite hopes for the opposition victory though, President Erdoğan won a third mandate in presidential office with his party AKP becoming the first

party in the parliamentary elections as well. To understand the voting preferences of Türkiye’s young people in those critical elections, we included the question of “which candidate did you vote for in the 2023 presidential elections?”

The survey results reveal that young people were more likely to support the opposition in the presidential elections. 33.3% of the participants reported to have voted for the united opposition’s common candidate Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, 5.5% voted for the far-right opposition candidate Sinan Oğan; and 3.4% for Muharrem İnce*.

While the oppositional candidates in total received 42.4% of the vote, 29.5% of the young people voted for the incumbent President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. However, it is essential to note that 28.4% of the survey participants answered “I don’t know” revealing a high tendency for not disclosing their voting preferences. While the percentages of young females voting for Kılıçdaroğlu and Erdoğan exceeded young males’ votes for both candidates (34% of females voted for Kılıçdaroğlu and 30.3 for Erdoğan), young males were more likely to vote for the far-right candidate Oğan and İnce (4.8% of young males voted for İnce compared to only 1.9% of young females). The highest difference between Erdoğan and Kılıçdaroğlu was measured among the 14–18 age group (only 19.6 percent stated to have voted for Erdoğan compared to 31.3% for Kılıçdaroğlu). Education level reveals parallel results to the long-time trends in voting among the general population: voters with low levels of education tend to vote for the incumbent party and highly educated voters for the opposition. While the low and medium educated youth stated to have voted for Erdoğan (38.3 and 37.8% respectively), united opposition’s common candidate Kılıçdaroğlu received the highest votes from the high educated youth (37.7% of the high educated youth voted for Kılıçdaroğlu, whereas only 20.5% of low educated youth preferred Kılıçdaroğlu).

The critical 2023 elections frequently included fervent and polarizing campaign discourses, which reached to a peak, when the People’s Alliance parties (the leader of which was the ruling AKP) released AI-generated fake videos to claim that terrorist organizations supported the opposition alliance (the Nation’s Alliance). To analyze the impact of this accusation on young voters, we asked the survey participants “What do you think about this claim?”. The results show that such propaganda - a striking example of post-truth politics - influenced youth perceptions about the opposition alliance to a significant degree. A total of 24% of the respondents answered the question “completely and mostly agree” and 25% stated “in-between”.

* Public surveys before the elections showed that Muharrem İnce (a politician who split from the main opposition party Republican People’s Party and established the Homeland Party in 2021) was most popular among young voters due to his campaign that incorporated populist, nationalistic and fun-oriented features offering a “third way” alternative to both the incumbent and the united opposition. Election results showed that despite him withdrawing from candidacy shortly before the elections, some oppositional voters still voted for him to show their dissatisfaction with the opposition’s common candidate Kılıçdaroğlu.

Therefore, a total of 49 % of Youth in Türkiye came under the influence of negative campaign discourse during the last elections compared to the 34 % of the survey participants stating “completely and mostly disagree” and 17.5 % who answered with “Don’t know”. The survey results revealed no significant differences based on age and gender. However, education level becomes a stronger predictor of the tendency to agree with the claim. The 30.5 % of the low educated respondents stated to have agreed with the claim compared to the 25 % average of general agreement rate.

The last decade in Türkiye witnessed the rise of electoral campaigns specifically designed for young voters. Politicians and political parties have included more detailed policy suggestions for youth in the election manifestos; have used social media effectively to reach out young voters; and organized big events where young people met party leaders and voiced their problems and concerns. This interest of political parties in youth however did not translate into political representation of youth in the parliament and that there are only 5 parliamentarians below the age of 30. In the survey, we asked the opinions of the

49 % of Türkiye’s youth came under the influence of negative campaign discourse during the last elections

respondents about these special electoral campaigns targeting youth. The results showed an almost even distribution of negative and positive opinions. While 26.5 % stated that they did not find the campaigns sincere and 13 % were cynical about them (they were aware of the campaigns but did not follow them), 23.4 % of the respondents reported to have liked them and 13.7 % stated that the youth-specific campaigns encouraged them to vote. While young males were more likely to find the campaigns insincere compared to young females, young females were relatively less interested in the campaigns. Compared to the total of 22 % of young males who either did not notice a campaign for young people or did not follow the campaigns, 29 % of female respondents were either unaware of the campaigns or were aware, but preferred not to follow them.

Main Takeaways

This chapter has first discussed the level of political interest among young people and highlighted that alongside Greece, Türkiye’s youth are the most interested in politics. Being female, older and more educated are positively correlated with political interest. In the political spectrum, 21 % self-identify in the left; 31 % in the right; and 37 % situate themselves in the middle. Situating mostly in the middle is a common trend in the region, but the “no answer” category is lowest in Türkiye. In all the countries included in the study, young people reveal very low levels of trust in national governments. In Türkiye, only 26 % expressed trust for the national government, but that level is the second highest among other countries. Youth trust for the EU is around the same level with trust for the national government and most of the survey respondents do not feel European. However, the majority of youth in Türkiye wish that Türkiye becomes an EU member. Only 19 % of young people in Türkiye believe that youth interests are represented in national politics, but it is important to note that this is the highest percentage in the region. Compared to other countries, young people in Türkiye are more willing to take a political function. Young people identify unemployment, corruption, immigration, skilled workforce leaving the country as the biggest issues facing the country in the next decade. The survey results also revealed that young people were more likely to support the opposition in the last presidential elections in 2023. Finally, we found an even distribution of negative and positive opinions about the success of special electoral campaigns targeting youth.

9 Attitudes towards democracy and perceptions of “others”

The process of democratic backsliding in Türkiye has weakened Türkiye’s already fragile democratic governance and limited the exercise of democratic rights and freedoms (see: Yılmaz, 2020). Furthermore, polarizing discourses by politicians have deepened historical socio-cultural, ethnic, and religious cleavages and divided society into different camps (Erdoğan and Uyan Semerci, 2020). It is thus significant to understand how young people in Türkiye perceive undemocratic policies and polarization and to what extent they value democratic governance and peaceful coexistence. The findings from both cross-country and Türkiye-specific questions in the survey show that young people, in general, tend to value democratic rights and are concerned about repressive policies, but they have weaker empathy and tolerance towards “others”-groups with different ethnic, religious, and cultural identities. To start with, young people were asked how much they agree or disagree with the statement “Democracy is a good form of government.” Those who “completely” and “mostly” agree are highest among young people in Kosovo (77%), Albania (72%), Türkiye (65%) and Greece (62%). The percentages are lowest in Serbia (36%), followed by Bulgaria (38%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (41%), Croatia (47%), Romania (50%), North Macedonia (53%) and Montenegro (53%).

It is important to highlight that even though those who completely and mostly agree with the statement “Democracy is a good form of government” in Türkiye is 65% (which can be considered as only a slight majority), this percentage is higher in comparison to some other countries where the percentages are much lower.

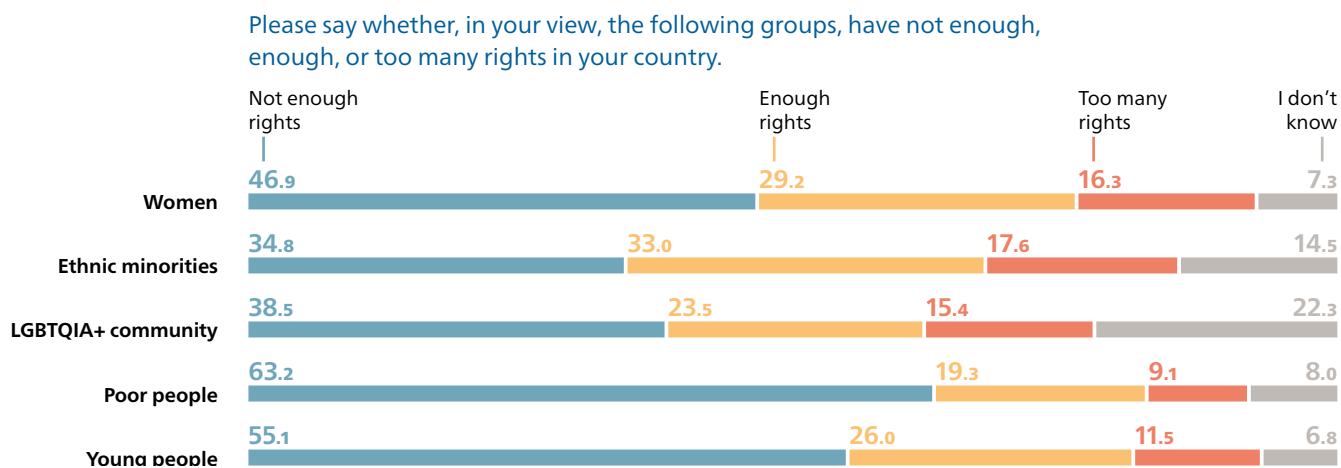
Those who completely and mostly agree with the statement “Democracy is a good form of government” is higher among females (66.6%) in comparison to young males (62.6%). The study also demonstrates that education level also influences the perceptions about democracy. 44% of highly educated “completely agree” that democracy is a good form of government, which is 31.0% among medium educated and 22.6% among low educated. It is also important to note that “Don’t know” are 14.2% among the low educated, whereas “don’t know” answers are 4.5% among medium educated and 2.7% among high educated.

As part of the questions asked specifically to youth in Türkiye, we inquired what the survey participants think about organizing protests on the streets to further understand young people’s opinions about political rights and freedoms. The majority of the respondents, 45%, reported to have completely and mostly agreed, while 18% disagreed. 27.5% of the respondents were in-between. Education level emerges as the strongest predictor of different opinions about this subject. While the low educated youth are mostly likely to disagree with organizing street protests, the high educated youth tend to show more approval. The total percentage of the high educated answering “completely and mostly agree” was 47%, while it remained 31.6% for the low educated respondents.

Many people in Türkiye have faced criminal investigations in the last decade due to their social media posts including criticisms against the government and the president. We asked the survey participants what they think about people being subject to legal proceedings due to political posts on social media. The 36.4% of the respondents completely and mostly disagreed, while the 25.6% completely or mostly agreed and the 26% neither agreed nor disagreed.



Fig. 20 Views on the rights of marginalized groups among youth in Türkiye (in %)



Views on the rights of marginalized groups

In the survey, respondents were also asked “Please say whether, in your view, the following groups have not enough, enough, or too many rights in your country”. The findings on this question emerge as a significant indicator about young people’s perceptions of minority rights. Poor people and young people were two major groups perceived as “having not enough rights” (63% of Türkiye’s youth think poor people don’t have enough rights, 55% think young people don’t have enough rights). Nevertheless, survey respondents in Türkiye also acknowledged that women, ethnic minorities, and members of the LGBTQIA+ community do not have enough rights (47%, 34.8%, and 38.5% respectively).

However, such acknowledgement does not necessarily translate into support for granting more rights to these groups. The total percentage of survey respondents who disagreed with the statement “same sex couples should have the right to marry” was pretty high at 56% and 56% of the respondents also stated that they would feel very bad or bad if LGBTQIA+ people moved into their neighborhood. It is striking that there is a broad consensus among different groups of young people on intolerance against LGBTQIA+ people. Gender, age, and education do not play a significant role on the level of negative opinions about LGBTQIA+ people.

The closure case against the People’s Democracy Party (HDP), the pro-Kurdish party accused of supporting terrorist organizations, can also be considered as a critical event to understand young people’s opinions about the violations of democratic rights concerning groups other than their own. The survey results revealed that the majority of young people in Türkiye approve the closure case against the HDP. While 52% of survey respondents stated to have agreed with the closure case, only 19% were likely to disagree.

The last decade has witnessed the arrests of many Kurdish politicians, the replacement of elected Kurdish mayors with appointed trustees (see: Bayer and Kemahlıoğlu, 2023), and the ruling alliance's criminalizing discourses about representatives of Kurdish politics. It is highly likely that political context as such has led the young people to

63 % of Türkiye's youth think poor people don't have enough rights

develop negative attitudes about the HDP. Compared to other indicators of democratic perceptions, education level functions in the opposite direction for this issue. The approval rate of the HDP's closure tends to increase with the education level. While the 22.8% of the low educated responded completely agreed with the HDP closure, the 36.4% of the medium and the 35.7% of the high educated stated to have agreed. It is still significant to note that a total of 30% of the respondents answered the question "in-between" and "don't know" revealing the presence of a relatively high number youth indecisive about a critical issue on the political agenda.

Previous research demonstrates that young people in Türkiye are polarized along partisan lines with respect to their opinions about critical issues on the political agenda, but tend to value friendships with people supporting different parties (Uzun and Lüküslü, 2024). Survey results, however, highlight an opposite tendency. More than 50% of the respondents stated that "they do not feel comfortable at all having close personal friends with the supporters" of each party identified in the question sheet. The highest level of discomfort was measured as 62.4% with the supporters of the pro-Kurdish Greens and Left Party (YSP).

Main Takeaways

The findings from both cross-country and Türkiye-specific questions in the survey show that young people, in general, tend to value democratic rights and are concerned about repressive policies, but they have weaker empathy and tolerance towards "others" – groups with different ethnic, religious, and cultural identities. For example, 65% of survey respondents agree with the statement that "Democracy is a good form of government" and most of them acknowledge that some groups do not have enough rights in the country. However, their tolerance for some of these groups are rather low. The majority do not want LGBTQIA+ people as neighbors and approve the closure case against the pro-Kurdish People's Democracy Party (HDP).

Conclusion

The study's major findings offer critical insights to anyone aiming to understand and analyze the socio-economic, cultural, and political tendencies of Türkiye's youth of today. First, compared to previous generations of youth, **young people in Türkiye are now more urban and educated**. As approximately 70% of survey respondents stated that they live in cities, 73.8% are in formal education. An increasingly urban and educated youth do not only reveal novel political attitudes and value orientations but are also more likely to put forth a new set of socio-economic and political demands from national and local governments that need to be addressed effectively. Even though the majority of youth in the survey are still single, the number of married young females exceeds those of married young males by more than 10%, revealing that young women's lives are more restricted by traditional familial norms. Among striking demographic trends is the household information of youth. Only a small minority of survey respondents (around 7%) stated that they live alone. The **financial dependency of young people in Türkiye on their families** should be resolved through more effective social policies such as increasing the number of student dorms or providing youth with subsidized housing.

Dissatisfaction with the quality of education - a trend common to many countries included in the study - is also prevalent among Türkiye's youth. Overall, the highly educated appear as the most critical and skeptical about the education system. However, one exceptional result for Türkiye is that the perception of corruption in education is low compared to other countries. Despite the problems identified about the quality of education, centralized examination systems in Türkiye -both for high school and university admissions- seem to create a perception of justice among youth regarding fair access to education.

The results regarding **the psychological well-being of young people in Türkiye is somehow alarming**. Türkiye's youth reveal the lowest life satisfaction levels; they are the most pessimistic about their personal future in 10 years; and they also have very negative opinions about their country's future in 10 years (similar to youth in Greece). Unemployment and inequalities in society emerge as the major sources of concern for Türkiye's youth. Besides, as climate issues are perceived as alarming especially for the youngest age group and females, young females also express great concern about gender-based discrimination and violence. It is important to note that young females are more anxious about every (potential) individual or country-wide problem compared to young males. Overall, political authorities should prioritize social policies aiming to increase the psychological resilience of young people in Türkiye.

Rising fears and concerns of young people in Türkiye lead them to consider "exit" as one of the most viable options. As confirmed by previous research (SODEV 2020, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Türkiye 2023), Türkiye emerges as the third country in the survey (after North Macedonia and Albania), where the desire to emigrate among youth is the strongest.



It is not surprising in a context where young people conceive **“connections with people in power as the most important”** factor for finding a job. Relatedly, respondents emphasize dissatisfaction with standard of living and expectations for higher salary as the major reasons behind the desire to emigrate.

Even though “exit” appears as the most viable option, it is important to underline that young people in Türkiye (together with young people in Greece) are **more interested in politics than their peers in the region**. Similarly, the answers to the question “Would you be willing to take a political function?” also demonstrate that an important percentage of young people in the SEE region respond negatively to this question. Türkiye is the country with the highest percentage of young people responding “Yes” to this question (42%). Combined with Türkiye’s youth’s higher interest in politics, it is safe to conclude that young people in Türkiye are more into politics compared to their peers in the region.

Young people in Türkiye **desire to live abroad**, but they hold strongly negative opinions about refugees in the country. “Too many refugees” emerges as the top fear and concern of youth, as survey respondents also express immigration as one of the biggest issues facing the country in the next decade. Prolonged and severe economic crisis has rendered adulthood transitions more challenging than ever. Under these conditions, young people tend to scapegoat refugees in the country as the source of unemployment and inequalities. Parallel to anti-refugee sentiments, **nationalistic attitudes are also strong** among survey respondents. The majority of young people tend to prioritize the “real native population” in the country.

Türkiye’s trajectory of EU membership has been complicated and fraught with tensions. Even though survey respondents seem to not strongly identify with being European (only a total of 17.7% of youth stated to feel very much and completely European), young people in Türkiye still display **high levels of trust for the EU** and a strong desire for Türkiye to become an EU member.

The findings from both cross-country and Türkiye-specific questions in the survey show that young people in Türkiye tend to value democratic rights and are concerned about repressive policies, but they have **weaker empathy and tolerance towards “others”** – groups with different ethnic, religious, and gender identities. It is critical to note, for example, there is a broad consensus regarding intolerance against LGBTQIA+ people. Regardless of gender, age group, and education level, the majority of survey participants hold negative opinions about the LGBTQIA+ community.

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Figures

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