



Eurofound

Quality of life in enlargement countries

Third European Quality of Life Survey – Turkey

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Country codes

EU27

The order of countries follows the EU protocol based on the alphabetical order of the geographical names of countries in their original language.

BE	Belgium	FR	France	AT	Austria
BG	Bulgaria	IT	Italy	PL	Poland
CZ	Czech Republic	CY	Cyprus	PT	Portugal
DK	Denmark	LV	Latvia	RO	Romania
DE	Germany	LT	Lithuania	SI	Slovenia
EE	Estonia	LU	Luxembourg	SK	Slovakia
IE	Ireland	HU	Hungary	FI	Finland
EL	Greece	MT	Malta	SE	Sweden
ES	Spain	NL	Netherlands	UK	United Kingdom

Enlargement countries

HR	Croatia	IS	Iceland
ME	Montenegro	MK	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia ¹
RS	Serbia	TR	Turkey
XK	Kosovo ²		

¹ MK corresponds to ISO code 3166. This is a provisional code that does not prejudice in any way the definitive nomenclature for this country, which will be agreed following the conclusion of negotiations currently taking place under the auspices of the United Nations (http://www.iso.org/iso.country_codes/iso_3166_code_lists.htm).

² This code is used for practical purposes and is not an official ISO code.

This paper is one in a series on EU enlargement countries covered by the European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS) 2012: Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey. For background information including survey characteristics and definitions of indicators reported in this paper, please consult [Quality of life in enlargement countries: Third European Quality of Life Survey – Introduction](#).

Table 1: *Demographic profile, 2007, 2009 and 2012*

	2007	2009	2012
Population (1 January)	69,689,256	71,517,100	74,724,269
Age structure: people <15 years as % of total	n.a.	26.3	25.3
Age structure: people 15–64 years as % of total	n.a.	66.9	67.4
Age structure: people 65+ years as % of total	n.a.	6.8	7.3
Women per 100 men	99.5	99.2	99.1
Life expectancy at birth, men	71	72	n.a.
Life expectancy at birth, women	76	77	n.a.

Note: n.a. = not available

Subjective well-being

Table 2: *Subjective well-being*

	Turkey	Range of 34 surveyed countries			
		Minimum	Maximum		EU27
Life satisfaction (scale of 1–10)	6.6	Bulgaria 5.5	Denmark 8.4	7.1	
Happiness (scale of 1–10)	6.9	Bulgaria 6.3	Iceland 8.3	7.4	
Optimism about the future (% 'agree' or 'strongly agree')	59%	Greece 20%	Iceland 87%	52%	

One way of measuring a society's progress is by assessing the subjective well-being of its citizens, to complement the more usual economic information such as gross domestic product (GDP). In this report, three subjective well-being measures are examined: life satisfaction, happiness and optimism.

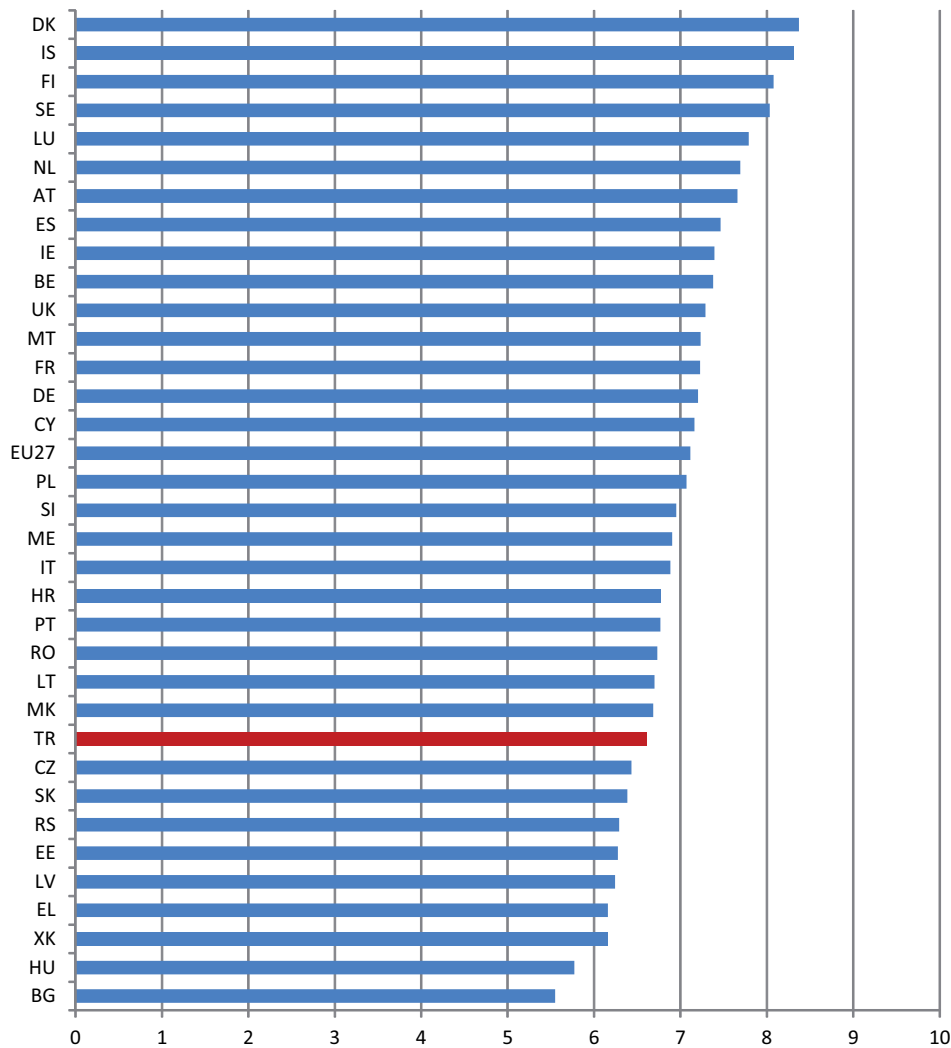
On average, people in Turkey rate their life satisfaction at 6.6 on a scale of 1 to 10. This is below the average for the EU27 (7.1), where life satisfaction levels range from 5.5 in Bulgaria to 8.4 in Denmark. There are seven EU Member States where life satisfaction levels are lower than in Turkey (Figure 1).

Like in most countries, people in Turkey rate their satisfaction with life in general (6.6) less positively than their happiness (6.9). This gap tends to be largest in countries where life satisfaction is low, suggesting that people are able to compensate for dissatisfaction with their quality of life through, for instance, family relations and personal adjustments. In Turkey, the gap between life satisfaction and happiness matches the EU average (-0.3) and is much smaller than the gap noted in Bulgaria (-0.8), where life satisfaction is lowest.

The EQLS overview report shows that health, income and unemployment have the most significant association with subjective well-being in the EU (Eurofound, 2012). In Turkey, differences in subjective well-being between those assessing their health as good (7.0) and those who feel it is bad (5.4) exist, although the difference is smaller than in many other countries. In terms of income, life satisfaction ranges from 5.9 for people in the lowest income quartile to

7.2 in the highest quartile. The reported life satisfaction of unemployed people (5.6) is one point below the Turkish average.

Figure 1: *Life satisfaction*



Note: Scale of 1–10.

There is no clear relationship between subjective well-being and age in Turkey even if there is some evidence of the commonly exhibited U-shape for age, whereby well-being drops mid-way in life, as life satisfaction levels are lowest among those aged 35 to 49 (6.3).

In all seven enlargement countries, optimism about the future is above the EU average. In Turkey, 59% of people are optimistic about the future, compared with 52% on average in the EU27. There are only 10 Member States where optimism levels are higher. However, in comparison to the other enlargement countries, the level of optimism in Turkey is fairly low, scoring just above Croatia (56%).

Across social groups optimism is significantly lower among those in the lowest income quartile (52%), whereas only very small differences are noted among the higher income quartiles. Being unemployed affects optimism, as among this group the level of disagreement with the statement, ‘I am optimistic about the future’ is far higher than average (32% vs.

20%). Unlike what is commonly found, there is no strong relationship between age and optimism in Turkey, even if the youngest age group is more likely to report optimism (67%). As noted in the EQLS overview report, the proportion of people feeling optimistic about the future has a positive correlation with average satisfaction with the economic situation in the country and with trust in government.

Health and mental well-being

Table 3: *Health and mental well-being*

	Turkey	Range of 34 surveyed countries				EU27
		Minimum		Maximum		
Satisfaction with health (scale of 1–10)	7.5	Latvia	6.5	Cyprus	8.4	7.3
Mental well-being (scale of 0–100)	56	Serbia	54	Denmark	70	62.5

On average, people in Turkey rate satisfaction with their health at 7.5 on a scale of 1 to 10. This is slightly above the average for the EU27, where scores range from 6.5 in Latvia to 8.4 in Cyprus.

With regard to age differences, satisfaction with health decreases from 8.1 among those aged 18–24 to 6.2 among those aged 65 and over.

As a consequence of the global economic crisis, mental well-being has become an urgent priority. A substantial body of research shows that unemployment, poverty and social exclusion are detrimental to mental health. Good mental health is also positively associated with life satisfaction (Eurofound, 2012). The World Health Organization’s mental well-being index score, WHO-5, for Turkey is 56 (on a scale of 0–100), which is significantly below the EU average and on par with the lowest-scoring EU Member State (Latvia). In comparison with the other non-EU countries, mental well-being in Turkey is slightly higher than in Serbia (54) but much lower than the levels recorded in the other countries.

There are significant differences in mental well-being on the basis of income, with index scores ranging from 51 for the lowest income quartile to 63 for the highest income quartile. As in the EU, men (71) score better than women (66) and this gender difference tends to hold when controlling for age. It should, however, be noted that the gender difference is negligible in the youngest age group, where mental health levels are well above average for both men (63) and women (61), suggesting that the impact of gender roles and living conditions change over the life course.

As noted in the other enlargement countries (except Iceland), in Turkey the mental well-being score of unemployed people is also not significantly different from the average. While unemployed people in Turkey have a relatively high sense of exclusion when compared with others (see below), they might also have sources of support that help prevent damage to their mental well-being.

Living standards

Table 4: *Living standards*

	Turkey	Range of 34 surveyed countries				EU27
		Minimum		Maximum		
Satisfaction with standard of living (scale of 1–10)	5.9	Bulgaria	4.7	Denmark	8.3	6.9
Difficulty making ends meet (% 'difficult' or 'very difficult')	22%	Denmark	3%	Greece	50%	17%
Number of items people cannot afford (scale of 0–6)	2.9	Luxembourg	0.3	Bulgaria	2.9	1.2
Informal debts (% in arrears over last 12 months)	21%	Malta	1%	Kosovo	21%	8%

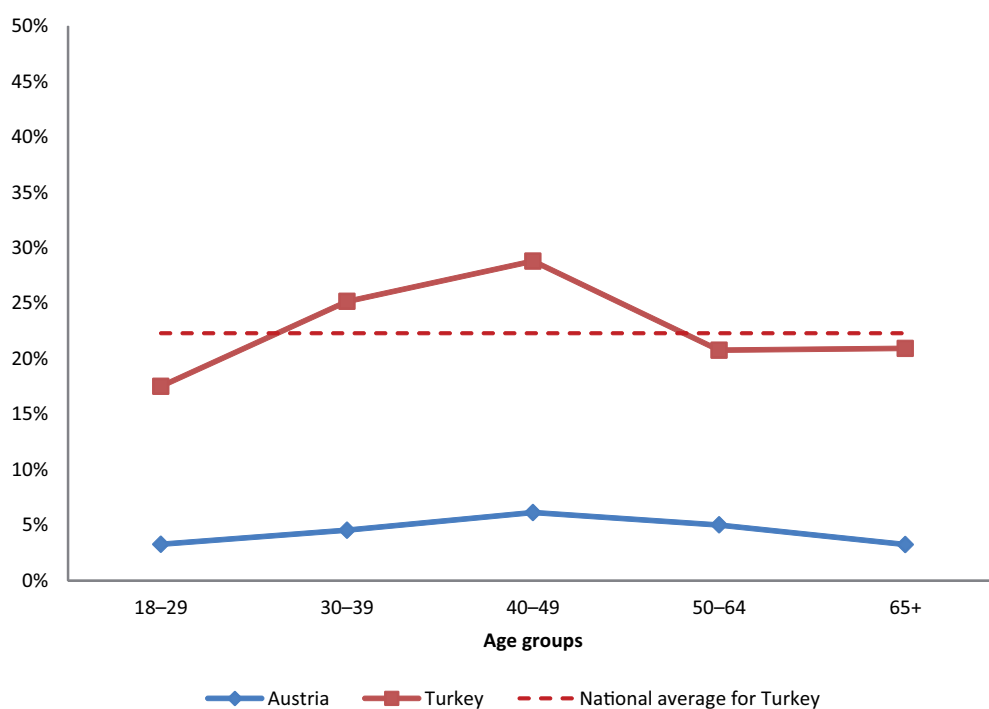
The Gini index is a measure of income inequality. In Turkey in 2011, the Gini coefficient was 40.4 according to the country's national statistical office (and 42 using income information from the EQLS, 2012). This is well above the EU27 average of 30.7 (Eurostat, 2013). With 23% of the population living at risk of poverty in 2011, as reported by the official statistics, Turkey comes second worst in this respect among the 34 countries covered by the EQLS. It is also the country that had the biggest increase of its consumer price index since the previous EQLS: the HICP increased by 56 percentage points from 2007 to 2012.³ A similar price increase was recorded only in Iceland. In addition, the inflation rate is well above the EU27 average, but prices are still only about half what they are in the EU27 on average.

The misery index is a measure that summarises the economic context. It sums the inflation rate (6.5%) and the unemployment rate (8.8%), giving a figure of 15.3 for Turkey. This is comparable with, for example, Ireland's rate of 15.9; however, Ireland has a lower inflation rate (1.2%) as it is part of the euro zone but has a much higher unemployment rate (14.7%).

Satisfaction with the standard of living in Turkey is at 5.9, higher than in all of the other enlargement countries except Iceland (7.7) and Montenegro (6.1). It is on the same level as Croatia (5.9). Turkey is in the lowest third of countries in Europe when it comes to this indicator.

³ HICP: harmonised index of consumer prices, defined as the list of the final costs paid by European consumers for the items in a basket of common goods.

Figure 2: People finding it difficult or very difficult to make ends meet by age group



More than one out of five people in Turkey have difficulties making ends meet (22%). If all 34 countries surveyed were divided into three groups of the most deprived, the moderately deprived and the least deprived countries, Turkey would belong to the middle group, albeit just above the line distinguishing this category from the most deprived countries. For example, Estonia and Poland are in the category of the most deprived countries, with 23% of their citizens declaring they have difficulties in making ends meet. Nonetheless, the situation in Greece, where the figure is 50%, is more than twice that in Turkey.

The biggest proportion of people finding it hard to make ends meet are in the 40–49 years age group (Figure 2). The smallest proportion is found among young people (aged 18–29). The differences are not as pronounced in Turkey as they are in some of the other enlargement countries, but these trends are similar to those found in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro. Only Iceland is much less differentiated in deprivation across age groups.

In relation to the affordability of items considered necessary for a decent standard of living, Turkey has one of the highest number of items that people cannot afford; on average a Turkish household cannot afford 2.85 items out of 6 listed in the survey.⁴ Only in Bulgaria is the level as high. The items that people most commonly cannot afford are the replacement of worn-out furniture and a one-week holiday away from home at least once a year; these are the items most commonly unaffordable in most countries.

⁴ These are: keeping the home adequately warm; paying for a week's annual holiday away from home (not staying with relatives); having a meal with meat, chicken or fish every second day; replacing worn-out furniture; buying new clothes rather than second-hand ones; inviting friends or family for a drink or meal at least once a month.

Many people in Turkey rely on loans from friends and family. The practice of taking out large informal loans is widespread, and such loans substitute for formal credit for substantial purchases.⁵ This helps explain why many people in Turkey experience difficulty in paying back informal loans on time (21%), the same rate as is found in Kosovo (21%). This proportion of people with informal debts is well above that of other countries surveyed. Greece and Italy come closest at 14% each.

It is also notable that nearly one-third (32%) of people in Turkey reported difficulties in accessing banking services (with regard to distance, working hours, for example; see more in Figure 5).

Work–life balance

Table 5: Work–life balance

	Turkey	Range of 34 surveyed countries				EU27
		Minimum		Maximum		
Work–life conflict (on any dimension, % women)	80%	Italy	44%	Cyprus	86%	59%
Work–life conflict (on any dimension, % men)	75%	Italy	39%	Serbia	77%	54%
Doing household tasks at least several days a week, difference between women and men (percentage points)	72	Finland	11	Turkey	72	30
Women, economically inactive, willing to work (%)	58%	Kosovo	45%	Iceland	91%	70%

Reconciliation of work with life outside work matters for quality of life as well as for increasing opportunities for more people to work and for achieving gender balance. The EQLS asks employed people if they have problems fulfilling family or household responsibilities because work takes up too much time or they are too tired after work, and whether concentrating at work is difficult because of family responsibilities.

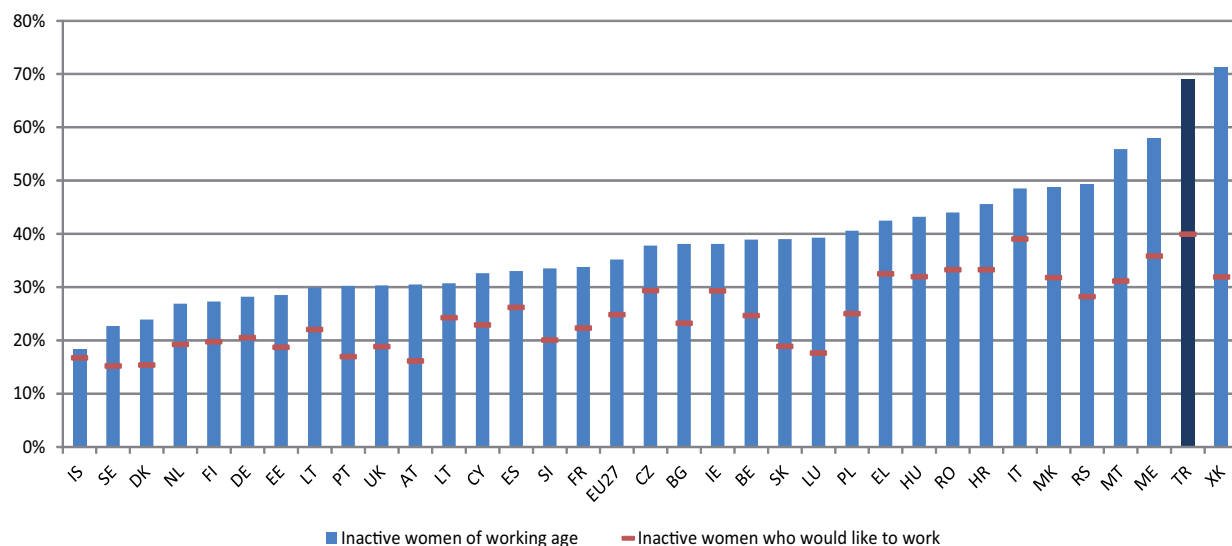
Turkey, as well as other enlargement countries (except Iceland), is at the higher end of work–life conflict both for men and for women. It has the third highest proportion of people suffering from work–life conflict of all the countries surveyed (higher only in Cyprus and Serbia). A general issue around work organisation and (lack of) flexibility of working time arrangements could be raised more effectively by social partners and policymakers.

Life outside work is to a certain extent shaped by the amount of daily household tasks and their distribution among family members, as it can be a significant extra burden, especially on working women if they are the main contributors to housework. The difference between the contribution of women and of men to household tasks in Turkey (72 percentage points) is the largest among all the countries surveyed.

Turkey has the second largest proportion of working age women that are not in labour force (69%) among all 34 countries surveyed (Figure 3). However, more than half of them (58%) would like to have paid work if they could freely choose their working hours. These two figures suggest that there is potential for the country to increase labour market participation by developing balanced work arrangements. This could also serve to achieve greater gender balance in terms of work and family responsibilities.

⁵ It can be difficult to get a mortgage in Turkey. Banks may ask for 10%–25% of own capital, and the loans have to be paid back within 10 years. Apart from larger credit constraints, sources such as credit card overdrafts may be overused: for example, among the countries surveyed, Turkey has second largest proportion (23%) of people who are late in repaying consumer debts such as credit card overdrafts.

Figure 3: Proportion of working age women inactive in labour market and the proportion of these who would like to work



Source: European Labour Force Survey (Eurostat) and EQLS

Public services

Table 6: Public services

	Turkey	tRange of 34 surveyed countries			
		Minimum	Maximum	EU27	
Cost as a problem to see a doctor (% very difficult)	16%	UK 1%	Greece 28%	8%	
Households with children <12 years using childcare services	7%	Turkey 7%	Sweden 69%	34%	
Proportion using public transport	97%	Cyprus 50%	Turkey 97%	87%	

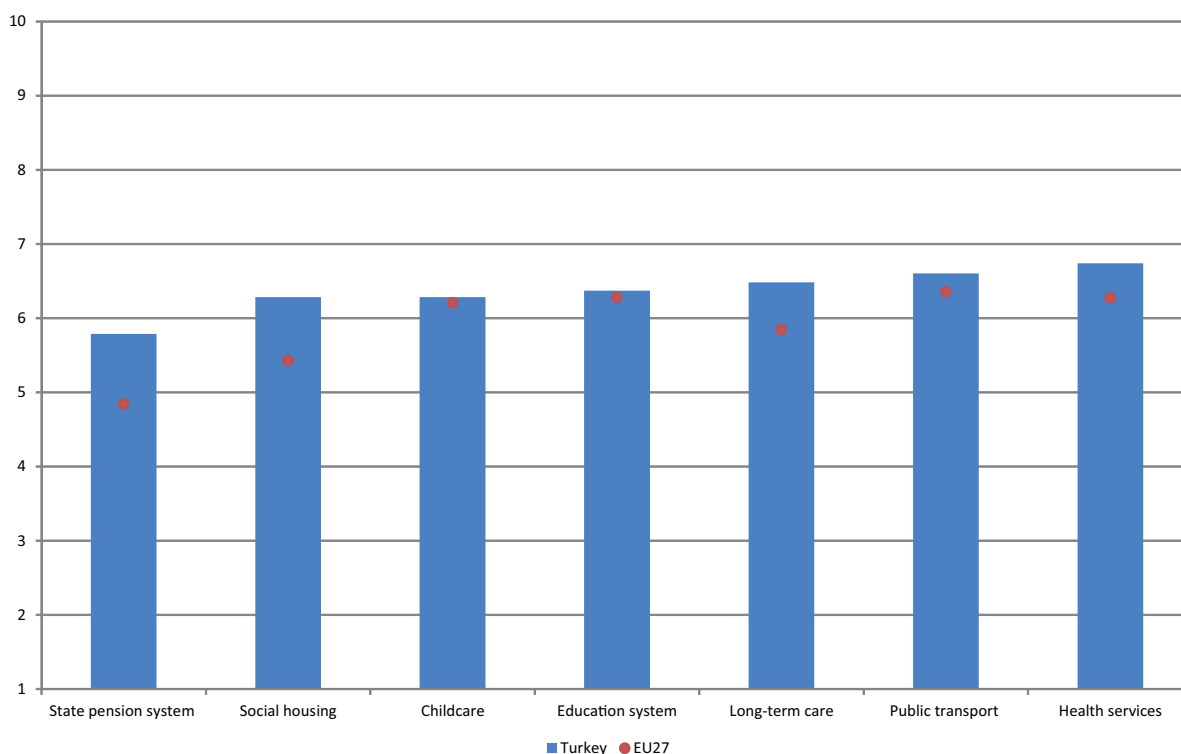
People in Turkey regard the quality of public services highly and give a higher rank to each of them than do people on average in the EU27 (Figure 4). The range of different rankings is also rather narrow: on the list of seven assessed services the highest score (health services at 6.7) and the lowest (state pension system at 5.8) are closer than they are in other countries. This brings to mind the rather unique phenomenon of high trust levels in public institutions in Turkey (see the next section).

Access to services is not always easy for everyone. With regard to accessing a doctor, cost makes it very difficult for 16% of people – that is twice as high as in the EU27 (8%) and much higher than in other enlargement countries except Kosovo (27%). In addition, 12% pointed out that their distance from a doctor or medical service posed a very difficult problem. In only three of the surveyed countries is this figure above 10%, the other two being Greece (13%) and Kosovo (14%).

It is likely that distance as a barrier to accessing medical service relates to the density of the infrastructure of medical service provision. Nearly everyone in Turkey (97%) is a public transport user (though not necessarily exclusively), but 28% cite greater or lesser difficulties in accessing public transport. Unlike in many other countries, especially geographically large ones, Turkey does not exhibit any differences in access to public transport between urban and rural populations (Figure 5).

Nevertheless, around one-half of the rural population has difficulty accessing the postal service, and even greater problems in accessing banking, cinema or cultural centres, and recreational areas. A total of 25% of the rural population say they do not use cinemas or cultural centres at all, but the rate of non-users for other listed services in Turkey is relatively low.

Figure 4: Ratings of quality of public services

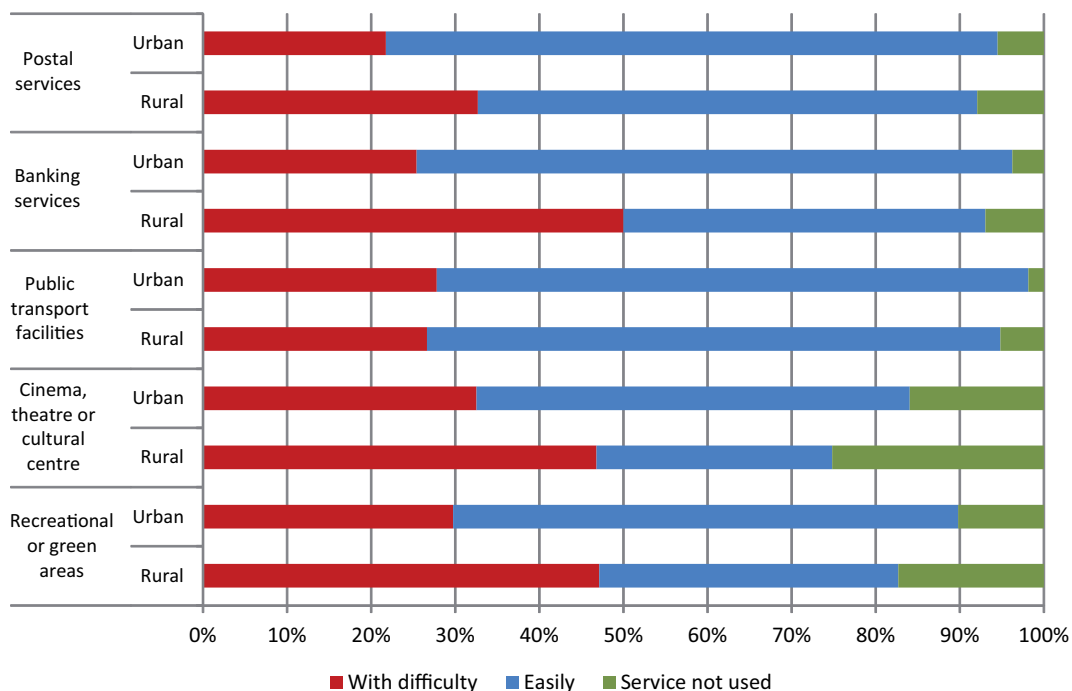


Note: Scale of 1–10.

Quality of the education system (6.4) and childcare (6.3) are rated relatively highly, but direct experience with some of these services is not always widespread. Of all the surveyed countries, Turkey has the smallest proportion of households with children using childcare services (7%). These data complement the proportion of women not in the labour market noted already (Figure 3) and their contribution to household tasks greatly exceeding that of men.

In many countries, people in the middle and pre-pension age groups are more critical than others of the quality of the state pension system. In Turkey (5.8), the youngest are most critical (with 18–24-year-olds giving a rank of 5.2), but assessments gradually increase with each older age category; people aged 65 years and older are the most satisfied (6.7).

Figure 5: Access to neighbourhood services, % of respondents



Trust and tensions

Table 7: Trust and tensions

	Turkey	Range of 34 surveyed countries			
		Minimum	Maximum		EU27
Trust in people (scale of 1–10)	4.9	Cyprus 1.9	Finland 7.1		5.1
Trust in the government (scale of 1–10)	6.3	Greece 2.1	Luxembourg 6.5		4.0
Trust in local authorities (scale of 1–10)	5.8	Serbia 3.3	Luxembourg 6.7		5.2
Tension between different racial or ethnic groups (% perceiving 'a lot of tension')	40%	Iceland 11%	Czech Republic 68%		37%
Tension between poor people and rich people (% perceiving 'a lot of tension')	42%	Denmark 4%	Hungary 71%		35%

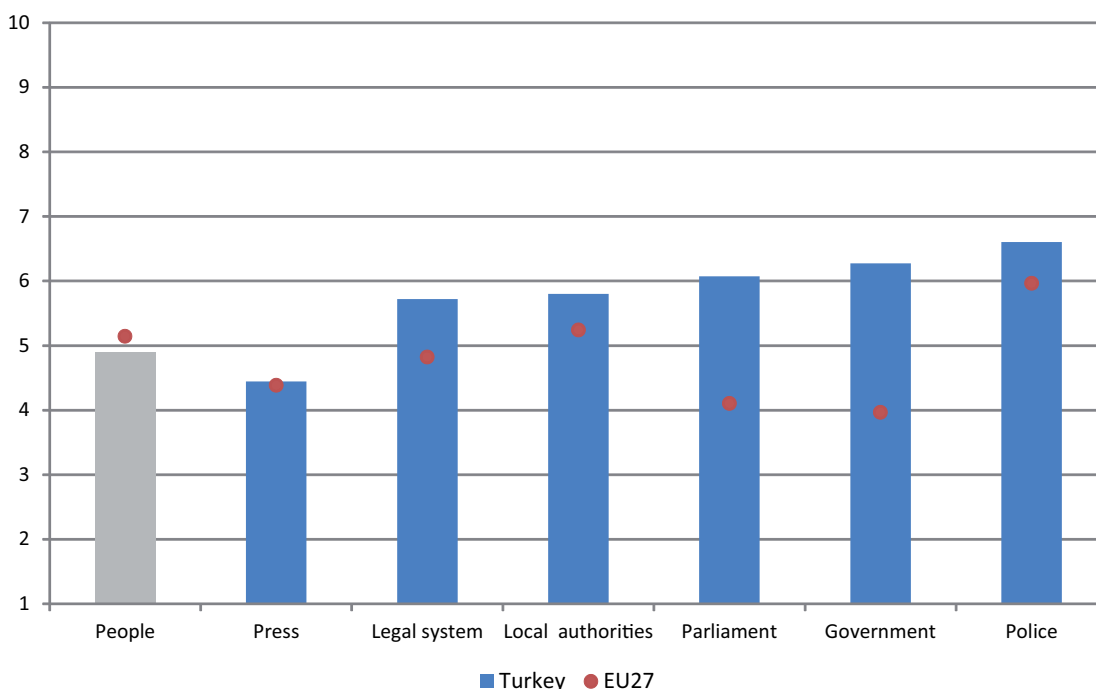
This section looks at trust in people, trust in public institutions and the perceived tensions between various groups in society.

Trust in other people is seen as a key indicator of social capital. Overall in Turkey the level of general trust in people stands at 4.9 on a scale of 1 to 10 (Figure 6). Comparing this with the findings for the EU27 (5.1 on average) shows that 12 EU Member States have higher trust levels than Turkey, whose score is similar to that noted in Estonia, Italy and Poland (all 4.8) and Germany and Romania (both 5).

Analysis of sociodemographic factors reveals a country-specific situation: whereas educational attainment is found to be conducive to higher trust in many countries, in Turkey people with the lowest educational attainment are the most trustful of others. For age, the pattern is also the opposite of what is typically found, in that in Turkey trust in others is higher among older people than it is among younger people. A quick scan of the results confirms that trust in others is highest in regions with a large share of older inhabitants. Furthermore, the analyses show that trust in others is higher in rural communities than in larger semi-urban and urban areas. Though beyond the scope of this briefing paper, greater social cohesion in smaller rural communities may be one of the reasons why trust in others in Turkey is higher among older respondents.

In most countries, trust in public institutions tends to be lower than trust in other people. In Turkey this is not the case; trust in government is 6.3, which puts it second highest (after Luxembourg) of all 34 countries surveyed.

Figure 6: *Trust in people and in institutions*



Note: Scale of 1–10.

Levels of trust in the national parliament and in local authorities (6.1 and 5.8, respectively) are also higher in Turkey compared with the other non-EU countries and are above the EU averages. However, earlier research has pointed to the discrepancy in Turkey between high trust in institutions and a low level of belief that people in the country respect the rules (Eurofound, 2011). In most countries, low trust in public institutions is associated with perceived corruption (as measured by Transparency International). However, in Turkey, where the level of perceived corruption is at the higher end of the spectrum in Europe, trust in institutions may involve some other criteria. These might include a sense of representation and identity, for instance.

With regard to social cohesion, two out of five respondents in Turkey believe there is a lot of tension between different racial and ethnic groups in their country. This is slightly above the EU average (37%), where tension is highest in countries known to experience challenges relating to Roma integration or that have large Muslim immigrant populations. Compared with the other enlargement countries, the reported level in Turkey is just below that of the former Yugoslav

Republic of Macedonia; both countries have large minority populations (such as Kurds in Turkey and Albanians in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia).

In Turkey, 42% of people believe there is a lot of tension between rich people and poor people. This is above the EU average (35%) and only six Member States report higher levels. Whereas in many countries, the perception of this type of tension is closely related to people's socioeconomic status (such as lower income or lack of employment), the evidence for Turkey is less conclusive. However, there is a need for further investigation as levels of material deprivation do seem to play a role.

Participation and exclusion

Table 8: *Participation and exclusion*

	Turkey	Range of 34 surveyed countries				EU27
		Minimum		Maximum		
Index of perceived social exclusion (scale of 1–5)	2.4	Denmark	1.6	Cyprus	3.0	2.2
Participation in voluntary work	20%	Montenegro	9%	Kosovo	61%	32%
Civic and political involvement	8%	Turkey	8%	Iceland	61%	25%

Turkey's rating on the perceived social exclusion index (2.4) is above the EU average. This index is based on questions about feeling left out of society, experiencing complications in life and recognition of one's activities. This figure, however, is similar to other enlargement countries (except Iceland). Unemployed people have the highest rate of perceived exclusion (2.8). Differences are also pronounced between income categories: half of the population from two upper income quartiles have a score of 2.2, while for the lowest quartile it is 2.6. In terms of age categories, older people (65 years and over) feel the least excluded (2.2); there is no difference between men and women.

Social and civic participation can improve one's subjective well-being and help overcome social exclusion in contemporary society. Social participation in Turkey via organised societies or clubs (10%), is more characteristic of younger age groups (12%–13% among those aged 18–34), those with a higher education (21% for tertiary, 12% for secondary), and those with a higher income.

With regard to political and civic involvement, Turkey has the lowest overall rate of people (8%) who took any particular action among the surveyed countries (Figure 7). This relates to either directly contacting a politician or taking part in a meeting (7%, third lowest) or signing a petition (2%). However, rates are more than twice as high for those with a tertiary education. Direct participation (in meetings or contacting politicians) is also considerably higher among the highest income quartile (12%).

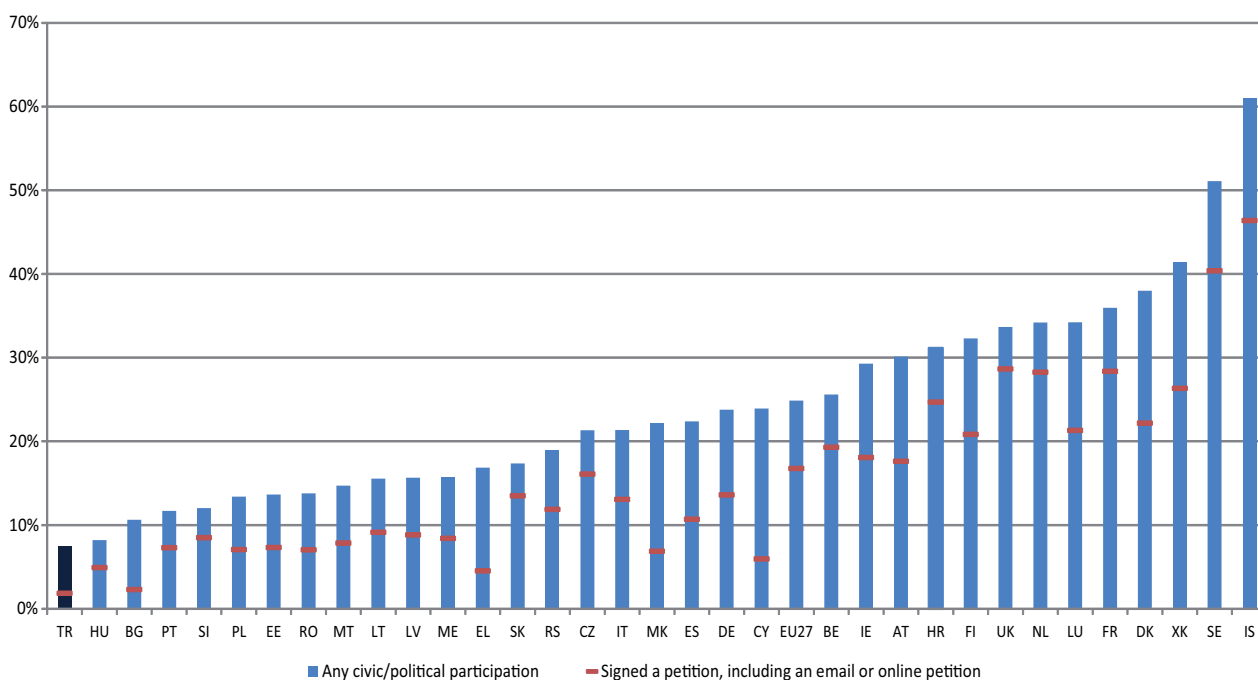
With regard to self-expression via petitions (including electronic formats), it has been observed in other countries that this is more widespread among daily internet users. Turkey at present, however, has the lowest rate of people who use the internet almost every day for purposes other than work (20%; the EU27 average is 47%). It also has the highest proportion of people who do not use the internet (55%; the EU27 average is 33%). Even though the number of petition signatories among Turkish respondents is small for the purpose of analysis, a higher prevalence exists among younger people (those aged under 35 years). This rate might therefore rise eventually, as young people's use of the internet increases.

Involvement in unpaid voluntary work at least once a year is reported by 20%, but the rate of regular volunteers (who contribute every month), 4%, is among the lowest of the surveyed countries. Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia have the smallest proportion of people (5%) who expressed a wish to spend more time volunteering (the EU27 average is 23%). However, it should be noted that for volunteering to happen, personal motivation is not the only relevant factor; the legal framework and infrastructure can also matter.

Another relevant issue is that of gender representation in public sphere participation. The rate of individual political participation in contacts and personal meetings is 10% for men and 4% for women. The same issue is observed regarding the social activities of clubs or societies (12% among men, 7% among women). The rate of volunteering is also higher among men (24%) than it is among women (16%).

Participation in a religious community can be seen as a form of engaging with a network of people. While the Turkish state is secular, Turkish society is sometimes seen as a country where the roles of tradition and religion are more pronounced than in some European countries. However, 26% of men and 31% of women indicated they never attend religious services.

Figure 7: Civic and political involvement, % of respondents



The approach in the EQLS reflects an increasingly global movement that goes beyond an exclusive focus on economic progress towards measuring broader public policy goals, embracing a greater consideration of quality of life.

For more aspects of quality of life and a more extensive set of EQLS results, please access the [Survey Mapping Tool](#) on the Eurofound website.

Visit the Eurofound website for the forthcoming report on *Trends in quality of life in Turkey*, based on an analysis of three waves of the EQLS (2003, 2007 and 2012).

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