British Council

NEXT GENERATION TURKEY

Listening to the voices of young people

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Disclaimer

The Next Generation Task Force is convened by the British Council in Turkey. The Task Force functions in the capacity of an advisory body for the 'Next Generation' research series.

It should be noted that these are the views and recommendations of young people, not YADA, GDN or the British Council. While the British Council endorses this report, it does not necessarily agree with all the views expressed in it. Consent has been given by all young people whose stories have been quoted in this report.

> ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

> FOREWORDS

I am delighted to be invited to provide the foreword to this important research on the views of young people in Turkey as it undergoes a period of unprecedented change. The shocking events of 15 July 2016 continue to have profound resonance for people in Turkey, old and young, but it is Turkey's youth who will need to shape a new future.

But there are clear signs for optimism – I am amazed at the resilience of those young people in particular, who within days of the failed coup were back to their daily lives and routines.

There is potential for Turkey to capitalise on a demographic dividend, but policymakers need to work swiftly and sensibly to do so. In doing so, it is important to remember that this is not just about getting young people into work. It is about recognising the agency of the next generation. It is vital to listen to the young people who have contributed to this report, representing the voices of their peers across the country. They are the leaders, shapers and global citizens of tomorrow and their actions will shape the security and prosperity agenda for Turkey and its neighbours.

Next Generation UK was published earlier this year, and looking at both reports we see that youth in Turkey have much in common with their UK peers – they seek a good quality education, secure employment, the opportunity for overseas travel and to develop good relationships with their neighbourhoods and communities. I am delighted to see such positive views of the UK among youth in Turkey, whether for our higher education, English language teaching or cultural experiences. I see this as testimony to the strength of the strong relationship between our countries, and I believe there is the potential to work even more closely together.

The UK and Turkey face a number of shared challenges; I believe there is much to share and learn from the experiences – and challenges – in integrating refugee communities, protecting the rights of women and girls and promoting community cohesion. We should all recognise the significant potential economic and social dividend that will follow.

I trust that this report will prompt further discussion and provide an informed platform for young people to join in dialogue with those who govern and influence their lives. I am proud of the role that the UK, and particularly the distinctive contribution the British Council can play, through its cultural relations approach, in convening dialogue and action.

I thank the British Council, the Next Generation Task Force members, partners and sponsors for their work. Most importantly, I thank the young people for opening up their lives and providing an insight into their world. I hope that those who read this report take away the knowledge that will allow them to serve their young constituencies more effectively. I look forward to continued dialogue and the ensuing actions, and I assure you that the UK will continued be a trusted partner for Turkey.

Richard Moore CMG,
British Ambassador

The purpose of the British Council's Next Generation research reports is to provide a channel for the voices of young people to be heard by the policy makers, educators and employers who are working with them to build a better future. The British Council has focused its reports on countries experiencing periods of significant change, such as Nigeria, Bangladesh, Tanzania, the UK and Ukraine. With this new report, we hope to bring the opinions and perspectives of young people in Turkey to the forefront of national policy debates.

Next Generation Turkey looks into three important areas for young people – their daily lives and connections, how they are envisaging and investing in their future, and their attitudes to identity, politics and participation. It's pleasing to see high levels of optimism among youth in Turkey, despite the challenges they face. This finding tallies with other studies – according to the World Happiness Report, Turkey ranks in the top half of countries surveyed, standing at 69th out of 155 countries. But we can also see a generation sceptical about their ability to influence policy and reluctant to engage in politics. And the lack of support for individual growth.

Young people are also deeply concerned about education. They recognise that the further they progress through the education system, the greater the chance of taking control of their own lives. And far from being a generation that only thinks of itself, we can see youth in Turkey actively considering how they will provide better lives for their families in future. However, a good education alone was not sufficient in their eyes – youth in Turkey clearly recognise the need for modern skills such as English language proficiency, good communication skills and the ability to develop networks. Many of them see international engagement as invaluable and have a strong urge to seek cultural and educational opportunities as a way to broaden their horizons. This resonates with our Next Generation UK research, where more than 50 per cent of young people surveyed felt that international engagement was crucial to achieving their goals.

In common with young people around the world, we see that youth in Turkey wish to feel empowered to develop their own futures. Yet the lack of support for them to do so, coupled with their discontent with politics, runs the risk of a generation of youth in Turkey disengaging from policy altogether. However, they do feel strongly about growing inequality and rising intolerance and would want to help support stronger and more cohesive communities if they're given the chance to do so.

Having commissioned this research as part of its global series, the British Council is ready to work with its partners and stakeholders across Turkey to help make the changes young people are asking for. This research and its recommendations will not provide solutions to all of our shared challenges, but we hope that they will stimulate dialogue among a range of actors to develop policies that help young people achieve their aspirations. Through co-operating on opportunities to share cultural experience, access international education and qualifications, and build on young people's desire to connect with the wider world, we believe Turkey and the UK can support a positive future for young people in both our countries.

Cherry Gough
Director Turkey, British Council

> EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A young country in both senses of the word, the Republic of Turkey was founded in 1923. Half of its population of 80 million is aged under 30.

Turkey is experiencing a period of profound social, political and economic change, and this young population – like their peers around the world – face a challenging and unpredictable future for which they must plan today. They strive for independence and individuality, while trying not to cause a rift with their families and communities. They find themselves disenfranchised by day-to-day politics and the tensions they see it brings, but they wish to participate as active citizens within their communities as well as engage with the wider world. Naturally, their desire to secure good outcomes for themselves and their future generations is strong.

The British Council, as a part of its global Next Generation research series, commissioned Yaşama Dair Vakıf (YADA) and Gelecek Daha Net (GDN) Gençlik Platformu to conduct the Next Generation Turkey research project. The research, being sensitive to the diversity of youth in Turkey and their voices to be heard, aimed to uncover what they have in common, as well as what distinguishes them from each other.

A mixed methodology was employed for the research. This included a nationally representative survey across 12 cities with 2,524 respondents between the ages of 18 and 30, conducted between 1 March and 10 April 2017. Between 18 May and 23 June 2017, interviews were conducted in four cities (İstanbul, Kayseri, Konya, Diyarbakır) with 93 young people from different backgrounds. An innovative research tool, fuzzy cognitive mapping, was also utilised in interviews to reach an understanding of how young people perceive their sources of support, and the barriers they face when shaping their future plans.

Academic advisers and the task force [1] members supported analysis and interpretation of the research results. During the period of the research, roundtable meetings were held to take the insights of professionals from various fields of civil, private and public sectors regarding youth in Turkey. A youth workshop was also organised to discuss the findings with young people and encourage them to put forward their own recommendations around issues that emerged through the research.

An overall assessment of the findings of the research shows that the perceptions and experiences of young people have two facets: on the one hand, on multiple levels, young people commit to fixed, solid, traditional and closed structures (education, politics, family, identities, communities, country, etc.). They strongly identify with and rely on the support they receive from these structures. On the other hand, they desire to be independent and autonomous individuals, and – to a large extent – recognise and appreciate the diversity in their society, and show more flexibility in their values and attitudes than older generations. These two facets of their lives co-exist, not in an 'either/or' but a 'both/and' relationship.

The experience of young people in Turkey today is strongly characterised by an effort to negotiate these pressures, trying to develop ways to achieve their individualism without giving up on or getting into conflict with their families and communities.

Key findings based on three themes that emerged over the course of the research are discussed below.

Key findings

Daily lives and connections

Despite coming from different backgrounds, young people have common lifestyle preferences: almost all young people's daily practices involve socialising with their closest communities, while there is little interest in cultural activities such as theatre. The majority of youth watch television every day, but apart from that, the way they spend leisure and social time is different to that of their parents. Much of their daily interaction takes place on the internet and social media. They prefer to follow current affairs through social media, and watch television series and movies on the internet. The television may be on in the home, but it is in the background, and is more of a way of spending time with family and a means to an end. Social media dominates their time, with 97 per cent of survey respondents spending time daily on WhatsApp and conducting other social media conversations, and for half of them time spent doing this exceeds two hours a day.

Instagram is the most popular social media platform among youth in Turkey. It is seen as an outlet for socialising, with young people preferring to keep politics and other community aspects out of their social media interactions. However, their interest is not purely in the superficial. Young people believe that social media is valuable and indeed beneficial for them. Almost all of them follow accounts related to some aspect of their future plans, looking for information and inspiration from their areas of interest around the world. It is also an area where there is a strong generational gap. Young people's interaction with social media differentiates them from their parents in various aspects, from the jargon they use to the ways they access and use information. This generation gap has its advantages for young people: they have a space to themselves where they feel more open, confident, experienced and knowledgeable than adults, allowing them to gain the respect of older generations. Their skills in information technology have the potential to challenge the hierarchy between youth and adults.

Youth in Turkey have strong ties with their communities: home, family, country and the region. These ties provide them with indispensable support and security. Yet young people also feel the need to become independent from these ties. This means they are constantly in a state of tension, wishing to strike a balance between their sense of individual self and independence, and their allegiance and ties to their communities and other fixed structures. Socio-economic

conditions play a crucial factor in this balancing act. Married young people, those who are in employment and those young people who are NEET (not in education, employment or training) are more conformist than their peers to fixed identities and structures, while unmarried youth, and those living away from their family put more emphasis on their individualism.

The relationship with the family is central to the lives of young people in Turkey. This can make the transition to independent adulthood a challenge. The majority (73 per cent) of single young people in work continue to live with their families. The close relationship, personally as well as in terms of shared space, means they need to navigate difference carefully and, again, we see young people develop coping strategies to deliberately avoid direct conflict and confrontation with their families while desiring to live independent lives.

Beyond family, Turkey itself plays a key role in young people's sense of self and place. Almost all express a strong sense of belonging to Turkey in some way, and sharing a common culture and tradition comes to the fore in all their interviews and discussions. This is also true in respect to their views of the Middle East and Europe. They recognise the shared culture and traditions of the Middle East, while aspiring to the lifestyle and opportunities they believe Europe offers. Turkey is regarded as a home to be loved and respected, despite its problems. And while they want to go abroad to seek new opportunities, many

state they would return home and that they would view themselves as Turks or Muslims in Europe, and not necessarily Europeans in Turkey.

Investing in the future

Turkey is faced with high rates of NEET and youth unemployment: 26 per cent of young people between the ages of 18 and 30 are in the NEET category and 12 per cent are unemployed. The NEET rate among young women is twice as high as it is among young men (36 per cent against 17 per cent). Despite the gloomy employment backdrop, young people continue to set their sights on jobs that would give them both financial and personal satisfaction, and they view education as key to achieving their goals. A total of 65 per cent view higher education as critical to their future success, with 29 per cent wishing to continue their studies at postgraduate level.

However, young people are dissatisfied with the current education system. On a 1 to 10 scale (1 being least satisfied and 10 being very satisfied), almost all factors of the education system scored below 5, with the examination system being the least liked aspect. Half of all young people believe that they need to move to a western country to get a good education. Adding to this, young people's experiences in the labour market lead 56 per cent of them to believe that networks are more important than academic achievement when it comes to securing success. On top of this, they strongly feel the need for good levels of English language to flourish in the labour market both nationally and globally.

As with much of their lives, young people in Turkey are flexible in how they plan to achieve their goals. They tend to have a 'plan A', which may be more aspirational and driven by their passions, but they also maintain back-up plans that are more conventional and realistic. Once again, family plays a huge role in how young people plan their futures, viewed as both the strongest source of support and the second biggest barrier to fulfilment. In every stage of their lives, and in the absence of other support systems, young people rely on their families' financial and moral support. This leads to a level of dependence on families that makes it much harder to divert from the paths a family might deem suitable.

Getting married is a significant part of the future plans of almost all young people. It represents a secure and conventional future, but it also reflects a level of independence from families. Young people want to marry to have their own homes and to manage their lives on their own terms, and this path to independence is the one least likely to lead to conflict with parents.

Young people are optimistic about the future. Most think their living conditions will be better in the future: on a 1 to 5 scale, young people's average scores are above 3. But when it comes to the living conditions in the future of Turkey, there is less optimism.

Identities, politics and participation

While young people are individually committed to their ethnic, cultural and religious identities, our interviews also show that many have ethnically, politically and culturally diverse social circles. They have a desire to meet new people from different backgrounds and make an effort to establish good relationships with people from various identities. However, our survey respondents did display signs of remoteness and prejudice towards some communities, including Syrian refugees, non-Muslims, and members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community. Despite their openness to differences compared to previous generations, today's youth still have a long way to go in fully appreciating the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural characteristics of Turkey.

The default choice they make is to follow the path of least resistance, i.e. to avoid conflict, and this is primarily displayed through their conscious choice not to talk about politics in their social interactions. Other networking opportunities, such as education, popular culture, sports activities and other hobbies – if available – serve as a framework for socialising without the burden of politics. This avoidance could potentially be a contributing factor as to why we observe low participation in the formal political process, with youth membership of political parties at just 4.8 per cent. Political party membership among youth is low in many other countries, just as it is in the UK (one per cent),[2] but a comparison with the adult population draws a clearer picture: There are over 11 million political party members in Turkey, which accounts for around 20 per cent of the adult population,[3] while this rate is 1.3 per cent among adults in the UK.[4]

Disillusionment with the formal process does not mean they are disengaged or disinterested in major issues affecting the country. On the contrary, more than half of respondents say they would feel moved to act against an unpleasant event in Turkey, but that their main expression would be via writing a post on social media (54 per cent) rather than more traditional outlets for expression. Their outlook is certainly more open, compared to previous generations, when it comes to the recognition and acceptance of diverse needs and views of various sections of society.

A number of workshops were held with young people at which the research findings were discussed. The following ideas were the ones that generated the highest levels of agreement. It should be noted that these are the recommendations of young people, not YADA, GDN or the British Council.

Recommendation one:

Improve quality and inclusive access to education (in all forms) and prepare young people for work and for the wider world

Workshop participants agreed that the most prevalent issue facing youth is the poor quality of education, both at school and in higher education. Therefore young people want the government to quality assure the education system. This would support them in acquiring a universally accepted level of qualification; would enable them to collaborate and compete with their peers around the world; and would provide them with the skills to prepare for working life and continuing professional development.

Participants also felt strongly that education should be inclusive, and there should be alternative pathways for those young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs). These should be practical in nature and support life skills and focus on learning skills through experience.

Policymakers should also look towards making existing support mechanisms, such as scholarships and bursaries, more transparent. This principle should be reinforced throughout the system and embedded in all aspects of the education system.

Finally, there was an expectation that the government should reassess the current university examination system. Young people felt that the current system places too much emphasis on learning by rote. It also puts intense pressure on students and their parents as failure to gain entry to university results in disillusionment. Young people urged a more holistic approach, which includes English language skills, intercultural experiences and access to networks.

Recommendation two:

Empowering young people to be independent and active citizens in their society and taking greater ownership of their own futures

There was a strong sense that young people need to develop as individuals and be empowered to take ownership of their own lives. However, they would prefer to do this in a way that does not put them into conflict with families, community leaders and governments. At the moment, many sense that their necessary reliance on traditional structures can stand in the way of their dreams.

The participants felt that governments, as well as improving the education system, should improve social support that could complement, or even replace, the financial and moral support young people receive from their families and social circles. This would lead to greater

independence and allow them to make different choices. This is particularly important for those groups or individuals for whom family support is not readily available.

Workshop participants felt that civil society institutions could work with policymakers to devise projects and campaigns that would challenge current stereotypes of youth. This should include showcasing 'independent youth' as an asset to society, rather than a threat.

The importance of young people being represented at the heart of youth policymaking was highlighted. It was noted that young people felt distanced from politics and policymakers; they also felt their voice would not necessarily make a difference. Participants in the workshop felt that modes of participation away from traditional politics should be explored, which would enable young people be active citizens in their communities.

These could include how to raise a complaint with local officials, engage with city planners and opening youth-led spaces for community participation and engagement in local decision making.

Recommendation three:

Supporting an inclusive society with tolerance and respect for all young citizens

One of the issues that concerned young people most was around the remoteness and prejudice towards some identities. While young people retain a strong sense of their identities and beliefs, there is diversity in the ethnic, religious and political make up of their networks. Workshop participants displayed empathy with others, and emphasised the need for pluralism.

Policy proposals put forward to address this were that local and national government should ensure there are suitable spaces and opportunities for young people to socialise outside their immediate circles. Youth centres and sports clubs were highlighted as providing good opportunities to allow young people to reach a better understanding through shared recreation and play.

Young people urged government and civil society to take proactive steps to fight hate speech, and to address crimes against some groups, such as LGBT people, Syrian refugees and non-Muslims. They suggested policymakers should be aware of how social media can support such a campaign, and that young people would be willing to lend their skills to these campaigns. It should also be possible to explore interventions focused on raising awareness and enhancing equal citizenship and rights. It was felt that many parts of society, including the private sector, the media, civil society and policymakers, should be involved.

Participants felt strongly that gender sensitive policies, particularly in relation to empowering women and girls, should be actively pursued and adopted. Negative gender stereotypes – for boys and girls – should be challenged from a young age. They also urged that gender-sensitive considerations should be at the heart of all policymaking.

> INTRODUCTION

A young country with almost 50 per cent of its people under 30 years of age, Turkey has a potential demographic dividend on its hands. However, without access to quality education and employment opportunities, equality and inclusivity for all its citizens, and policy levers to encourage active citizenship, the country could be faced with a lost generation.

Youth in Turkey

Turkey has a young population: there are about 13 million young people in Turkey in the 15–24 age group, comprising 16.3 per cent of the population.[5] Young people in the same age group account for 13.6 per cent of the total population in the United States, 12.3 per cent in the UK, 10.4 per cent in Germany, 15.6 per cent in Saudi Arabia, and 19.0 per cent in Nigeria (which has one of the youngest populations in the world).[6] Although population projections show that the number of young people in Turkey is expected to decline in future generations (the young population in Turkey will account for only 10.1 per cent of the population by 2073) the country will still be facing a substantial young population in the coming years.

The official definition of youth in Turkey today can be found in the National Youth and Sports Policy document, which was issued by the Ministry of Youth and Sports[7] in 2013, and defines youth as the age range between 14 and 29. The literature covering the definition of youth, on the other hand, is wide-ranging. Some argue that youth is not to be understood as a 'natural' phase of human life like childhood or adulthood, and thus it is not a universal constant.[8] Reducing it to a biological phase, and defining it within an age range, implies that it has an independent nature free from the effects of historical and social influences.[9] Though there may be common elements,[10] social, political and other variables produce different youth experiences. The experience of being young for a 25-year-old woman married with two children living in a small city is quite different from the experience of a woman of the same age living alone and away from her family and working in a big city. Some scholars have suggested that since there is no single youth experience, policy makers should provide separate policy proposals that address the development of young people from different socio-economic backgrounds, living in different locations.[11] As with all sections of society, there is considerable social, cultural, ethnic and other diversity within the youth population, which means being young is an even more distinct experience for every individual. With this approach in mind, Next Generation research reached young people between the ages of 18 and 30 to cover a wide range of youth experiences.

There are two international indexes that aim to score the overall wellbeing and development of young people in different countries. The first of these is the *Global Youth Wellbeing Index*[12] from the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). In order to measure the quality of life of young people, 40 indicators were evaluated under six areas. Turkey is ranked 18th out of 30 countries. According to the index, while economic opportunity and citizen participation scores are below 0.5 points, health and safety and security scores ranked top among the six areas of wellbeing (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Global Youth Wellbeing Index[13]

Area	Score
Health	0.72
Safety and security	0.68
Education	0.60
Information and communication technology	0.53
Citizen participation	0.45
Economic opportunity	0.40
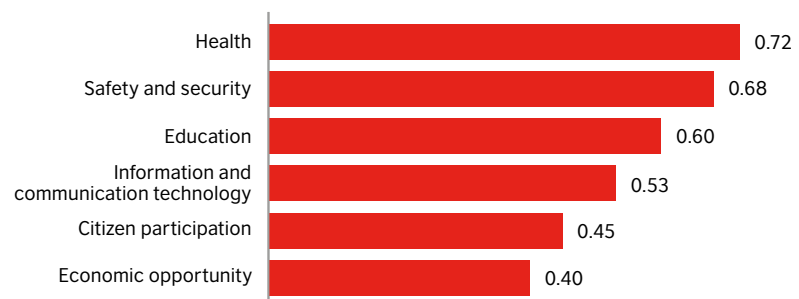
Figure 2: Global Youth Development Index [14]
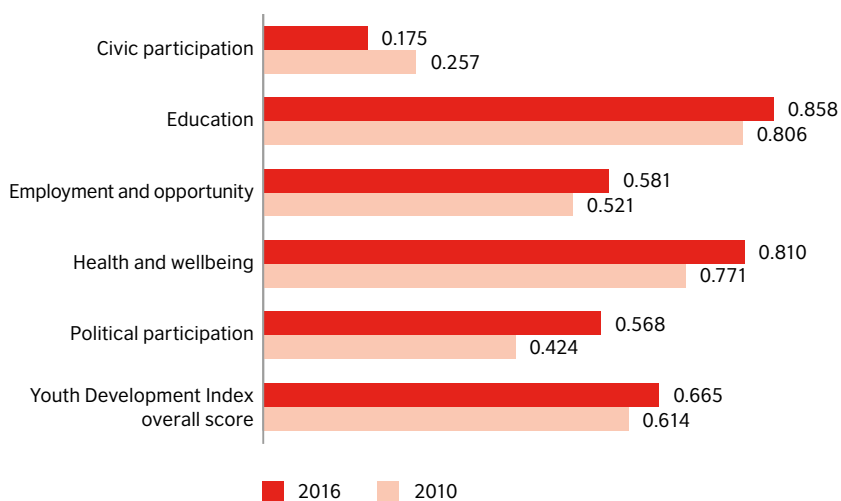
Domain	Ranking
Global rank	62
Health and wellbeing	31
Education	49
Employment and opportunity	71
Civic participation	177
Political participation	100

The second indicator is the *Commonwealth Global Youth Development Index*.[15] This scores five different areas regarding the development of young people aged 15–29 in 183 countries using 18 indicators. The results show that Turkey is ranked 49th in education among 183 countries, and its overall score is slightly above the global average (0.616). According to this index, Turkey has improved upon its 2010 scores in every field except civil participation (Figure 2).

The indexes do not draw a bright picture, particularly in terms of participation, and although the National Youth and Sports Policy document has paved the way for the development of youth policies in Turkey,[16] the evaluation of expenditure and policy implementation in the youth field reveals that the majority of resources are reserved for those in the formal education system. This makes the situation of disadvantaged young people even more pressing and has the potential to exacerbate pre-existing social inequalities. The General Directorate of Youth Services is the only institution in Turkey that is mandated to provide such services directly to young people, and its remit is limited to addressing youth regulations regarding leisure time activities and the protection of young people.

A shifting youth policy landscape

Turkey's circumstances mean that the potential dividend offered by a youthful population is not being realised. There are three main concerns. First, for now, Turkey has a large youth population but, as noted above, this will not always be the case. Second, there is a high youth unemployment rate.[17] Third, one out of three young women are neither in the economy nor in education and the labour force participation rate of young women is very low.[18] Turkey will not be able to benefit from the energy of its youth population unless the employment issues are addressed.

This is recognised at a high level. In the *10th Development Plan 2014–18*, youth issues requiring attention were listed as below:

- The increase in youth unemployment has become one of the main problems of the labour market.

- Low youth labour force participation rates high youth unemployment rates, and poor skills of young people maintain their importance.

- Socio-economic and regional inequalities, poverty, gender inequality, child marriages, child labour, violence and sexual exploitation towards children, deterioration in family structure, weakening in the sense of belonging and solidarity, harmful habits such as smoking, alcohol and drugs and internet addiction are still risk factors for children and young people.

The youth were explicitly referred to in the 1982 Constitution:

- ARTICLE 58. The state shall take measures to ensure the training and development of the youth into whose keeping our state, independence, and our Republic are entrusted, in the light of contemporary science, in line with the principles and reforms of Atatürk, and in opposition to ideas aiming at the destruction of the indivisible integrity of the state with its territory and nation. The state shall take necessary measures to protect the youth from addiction to alcohol, drug addiction, crime, gambling, and similar vices, and ignorance.[19]

Many working in the field of youth criticise the youth approach these official documents adopt. According to them, the Development Plan and the Constitution contain elements of a deficit approach – positing youth as a 'problem' and foregrounding social problems – and an instrumentalist approach – which views young people as 'human resources' for growth.

Others have recognised the need for a newer approach – one based on capability and empowerment, as well as the welfare of youth across the board. The *Youth Monitoring Report for Turkey, 2009–2012* summarised the need for policies based around 'youth empowerment', 'opportunities of participation based on equal status', 'increasing cooperation between institutions' and 'mainstreaming gender issues in the area of youth'.[20]

Many studies focusing on youth empowerment emphasise the issue of youth participation. As Lüküslü argues,[21] at least until the 1980s, an idealised definition of youth was adopted in Turkey, which she refers to as 'the Myth of Youth'. This definition presented the youth as the active and dynamic actors of the political scene that would take society one step further. From the 1980s onwards, Turkish society stopped viewing its youth as a golden generation, and began to characterise them as 'apolitical'. Participation in politics or in civil activities is indeed very low, but as Lüküslü states, the reason behind this is not political apathy and ignorance, but disillusionment with politics. Those young people who chose to be involved in politics are left out of the decision-making processes; others have lost faith in the system and the increased polarisation of political discourse.

Additionally, in recent years, young people have been at the heart of and/or affected directly by events, tragedies and shifts in the geopolitical environment in Turkey. On the international front, the ongoing civil war in Syria has had profound effects on Turkish society and its economy. Turkey hosts over three million Syrian refugees, more than any country in the world, and it plays a pivotal role in preventing irregular migration into the EU. Added to this, there have been a number of security and terrorist incidents around the country which culminated in the 15 July 2016 coup attempt. The Turkish government moved swiftly to restore democracy and the rule of law, but this has put Turkey's political and economic situation in a fragile position, with a direct impact on young people's lives. Yet youth in Turkey remain optimistic. They believe in a positive future and they are not afraid to aim high. Their concerns are no match for their self-confidence.

Next Generation Turkey

Next Generation Turkey is part of a global research programme run by the British Council. Next Generation research is initiated in countries that are experiencing a period of social, political or economic change. It gauges young people's views around education, employment and lifestyle, as well as uncovering their hopes and fears for their country, their degree of international engagement and views on the wider world, and the values and beliefs that affect their lives. Reports have already been developed in Pakistan, Tanzania, Bangladesh, Ukraine and the UK. Research is currently underway in Colombia, Kenya and South Africa. The British Council commissioned Yaşama Dair Vakıf (YADA) and Gelecek Daha Net (GDN) Gençlik Platformu to undertake the research project, which took place during the period from November 2016 to July 2017.

Next Generation Turkey aimed to contribute to the current field of knowledge in two ways. The first is to update the quantitative and representative data in fields such as education, unemployment and civil and political participation, which have previously been widely discussed. Second, it aims to shine a light on the full spectrum of youth in Turkey, from a variety of backgrounds, beliefs and opinions, to search for commonalities and shared interests among a population that is frequently categorised as polarised and divided. To do this, we explored their daily lives; their networks and social interactions; their feelings of belonging to their families, to society and to their country; how they see themselves as individuals and their future aspirations.

Next Generation Turkey, which has been mindful of the previous findings from the design stage to results evaluation, aimed to create a reference work for policymakers approaching youth from an empowerment and participation perspective. It also adopts the stance that there is no single and fixed category of youth and that the young are diverse, facing a range of different experiences shaped by their social conditions. This leads to the conclusion that youth policy must not solely focus on certain types of youth, but must be inclusive to be effective.

This report was drafted around the core themes that emerged over the course of the research. Each theme is presented under chapters using relevant quantitative and qualitative data collected throughout the phases of the research. When possible, data from previous national and international research studies has been used to compare the results with other recent findings and to set the conversation around youth in Turkey in a national and international context.

Report structure

This report is structured as follows:

Chapter 1 – Daily lives and connections delves into the everyday lives of young people: their leisure time and their cultural habits, as well as their digital engagement and views on social media. It also examines the connections and bonds that exist between young people and their families, their communities, Turkey and the wider world. Perceptions of the UK and other countries overseas, and how they feature in the future aspirations of young people, are also explored.

Chapter 2 – Investing in the future focuses on young people's plans, the opportunities they see and the barriers they face in realising them, and the strategies they develop as they build their futures. It analyses the routes of education, employment, marriage and going abroad, and how they are experienced in the context of Turkey.

Chapter 3 – Identities, politics and participation highlights the place of politics in young people's lives and explores how identities and opinions of young people shape their interactions with people. It also investigates young people's attitudes to various issues on the Turkish agenda.

Conclusions and recommendations presents conclusions of the research from a youth policy perspective and includes policy recommendations from young people, which emerged in a youth workshop conducted at the end of the research.

Finally, in the **Appendices** section of the report, we share the details of the cognitive mapping study results, and the profiles of quantitative stage participants.

> INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 1

Not the future, but present time: exploring the complexity of the everyday lives of young people

Demet Lüküslü, Associate Professor of Sociology, Yeditepe University

Youth is often represented as the 'future' of society. This statement in fact demonstrates the adult centrism in our societies: seeing the adult world as the 'real world' and childhood and youth as a training process or a transitory stage for arriving at the desired destination of adulthood. The statement indeed tells young people to wait for the future, to attain adult status in order to have a say and to be listened to in our societies.

It seems important to change this perspective and not only focus on the future of society and the future of young people, but also on the present: the experiences young people are actually going through. In fact, by exploring the lives of the young generation, one can see how this stage in their lives is difficult and stressful since young people have to prove themselves not only to their families and to other adults but also to their peers. They also have 'worries' for themselves, their families or their societies. Exploring the daily lives and connections of young people allows us to consider how young people cope with all the difficulties they face in their lives by focusing on their present time, on the daily/ordinary activities of the young generation.

The Next Generation Turkey research demonstrates the importance of exploring the daily lives of young people, since we learn how much the daily life of the young generation is determined by the presence of new information technologies. Social media plays an important part in the daily lives of the young generation in Turkey: 51 per cent say they spend over two hours a day on social media. WhatsApp/social media conversations and checking social media posts figure at the top of the list of most popular daily pursuits.

We also learn, thanks to the qualitative survey of the research, certain daily activities are going through important transformations. For example, the activity of watching television is changing with the young generation in Turkey, a country which is the world leader in television watching. The 'traditional' television becomes a tool to spend time with families. The interviewees say how they view television as a background rather than a standalone activity and that they prefer to follow news, films and series on the internet rather than television.

Family, in the absence of strong youth policies, serve as an important institution in young people's lives providing them financial and moral support. However, a paradox is observed there (which is also seen in other bonding of young people): they on the one hand state that family is important and they respect the opinions of their family members and on the other hand they state that their families restrict their lives and underline the importance of gaining a certain autonomy. A similar paradox is also observed in their relations to country and region which also demonstrates how complicated and difficult it is to understand the young generation. In order to grasp the experience of being young, one has to learn to go beyond the binaries and dichotomies such as: individualisation and communitarianism; conflict and conformity; political and non-political... and view the coexistence of contradictory sentiments/wishes/ expectations at the same time within the same individual.

> # CHAPTER 1 –
> # DAILY LIVES AND CONNECTIONS

Socialising and conversing with acquaintances plays a major role in the daily lives of youth in Turkey and they have strong connections with their families and immediate communities.

These connections provide them with support and security. However, this can lead to tension as they are constantly trying to strike a balance between individualism on the one hand and conformity on the other, and avoiding conflicts arising from their decisions.

When we ask young people what it means for them to be 'young', they say 'to have the energy to do whatever you want'. But they will also note that it is a time full of hardships and challenges. Being young is an experience that changes over time, and is also related to the socio-economic conditions of individuals. Thus, the experience of what it is to be young is unique. Getting married, having children and getting a job at an early age make young people feel much older: a fast-track to adulthood. A 24-year-old married young woman feels old enough to give advice to youth:

'To be young is to live life to the full. To have fun. This is my advice for young people. Do whatever you want to do. Don't dive into adult life so quickly. Don't be quick to get married or to have a job. There is nothing like youth.'

(Female, age 26)

And a 26-year-old young man working full time since finishing primary school feels like he never experienced youth:

'Youth is a burning spark, it's the future. But I didn't live my youth to the fullest. I grew up as soon as I came here. I started working right after primary school and kept working to this age.'

(Male, age 26)

Conversely, spending a long time in education, waiting until later in life to get married and limited experience of employment are all factors that lead young people in Turkey to feel that their journey to adulthood has been delayed. While experiences of youth change according to their particular circumstances, there are still similarities and shared interests across this demographic – their daily lives being one such example.

Daily pursuits and activities

One similarity between all young people in Turkey is immediately apparent: they love socialising with their immediate circles, either on social media or in real life. Most of their daily time is allocated to this: 51 per cent say that they typically spend over two hours a day talking to people on social media and 43 per cent spend over two hours a day talking to their families. Sports/exercise, arts and crafts and cultural activities are the least popular pastimes of young people, which are mostly solitary activities as well (Figure 3).

Their list of most frequent activities shows the same: activities based on meeting with friends, relatives and neighbours at homes, cafés, restaurants and parks were those that are most popular among young people, while cultural activities such as visiting museums, art galleries and historical places, as well as going to concerts or out to the theatre, are rarely pursued (Figure 4).

Figure 3: Most popular daily pursuits and pastimes (percentage of youth who spend more than two hours per day)[22]

Activity	Percentage
WhatsApp/social media conversations	51%
Checking social media posts	51%
Conversations with family	43%
Studying (if student)	41%
Following current events (internet/television/newspaper)	40%
Watching television	39%
Listening to music	39%
Reading (books, newspaper, magazines)	28%
Housework (laundry, cleaning, cooking, repairs)	26%
Playing computer and internet games	26%
Sports/exercising	19%
Art (playing an instrument, drawing, painting etc.)	13%
Crafts and handiwork	13%

Figure 4: Activities most frequently pursued (percentage of youth who did these activities in the last month)[23]

Activity	Percentage
Meeting with my friends at home	67%
Going to a shopping mall	66%
Shopping for clothes	62%
Meeting with my friends at a café/restaurant	62%
Visiting my relatives	61%
Meeting with my friends at the neighbourhood/street park	59%
Visiting my neighbours	55%
Going out with friends in the evenings	47%
Going to a cinema	46%
Qur'an reading meetings/conversations on religion/mevlit	28%
Visiting museums/art galleries/historical places	27%
Going to a theatre	24%
Going to a concert	23%
Taking part in a 'Gold day'[24] activity	11%

Naturally, young people's social and economic circumstances influence their social activities: those that take place outside the house (meeting friends in cafés and restaurants, going out in the evenings) were less popular among NEET and married young people, who were more likely to spend time visiting relatives and taking part in religious activities. Single young people living alone tend to spend time outside more.

Men were also much more likely to go out in the evenings than women (53 per cent and 39 per cent respectively). These findings indicate that unemployment, being married and being a woman means fewer opportunities for participating in this sort of public life (Figure 5).

Cost was not necessarily a factor in the lack of engagement in cultural activities according to our respondents,

since they were less popular even for young people within the higher income bracket (Figure 5). Young people in the survey attributed this behaviour to not being raised with a sense of interest in them, and lack of a lively cultural scene locally that would encourage them to participate. This leads to young people lacking the motivation to develop enthusiasm and interest for such activities.

Figure 5: Activities most frequently pursued by youth categories (percentage of youth who did these activities in the last month)[25]

	Female	Male	Single living with parent	Single living alone	Married	Unemployed	Student	Working	NEET	Lower than 2,000 TL a month	Higher than 5,000 TL a month
Meeting with my friends at home	70%	65%	71%	62%	62%	69%	66%	67%	69%	62%	64%
Going to a shopping mall	69%	64%	67%	68%	60%	68%	69%	65%	64%	62%	69%
Shopping for clothes	65%	60%	63%	63%	56%	65%	65%	60%	62%	61%	69%
Meeting with my friends at a café/restaurant	61%	63%	63%	66%	51%	62%	67%	64%	52%	60%	63%
Visiting my relatives	62%	60%	62%	55%	68%	60%	58%	64%	62%	56%	66%
Meeting with my friends at the neighbourhood/street park	56%	62%	61%	55%	56%	62%	61%	55%	61%	57%	61%
Visiting my neighbours	58%	51%	56%	48%	59%	57%	53%	52%	60%	50%	62%
Going out with friends in the evenings	39%	53%	46%	57%	29%	46%	55%	47%	35%	47%	54%
Going to a cinema	45%	48%	46%	51%	38%	37%	52%	48%	36%	48%	56%
Qur'an reading meetings/conversations on religion/mevlit	32%	24%	26%	29%	31%	24%	27%	25%	33%	31%	27%
Visiting museums/art galleries/historical places	26%	28%	24%	38%	20%	21%	34%	25%	21%	32%	28%
Going to a theatre	23%	25%	20%	36%	17%	17%	30%	23%	18%	30%	28%
Going to a concert	20%	26%	21%	35%	14%	16%	28%	24%	16%	26%	26%
Taking part in a 'Gold day' activity	15%	7%	10%	10%	13%	7%	8%	10%	14%	13%	11%

Young women said that they were less likely to go out of the house because of other pressures on their time: household and childcare responsibilities.

'I get my little one from school, then I do what is needed around the house: I do the cleaning, prepare dinner. I work for three hours in the evening from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m., then come back home. I eat something, I clean the dishes and that's it: I spend my whole day rushing around like this. I don't have a chance to rest or do anything fun. (…) Very rarely, on the weekends, we go to the park with the kids, they have fun and we come back home. That's it.'

(Female, age 30)

Television

According to research conducted by Ajans Press based on RTÜK[26] data, Turkey is the world leader in television watching, with an average daily viewing time of 330 minutes.[27] Our research also shows that almost 90 per cent of young people watch television every day, with those living with their parents and those who are married spending the most time watching television. While it is completely absent from the lives of a considerable proportion of students and single young people who live alone (24 per cent and 27 per cent), it is still a common activity of youth in Turkey among all categories (Figure 6).

Yet, our interviews with young people show that among those who do watch television, many view it as a background, rather than a standalone activity. Those who live with their families explained that they watch television because it was already on in the house and it is a way to spend time with their families. It is very common for young people to use

tablets and smart phones while watching television, and they follow news, films and series on the internet instead of television. Watching series online, especially foreign series, is specifically mentioned by young people from various backgrounds as one of their daily activities. While watching television remains a common and shared activity for all groups in Turkey, the way in which young people connect with this medium is markedly different from previous generations. This is a symbol of young people's need to build a bridge with their families and keep their dialogue going through the traditional activity of television watching, all the while pursuing their own preferred activities at the same time.

'If my parents don't watch television, I'd never watch it. If I want to watch something I do it on the internet. If I go home and the television is on, then I watch some shows with them but I don't watch television by myself.'

(Female, age 28)

Figure 6: Time spent viewing television per day by marital status[28]

	Never	0–2 hours	More than 2 hours
Total	12%	49%	39%
Single living with parent	7%	49%	43%
Single living alone	27%	49%	24%
Married	3%	51%	46%
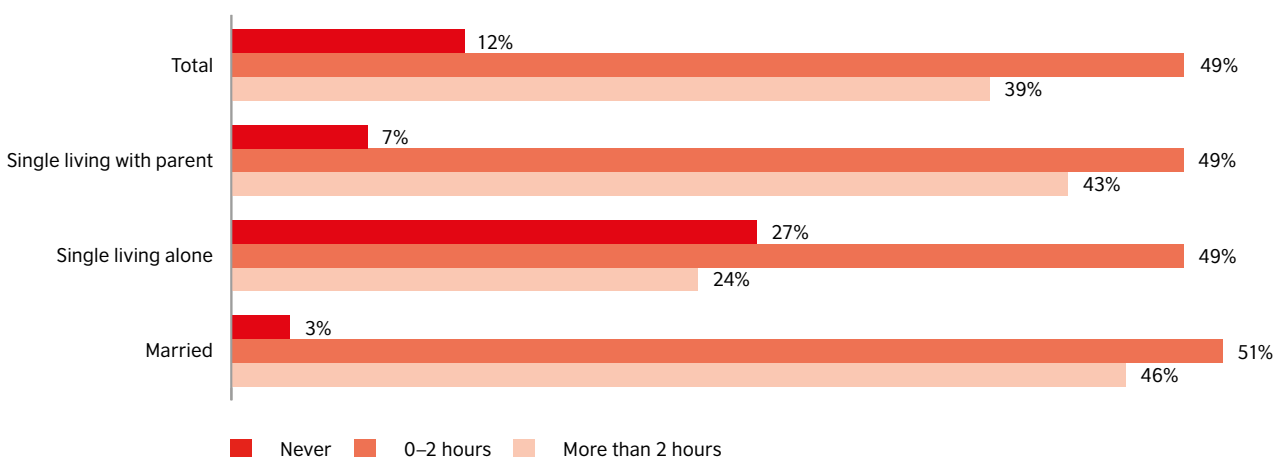
Internet and social media use

According to TurkStat (Turkish Statistical Institute) data, internet use is highest among those aged 16–24 (84 per cent) followed immediately by those aged 25–34 (79 per cent).[29] As noted at the start of this section, 97 per cent of young people spend time every day on WhatsApp and social media conversations and 95 per cent on checking social media posts. Instagram is cited as one of three most frequently used social media channels by 29 per cent of young people. This is followed by WhatsApp (27 per cent) and Facebook (26 per cent) (Figure 7).

Young people believe that social media is valuable and beneficial for them. There is a general view that social media provides a window onto the wider world and raises awareness of current affairs: 67 per cent of all youth agree with this statement. Less than half of young people (46 per cent) criticise social media for its polarising effects (Figure 8).

Figure 7: Most used social media channels[30]

Figure 8: Attitudes to social media[31]

67%	60%	55%	46%
Social media helps us become aware of the wider world	Social media makes it easier for us to express ourselves	I feel more connected to my community and society through social networking tools	Social media has contributed to increased polarisation

Our interviews suggest that the social media outlet most frequently cited for its polarising effects is Twitter:
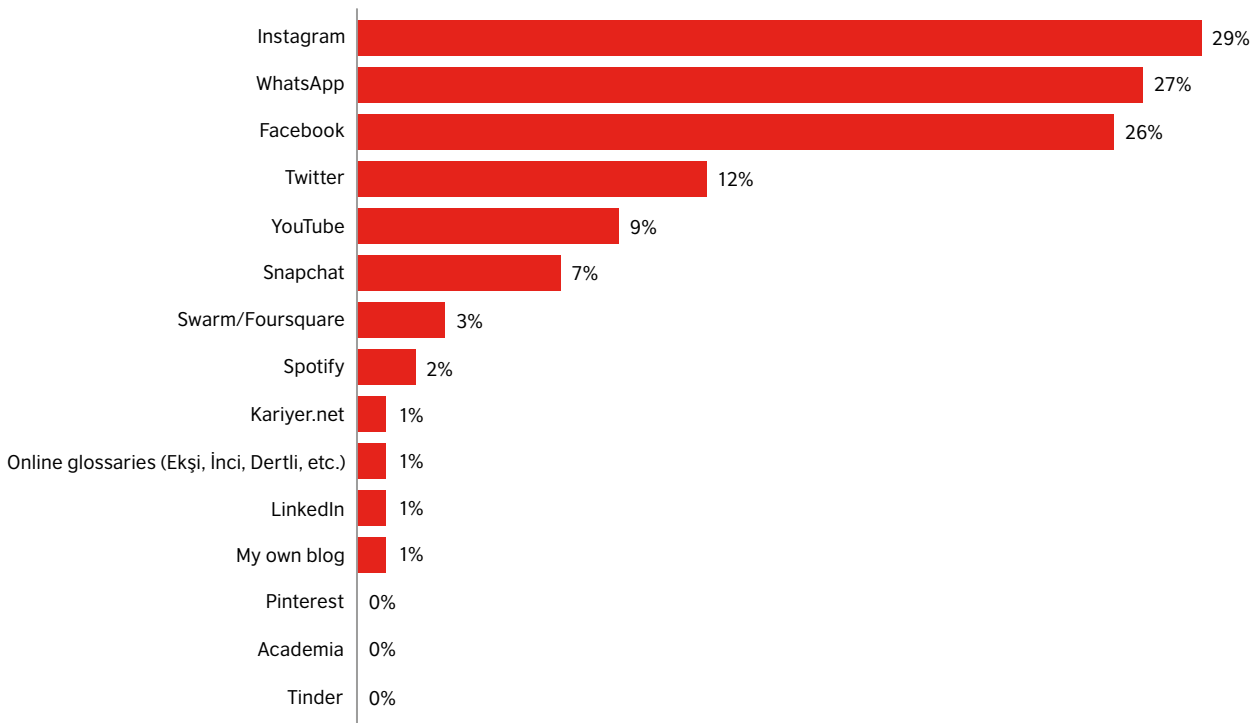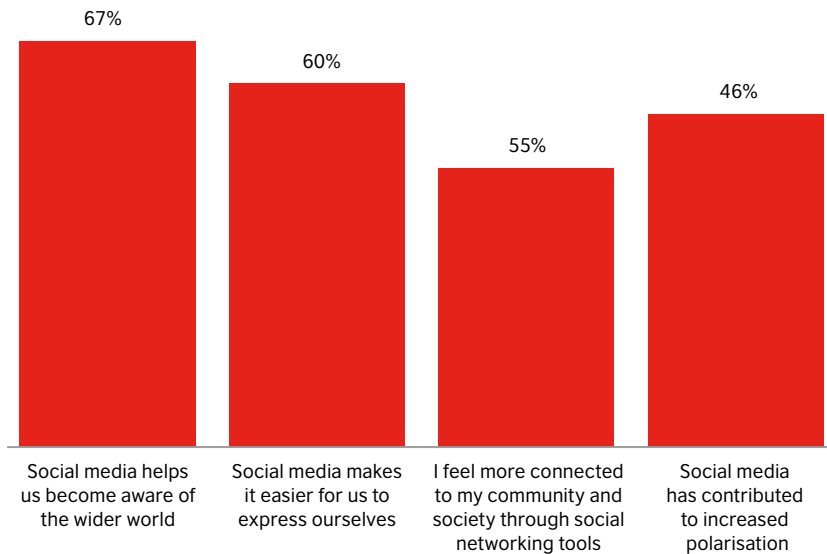
'Lots of quarrels take place on Twitter. There are people with opposing views. Even a simple comment can lead to quarrels and these are usually focused on political issues.'
(Male, age 24)

A comprehensive research study conducted with Twitter users, described an 'echo chamber' effect in Twitter, where young people are interacting only with those sharing similar views; the same voices are enhanced with repetition and opinions become hard to bend in a closed environment.[32] The words of our interviewees reflect this:

'On Twitter, we all live in our closed, isolated worlds.'
(Male, age 26)

The majority of young people are generally anxious to avoid conflicts in their social media interactions. Young people went so far as to say that they are closing their Facebook and Twitter accounts because of political content for example. The fact that a primarily visual platform, Instagram, is the most popular among young people suggests a preference for steering away from controversy and content that might cause tension.

'I don't share my political views and I don't keep those who post political content as my friends on social media.'
(Female, age 29)

'I was using Facebook only to look at the pictures and follow events. (...) But then I said Instagram is enough for me. There are lots of political posts on the Facebook. I don't like it. Pictures are enough for me.'
(Male, age 26)

However, while politics on social media may be a turn-off, professional interest in social media is popular, with young people using a variety of channels to stay informed about their work interests. Almost all young people check posts and follow accounts related to some aspect of their future plans. Social media helps to support their dreams of a better future by showing them inspiring examples of their area of interest around the world which motivates them to develop themselves and understand how their hobbies might contribute to their plans for the future.

'I am attending a hairdressing certificate programme and during classes, we search Instagram for hair models to try. There are very successful hairdressers in Dubai. I would like to work with them one day.'
(Female, age 28)

'I can see the preparations of famous fashion designers even before the fashion season starts. I can take a look at their daily lives, see how they work. I can see their studios. (...) It would be great if someday I have a chance to work as a fashion designer abroad.'
(Female, age 21)

Our interviewees also voiced some positive attitudes towards social media and the internet, particularly for providing them with the space to express themselves. Social media is an area where young people feel more confident and knowledgeable than adults, allowing them to gain the respect of older generations; young people's skills in information technology have the potential to challenge, or even to reverse, the hierarchy between youth and adults.

'I think adults have positive thoughts about us. They even envy us: they try to use social media like us, sharing posts and all.'
(Female, age 22)

'Society has a positive approach to youth. It's because we grew up with social media. They think this generation is very knowledgeable. We are informed about everything. We use tablet computers from a very young age.'

(Male, age 18)

Social media is mostly used to communicate with, and to be informed about, friends and networks. Productive activities are limited. Instead of writing, creating their own posts and blogging, young people prefer to forward and share existing posts, messaging their peers and following accounts related to their hobbies and interests. Social media is also the main platform used by young people to follow current affairs. Young people follow news through social media posts and websites, but they are sceptical about the information they read: 'fake news' and misinformation are strong concerns; young people attempt to counter these concerns by viewing information from multiple sources. However, they admit that they are more likely to believe information that echoes, or strongly aligns with, their own beliefs and worldview.

'I don't trust any source of information. Television is not reliable. There are great news sites on the internet but I don't think they are reliable either. You just read and choose which piece of information to trust.'

(Female, age 21)

'There is no specific source that I trust. I just try to compare two different sources and if they say two different things, I believe in the one that is closest to my worldview. I don't trust wholeheartedly.'

(Female, age 23)

Social media and the internet more broadly stir a variety of feelings for young people in Turkey. The criticism that used to be reserved for watching television is now used in debates about the internet and social media. Young people feel that they can waste time on the internet and social media; they try to avoid spending too much time immersed in their platforms.

'There is lots of unnecessary information on the internet. It steals your time, it steals from your daily life.'

(Male, age 23)

'I use Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. I spend one hour on Ekşi Sözlük and one hour on Facebook. But I don't overdo it. You know there's x y and z generations. I don't use novelties like Snapchat as the last generation do. (...) In fact, I try to reduce [my use of those apps]. (....) Because I feel like I am captured by them. It's very tiresome mentally. I think it's just useless.'

(Male, age 26)

Yet, at the same time, they argue that their view of the relative harm or benefits of social media depends on how people choose to use it. On balance, our participants believe that the pros outweigh the cons.

Connections with communities

When we analyse young people's sense of belonging to communities, from family and country to the wider world, we observe that they have both a sincere commitment to them, and a desire to transcend this commitment. They feel close to their families and say they have common values or perspectives, but at the same time they differentiate themselves by stating that they are more liberal, open-minded, tolerant or modern. However, instead of highlighting the differences and getting into conflict with their families based on these differences, young people choose to work around their rules and opinions and try to live their lives in their own terms without direct confrontation. When it comes to their country, young people from all backgrounds feel they belong to Turkey at some level, but this belonging is sometimes experienced as a duty. Turkey is regarded as a home to be loved and respected despite its problems, but young people also want to go abroad for better opportunities, at least for a certain period. Likewise, while the Middle East is where they feel comfortable due to cultural commonalities, Europe represents the opportunities and lifestyles to which they aspire.

Family

Family is a strong value for young people. For 82 per cent, family is the principal source of their identity, and it is on top of the list of most trusted people, with an average trust score of 4.6 on a 1 to 5 scale.

For 46 per cent, family is the most trusted source of information.[33] In every category of young people, 'father' is the most frequently mentioned person among the first three people whose opinions are trusted. This is followed by 'mother', 'other family members' and 'friends'. Young women also respect their fathers' opinions the most but they mention their mothers more than young men. The least respected groups are 'religious leaders', 'government officials' and 'politicians' (Figure 9).

Figure 9: People whose opinions are most trusted[34]

	Total	Female	Male
Father	86%	85%	87%
Mother	80%	83%	77%
Other family members	51%	50%	52%
Friends	32%	32%	31%
Opinion leaders in my community	9%	8%	10%
Teachers	11%	12%	9%
Youth in my community	7%	6%	8%
Religious leaders	6%	5%	6%
Government officials	5%	4%	6%
Politicians	2%	2%	2%
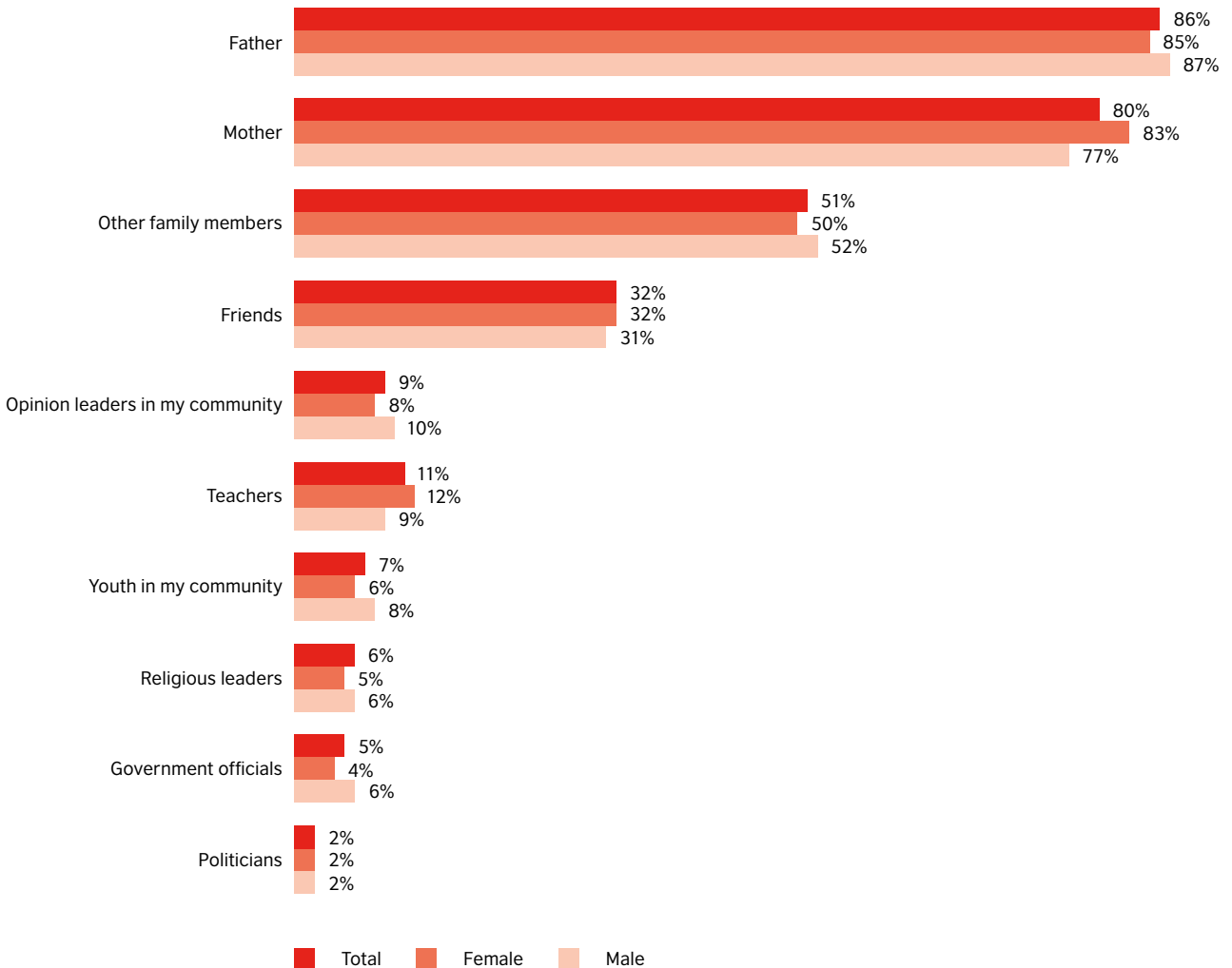
Our interviews showed that young people think they are similar to their families to a certain extent. Most of them say they have common values with their families, but the differences they list show almost all young people feel themselves 'better and more' than their families in various aspects. The majority of young people from all backgrounds say they share some common opinions with their families, but have softer attitudes to some of the more rigid opinions and values. The notion of 'traditional' values tends to be the first difference young people refer to. They state that their families are conservative and inflexible, while they are more easy-going and libertarian. A young woman who performs her daily prayers faithfully says she doesn't share the conservative ideas of her father.

'I share around 50 per cent of my family's ideas. We have different ideas in certain subjects though. My father is more rigid, more conservative, for example. When he sees a girl who doesn't use a headscarf, his prejudices emerge immediately. He thinks her faith is weak. I'm not like him at all.'
(Female, age 19)

Among the other areas where young people find themselves different from their parents there are features such as being open to different ideas and not being judgemental about people with different ethnic, religious or political backgrounds. Young people say they question everything before accepting, and that they do not necessarily share the value judgements of their parents about different identities.

'I'm not like my family in terms of ideas or lifestyle. It's just our values that are common. I guess there are some features that differentiate us. For example, they are disturbed by people who have ideological thoughts or they don't like conservative people who have radical approaches. I am doing the exact opposite and trying to understand them. I am trying to find out what drives them to think that way.'
(Male, age 24)

This sense of difference from family is more accentuated among university students who live away from their parents.

'I'm very committed to my family. We see each other frequently. But we don't share the same worldview or experiences. (…) The reason is my early separation from the family. I studied at a boarding school and I am also on my own while studying at the university. Especially the university provided me with opportunities to meet people who have different life experiences. That's what really differentiates me from my family, that's how it started.'
(Male, age 26)

Yet, young people do not go directly into conflict with their families in terms of their differences. First, they find their parents' approaches legitimate and logical, citing reasons such as the way they are raised, the culture they live in or the influence of their environment.

'We have a lot of differences, but it doesn't look like we have. Because I don't discuss such matters very much. (…) They are very understanding. But with respect to religious issues or social life my mother has more traditional perspectives. She thinks as she was taught when she was growing up. And she takes society very seriously. But it's very natural. It's a cultural thing.'
(Female, age 21)

Second, young people prefer not to emphasise the differences or show outright resistance to their families regarding their choices. Instead, they chose to work around them.

'I don't think we are very similar. (…) Because what they have learned about life is very different from mine. They are more conservative, I cannot be like that! My aunt texts me not to let my sister go out by herself. Why? Why wouldn't a 19-year-old girl go out by herself? (…) My attitude towards them is like … I usually say "OK, all right" but then I do what I want to do. I try not to get into conflict.'
(Male, age 28)

'I act like I'm not going out, but I do go out. They have a routine, a standard life. Maybe they are like this because they have children, I don't know. But if I do something they don't like, they are offended, so I try to make them get used to such things.'
(Female, age 28)

In her academic works in the field of youth, Lüküslü argues that young people invent tactics such as lying to their families or hiding their relationships rather than engaging in direct conflict with the rules and values of the family. We see in the testimony of conservative young women, even getting married is sometimes used as a tactic for going abroad for education, or gaining other freedoms without disobeying their families.[35] Lüküslü refers to this behaviour of young people as 'necessary conformism', which explains what underlies the seemingly conformist and apathetic behaviour of young people:

'(…) necessary conformist behaviour is acting in conformity with society's rules without really believing in them – paradoxically "killing" the rules while reviving them as "zombie" categories – by inventing "tactics" rather than directly rebelling. This behaviour is not apathetic but rather hides a real and strong discontent and can mask a profound agony. Taken together, these characteristics differentiate necessary conformism from either apathy or loyalty.'[36]

When we consider the reasons for avoiding conflict with the family, it is important to remember that young people's strongest support in every stage of life comes from family, either financial or emotional. Even though they define themselves as different from their families and strive for a certain level of independence, family support is significant for them and not dispensable. A 23-year-old female unemployed graduate student explains how she is grateful for her parents' support for her and how her worst future scenario is not to be able to move out of her family house:

'I told my parents if you are going to pay, I want to study in law school in a private university. And they said "OK. We will pay for it, you go after your ideals".

I wouldn't be here if they didn't give me that support. Thank God, they support me all the way. (…) [My worst scenario is] Not passing the exams. Not finding a job. Becoming an unemployed lawyer. Crawling in debt offices and courthouses. Living with my family even at the age of 30.'
(Female, age 23)

Turkey

As the figures show, patriotism is a strong value among young people. 'Patriot' comes third only to 'Muslim' and 'Turk'[37] as the preferred identity young people ascribe to themselves. In our survey, the majority of young people state that they feel a strong bond and belonging to Turkey. Their reasons for this include the greatness of Ottoman legacy, and being a country of 'Turks' and 'Muslims'. The majority of young people from across the spectrum agreed that sharing a common culture and tradition and having shared experiences are important in their sense of belonging to their country. Even for an atheist young woman, common traditional values based on religion can become a source of her belonging:

'I feel very strongly attached to Turkey, I don't know why. Maybe this is something we have learned to feel. We are a very emotional nation. My family is very important for me. Religious days, Ramadan, iftars … They made me experience all these things. I've attended Qur'an classes for example. That's how my childhood was. When I look back, it's my country and my people, my culture, I can get along with them. That's why I have a strong feeling of attachment to Turkey.'
(Female, age 27)

On the other hand, there are three factors that weaken young people's affinity of belonging to Turkey. First, social and political turmoil is frequently stated by young people as a factor that reduces their closeness to, and trust in, the country. This sense of disappointment is experienced more acutely for some youth who have been optimistic about their country, but who are disillusioned by ongoing political troubles.

'I used to have a very strong sense of belonging to my country and my nation, but it diminished over time. Because there is a never-ending conflict. Discourses are very powerful, they say "if we can just get over this problem, then we will fly high" but we never did fly, as a matter of fact in some areas we even got worse. Since these promises were not realised, I became very distant from my country.'
(Male, age 25)

The divided nature of Turkish society is a greater issue.

'People can do whatever they want if it makes them happy. People should respect each other. When I talk about Turkey, as you may have noticed, I divide people into two parts. It's a very bad thing that my mind works that way. People can be conservative and think freely at the same time. But this is how I think because the country is divided just like this.'
(Female, age 21)

Second, lack of tolerance is cited by those from minority groups e.g. Kurdish, LGBT and atheist communities as a cause of stress. Many still feel closely tied to the country, but articulate that daily life can be difficult.

'I believe people should live according to their own ideas or how they feel like living. Nevertheless, it is very hard in our society. I prefer to live among people who can express their ideas, who don't hold back or get scared.'
(Female, age 21)

The third factor that weakens young people's sense of belonging in Turkey is the perception that their needs are not being met and that the wider world offers more opportunities.

'I cannot think of anything I like about here. When you look at England, tin soldiers or the royal family come to your mind. When you say France, it is Coco Chanel, or Paris, capital city of fashion. When you think of Turkey there is only Ottoman history, mosques… but it's absurd to say that 'I like Turkey because there are mosques and the Bosporus. There is nothing I can be proud of when we did nothing culturally or scientifically. I don't care about historical events. The question is, what do you offer us today? Everything is lacking.'
(Female, age 21)

As with their families, we find many young people in Turkey feel conflicted: love and loyalty to their country, but frustration for how it stifles their ambition and doesn't allow them to pursue their dreams.

'Maybe it is treason to the country to say that but, other countries are better. Here, people are fasting now and when I go out of my house I can't chew my gum. That disturbs me. If I was abroad, everyone would respect me. I don't know, this is just an example.'
(Female, age 28)

'I hate it, but as I said, I was born and raised here. I left my family at some point, but they still have great influence on me. Being from Turkey is just like this. (…) I belong to Turkish culture, whether I like it or not. (…) It's like… like it's your home, but you don't like it very much. Maybe it's a cliché but I find Turkey very sincere. I'm not talking about hospitality, but sincerity. People are ill-intentioned, mostly, but sincere.'
(Female, age 21)

Wider world

We observe a similar situation in young people's opinions about the Middle East and Europe. Young people feel closer to the Middle East, in terms of cultural aspects, and this is more keenly felt in Eastern Turkey, likely due to geographical proximity.

'[I feel like a Middle Eastern] almost entirely. My origins are there.'
(Male, age 24)

European identity carries a number of positive connotations, such as modernity, progress, respect, prosperity and wellbeing. The overall sense is that young people wish to live in Europe as a Middle Eastern, Turk or Muslim.

'Being a European equals being more intellectual. They have better troubles. They have less threat to the safety of life. They are into arts and everything… I think I feel more of a European than a Middle Eastern.'
(Female, age 23)

Where does this leave membership of the European Union? Almost 40 per cent of young people want Turkey to become a member of the EU and 32 per cent of them are undecided, leaving just under 30 per cent opposed (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Attitudes towards EU membership [38]

39%	32%	29%

■ Yes   ■ Undecided   ■ No
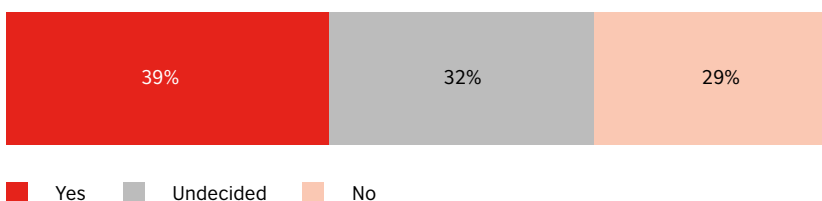
Young people's perception that Europe would provide better opportunities for them in terms of education and employment leads them to support membership of the European Union. Expectations of an easier, visa-free access to EU countries is the most important factor shaping their views. However, undecidedness and opposition have an important share as well due to the influence of national discourses exacerbated by tensions of the membership process. As our interviews show, young people's legitimisation of their opposition is merely a reflection of nationalist discourse regarding European countries. This is clear in the words of a young man who defines himself as a nationalist and 'against Europe' and who still sees going to Europe as a better option for his endeavours:

'I want to make lots of money. I want to open a branch of my business in the UK and I imagine myself driving in London in my Lamborghini. (…) I want my business to expand abroad. But it's not so easy. It's hard to become a citizen or start a business there. There are some methods though. My friends who live there will help me on this.'
(Male, age 26)

The United States, the UK and Germany are among the most well-known countries for youth in Turkey, although it should be noted that, according to another study on youth in Turkey, 89 per cent of young people have never experienced international travel, [39] so their perceptions are likely to have been influenced by the media. Each of the top three show high scores for both trust and distrust (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Trust in people from different countries [40]

	Distrust	Trust
United States	-36%	43%
UK	-33%	42%
Germany	-36%	38%
Spain	-20%	20%
France	-20%	20%
Australia	-19%	20%
Canada	-16%	18%
Brazil	-22%	17%
Russia	-21%	17%
Italy	-17%	16%
Japan	-16%	15%
South Korea	-24%	14%
China	-20%	11%
Mexico	-21%	10%
Saudi Arabia	-23%	10%
India	-24%	9%
Iran	-35%	7%
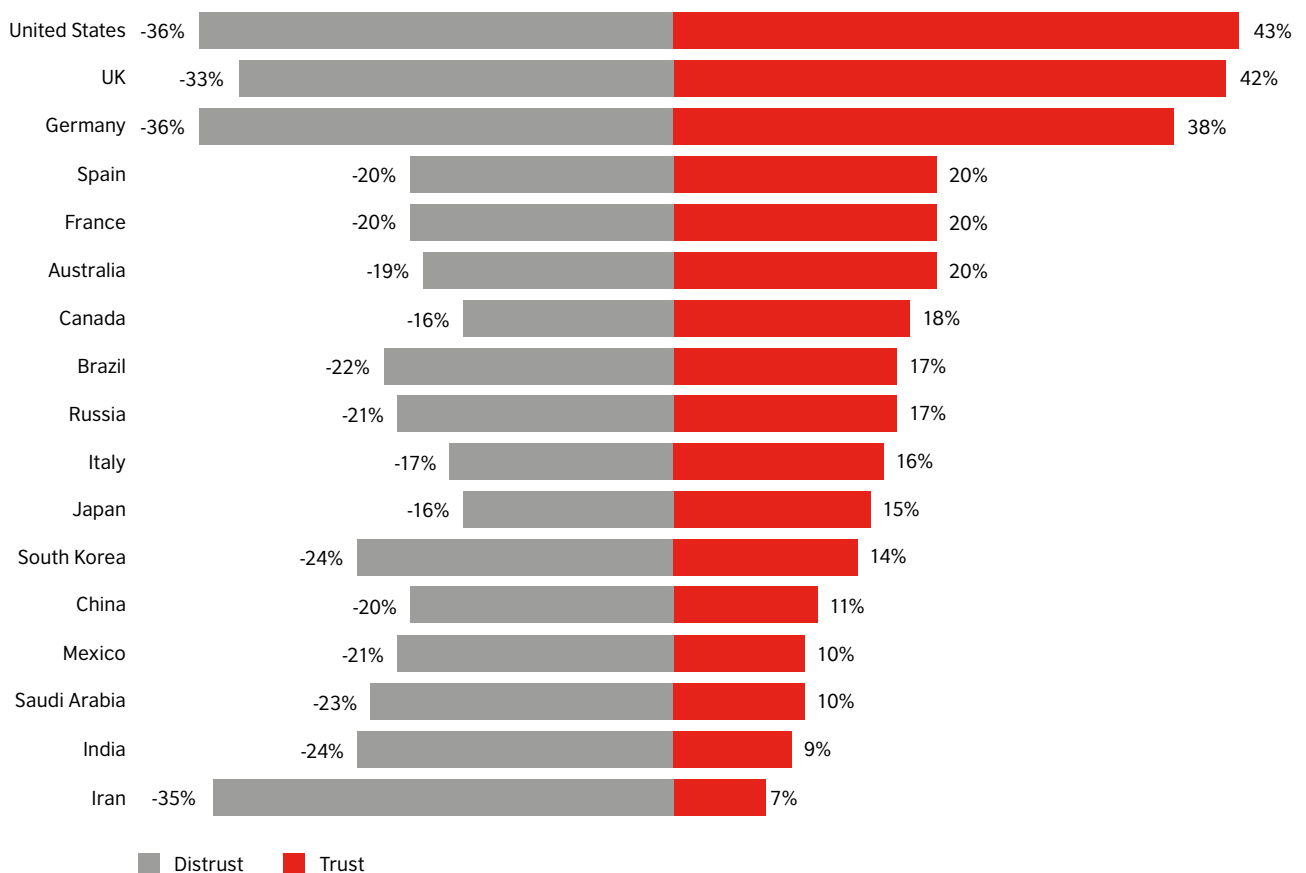
Unemployed and NEET youth tend to trust more in those countries (Figure 12). This may be a result of the idea that these countries provide better job and income opportunities. Trust levels are also high among high-income youth, which could be an indication of preference for the aspirational lifestyles in developed countries (Figure 13).

In terms of attractiveness, Turkey is ranked top but is also ranked top for unattractiveness: 50 per cent of young people find Turkey attractive, 44 per cent of them do not. Three countries (the United States, Germany and the UK) follow Turkey in terms of attractiveness, but the figures for Turkey are substantially higher (Figure 14).

Figure 12: Trust in people from different countries by occupational status[41]

	Unemployed	NEET	Working	Student
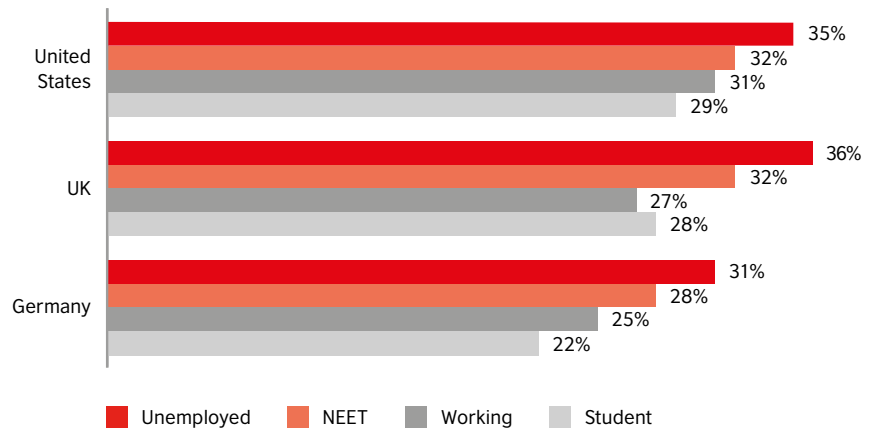
Figure 13: Trust in people from different countries by income level[42]

Higher than 5,000 TL a month   Lower than 2,000 TL a month
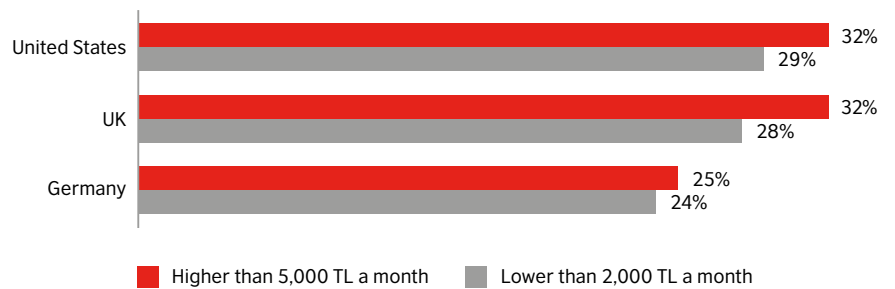
Figure 14: Attractiveness of different countries[43]

Country	Not attractive	Attractive
Turkey	-44%	50%
United States	-41%	12%
Germany	-40%	12%
UK	-29%	11%
Canada	-23%	8%
Japan	-22%	7%
Spain	-22%	6%
Australia	-22%	5%
Italy	-21%	5%
Saudi Arabia	-21%	5%
France	-19%	5%
South Korea	-17%	5%
Russia	-17%	4%
Brazil	-17%	4%
China	-16%	4%
India	-16%	3%
Mexico	-16%	3%
Iran	-15%	3%

Not attractive Attractive
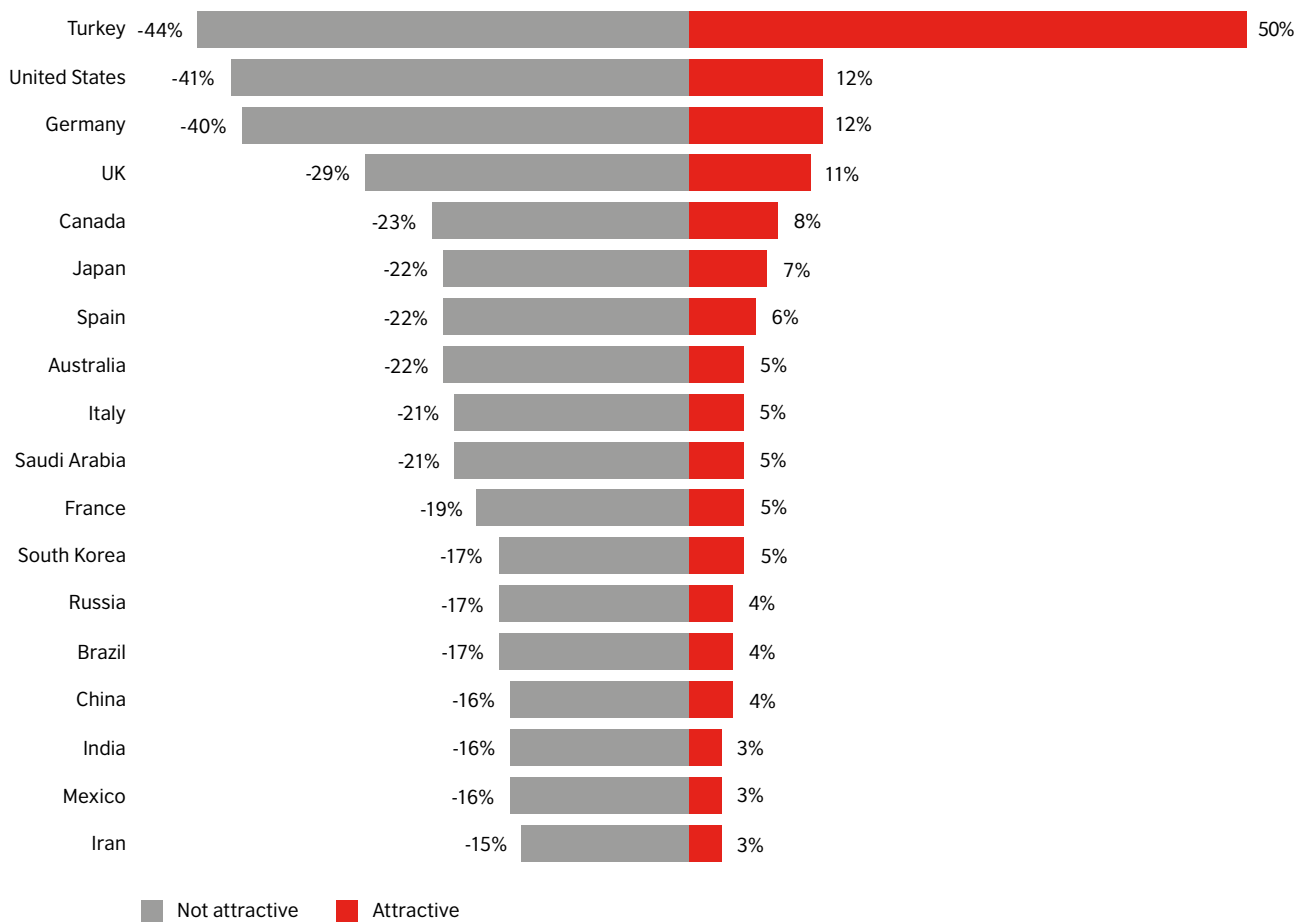
Figure 15: Features various countries are famous for[44]

	UK	United States	Germany	Turkey	France
Higher education	30%	30%	14%		
Art and literature	18%			16%	24%
Safety and security	19%	18%	15%		
Overall quality of life	27%	24%	15%		
Sports	22%	13%	22%		
English language teaching/tests	42%	34%	5%		
Jobs/career opportunity	26%	29%	19%		
Music	16%	18%		24%	
Theatre	17%			19%	
Healthcare	20%	22%	20%		
Savings potential	27%	27%	16%		
Good weather			12%	33%	12%
Science	22%	28%	15%		

The figure above shows how young people see the appeal of other countries. Turkey is well known for its good weather and music. The UK stands out in terms of English education, higher education, overall quality of life and savings potential, while the United States is ahead of other countries in science and Germany is most famous for its sports (Figure 15).

Our interviews show that Northern European countries are most appreciated in terms of their educational quality, and for their prosperity, as well as the respect for differences and democracy. The United States evokes curiosity among youth, as well as conspiracy. Canada is viewed as a country with few problems.

'I'm in love with Canada. They have no problems. It's a very big country and all is well there.'
(Male, age 23)

Nationalist youth favour countries such as Azerbaijan and Georgia because of common perceived Turkish origins. Conservative young people want to live in Muslim countries, and among them Malaysia stands out due to its freedoms. But while conservative young people also favour European countries, there are concerns about perceived Islamophobia, and so they would prefer the East or the regions of the West where they would expect to face less discrimination.

'I can go to some places in America. Of course, there are lots of problems. I cannot say the country is totally liberal, but they are more open in terms of experience. For example, there are conservative people in some places of the UK like Birmingham more than other places. Muslims and conservative people get together in such places, that's why I identify myself with these places. Or I can go to countries free of war in the Middle East like Qatar[45] or Jordan.'
(Female, age 23)

One of the factors shaping young people's views about certain countries is their hobbies and interests. Young people tend to favour countries that are famous in areas that coincide with their hobbies and interests. Popular culture and hobbies tend to bring identities together while at the same time paving the way for possible relationships with young people from other countries. Young people frequently express that the countries which are famous in the fields and subjects they are interested in are the ones they want to travel to and to gain further knowledge about. A young woman from Kayseri who likes to watch a Korean television series says she may want to meet young people from South Korea:

'I'd like to go South Korea, Taiwan (…). For example, they have Korean days there. I would like to have more information about the Korean activities from Korean youngsters.'
(Female, age 21)

The most important sources of information that influence young people's views of the UK are national press, radio or television and social media. This supports the view that the ideas of the most popular countries in young people's perception are shaped by the media (Figure 16).

Figure 16: Most important sources of information that influence views of the UK [46]

Source	%
Press, radio or television in my country	48%
Social media	13%
Internet/websites	11%
UK-based radio or television	6%
International press, radio or television other than from the UK	4%
Films	4%
Books	3%
None	3%
Other	2%
Word of mouth from family or friends in the UK	1%
Official publications/websites of other UK authorities	1%
My personal experience of the UK	1%
Official publications/websites of UK tourist authorities	1%

The first three sources of information are top of the list for young people from all backgrounds. But there is a small difference to be mentioned here: single people living alone and students tend to have information from a variety of sources and they mention films and books more than their peers.

In the perceptions of young people, the UK is mostly remembered and liked for its 'elite' people and for being the most orderly country in the world. In addition to this, factors such as respect for diversity, treating people as valuable individuals, freedom of thought and prosperity are also listed among the most liked features of the UK.

'I like English culture. They value people, they have fewer working hours. There are some days when everybody has fun. Other days they work. Everything is organised and determined. It's not like that here.'
(Male, age 26)

'I would like to be from England. Because they are cold people. I mean, they are elite.'
(Male, age 23)

Summary

- Despite coming from different backgrounds, young people have common lifestyle preferences: almost all young people's daily socialisation practice involves conversations with immediate communities and cultural activities are unpopular.

- Young people give the impression they are engaging in everyday activities, however their accounts tell another story, and they have their own ways of doing things. A big part of their daily interactions take place on the internet and social media via mobile phones and computers, with television in the background and an excuse to spend time with family.

- They have strong ties with their communities: home, family, country and the region. These ties provide them with indispensable support and security and it is very welcomed. Yet young people also feel the need to become independent from these ties. This leads them to constantly try to strike a balance between conflict and conformity, between individualisation and communitarianism.

- Young people's socio-economic conditions define their level of differentiation from each other and their place on the communitarianism and individualisation scale. Married and working young people, NEET and unemployed youth are outliers, who don't share their peers' lifestyles and who are more committed to their sense of belonging, prioritising conformity, rather than conflict. On the other hand, single young people living away from their family come to the fore in terms of their more individualistic and libertarian tendencies.

> INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 2

Batuhan Aydagül – Director of the Education Reform Initiative

I once met a male student enrolled at a prominent foundation university, a not-for-profit and tuition-charging institution in İstanbul. He was studying engineering and didn't seem too content with his choice. I asked him who he was studying engineering for, intuitively sensing that wasn't his first choice. 'My father,' he said. This young man wanted to study to be a pilot, but his father challenged that by asking whether he wanted to spend his life in a tiny cockpit. A couple of days later I recounted this exchange to a university professor. His comment was brief: 'Of course, it's his father who pays the tuition.'

The Next Generation research introduces ample evidence, both qualitative and quantitative, to confirm that young people are too dependent on their families as well as surrounding networks to build a future of their own. In the following chapter, you'll read a well-justified and urgent need for empowering young people through cross-sector public and social policy that should encompass education, youth and labour.

Providing quality public education at all levels provides a strong starting point; the current system hardly gets a passing grade (below five in a ten-point scale) from the respondents. The conviction in the value of education looks higher among those who are employed, in other words for whom the system seems to work. Yet, the fact that 56 per cent of respondents see personal connections as more important than education in achieving success indicates the diminishing promise of a good education. While the results give us enough confidence that education maintains its importance among young people in society, the urgency for progress in education is clear.

Access to scholarships as well as state-subsidised loans for skills could enable young people to plan their education and training in line with their dreams. The chapter is also a good reminder that financial support for skills should not be limited to students in conventional institutions and degrees. Promoting better access for young women is crucial. The widening of this sort of support to other areas, such as arts and entrepreneurship, is essential.

A total of 60 per cent of young people finished high school in a country where average educational attainment falls short of eight years, a threshold for finishing middle school. That's good news and evidence of progress, yet despite this we still lag behind peer countries. The Next Generation research also confirms young people are hopeful and resilient; they have grown up through economic and political crises and have already developed strategies for managing the uncertainties ahead. Throughout the report you'll find many clues on how adults can help this potential flourish. My take is clear: young people need an ecosystem for empowerment, one that should first and foremost love them; trust in their ability and potential to build a new future; and support their self-realisation. We may as well start by giving the youth the space to design this new ecosystem.

> CHAPTER 2 –
INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

Young people have high hopes and aspirations, but they also feel the need to underwrite their future by holding on to family support, community circles and marriage, despite the perceived pressures to conform brought by these structures.

They are optimistic about their individual future, yet there are significant obstacles interfering with their future planning which lead them to pessimism about the future of the country as a whole.

In this chapter, we approach young people as individuals with hopes, fears, dreams and plans. We examine the factors young people see as sources of support in approaching and safeguarding their future and the factors they regard as barriers to achieving their aspirations.

Our research suggests that young people in Turkey, while having a number of aspirations, take a practical approach to their lives. They aim for traditional goals – marriage, education, employment – and are realistic in planning multiple routes to achieve their dreams. That includes navigating the public and private sectors, academia and civil society, and trying to develop themselves in various fields.

'I have more than one thing in my head about my future. I don't want to focus on one route and then get disappointed. I'm sure I want to have a family, at least. I have some experience in the private sector, so I can work there, but I can be a state official as well. (…) I would consider being an academic. I would like to get a job where I enjoy myself and use my smarts.'

(Male, age 23)

A 19-year-old young man wants to become a specialised sergeant [47] which suits his desire to serve his country. He enthusiastically defends his plan, but he also talks about other options if things don't go according to plan.

'At worst, I can use my auto paint skills to get a job, if I can't pursue my education. You know, if people have a profession they can easily make a living in İstanbul, even if they don't complete their education. Maybe they can't ensure their future but they can make a living.'

(Male, age 19)

Young people therefore plan a number of steps in order to achieve their dreams, and they are practical enough to sketch out a number of routes to the future, and to look to what is needed to get them there. Alongside a 'plan A' – the optimum, which might be more creative and aspirational – they look to ensure they are pursuing more conventional leads, such as continuing traditional education and gaining work experience. They are passionate about their dreams, even if not always hopeful of achieving them. Many factors of Turkey's socio-political climate – political instability, lack of support structures outside the family, the dynamics of education system and the labour market – lead them to take this practical approach to their future.

Securing a job and thereby achieving self-sufficiency is regarded as the most powerful enabling factor in the transition to adulthood (alongside other factors such as marriage and completing education). But independence as a by-product of employment is not a given – the majority of employed young people (73 per cent) continue to live with their families while they remain single (Figure 17).

For those who are not in employment, the family is the main source of financial support (Figure 18). Scholarships are second only to family support as the highest source of income for young people, which indicates that those who can benefit from the little support available for young people are those who are in the formal education system. Only six per cent of young people receive state support, mostly due to the strict requirements of an eligible unemployment claim. Since state supports exclude young people who have never worked before and with the lack of any other support systems, family support becomes indispensable for a significant proportion of young people.

Figure 17: Household conditions of single and working young people [48]
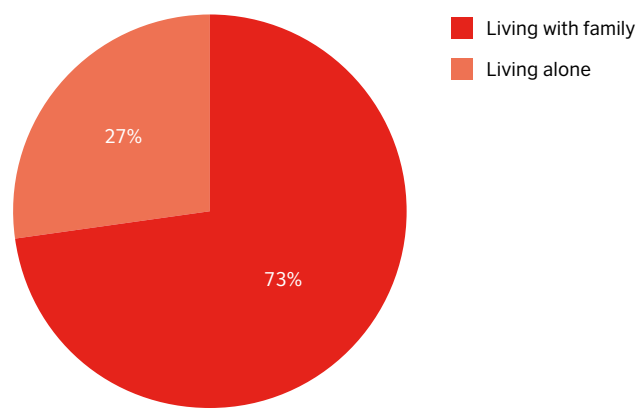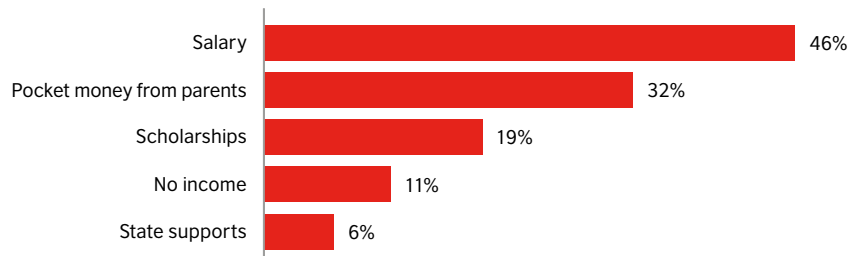

- Living with family
- Living alone

27%

73%

Figure 18: Sources of income [49]

Salary	46%
Pocket money from parents	32%
Scholarships	19%
No income	11%
State supports	6%

In the previous chapter we discussed that young people have strong ties with their families and adopt tactics to avoid any conflict with them. This is not only an issue of love or honour, but a practical one: the family plays an important role in realising a young person's future, particularly given the lack of an external support system. They contribute by sending them to good schools, supporting them when they are unemployed, drawing on their networks when young people seek a job, giving financial backing to business start-ups, providing a safety net if plans fail, and being a source of reassurance and motivation.

'My family is extremely effective in realising my plans. My father is the first person to help me in my academic endeavours. My mother's support and my sister's support are also important. If I didn't have their support, I couldn't stay in academia.'
(Female, age 21)

This support is welcomed by young people, but it also breeds a culture of dependency and apathy among some of the survey respondents. Long periods of unemployment are particularly very disturbing for young people.

'If I can start my own business, I will earn my own money. I'll have a social life. I will have my freedom. Now, I don't feel free because my family is financially supporting me. I try to spend less money because I try not to be a burden for her.'
(Female, age 28)

As well as being a welcome support, family is regarded as a source of pressure. Young people's cognitive maps regarding sources of support for and barriers before future plans [50] show it clearly: while 'family support' is the strongest factor that has a positive effect on future plans, 'family pressure' is the second strongest factor that has a negative effect. In particular, this stems from a sense that their families may not support, or try to alter, future plans, because of the pressures of what is traditional or acceptable. Young people thus try to seek ways to convince their families or work around the rules, all the while legitimising the behaviours of their families and avoid directly blaming them. A 21-year-old high school female graduate, currently unemployed, reported that she couldn't pursue her future plans because of her family, but still excuses their behaviour:

'My family didn't let me continue my education, so I quit. If they had allowed me, now I would be an educated person. I would be in the university. I believe I can overcome all obstacles easily without them. But it is a little hard to overcome family mentality. Their community has a great influence on them. (…) I warn them a lot about this. Probably they are not guilty because it is a very rooted mentality and it's hard to make them admit something.'
(Female, age 21)

Such reliance on the family leads young people to try to find a balance for all limiting factors.

'The mentality of the people around is very important. You make an effort to do something, but if your family has a different mindset, it undermines your efforts. They say, "why bother, why not just become a government officer," and I'm very discouraged. (…) I'm trying to change the ideas of my family. Whatever happens, this is your family and you can't do more than trying to convince them.'
(Female, age 19)

Another factor that has an impact on young people's future plans is political instability – local, regional and global, with the cognitive map again supporting this.[51] This is true for all young people, but mostly prevalent among minorities and young people with a secular outlook. Young people talk about their dreams of a peaceful life without political conflicts, and see the political turmoil as an obstacle to realising their plans.

'I am worried that after I spent so much effort working on my thesis for so long … what if a war is declared? Our efforts in our micro lives mean nothing then.'
(Female, age 27)

Education, employment, marriage and going abroad are prevalent themes in young people's future plans, and we will now turn to each of these in more detail.

Routes to the future

Education

In a country with a sizeable youth population it is critical not to underestimate the role of education in their lives and futures. When we examine the completed levels of education of young people, we observe that the largest group of young people are high school (upper secondary school) graduates, who account for 44 per cent of young people. The proportion of young people who complete university or higher education is just 16 per cent among the 18–30 age group (Figure 19).

One potential reason for this low rate of higher education completion is that some of the young people within the 18–30 age range in our sample were not of a graduation age (at least 22). OECD data shows that in the 25–34 age group, the population with a higher education is 28 per cent. Even with this rate, Turkey ranks fourth worst after Mexico, Italy and Colombia, and way below the OECD average of 42 per cent.[52] Net schooling rates show a greater proportion of young women (43 per cent) than young men (39 per cent) are enrolled in higher education.[53] However, when labour force participation rates at different levels of completed education are considered, it seems that it is harder for young women to move from education to employment, because similar schooling rates for women and men do not necessarily translate to similar employment opportunities.

For example, the labour force participation rate for high school graduate men is 84 per cent, which increases to 89 per cent for university graduates. For women, however, labour force participation rate for a high school graduate is as low as 34 per cent, with a significant jump to 73 per cent for university graduates.[55] This clearly indicates the disparity faced by women in working life. Women with a high school education are three times more likely to be left out of work than men and need significantly higher levels of educational attainment to improve their employment prospects. This gender gap at work is an issue for countries around the world: as an International Labour Organization (ILO) report suggests, increasing gender parity in educational attainment does not prevent women from being concentrated in middle to lower-paid occupations, which is a reflection of traditional gender stereotypes and beliefs about women's and men's aspirations and capabilities.[56]

Figure 19: Completed education levels[54]

Level	Percentage
Primary/secondary	35%
High school	44%
University	15%
Higher education	1%
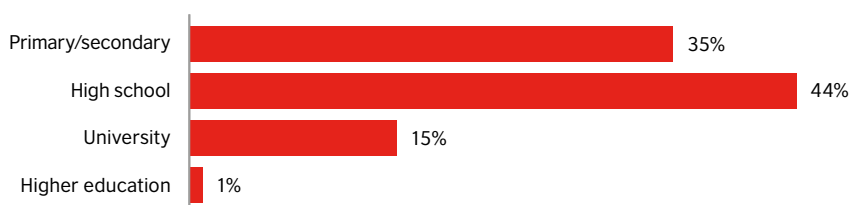
There is a close correlation between the level of resources dedicated to education at a national level and the quality of national education provision. Comparative data reveals that the share of the state in education expenditures is 91 per cent in the OECD average, while it is 87 per cent in Turkey.[57] According to data from the Public Expenditures Monitoring Platform (KAHİP),[58] the ratio of public expenditure for the empowerment of youth to GDP was 0.49 in 2013. The data also shows that 60 per cent of this expenditure is used to support young people in education with a further 20 per cent allocated to

sports. The *Guide for Monitoring Expenditures for Youth Empowerment*[59] states that 'youth in education' (who account for only 30 per cent of those aged 14–24 in Turkey) benefit from 75 per cent of the budget dedicated to youth empowerment. Young people outside the education system account for 70 per cent of the youth population in Turkey with only a 25 per cent share of this budget. Once we take the high share of women in the category of NEET into consideration, these figures reveal that the category of 'youth' supported by existing youth policies is predominantly made up of young

men within the education system, an approach which does not respond to the needs of the majority of young people in Turkey.

While some aspects of the current education system do exacerbate socio-economic and gender-based divisions, education is highly valued by young people of all age groups in Turkish society. For 65 per cent of young people, higher education is a critical factor for their future success, while 29 per cent wish to continue their studies at postgraduate level (Figure 20).

Figure 20: Perceptions on education levels: desirable and critical for future success[60]

	Pursue in the future	Critical to succeed
Secondary school		8%
High school	11%	17%
Distance learning	2%	2%
Bachelor's degree	35%	42%
Postgraduation/master's degree	18%	13%
Doctorate/PhD	11%	10%
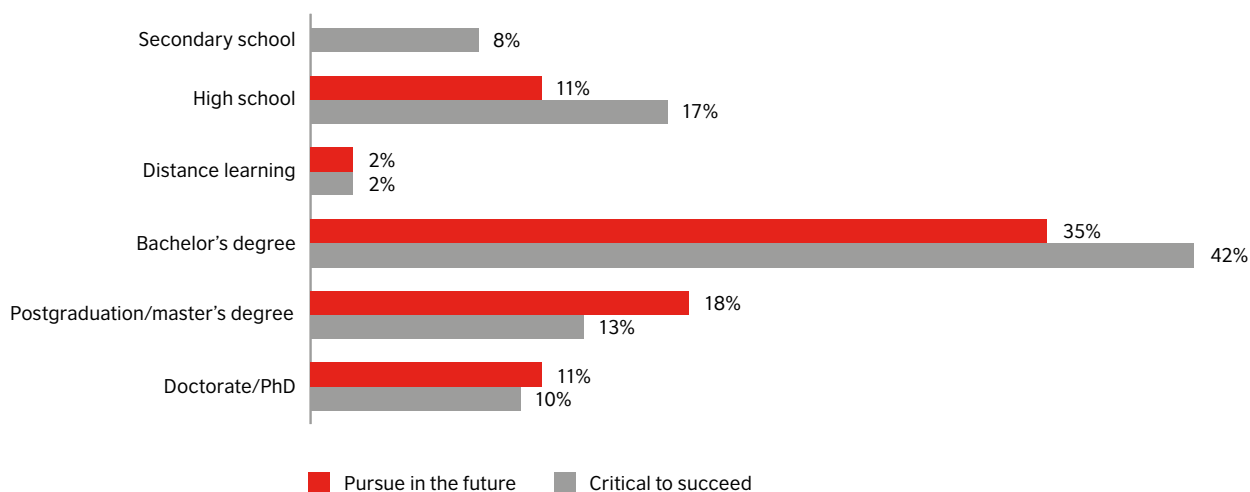
This high status of education in the minds of young people is supported by the findings of other recent studies. Research from 2014 found that education is among the three most important issues for 89 per cent of young people: nine out of every ten young people stated that, 'education is very important to me'.[61] Our findings also show that young people value the concept of education: when we asked young people what increases people's respect for them in their social environment, 62 per cent said, 'If I have a good education' (Figure 21).

Students and single people living alone have the strongest belief that education is the best way to gain the respect of others (87 per cent and 77 per cent respectively), while married and working youth place less importance on this aspect of life (42 per cent and 44 per cent respectively). Married young people are more likely to believe that 'obeying the rules of the society' will gain them respect than young people from other categories (34 per cent). Education is regarded as a way of gaining respect more by young people with higher education but low income than those with low education and high

income, which confirms its value as cultural capital (79 per cent and 35 per cent respectively). Having a good job and becoming rich replace education in this category.

Figure 21: Factors that increase the respect of society for young people[62]

If I have a good education	62%
If I get a job	48%
If I become rich	33%
If I get the support of people in important positions	24%
If I get married	24%
If I obey the rules of society	23%
If I fulfill my worshipping practices	16%
If I become the leader of my community	15%
If I have children	13%
If I become physically powerful	12%
If I become a martyr for my cause	11%
If I complete my military service	6%
If I use a headscarf	3%

Only 16 per cent of young people believe that education is a waste of time and money; however, 56 per cent of young people state that personal connections are more important than educational achievements when it comes to securing success. This finding hints at a division between an idealised view of education and the realities of education and the labour market in Turkey. It is again notable that 50 per cent of young people believe they need to study overseas to secure a good education (Figure 22).

A deeper examination of data shows that the rate of young people who agree that education is a waste of time and money increases to 21 per cent for unemployed young people. Unemployed youth are also most likely to believe that it is more important to have personal connections than educational achievements to succeed (61 per cent). Young people with a higher education (university students or graduates) believe one should move to Western countries for a good education more than those with lower education. Again, young people who are in education or employment have a higher tendency to agree with this statement than their NEET peers. These findings again indicate that a better education abroad is valued as cultural capital more by young people from higher socio-economic categories. On the other hand, it is striking that regardless of their socio-economic status, young women value education more than young men: fewer young

Figure 22: Attitudes to education[63]
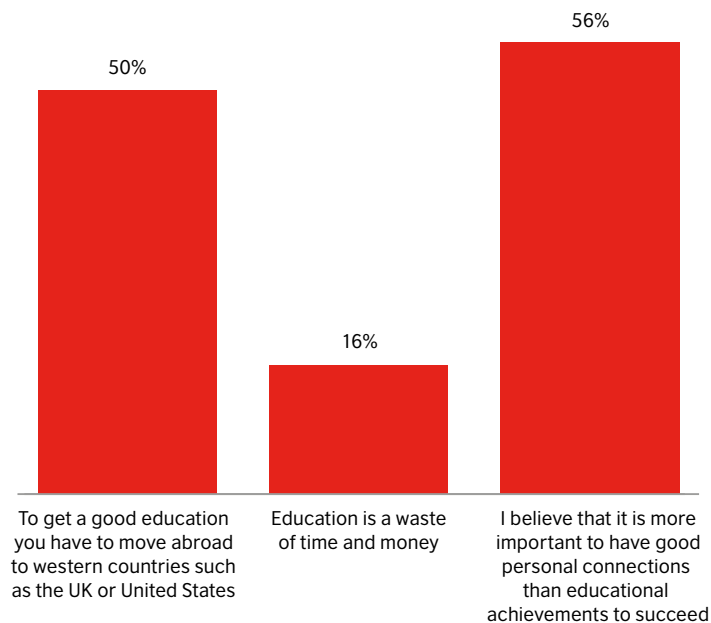
women agree with the statements 'Education is a waste of time and money' and 'Personal connections are more important than educational achievements' compared to young men.

We can infer two points from this apparent discrepancy between the value placed in education by young people and the belief that an education might ultimately be less important than 'who you know' when it comes to achieving success. First, young people's experiences in the labour market lead them to believe that networks trump personal merits

when it comes to securing a job. A young woman who wants to become an air hostess but remains unemployed attributes this to her lack of influential connections, and describes this as normal and expected:

'Actually, I did look for a job. I wanted to be an air hostess, I tried hard for that. Three or four years ago I managed to get a job interview but I failed. The reason? The reason is my lack of networks! Plain and simple.'

(Female, age 28)

Figure 23: Average scores for the components of the education system
(1 to 10 scale where 1 is 'I don't like at all' and 10 is 'I like very much')[64]

Teachers	Compulsory education of 12 years (4+4+4)	School management	Ministry of National Education	Quality of education	Exams
5.05	4.94	4.50	4.39	4.38	3.96
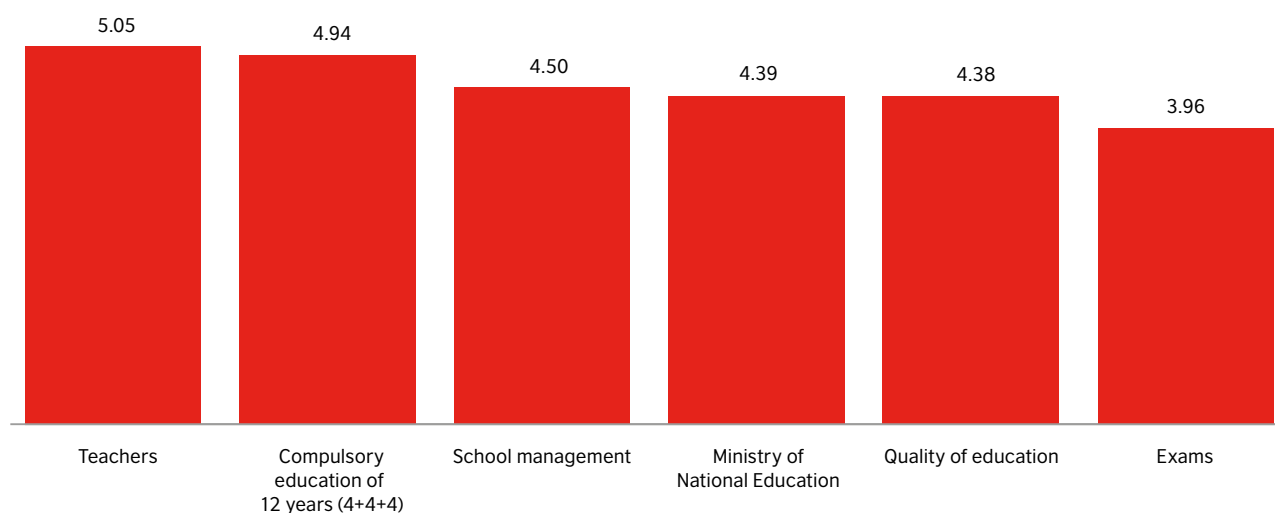
Second, young people are dissatisfied with the current education system. We asked our participants to rate components of the national education system on a 1 to 10 point scale (1 – I don't like at all; 10 – I like very much). The average score for almost all of these components was below 5. Teachers were viewed most positively, but even then, the score was only a little over 5. The examination system was the most disliked component with an average score of 3.96 (Figure 23). Those most discontented with the education system are single young people living alone, and students.

Even young people who are content with many educational policies are critical about examinations, which take place at every stage of education and employment in Turkey. One of our interviewees voiced his frustrations with the system as follows:

'One thing I don't like about my country is the education system. It has never progressed. It's even getting worse these days. There should be a radical revision of the system. It's a system based on exams that require youth to compete with each other all the time. It doesn't aim to teach.'

(Male, age 18)

Despite regarding education as a crucial investment in their future, young people in Turkey have low confidence that education offers any guarantee of success. The fact that net schooling rates are rising at the higher education level[65] has an impact on this – as more people attain higher education, education becomes less of an advantage. Thus, after fulfilling the obligation of completing education, young people invest in other factors that could contribute to, or make up for, gaps in their education, such

as attending vocational courses, learning English and having and expanding networks.

'I'm studying economics but I also attend some vocational programmes. I have to finish school first and then I have to improve myself, because I have no capital whatsoever. My first job is to finish school.'

(Male, age 21)

'Normally I'm a student of art history. But what I want to do is to be a cook. What I had to do for this is to improve myself in the kitchen. That's why I work in a kitchen and see what I can do. (…) After I receive my certificate from the course, I plan to change my profession. I want to learn something in a different kitchen, maybe about world cuisine or something.'

(Female, age 27)

'I'm in law school but I don't envision myself as working in this area. (…) I take music classes, I play the flute. I think maybe I improve myself in this area and become a musician in the following years.'
(Female, age 21)

Skills in a foreign language, particularly English, is considered a key part in achieving future plans. It is seen as necessary not only for getting a job, but also for going abroad. Even those who have studied English while in education feel they need better levels of English to have an advantage in the labour market and capitalise on future opportunities.

'Do I trust private companies? Maybe, if they are big corporates. But they easily kick you out if you don't know English or can't improve yourself. (…) To develop my English, I will join a European volunteer service. Money is not everything, after all. It is hard to develop your English in my city. There is no place where you can talk in English in my university.'
(Female, age 24)

'At the moment, everything is about learning English. It is the greatest obstacle that prevents me from taking advantage of the opportunities ahead.'
(Female, age 27)

'I want to gain a level of profession in English but language courses don't provide it. I want to go abroad to improve myself in English. My primary goal is English right now.'
(Female, age 23)

We have mentioned previously that young people have a strong bond and ties to their country.[66] When they are asked to choose a country where they would like to pursue their education, Turkey ranks top among other countries (Figure 24).

But this also means that 49 per cent of young people feel they need to go to Western countries to continue their education, pointing to a level of dissatisfaction with the education provided in Turkey. The United States (11 per cent), the UK (eight per cent) and Germany (six per cent) are the most popular destinations for young people to pursue their education overseas.

Employment

According to TurkStat data, the youth unemployment rate was 20 per cent in 2016. This rate is 17 per cent for young men and 24 per cent for young women.[67] According to our research, only 39 per cent of young people aged 18–30 are in employment and 35 per cent are students. Of young people in employment, 86 per cent are working in private sector companies, with 11 per cent of them in public sector institutions. Young people who are unemployed, those who are not looking for a job, 'house girls'[68] or housewives, and part-time workers make up 26 per cent of young people in Turkey (Figure 25).

Figure 24: Countries where young people want to pursue their education[69]

Country	Percentage
Turkey	51%
United States	11%
UK	8%
Germany	6%
Canada	3%
France	3%
Finland	2%
Norway	2%
Italy	2%
Switzerland	1%
Sweden	1%
Spain	1%
Netherlands	1%

Figure 25: Occupation status[70]

Occupation	Percentage
Not looking for a job	6%
Unemployed	12%
Student	35%
Housewife/house girl	6%
Part-time worker	3%
Full-time worker	39%

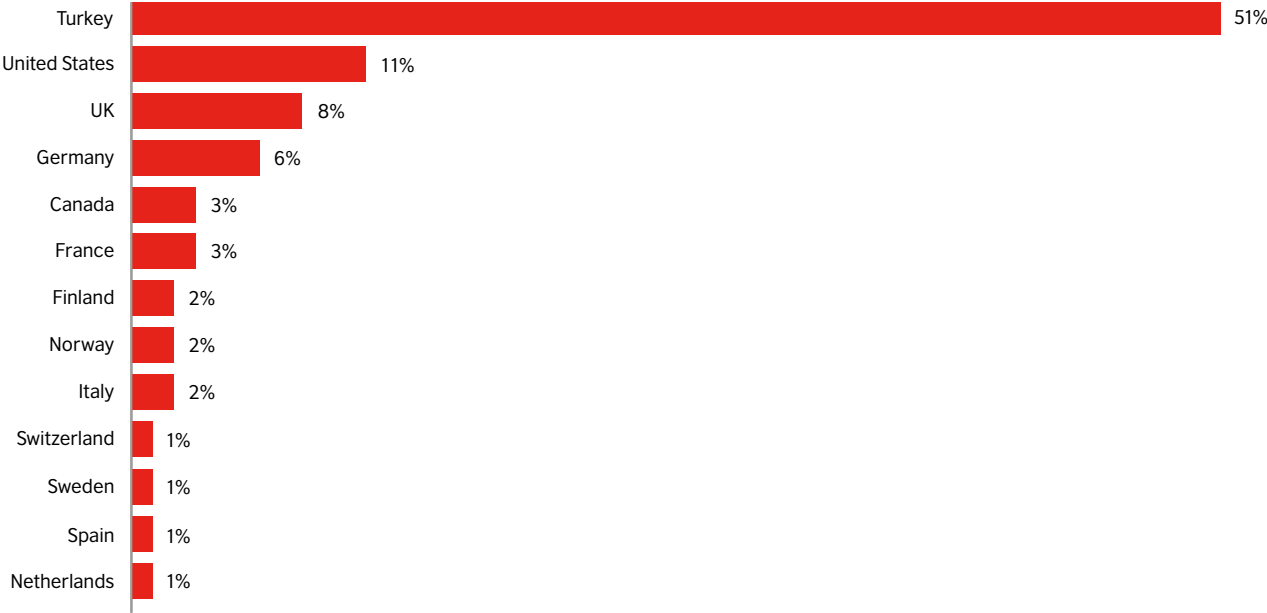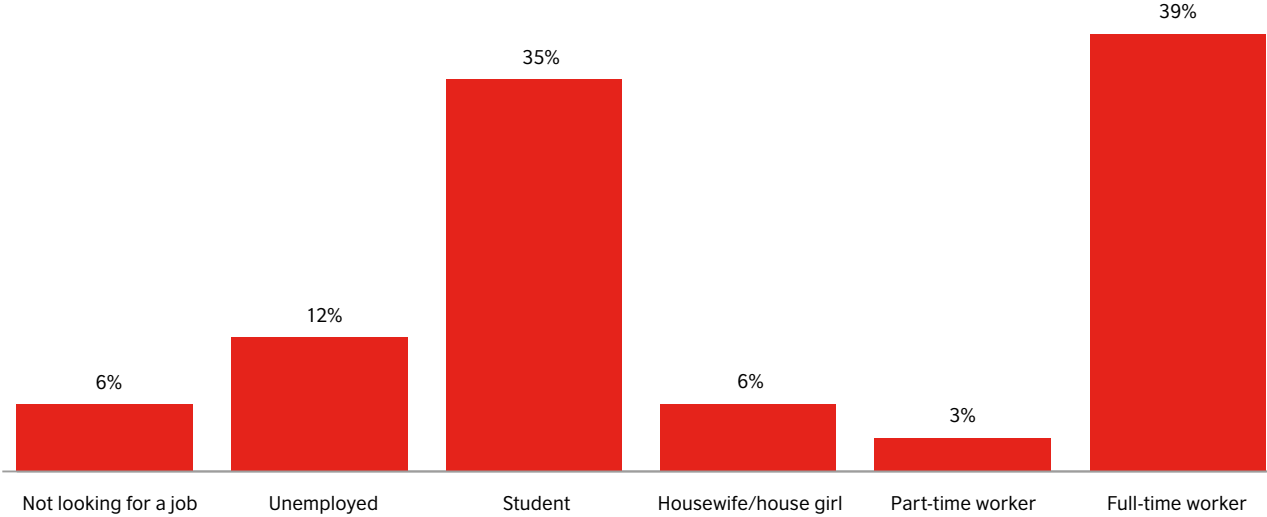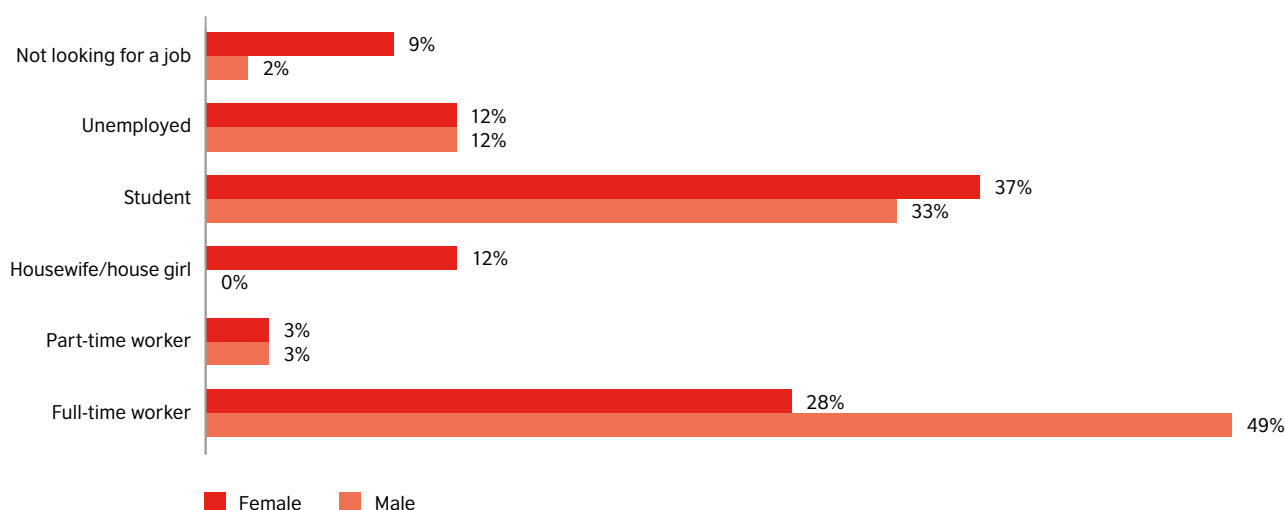**Figure 26:** Occupation status by gender[71]

The rate of young women not looking for a job is around four times higher than young men. There are many more men than women in full-time work (49 per cent and 28 per cent respectively) (Figure 26).

Turkey is below the OECD average both in terms of general employment and youth unemployment in particular: It ranks 29th among 39 countries in unemployment and 37th among 41 countries in youth unemployment.[72] According to ILO data, 40 per cent of employed young people in Turkey are informal workers compared to 20 per cent of the adult population.[73] It is important to note that youth unemployment is a common global concern and by no means unique to Turkey: youth unemployment in many developed countries in Europe is higher than it is in Turkey.[74]

The reasons behind youth unemployment vary from country to country. In Turkey, there are many parameters: macroeconomic indicators (the growth figures not resulting in a desired increase in employment rates); dynamics and structural problems of the labour market; social and cultural characteristics that determine the attitudes and behaviours of young people and their potential employers. According to various studies on the issue, there are also a number of factors that contribute to youth unemployment in Turkey: employers' preference for cheap unskilled labour despite an increased qualified labour force supply; the reluctance of young people who have been in education for a long time to work in jobs with low incomes as a first step on the job ladder; less generally young people's lack of 21st-century skills, which have become as important as a degree/diploma (such as knowing a foreign language); unavailability of intermediary institutions or policies that would introduce young people to jobs matched to their qualifications;[75] difficulties experienced by young people in accessing quality careers guidance and labour market information and jobs availability more generally; capacity building opportunities; and, as civil sector employers have emphasised, the disadvantaged position of young people from marginalised and minority communities, due to perceived discriminatory employment practices in the private sector.[76]

As well as exploring the reasons behind youth unemployment, studies have also focused on how unemployment is experienced by young people themselves. These studies contend that young people feel personally responsible for being unemployed: they believe that they are out of work due to their own inadequacies.[77] An important consequence of youth unemployment is financial dependence on the family, which in turn strengthens their reliance on the family and provides increased motivation to become a 'good family member', which prevents young people from becoming the active, responsible, participatory and entrepreneurial individuals that society requires.[78]

Another indicator of the wellbeing of youth is the NEET ratio. This category includes those young people who are unemployed (voluntarily or involuntarily), those with health-related issues and people with disabilities, and those who are carers or looking after children, and thus it is a valued indicator for those working with disadvantaged youth.

Figure 27: NEET rates by gender[79]
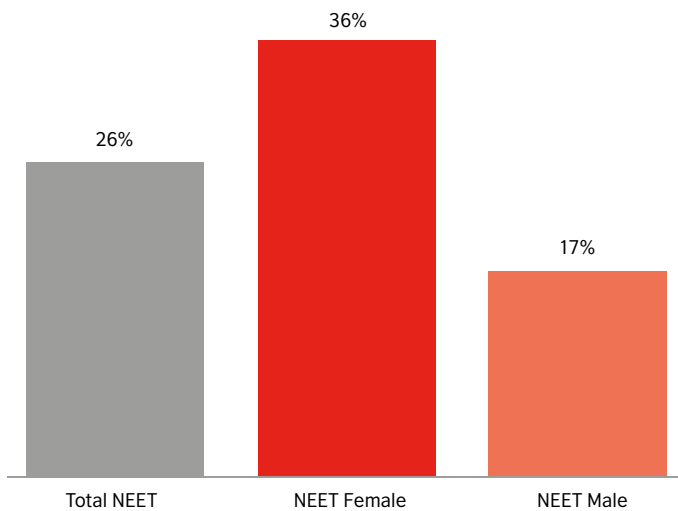
A total of 26 per cent of young people in Turkey are in the NEET category (OECD average: 15 per cent).[80] There is a significant difference between men and women, with the NEET rate among young women twice that among young men (OECD average: 18 per cent for women and 13 per cent for men) (Figure 27).

Despite high unemployment and NEET rates, young people do strive for financially and emotionally satisfying jobs that would make them successful and happy.

'What I expect from the future is to do something that would make me happy and let me be with the people that make me happy.'
(Female, age 18)

'Ten years from now I see myself having established my own business, earning lots of money and leading a comfortable life.'
(Male, age 22)

A good job is an ambition for young people from all walks of life. They want to have a better standard of living than their families can provide alone. Young people from a low socio-economic level emphasise their desire to earn enough to make a comfortable living through getting a job. Those from the higher socio-economic level, however, wish to pursue a more aspirational lifestyle as well as a decent career and not just a job. On the other hand, young people recognise the influence of social circles in getting a job and achieving financial gain.

'I join the activities of various clubs or associations to have networks. I stay connected to people. If I'm able to go abroad, the rest would follow. (...) I like to meet new people. It has advantages. You know people from every city. And sometimes, they help you.'
(Male, age 20)

The world of work also generates levels of concern and pessimism, particularly among those who are unemployed or on low incomes. A 23-year-old young woman who is registered as a student at a university, but needs to find a job to continue her education, speaks about her disappointment in the process:

'I'm very sorry that my efforts are in vain. I'm sorry that my future is not promising, I am sorry that I'm in a very bad economic situation. I have been unemployed for a very long time. It makes me feel quite inadequate and my confidence is shaken. It shouldn't be like that. I am a skilled person in many ways. It causes me to doubt myself. People want to finish school but what will happen after school is very uncertain. I don't have any motivation. After I finish school, I'll take KPSS [Public Personnel Selection Examination], but where will they send me to work afterwards? These are very ridiculous and bad thoughts, which make you feel really sad and worn out.'
(Female, age 23)

Finally, we see indications of the impact that employment, once found, has on young people and the way they view the world. As they have already established a connection between their future and the future of the country, they tend to have more consideration of current social, economic and political conditions.

'The current economic crisis affects my future plans. There is no other factor. Our state has some problems with other states. They impose embargoes on us. So, the dollar rises and the value of our money decreases. People's purchasing power is decreasing and in turn it affects us.'
(Male, age 26)

Marriage

Marriage is a significant part of the future plan for almost all young people. It helps to fulfil the requirements of family and convention while providing something new. It satisfies the need for independence and security simultaneously; it is desirable for conventional reasons, such as falling in love, having a life partner, and building a secure future; but it also reflects a level of independence from families, as young people see marriage as an exit strategy to have their own houses, follow their dreams and to live their own lives on their terms.

A 24-year-old young man from Diyarbakır directly links a life of his own with marriage:

'I want to get married. I want some mandatory tasks to be taken over from me. I want to have a life that I can manage myself.'
(Male, age 24)

This is particularly true for conservative educated young women who have plans for continuing education or going abroad, as getting married means a route to freedom that avoids conflict with their family.

'If a woman is alone for too long, she can be disapproved of by the society. I see lots of girls around me who completed their bachelor's and master's degrees and want to go abroad for a doctorate but they are not married. So, they talk about marriage a lot. I'm only 21 years old and all the girls around me end up talking about marriage these days. They are surprised to hear when I say I would go abroad for a doctorate alone, without getting married.'
(Female, age 21)

Again, a 28-year-old, university graduate conservative young woman talks about her desire to get married in order to pursue higher education:

'I want to get married. It's not appropriate for me to go abroad by myself as a lady. If I get married in the future, I really want to go abroad. That's the only way.'
(Female, age 28)

While marriage and loyalty to family are valued and promoted mostly by conservative communities in Turkey, young people with secular lifestyles share their conservative peers' desire to get married. Marriage is basically the easiest way to independence from family for young people from all walks of life. Young men and women with secular lifestyles regard marriage as both a desire to have a family and an experience that has to be lived due to family pressures.

'[My future dreams] wouldn't come true because my family will make me get married until then. This is due to the mentality of my family. They say I have to get married before 30.'
(Male, age 26)

'For the last six to seven years, one of my biggest goals has been to get married and have a peaceful home because I like crowded houses, people coming and going.'
(Female, age 23)

For some of the young women in our survey, marriage is itself an instrument for planning a future. It is acknowledged as a means of future livelihood and prioritised among other plans. This is more prevalent among low-income young women without a university degree. However, as suggested in the following quotation, even university student young women can see marriage as a way to set up/ensure their future.

'I didn't think too much when choosing my branch of study. It is not a field where you can easily find a job anyway, so I didn't give much thought about it, and frankly, I don't think it is important. I thought, I don't need to earn enough money to maintain a livelihood, since probably I'm going to get married. But now I tell myself it's better to earn some money since it doesn't seem like I'm getting married any sooner. But still, it's not my priority to earn money.'
(Female, age 22)

'I was married and it ended badly. Then I was engaged for a while, which was also ended. I understood that I wouldn't be able to ensure myself through marriage, I decided to set up my own business.'
(Female, age 28)

Marriage can in some cases lead to liberation and independence, however, the future plans of those who are already married tend to be more conventional and focus on maintaining the family home and raising children. As discussed before, getting married changes young people's priorities and makes them feel older.

'I want to retire. I want my children to complete their education, stand on their own feet and save their lives. And I want my husband to be loyal to his family. (…) I have made a good marriage and it's important for the future. If I can retire, it will have a huge impact on my future. I will be able to save myself. I'm getting older, nobody gives me work any more, if it goes like this and if my husband doesn't work, retirement helps me stand on my own feet.'
(Female, age 30)

Going abroad

The desire to go abroad, through education or employment, is prevalent. This is particularly true for young people who have a secular outlook, as the ongoing socio-economic situation exacerbates their sense of disillusionment, and the sense that they would have a better future outside the country.

'Most probably I won't be able to set up a future in this country. If I try to have a future here, I am obliged to submit to the things I don't like.'
(Male, age 25)

This pessimistic view of Turkey and the desire to go abroad is stronger among those with higher levels of education, or socio-economic standing, as well as young people who are unemployed. But even those who feel positively about their country still perceive value in international travel and overseas education. Many cite the acceptance of plurality, freedom of expression and tolerance they perceive to exist in developed countries, particularly in Northern Europe.

'When I consider the level of happiness, level of wellbeing and people's freedom, Finland and Norway stand out of course.'
(Female, age 21)

'Scandinavian countries, they are comfortable. When we look at Sweden and Finland, especially Finland is the best of OECD. There is no oppression in terms of religion and they don't disturb people. There is welfare because there is a well-established system.'
(Male, age 20)

For most, the desire to travel does not compromise their ties with their country, so many state that they wish to travel, but also to return. This seems to balance their own aspirations with the ties to country and family. This narrative also helps them persuade their families to sanction their travel – for the more traditional, disapproval remains an obstacle.

'I want to finish my school and to go abroad, work a little, then come back to my family and be happy with them.'
(Female, age 19)

'I won't be in Turkey in the future. I will be in America. I want to have the experience of living in America. But I won't stay there. I will come back to my country.'
(Female, age 19)

'I want to work abroad no matter how. The obstacle before me is my grandmother. She doesn't want me to go abroad. […] There are no other obstacles and I can overcome my grandmother – I just need to talk to her brother. They can tell my grandmother that going abroad is not bad.'
(Female, age 24)

'I can go to another country for language school. At the moment, the only obstacle before me is my family. They don't want me to live far away from them. They would think that I won't come back or that I can't manage to be there alone by myself. They would get worried. […] I talk to them to overcome this. I try to convince them. My best method of convincing is talking.'

(Female, age 27)

Optimism and expectations

Across the generations, Turkish people are generally inclined to optimism. According to the World Happiness Report, Turkey ranks in the top half of countries surveyed (69th out of 155 countries with an average score of 5.5 in terms of happiness in 2017).[81] The Life Satisfaction Survey, conducted by TurkStat, shows that 61 per cent of the population declared that they are happy in 2016. Highest happiness levels, on the other hand, are observed among youth: 65 per cent for the 18–24 age group.

When we ask young people to rate how happy they are on a 1 to 10 scale, the results also confirm that they have relatively high happiness levels. The average score of their current happiness level is 6.43 and young women feel happier compared to young men (6.57 for young women and 6.29 for young men). Unemployed young people differ from the rest with happiness levels falling below 6. The average score of the NEET category, including those unemployed young people not looking for a job, is 6.33 for women and 5.76 for men, and this is higher than the average scores in the unemployed category. Another recent study confirms this finding: while 69 per cent of NEET young people state that they are satisfied with their lives, this falls to 55 per cent among young people who are actively looking for a job.[82] One may conclude that job seeking is a factor that reduces young people's happiness perhaps due to frustration and disappointment and the issues (previously mentioned) about networks and connections when one is seeking work (Figure 28).

There is a similar picture when it comes to young people's levels of optimism for their future. Most think their living conditions will be better in the future; average scores on a 1 to 5 scale are above the median of 3 in all categories. Yet they think somewhat differently when it comes to living conditions in the future of Turkey: young people from all categories are less optimistic about the future of Turkey than their own futures (Figure 29).

Less optimism in the future of the country, continued political uncertainty and lack of state support reinforce the dependence on family structures, as we have noted. Yet, young people are most optimistic about being able to move out of their family home and live independently. Considering their high dependence on family support in realising their future plans, this high score shows independence from the family is a success indicator and a wishful expectation for young people (Figure 30). This is accentuated by the fact that 55 per cent cite lack of financial independence as a key concern (Figure 31).

Figure 28: Happiness scores by occupational status and gender (1 to 10 scale, where 1 is 'very unhappy' and 10 is 'very happy')[83]

	Total	Unemployed	Student	Working	NEET
Female	6.57	5.97	6.64	6.79	6.33
Male	6.29	5.65	6.23	6.52	5.76
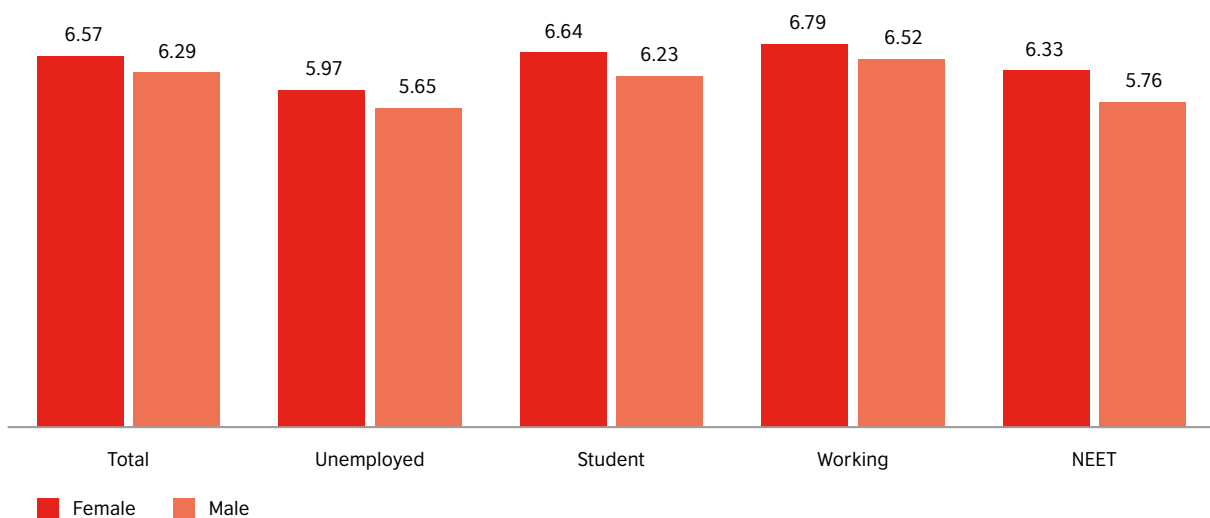
Figure 29: Optimism levels (1 to 5 scale where 1 is 'disagree strongly' and 5 is 'agree strongly')[84]

3.35

3.16

My living conditions will be better five years from now

Living conditions in Turkey will be better five years from now
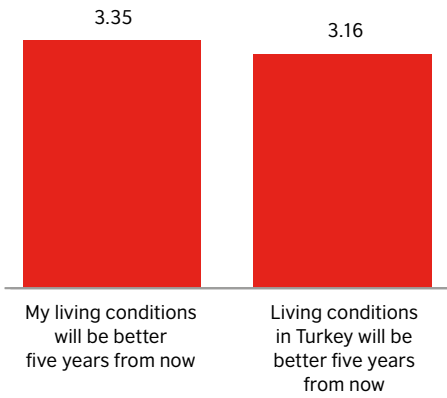
Figure 30: Optimism regarding future expectations (1 to 10 scale where 1 is 'not optimistic at all' and 10 is 'very optimistic')[85]

6.55

6.45

6.40

6.32

6.15

I will be able to move out of my family home and live independently

I will have more opportunities to express myself

I will get the career of my choice

I will have enough money to live on comfortably

I will have more opportunities to influence the way things are done in my country

Looking at the specific concerns of young people in Turkey, they are concerned not just with themselves, but also their imagined future families. Almost 60 per cent fear they will not be able to provide their children with a good education. Far fewer (38 per cent) are concerned that they themselves will not be able to access higher education.

We have already noted the value young people place on a marriage, so it is unsurprising that 53 per cent express concern that they will not marry someone compatible (Figure 31).

When we consider the differentiations between youth categories, we observe that high-income youth compared to low-income youth are more concerned

about future prospects (Figure 32). We can argue that this is due to their increased need for a stable Turkey to realise their plans, and that they feel they have a clearer stake in the country's future.

Figure 31: Future concerns[86]

Not being able to provide my children with a good education	59%
Not being financially independent	55%
Marrying someone with whom I won't be compatible	53%
Not being able to maintain good physical health and overall wellbeing	53%
Not being able to pursue my career of choice	50%
Having to live life alone in old age	50%
Lack of opportunity to make my voice heard	47%
Having to face violence in my life	42%
Not being able to pursue/complete my higher education	38%

Figure 32: Future concerns by income levels[87]

Not being able to provide my children with a good education	67% / 55%

Not being able to provide my children with a good education — 67% / 55%

Not being financially independent — 60% / 54%

Marrying someone with whom I won't be compatible — 58% / 47%

Not being able to maintain good physical health and overall wellbeing — 57% / 50%

Not being able to pursue my career of choice — 60% / 46%

Having to live life alone in old age — 52% / 50%

Lack of opportunity to make my voice heard — 52% / 43%

Having to face violence in my life — 38% / 39%

Not being able to pursue/complete my higher education — 44% / 37%

■ Higher than 5,000 TL a month   ■ Lower than 2,000 TL a month

Figure 33: Future concerns by gender[88]

Concern	Female	Male
Not being able to provide my children with a good education	61%	58%
Not being financially independent	55%	56%
Marrying someone with whom I won't be compatible	58%	48%
Not being able to maintain good physical health and overall wellbeing	55%	50%
Not being able to pursue my career of choice	50%	49%
Having to live life alone in old age	53%	46%
Lack of opportunity to make my voice heard	49%	46%
Having to face violence in my life	53%	31%
Not being able to pursue/complete my higher education	41%	35%

■ Female ■ Male

Pursuing or completing higher education is an area where young women feel more concerned than young men, often due to a lack of support from family and gender bias in financing education among siblings. Women are also more concerned, particularly with respect to facing violence (Figure 33). As their accounts will 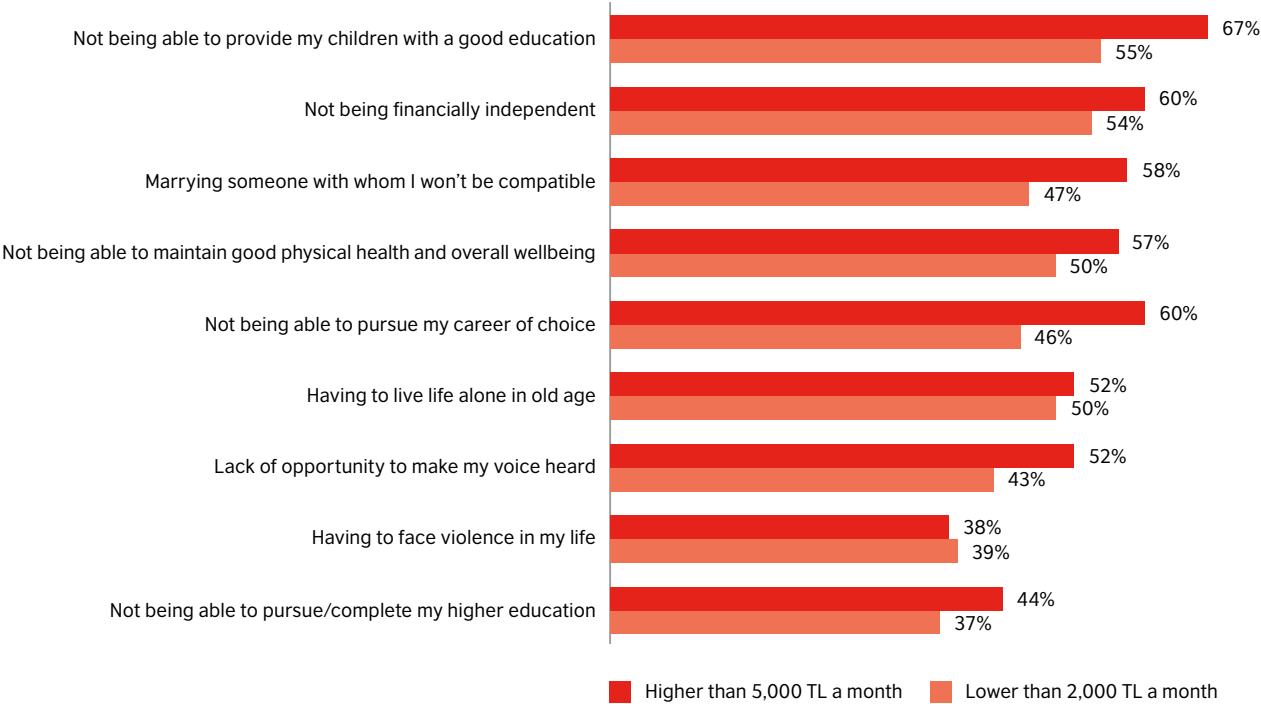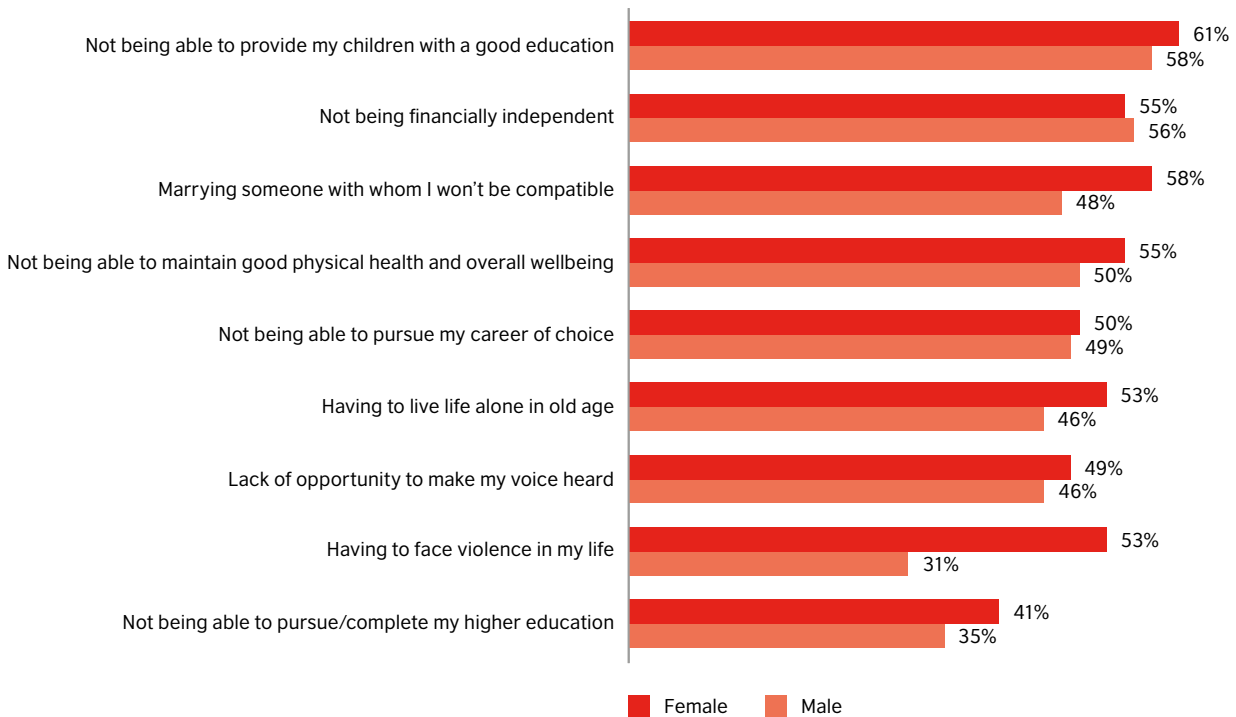show, almost all young women we spoke to have a story of violence, from direct assault to threat of sexual harassment in public space, which is expected to increase as more young women go out of their houses for education or employment opportunities. This is coupled with increased awareness in society due to greater media coverage of violence against women. This awareness seems to result in a certain level of worry among young women, which is also reflected in their stories.[89]

When compared to other future concerns 'having to face violence' on a personal level seems to be less of a concern for young people in general, but an open-ended question about their most significant concerns revealed a high level of anxiety around violence due to an unstable and insecure atmosphere created by internal conflicts and the possibility of war. While they are more optimistic about their own future than that of Turkey, their words confirm that they feel the current socio-political climate in Turkey has an impact on both their long-term goals and their everyday freedoms.

'I can't see the future so bright as long as the country is in this situation. I pray God to make things good, but it does not look good. We want to dream about the future, but we can't. Bombs explode, wars, loss of lives, our soldiers are dying, we have martyrs. You can't find a job after the latest events, everything stopped.'

(Female, age 24)

'Usually, we go to places like Bebek or Moda. We used to go to Taksim as well, but you cannot go there these days. Bombs are exploding everywhere.'

(Male, age 23)

Summary

- In the transition to adulthood, young people are faced with many difficulties. Inequalities in the education system and the dynamics of the labour market exacerbate the challenges in the transition to adulthood. Lack of proper social support and encouragement lead young people to hold on to communities – mainly family – as a guarantee for the future.

- Despite high NEET and youth unemployment rates, young people still don't give up on their 'Plan A' and strive for the jobs of their choice, engage in what makes them happy and satisfied, and pursue their dreams, desires and expectations.

- Young people's plans for the future are not fixed. Many have a 'Plan A', stemming from their passions, but they maintain alternatives – they know the employment situation is challenging, and while they believe in the power of education, they are pragmatic enough to realise it is not always enough. They invest in their futures beyond the formal system through seeking courses and vocational courses, developing language skills, reaching out to social circles for support and seeking overseas experiences.

- Despite all this, young people are optimistic that their living conditions will be better in the future. But they feel less optimism about the living conditions in the future of their country. Having in place plans and exercising flexibility could be a reason why young people are inclined to think this way, in contrast to the current generation who might not have the same options as younger citizens.

- While family is regarded as the main source of support in realising future plans, it is also regarded as one of the strong negative impacts, along with political uncertainty.

> INTRODUCTION TO
CHAPTER 3

Youth, identities and politics: tension and hope in the same place

Rumeysa Çamdereli

Turkey has always been an interesting mixture of different ethnic, religious and political identities. Although in current times, where identities are more fluid and complex, young people still seem to inherit their parents' biased worldviews. Today's youth define their position in their lives according to their families and they trust their families the most. This relationship is also a source of tension. While they are reliant on their families, at the same time young people are aware of restrictions posed by this relationship. In order to be a part of their community, specifically their family, they sustain their identities in the public space. Young people do not risk being open in their relationships with people from other identities. However, in the daily lives of young people it is still apparent that they are less biased towards people from other identities than older generations. They are open to discussions, and interaction in their daily lives. Yet this openness does not allow for traditional political discourse.

Political participation is an important challenge for young people. Here, Turkey's exhausting macro-political atmosphere plays a complicating role. In addition, as young people wish to avoid tension with their families and do not want to 'get in trouble' generally, they do not want to be open about their political views. As a result, the rate of young people being active in politics, even through civil society organisations – which can be thought of as a more 'neutral' place for these activities – is low. Political polarisation compounds this by preventing young people from becoming active citizens. Each activity and each argument is considered as belonging to one side or the other. A 'third way', which is experienced mostly in the daily lives and interactions of young people, seems impossible to maintain in the political environment. However, although young people do not take action, they are aware of the current issues regarding different parts of society. Gender issues, human rights issues are top of the list, and constitute the brightest part of the picture regarding young people and their relationship with the future.

Hearing each other's stories, coming into contact with others in daily lives, and being aware of others' issues is an important starting point for social peace. In this sense, although today's youth are hiding behind their identities and their backgrounds, in the future, their awareness towards each other in their social lives constitutes an important source of hope for future social peace in Turkey.

Turkey is a country with multiple ethnic, religious, political and gender-based identities. The identity or identities to which a young person adheres affects both their own beliefs and interactions, and the way their peers and wider society views them. The prescriptive way in which Turkey approaches and categorises identity can lead to an analysis of this complex area that verges on caricature. However, identities are complex and the parameters set by society and communities should not be viewed as absolute. Thus, in our endeavour to understand the lives of young people, it is important to see how, and to what extent, their life experiences are shaped by these identities. What might compel them to commit to their identities and retreat into some communities, or alternatively encourage them to reach out and connect with others?

> CHAPTER 3 –
IDENTITIES, POLITICS AND PARTICIPATION

Young people have a strong affinity and bond to their identities and beliefs, but there is diversity in terms of ethnic, religious and political identities within their networks and daily interactions.

They like meeting people from different backgrounds and they express more tolerant attitudes than the rest of society generally. They prefer to avoid identity-based conflicts by not discussing them in public and instead preferring to reserve them for the relative security and privacy of their own community and family circles. They are generally disillusioned with politics from which they feel distanced and believe it does not act in their best interests.

Identities and interactions

Young people were asked to select three identities (from a list of 27) that best described themselves. 'Muslim' was the most popular choice and 60 per cent of young people regarded 'Muslim' as one of the three identities that defined themselves. Also, 'Muslim' ranked first for all categories of young people (Figure 34).

Figure 34: Identities of youth [90]

Young people regard their identities as largely determined by their families; 82 per cent of them agree with the expression 'my principal source of my identity is my family'. Fifty-four per cent believed that their ethnicity defined their identity, which, while still significant, was viewed as less important than family, country or religion (Figure 35).

Youth in Turkey hold core values, which are shaped by their experience and identities. Conservative youth identify strongly with a religious code; nationalist young people emphasise the indivisible integrity of the country and the nation; young people with secular lifestyles are passionate about individual rights and freedoms; and Kurdish and other minority groups of youth talk about their ties with their own cultures. But they also embrace flexibility and highlight the need for respect, claiming that they can connect to anyone as long as they are respectful towards their own opinions and preferences. Young people from across the socio-economic and political spectrum all agree on concepts of rights, freedoms and not interfering with the lifestyles of others.

'I say "I don't want to get together with people who violate my personal space". But I never say "I don't like people supporting this or that political party"'. (Female, age 23)

Young people have strong trust in their immediate communities. Trust scores are highest for family and neighbours, while they are lower than the median value of three in all categories for new acquaintances and those from other religious beliefs and countries (Figure 36).

Figure 35: Perceived sources of identity[91]

My family	82%
My country	74%
My religion	67%
My ethnicity	54%

Figure 36: Trust in people (1 to 5 scale where 1 is 'strongly distrust' and 5 is 'strongly trust')[92]

Family	Neighbours	People from other nations	People from other religious beliefs	People I first met
4.6	3.5	2.8	2.7	2.6
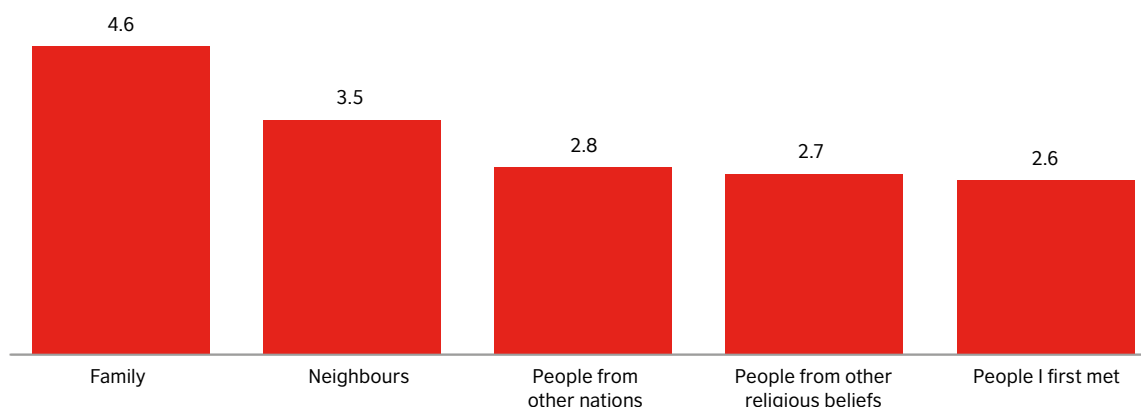
Figure 37: Most trusted sources of information[93]

Source	Percentage
Family	46%
National television news	40%
Friends	34%
Facebook	31%
International television news	27%
Twitter	25%
National online news	19%
Instagram	18%
International online news	10%
YouTube	9%
Religious leaders	7%
None	7%
Leaders of football fan group	2%
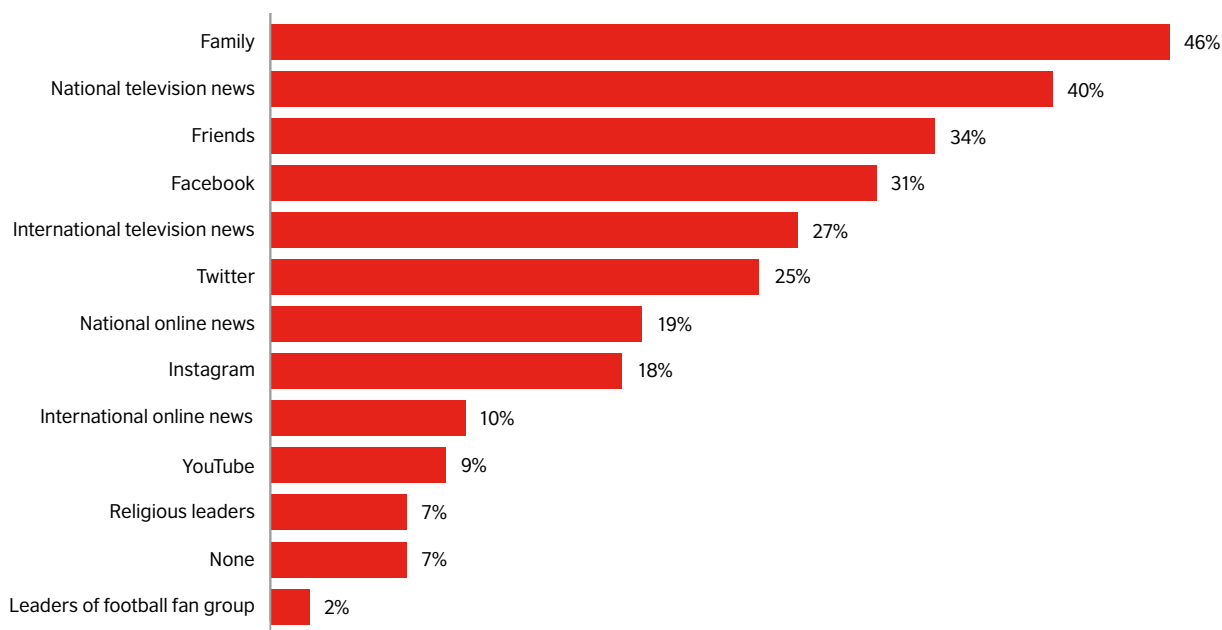
In terms of most trusted information sources, family again comes to the fore, with 46 per cent of young people listing family among the three most trusted information sources. It is followed by national television news, which can be interpreted as their commitment to yet another traditional, familiar structure in their lives. Young people show rather low trust levels towards online news and social media outlets like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube (Figure 37). Indeed, while they chose to follow current affairs online, they are often sceptical about the content.[94]

Trust for immediate communities is higher in certain categories: unemployed, NEET and married young people prioritise family in terms of trust more than their peers. On the other hand, single people who live alone, students, and high-income youth, while still prioritising family, have higher trust in international sources of information and people from other nations and religions, compared to their peers.

Young people from all walks of life have close friendships within their local communities and schools. They describe these as the closest groups they have, after their family. Examining wider connections, we see considerable diversity within young people's networks, including people from a variety of ethnic, religious and political identities. However, there are signs that some young people do not tend to have a close relationship with groups such as Syrian refugees, non-Muslims and members of the LGBT community (Figure 38).

Figure 38: Nature of relationship with different identities[95]

Identity	Cold/remote	No interaction	Warm/close
Friends from university/high school	3%	8%	89%
Turkish	3%	6%	91%
Relatives	5%	6%	89%
Friends from neighbourhood	6%	12%	82%
Religious	10%	13%	77%
Kurdish	11%	17%	72%
Secularist	11%	19%	70%
Alevi	13%	23%	64%
Turkish nationalist	16%	31%	53%
Football fan group member	16%	45%	39%
Armenian	19%	51%	30%
LGBT	23%	53%	24%
Atheist	24%	43%	33%
Syrian refugee	33%	50%	17%

■ Cold/remote   ■ No interaction   ■ Warm/close

Young people scored on a scale of 1 to 5 their willingness for people from different identities to befriend their children or siblings or to become governor of their city. The answers reveal that they were very open to this proposition by religious people, Kurdish people and Alevis. However, they were less keen on members of the LGBT community, Syrian refugees and non-Muslims to befriend their children or govern them. Young people would generally prefer somebody from a different identity to befriend their children or siblings rather than to govern their city. This could again be as a result of distrust and disenchantment with officials and those governing young people (Figure 39).

An overall assessment of the findings reveals that non-Muslims, Syrian refugees and members of the LGBT community are the groups most likely to cause concern among young people. This is highest among young people with low income and low education levels. However, it should be taken into consideration that youth are more liberal in terms of tolerance of different identities when compared to society as a whole. *World Values Survey Turkey Data* (wave 2010–14) shows that young people aged 18–30 are more willing to have people from different backgrounds as neighbours (Figure 40).

These findings suggest that there is some discrimination against Kurds, Alevis and Turkish nationalists. These are also the communities, along with the most discriminated identities (non-Muslims, Syrian refugees and members of the LGBT community), that young people have the least contact with, and our research shows many young people are willing to open up, to be more diverse and to reach out and learn about minority groups when they can.

Moreover, when speaking about 'identities' as social categories, young people draw on stereotypes and perceptions shaped by society, politics and the media. When we talked to young people about their day-to-day activities and networks the contradiction between these generalised views and the reality of their own social circles became apparent: young people speak about the same group of people differently when they think about them as identities rather than individuals.

'I have lots of Kurdish neighbours. They are very friendly. Beautiful people, very good people. Sometimes they are even more close to me than my relatives. We have good relationships. (…) There are Kurdish people around the neighbourhood. They do the worst things.'
(Female, age 24)

'There are those kids from the university. They call me bro! They have varied political tendencies. There are supporters of different political parties. We get together a lot. […] I feel distant to fundamentalist conservative people. I don't like them at all.'
(Male, age 26)

There are signs of tolerance in the narratives of young people when they are asked about their experiences with people from different religious, ethnic and political identities. Almost all of them say they have people around them who do not share their beliefs, political preferences or ethnic backgrounds.

Figure 39: Tolerance for different identities (1 to 5 scale where 1 is 'disagree strongly' and 5 is 'agree strongly')[96]
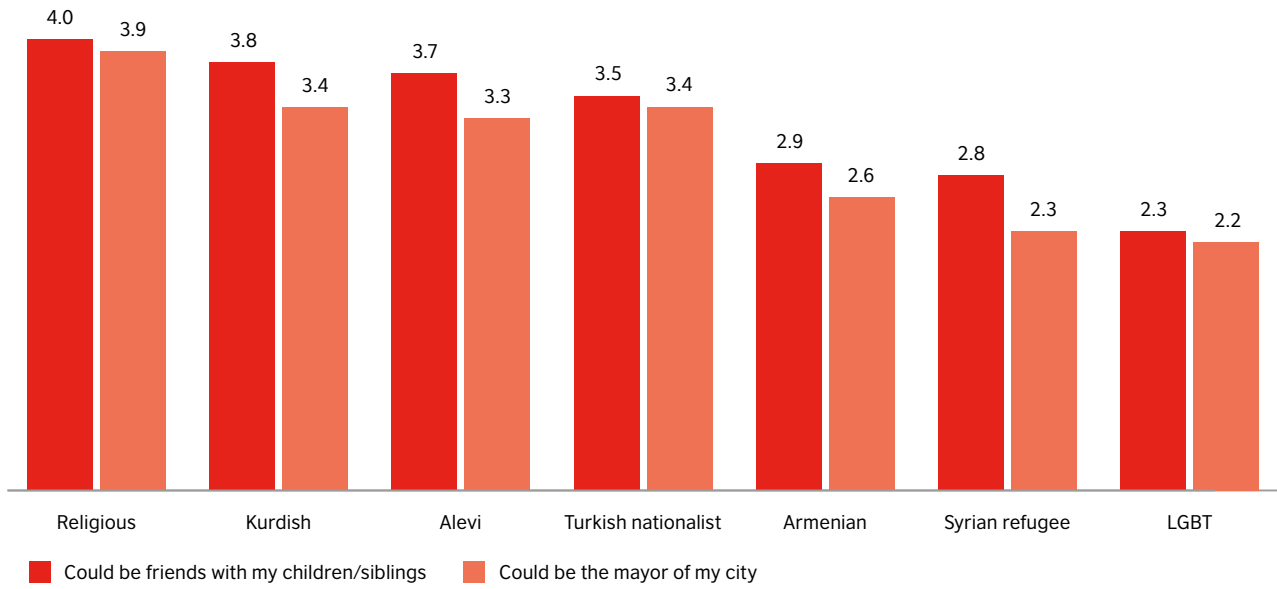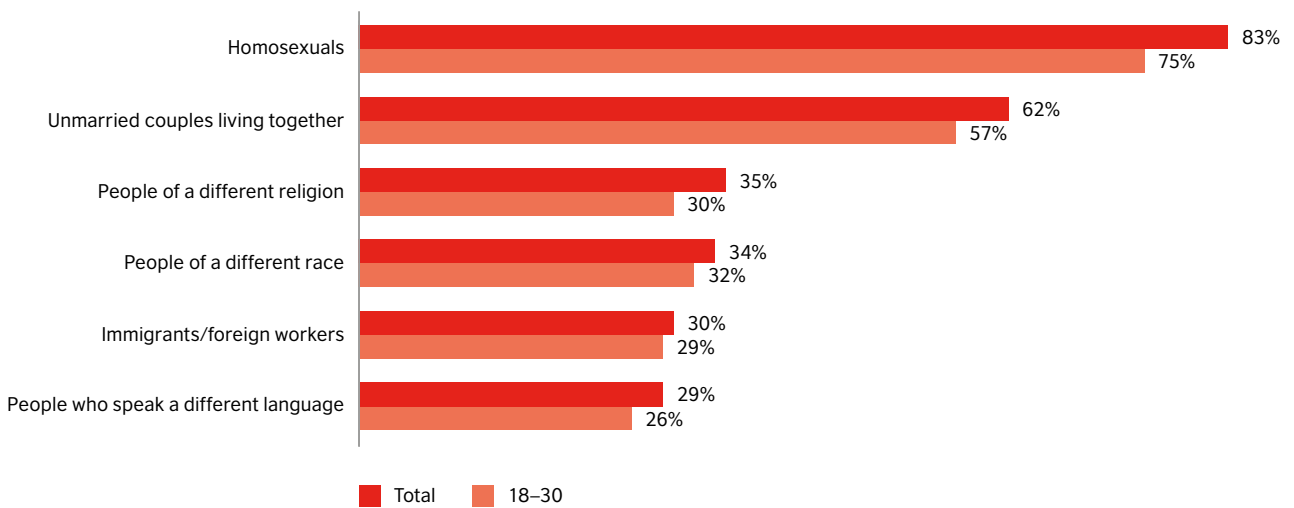

- Could be friends with my children/siblings
- Could be the mayor of my city

Figure 40: Tolerance towards people from different backgrounds – would not like to have as neighbours (World Values Survey)[97]

- Total
- 18–30

'People having different world views don't affect my friendship with them. However, whether they defend views that I don't like, if I'm close to them and get along well with them, they are close friends of mine.'

(Male, age 18)

'There are all kinds of people in my network, with different views, different beliefs. I have two or three Alevi acquaintances. There are conservative people. I have secularist acquaintances. There are lots of nationalists. […] I know some Syrians from the neighbourhood. And I had two atheist friends back in high school.'

(Male, age 19)

The common desire of young people is to be accepted and to have their ideas and lifestyle respected. They say that the key point of positive interaction is respect for each other's views. The most obvious indication of this is that young people avoid talking about politics, except with the people from their immediate surroundings who share their views:

'I don't consider people's religious beliefs or political views in my relationships. One of my closest friends is an atheist. But he is very respectful to me, he is very respectful to my mother, he is respectful to women with headscarves. I don't talk about these issues with people with whom I don't share the same political views. Because we may be hurtful to each other and it's very unnecessary.'

(Female, age 19)

The research indicates that young people are quite aware of the political differences among them but they consciously avoid talking about them, rather than being indifferent to them.

There are young people who have given up following current events, because it negatively affects them, but the majority closely follow the news, especially through social media. But they tend to only talk about them with their friends who share similar views.

'I rarely talk about politics. When we read news or something, we discuss it among friends, and ask ourselves what's going to happen to this country. But I only talk to those who share my point of view. I don't get into arguments with other people.'

(Male, age 26)

Not talking about politics allows young people to exist in society without the burden of an identity. Social media facilitates this by providing anonymity. A young woman with a physical disability establishes her closest friendships through social media; a young woman using a headscarf feels more comfortable presenting her fashion designs when she hides her identity:

'My friends from social media visited me the other day and motivated me a lot. I feel very close to them. Sometimes we argue when they don't answer my messages on social media, but we easily get over it.'

(Female, age 19)

'On Instagram, there is tension if my works are denigrated or if I am accused of doing something I didn't do. For example, when I create a veiling style, I get comments like "you cannot do such a thing, you are a woman with a headscarf, you shouldn't do that." So, I try not to share anything about myself, so I can only be there with my works. Then the comments aim at my works instead of me.'

(Female, age 21)

In general, young people avoid talking about difference. Instead, they focus on what they have in common, which helps them to establish and strengthen their friendships.

'My older brother is a solider and my friend's sister is in the mountains. We can sit and chat ignoring this fact. This is a very different position but I do respect him. And he respects me too. No tension occurs between us. I am aware that if I open up the subject, I hurt and upset him. If I do upset him, I myself become upset as well. So, none of us brings up these issues.'

(Female, age 22)

Some young people are more comfortable in environments which match their lifestyle and preferences. In order for them to leave their comfort zone and engage with people with different lifestyles, they want to make sure that other people's preferences are not imposed on them.

'I don't like to go out late at night. But I don't say that I wouldn't want to be friends with someone who has a night life. In fact, I do have a friend who goes out every night but she never forces me to go with her, never offers such a thing. People can do whatever they want as long as they don't oppress me.'

(Female, age 28)

Acceptance by society allows young people to focus on their individual aspirations, their hobbies and future plans. Consuming global popular culture products such as foreign television series and manga; considering theatre, music or fashion design as a career; and pursuing university education with a diverse student population including various social groups leads conservative young people for example to have contact and share common grounds

with various identities, which in turn softens prejudices and enables open dialogue. Even members of the LGBT community are included in rather conservative young people's networks to a certain degree. A conservative 21-year-old says that even though he does not necessarily agree with LGBT lifestyles, he has no problem getting along with them:

'I'm not sure, maybe I don't like them [LGBT] at all but when I'm with them, I am very comfortable. I don't know, I think it is my nature to blend in and get along well with anybody. So, I get along with them very well.'

(Male, age 21)

And a conservative young woman also tells us that she has begun to accept LGBT individuals as they are:

'I'm not disturbed to be around homosexuals. I used to criticise them, but now I only say that it's their decision, not mine.'

(Female, age 21)

These interviews suggest an emerging generation who protect their values and lifestyles while accepting and even embracing people who do not share their beliefs. However, it is worth mentioning that socialising with the opposite sex remains an area of conflict for conservative young women. Their relationships with men provoke a wide range of different reactions from their family and immediate communities. Attending a university in a different city where they live more anonymously alleviates this pressure on young women, without forcing them to confront their parents on this issue.

Less conservative narratives also reflect tolerance towards people from all different backgrounds.

'I don't categorise people. I never say, "He is a Kurd, I should stay away" or "she is a rightist or a conservative person, so I don't like her". I don't have such criteria for people. I can get along with conservative people. But I may not feel comfortable around biased people.

(Male, age 25)

'For example, there is a woman using a headscarf in our motor club. I did not have a chance to talk to her. I wonder about her, I would like to meet her and chat sometime.'

(Female, age 21)

As with other individual aspirations in daily activities such as hobbies, sports and interests, a 'motor club' may become a way to have contact with unknown identities. So as long as young people are relieved of the tensions and baggage of identities, they get along well with each other. However, we note that minorities are more likely to isolate themselves from society and retreat into their communities when they perceive their lifestyle is not accepted or when they feel threatened.

'I don't like any kind of fanaticism. [...] I do not like anyone who supports something without any argument.'

(Male, age 28)

While we noted above a softening of the attitudes among conservative youth, and there is evidence that the younger generation is more tolerant of the identities and orientations of their peers, we cannot say that intolerance does not exist. Most discriminatory language is directed at minorities, for example Armenians, atheists, members of the LGBT community and Syrian refugees. Young people often say that they don't have acquaintances associated with these identities, because they 'do not come across' them in their daily lives.

'I don't like them. They are strongly against Islam. I guess that's why I'm against them that much.'

(Female, age 19)

This attitude regarding 'the other-ness' is clearest when it comes to expressions about LGBT individuals – one respondent wondered how they would deal with them, and characterises this as stressful. Another notes the issue of social environment; this highlights the lack of common places to mingle, which can lead to fear or concern regarding other identities.

'I don't feel uncomfortable around anyone. But, I cannot imagine what happens when I meet homosexuals and I would be nervous thinking how they would see me and whether I can communicate with them or not. I have fears due to the attitude towards people who are identified with an identity.'

(Female, age 23)

'I never had homosexual friends. We did not come across because their social environment is different. I don't judge them but I don't know how I would react if we meet.'

(Female, age 23)

The narratives also suggest an ambivalence towards the presence of Syrian refugees in Turkey. They are not entirely welcomed, but their presence is met with a degree of compassion. Young people accept that Syrian refugees are in a very bad situation and that they need help and support. Being a Muslim is a common ground for conservative youth, which creates feelings of benevolence towards the refugees.

Some young people praise Turkey's role as a compassionate protector of nations in need. However others are increasingly resentful and irritated by the perception that Syrian refugees are provided with educational opportunities that they could not readily access, and by employers' preference for hiring Syrians who are prepared to accept the same work for lower wages.

'Refugees escaped from their countries and took refuge in our country. Of course, we should help them, we cannot think otherwise. [...] You cannot employ them when there is unemployment among your citizens. But I'm not against helping them.'

(Male, age 26)

'I don't say we shouldn't help refugees. But you gave these people the right to education. Universities and dormitories are for free. Besides, they can enter the schools without exams. Frankly, I think we don't have to take care of them.'

(Male, age 19)

Syrian refugees are also the group with which young people have the least contact. Their day-to-day interaction with Syrian refugees is limited to charity activities and giving money to beggars on the street. Such a relationship creates a hierarchy, and the fact that there is no other convenient channel of contact means that the approach to Syrian people remains troubled.

'If Syrian refugees would like to befriend me, they can. There is no obstacle in front of it. But they are only interested in selling tissue paper on the streets and usually I buy from them to help them. But you cannot develop a relationship merely by selling tissue paper. If one of them comes to me and says, 'let's have a cup of tea together', then of course I would not refuse him.'

(Male, age 25)

As with their political lives, youth in Turkey in general show flexibility in their own identities and related values. They are capable of managing multiple opinions and are not rigid. They are open to a variety of worldviews and are comfortable with people different from them, although again, as with politics, they work hard to avoid conflict. Environments where such discourse can be put to one side – sports, hobbies and other social activities – can bring young people from different backgrounds together and help them to meet, communicate and remove prejudices. However, groups such as the LGBT community and Syrian refugees continue to face discrimination due to deeply held prejudices. Nevertheless, it seems that the diversity of society, and the exposure – face to face and online – of people with a variety of identities mean youth in Turkey in our survey are more open to living with difference than their parents were.
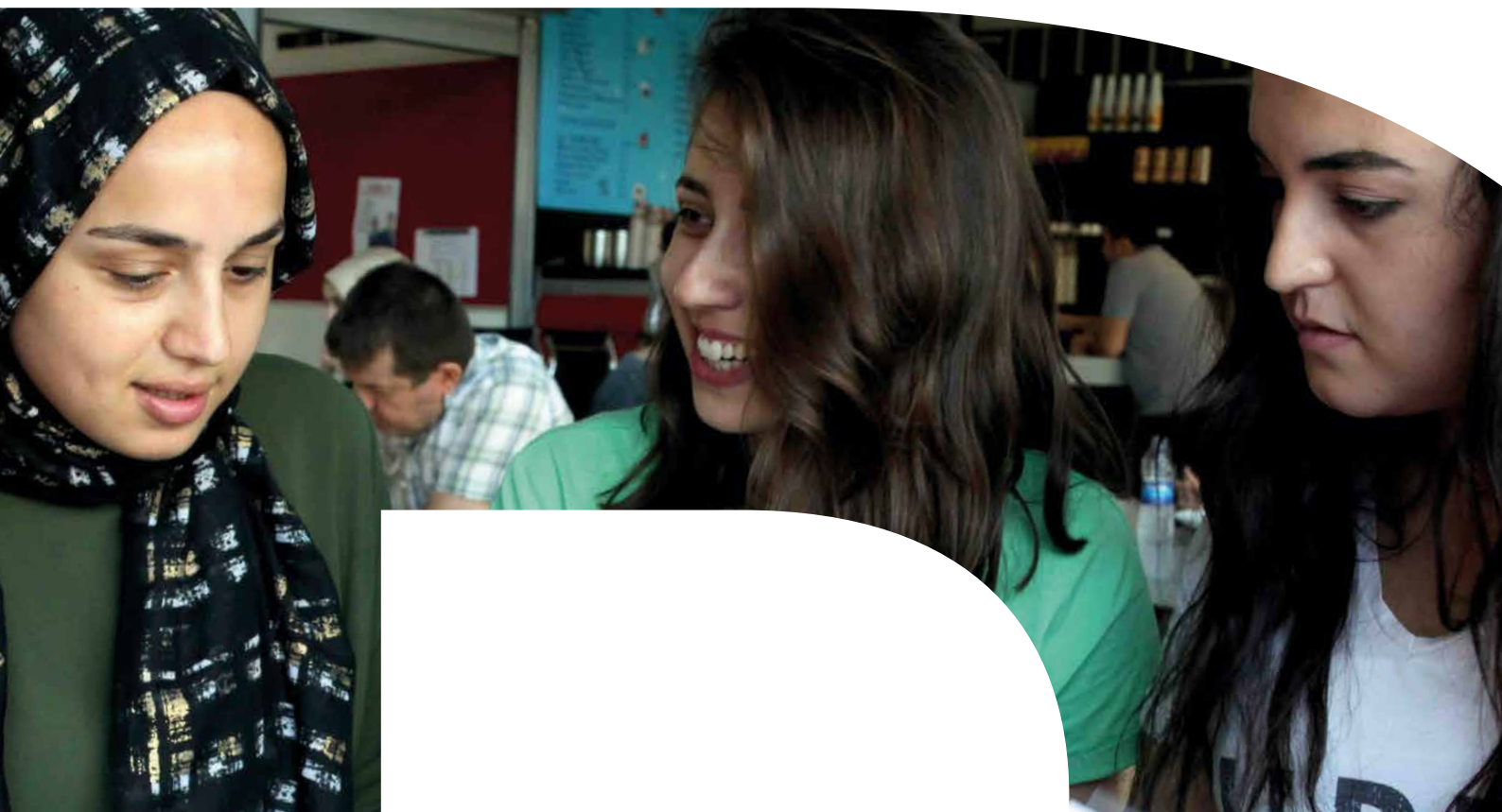
Young people in the survey showed levels of apathy towards politics, but this view is not directed at the concept itself. Politics is considered meaningful and beneficial as long as it is inclusive and conducted with decorum and respect for different viewpoints.

'I think it is called politics when you make an effort to make sense of life rather than supporting or becoming a member of this or that political party. This attitude indicates sensitivity and respect. In this sense, I am very interested in politics. But when it comes to a partisan mentality, I don't call myself a person who is interested in politics.'
(Male, age 25)

'We are young and we should improve ourselves but politics pulls you back, it doesn't improve you. Maybe some aristocrats or intellectuals who are aware of political matters, or those with a firm character should be involved in politics. Other than that, it's just useless.'
(Male, age 23)

In young people's discourses, 'doing politics' is constructed as a term to define negative behaviours.

'I'm not active in politics. We don't do much politics within the Ülkü Ocakları.[98] Instead, we prefer to talk about issues that are important for the future of our country.'
(Male, age 19)

'Well, what comes to my mind when you say "politics" is only lies. Here, we don't say "don't lie" to a person, we say "don't do politics" instead.'
(Male, age 26)

'When I think of politics, hatred comes to my mind. Voters of different political parties seem to hate each other. This hatred is excessive.'
(Female, age 21)

Young people feel unable to participate in politics, and therefore do not feel any meaningful sense of ownership of it. That also means they feel unsure about how they can positively influence the future of their country. As mentioned before[99] the average optimism score for the statement 'I will have more opportunities to influence the way things are done in my country', on a 1 to 10 scale, is 6.15. While it is not a low score in itself, it is lower than their other expectations for the future, such as living independently, expressing themselves, having their career of choice and having enough money to live comfortably.

'I would be interested in politics if my opinions or anything I say about how things were understood and acknowledged.'
(Male, age 25)

'If I believed in my heart that I can change something when I defend my ideas, maybe I would be more interested in politics. But now it seems so unnecessary to go after such a thing.'
(Female, age 21)

'I'm not interested at all in politics. What would happen if I get interested in? What changes? What positive impact might it have? I cannot find an answer to these questions. I don't think politics is worth investing time or effort.'
(Male, age 25)

Young people's attitudes towards politics intensify when political disruption affects their daily lives, preventing them from focusing on their individual aspirations. They rapidly become exhausted by the situation, viewing politics as an impediment. A young woman, at university, talks about the impact of political events during the time the fieldwork of this research was conducted on her personal daily life:

'Politics has become almost as much of a priority as my friendships. People can't go back to living their daily lives.'
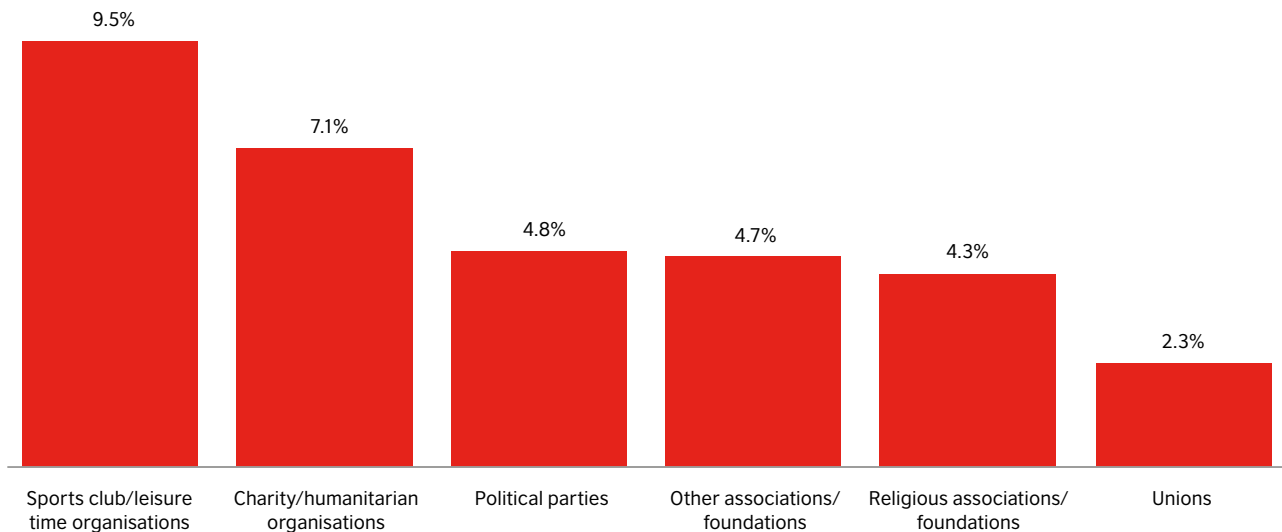(Female, age 22)

As a result, besides staying away from politics and not participating in political practices, young people avoid conflict by not talking about politics at all with people around them. Not talking about politics is regarded as polite behaviour in relationships and young people don't want politics to be a barrier in meeting new people.

'I don't like to talk about political issues because you cannot find a solution and settle the matter. Even though we are friends, if we have different opinions, heartbreaks are unavoidable, and that's why I never start such topics.'
(Female, age 23)

'I do not really care about politics. Sometimes my neighbours discuss politics but it always leads to quarrels so I don't participate in those conversations. One supports her own party, the other supports her own party. Because they are neighbours, they see each other every day, they cannot fight because of politics.'
(Female, age 24)

Figure 41: Membership of civil and political organisations [100]

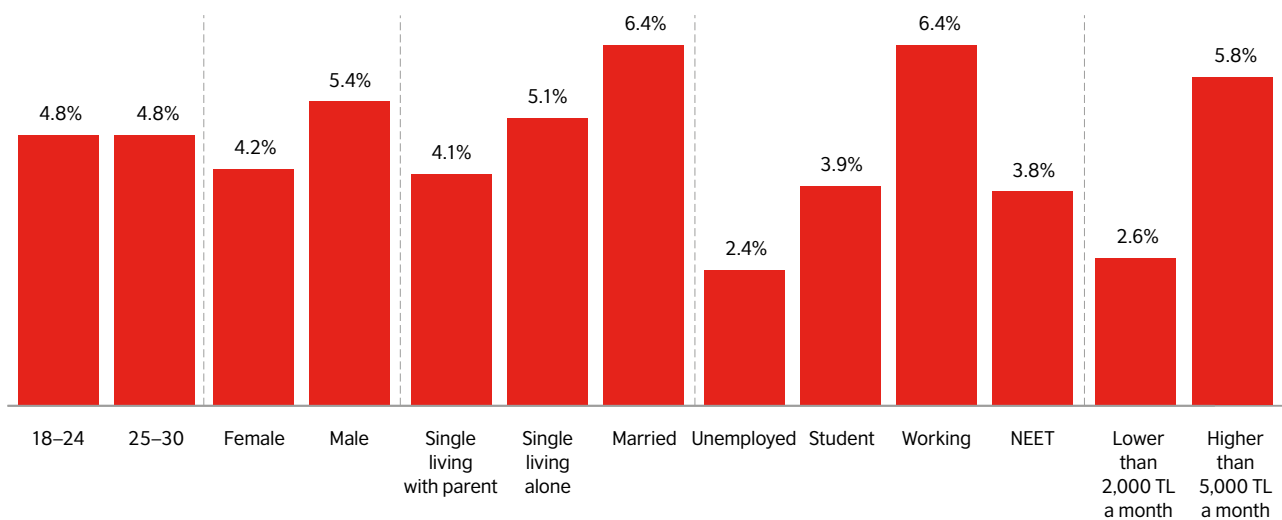|	
Sports club/leisure time organisations	9.5%
Charity/humanitarian organisations	7.1%
Political parties	4.8%
Other associations/foundations	4.7%
Religious associations/foundations	4.3%
Unions	2.3%

A conservative young woman defining herself as a patriot and a bohemian, explains her reasons for not talking about politics in her daily life:

'Because I like to communicate with different people. When you meet someone new and if these topics come up they may feel themselves isolated, they may feel like 'other'. I wouldn't like it if it happens to me.'

(Female, age 23)

A prevalent presupposition – and a criticism at the same time – regarding today's youth in Turkey argues that the 'post-'80 generation' is indifferent to politics. Participation of young people in the political and civil arena has been one of the most studied areas of youth literature and research has consistently presented findings that demonstrate low interest in politics among youth. According to those research projects, young people avoid participation in politics, political party or non-governmental organisation (NGO)

memberships are low, and voluntary activities are uncommon. Conducted by Ferhat Kentel, the *Türk Gençliği 98: Suskun Kitle Büyüteç Altında* study is the first comprehensive research that includes results regarding the political participation of youth and it shows politics is avoided by young people in Turkey. [101] The findings of our research reflect the same, with far more young people having membership of sports and leisure clubs than of political or civil institutions (Figure 41).

Figure 42: Political party membership by youth categories [102]

4.8%	4.8%	4.2%	5.4%	4.1%	5.1%	6.4%	2.4%	3.9%	6.4%	3.8%	2.6%	5.8%
18–24	25–30	Female	Male	Single living with parent	Single living alone	Married	Unemployed	Student	Working	NEET	Lower than 2,000 TL a month	Higher than 5,000 TL a month

When we analyse the political party membership rates of different youth categories, we observe that it is lower among low-income and unemployed young people. It is relatively higher among single people living alone and married young people compared to those who live with their parents. Young people with fewer socio-economic means tend to participate less and those who live away from the parental home tend to participate more in politics in its most conventional sense (political party membership) (Figure 42).

Lüküslü, in her efforts to understand the reasons behind the 'non-participation' of the 'post-'80 generation', concludes that this negligence is a cover for the underlying discontent and pain that cannot be expressed through conventional politics or outright resistance. [103] She argues that this behaviour is a way to comply with the rules of society without believing them, developing tactics to live in their own terms without totally facing and challenging the categories like family, education and politics.

The experience of those young people who chose to participate directly and become a member of a political party is a different story. While the rates of political party membership are relatively low among young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds, as Caymaz states, [104] those who actively work in youth branches of political parties are also from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and consider this as an investment in their futures. [105]

But a politically active young individual, who undertakes several tasks in a political party close to his worldview, describes his hesitations about politics as a future endeavour:

'If there are things that we can work for and change, then I would like to take charge in politics. I cannot run away from it. But I don't appreciate going after greedy ambitions and titles. When thinking about politics, if we see that our space to move is limited, if our opportunities are diminished, then this can make me move away from politics.'

(Male, age 26)

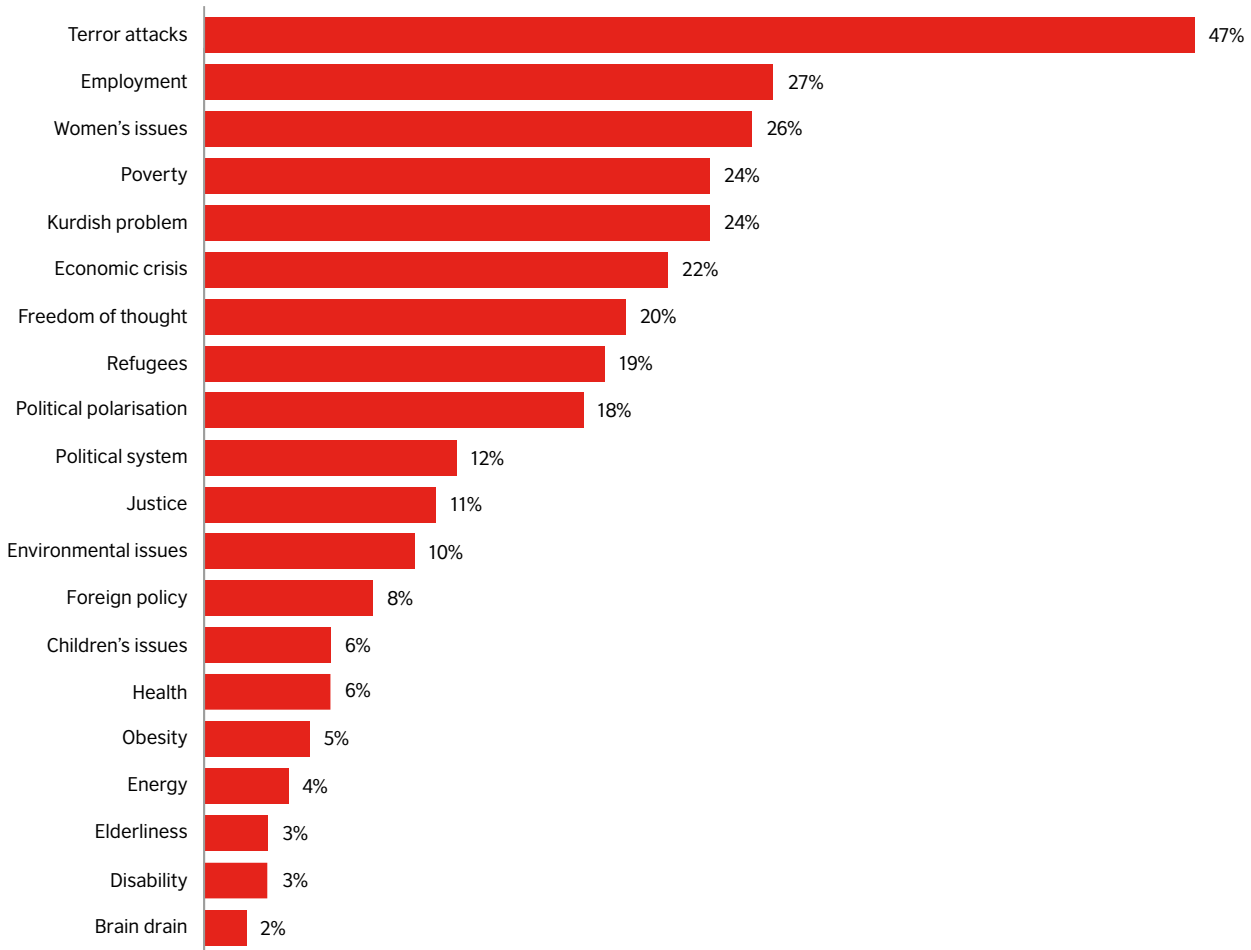**Figure 43:** Reactions against an unpleasant development in Turkey[106]

React		Do nothing	
I motivate people that can do something	6%	I do nothing because nothing works	20%
In some cases, I try to do something, even if it's a little	28%	I do nothing because I'm worried about getting into trouble	14%
Usually I try to do whatever I can	22%	I do nothing because I'm not interested	10%
Total	**56%**	**Total**	**44%**

Figure 44: Types of reactions against an unpleasant event in Turkey[107]

Write a post in social media	54%
Participate in legal demonstrations	35%
Sign petitions	33%
Email, tweet, etc. to relevant institutions	30%
Inform relevant public institutions through formal procedures	25%
Inform relevant NGOs	19%
Punish those who are responsible, if possible	8%
Participate in unauthorised protests	8%
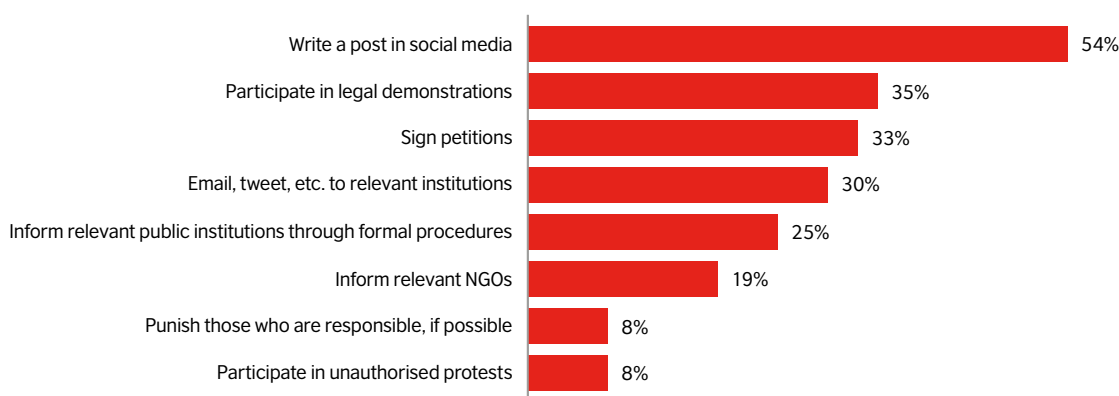
We also observe a similar situation among NGOs where opportunities for civil participation are limited for young people due to management structures. According to a study, only 7.7 per cent of the managers of voluntary organisations in Turkey are under the age of 30.[108] It is also argued that young people's participation or non-participation is not uniform. Besides membership and volunteering, or outright resistance, there are many situations that can be regarded as participation in politics. Indeed, as our research shows, more than half of young people say they react in some way to an event they find unpleasant or not in accordance with their values and principles or those of their fellow young people (Figure 43).

When we ask young people which steps they would take to react against an unpleasant event in Turkey, only 35 per cent say they would consider more direct action (Figure 44). But, though young people avoid politics in general on their social media interactions,[109] their way of reacting to a political development mostly involves social media: 54 per cent of young people say they would write a post on social media as a reaction to an unpleasant event. This reaction is top of the list of reactions for young people from all backgrounds, but we see that single people living alone and high-income youth tend to use other types of reactions more than other categories.

The use of social media as a tool for indirect participation conceals the real scope of young people's participatory behaviour. As Neyzi argues, young people can express themselves more through new media tools, challenge how they are represented in social discourses and diminish the hierarchy established between them and the adults.[110]

Figure 45: Most important issues in Turkey [111]

Issue	%
Terror attacks	47%
Employment	27%
Women's issues	26%
Poverty	24%
Kurdish problem	24%
Economic crisis	22%
Freedom of thought	20%
Refugees	19%
Political polarisation	18%
Political system	12%
Justice	11%
Environmental issues	10%
Foreign policy	8%
Children's issues	6%
Health	6%
Obesity	5%
Energy	4%
Elderliness	3%
Disability	3%
Brain drain	2%

Attitudes to political issues

When asked about the most important issues facing Turkey at the moment, 47 per cent cite terror attacks as the main concern (although this research took place following a concerted period of terrorist attacks in the country). The next most important issues are employment, women's issues, poverty and the Kurdish issue (Figure 45).

'Children's issues' are regarded as the one of the three most important issues in Turkey, mostly by young people from the NEET category. This is listed among the three most important issues in Turkey by 8.9 per cent of NEET young men and 11.9 per cent of NEET young women, reflecting the effect of dominant gender roles which mean that women are the primary caregivers.

Continuing the subject of gender roles, we see that 'women's issues' ranked third in overall concerns. The contribution of women respondents' answers to this proportion is high: 40 per cent of young women versus 13 per cent of young men mentioned women's issues among the most important three issues (Figure 46). We have noted that increased awareness in women's issues is partly due to increased media coverage of violence against women, which has a greater impact on women than men. This implies that the notion of gender equality is not yet fully recognised by men, who are not ready to give up their privileged position, both at home and at work. It is still significant that there is a consensus on the importance of women's issues among young people from low and high socio-economic statuses.

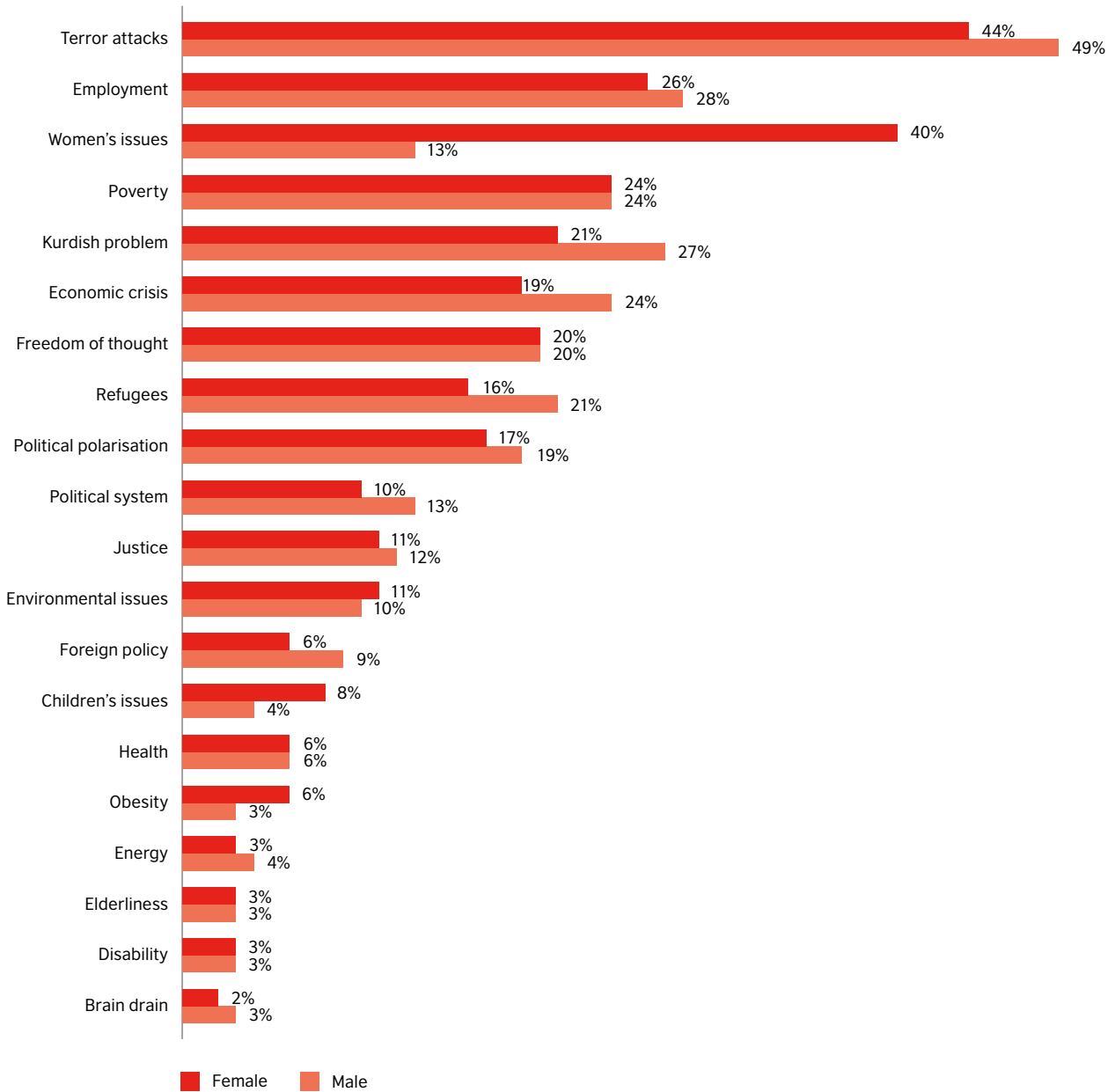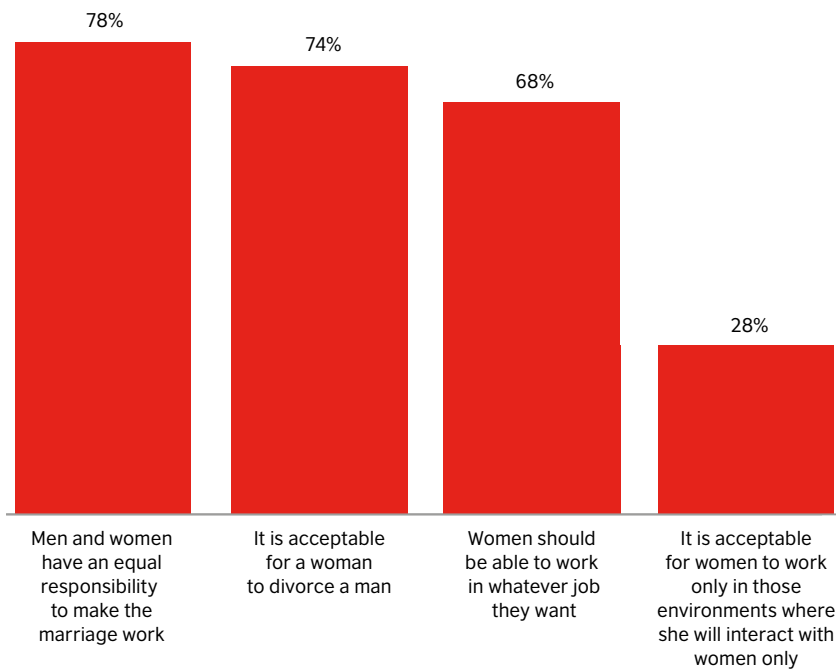**Figure 46:** Most important issues in Turkey by gender[112]

Issue	Female	Male
Terror attacks	44%	49%
Employment	26%	28%
Women's issues	40%	13%
Poverty	24%	24%
Kurdish problem	21%	27%
Economic crisis	19%	24%
Freedom of thought	20%	20%
Refugees	16%	21%
Political polarisation	17%	19%
Political system	10%	13%
Justice	11%	12%
Environmental issues	11%	10%
Foreign policy	6%	9%
Children's issues	8%	4%
Health	6%	6%
Obesity	6%	3%
Energy	3%	4%
Elderliness	3%	3%
Disability	3%	3%
Brain drain	2%	3%

■ Female ■ Male

Figure 47: Attitudes to women's issues[113]

Figure 47 shows that young people's attitudes to gender issues are more liberal compared to the rest of society: 76 per cent of young women and 60 per cent of young men agree with the statement that 'Women should be able to work in whatever job they want', while according to a recent study,[114] 57 per cent of men and 48 per cent of women support the idea that 'A woman shouldn't work if her husband doesn't allow her to do so' (Figure 47).

Young people's words reflect such an awareness. They agree that being a woman in Turkey is hard and they talk about femicide, domestic violence, discrimination and women's rights.

'There is no equality between men and women in our country. Of course, there must be equality, even positive discrimination for women. Women should take part in community life, there must be a women's quota in

every area. Even if she has a child, she should be able to take part in the workforce. The caregivers would look after children if necessary. There's nothing as dangerous as a woman sitting and waiting in a house.'

(Male, age 26)

Nevertheless, some conservative young people hold a different opinion with respect to gender equality.

'According to law, women and men are equal but in religious terms I think that women are not equal to men. A man should be one notch above, more knowledgeable, more conservative. He should be firmer on his legs. After all, father is to manage the family. Mother is to look after the children, to handle the domestic affairs. A man manages the affairs outside the house.'

(Female, age 19)

Figure 48: Involvement in a fight [115]
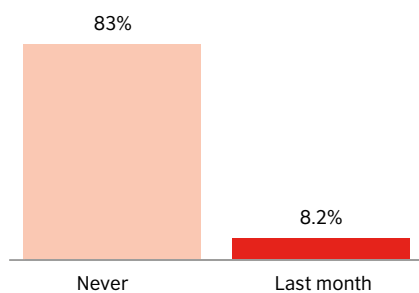
The issue of violence in the lives of young people is investigated as a part of our research. Findings show that 17 per cent of young people say they have been involved in a fight, with over eight per cent stating that they had been in a fight during the last month (10.8 per cent for men and 5.5 per cent for women) (Figure 48).

Stories of violence are prevalent among young men. Usually these are stories about the past, from when they were high school students, but there are also stories that took place in the recent past. These stories are generally not recounted as traumatic events. In fact, they are interesting memories – even something to be proud of. In daily lives, in school or while driving in the traffic, physical violence is perceived to be normal. This is true for almost all young men from different backgrounds. Young men also state that they are not worried about being subjected to violence in the future; not because it is not likely, but because they feel powerful enough to respond to such an attack. They even find it desirable and exciting. Yet, those young men who are a minority, in terms of religious belief or sexual orientation, do worry about being subjected to physical violence in the future due to social prejudices.

'I worry about being subjected to physical violence by my friends. And I worry because it is very hard to hurt or hit a friend if I have to give a response. Other than that, I don't have worries.'

(Male, age 23)

'Of course, there were fights with my new friends or old friends. I used physical violence myself before. In traffic for example. I don't worry if it happens again in the future; on the contrary, I would like it to happen so that I can expel my anger.'

(Male, age 26)

'I think that social oppression is increasing in this period. Therefore, I have a fear of being subjected to violence. Because I think that according to the value judgements of society, even being agnostic is a problem. Just knowing that I'm a non-believer would be enough for them to use violence on me.'

(Male, age 28)

While many young men seem to be confident of managing the violence they experience, the experience for young women is generally very different. Almost all of them have experienced direct violence or the threat of being subjected to violence and/or sexual harassment. Traumatic physical violence stories are rare, but experiences of violence in the public sphere are common. Over half (53 per cent) of young women say they are worried about facing violence in their lives (this is 31 per cent for young men). [116]

The women we spoke to used expressions such as 'attacks coming out of nowhere', 'sudden development of events' and 'possibility of being subjected to violence without any reason'. This language may suggest that women are moving away from the belief that they have somehow provoked or invited attacks, which had been a prevalent view in society.

'Anything can happen at any moment. If someone is determined to get you into trouble, he finds you even though you do nothing and even though you try to avoid it.'

(Female, age 19)

'Everyone can face with violence someday. I think I can too. You can never know what would happen to you and when.'
(Female, age 21)

Other studies also indicate that there is an increase of awareness on the issue of violence among women in general. According to a 2017 study, which is a repetition of a 2016 study, 78 per cent of women believe that domestic violence is enough reason for a divorce, which is an 11 point increase compared to 2015 results. [117] Our interviews with women show that this awareness is partly due to the recent media coverage of the issue of violence against women.

While this is the situation for young women in general, conservative young women are less worried about being subjected to violence in the future due to their fatalistic stance.

'Thank God, I'm not worried about being subjected to violence, I mean, we all have worries, but I'm not worried any harm may come from my environment. Of course, the world is troubled, the country is troubled, they are trying to start a war; we all have worries, I hope it will not happen. But if it starts, there is nothing to do, God Forbids!'
(Female, age 28)

In this context, violence tends to be perceived as an issue mostly by young women, but their increasing awareness and how they shift the responsibility away from the women is significant.

Summary

- Young people feel strongly about their identities, but there is diversity in terms of ethnic, religious and political identities within their networks. They like meeting with people from different backgrounds and they are more tolerant and open to living with differences, compared to the rest of the society. But they are aware that political differences may adversely affect their relationships so they make a conscious choice to avoid conflict in their lives through not talking about politics.

- Despite diversity and flexibility in daily lives, there is continued prejudice displayed toward some communities, including Syrian refugees, non-Muslims and members of the LGBT community.

- Like their peers around the world, young people are tired of politics. They express exhaustion with national and international political turmoil. As one consequence of this, participation in any civil or political organisation is low.

- Young people are more open-minded compared to the rest of the society. They are sensitive to women's issues and more tolerant to the demands for rights and freedoms coming from various sections of society.
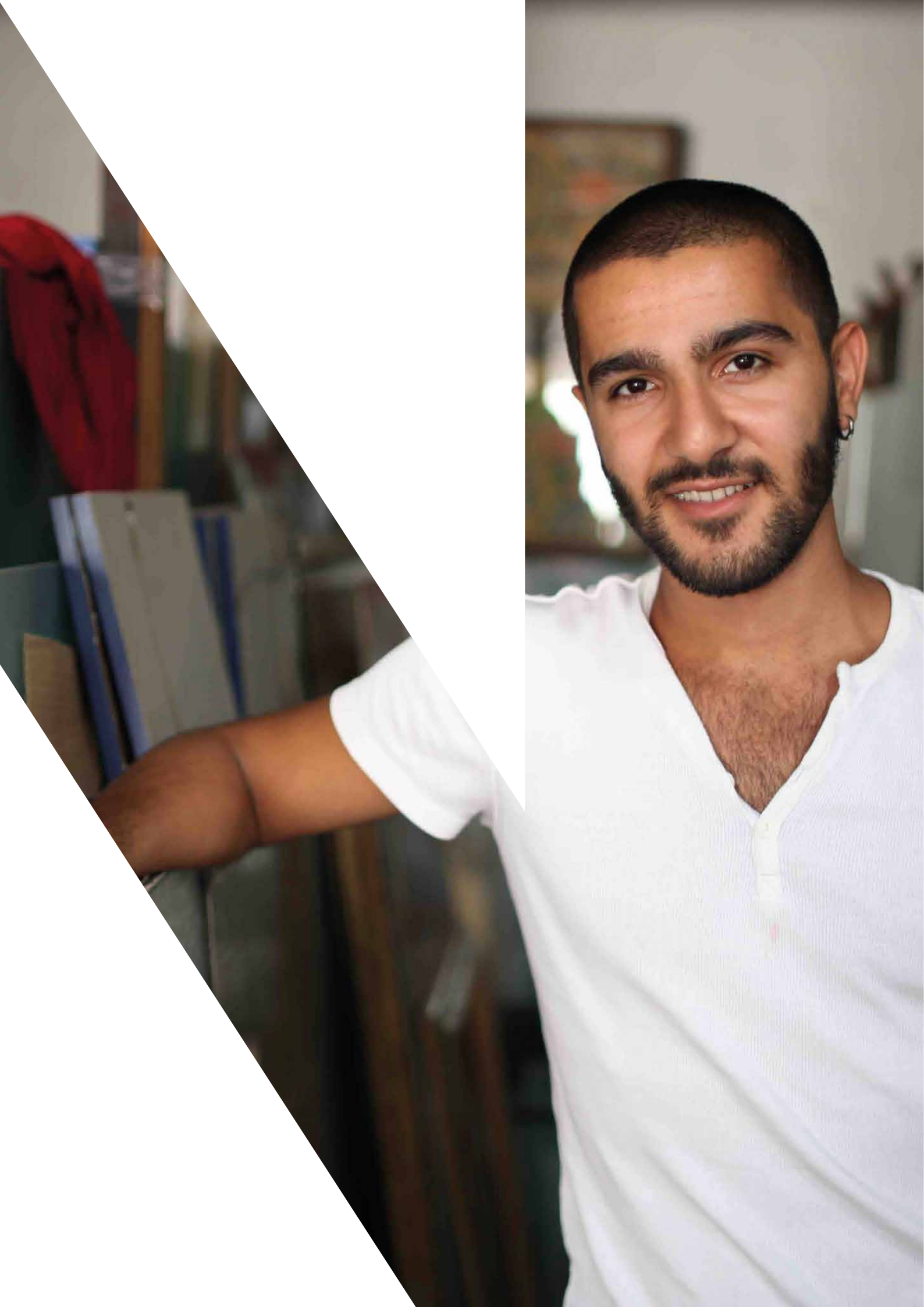
> CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research was conducted during a period of great political and social turbulence in Turkey. The research, which examined the attitudes of young people across the country, found a generation at a crossroads, on the one hand needing to conform and live up to the expectations of traditional values, culture and family pressures, while having a strong desire to forge their own futures and develop their sense of self and individualism.

For some, this was a fact of life and something to be navigated skilfully. For many of the young people in our survey, maintaining the status quo was not an option.

Next Generation Turkey, above all, revealed young people's strong ties and adherence to communitarian structures in their daily lives like family, religious, ethnic and cultural communities and their inherent values and beliefs, notwithstanding a sense of general dissatisfaction and passivity as a result of the considerable influence and reach of these communities.

Young people have clearly expressed a strong aspiration for living their lives independently and on their own terms: desire for working, living and pursuing education abroad come to the fore in young people's future plans and they highly value marriage, not only to have a secured future in a traditional structure, but also as a means to achieving independence, to live their own lives and reach some sense of freedom. Despite acknowledgement from young people that they cannot build their desired lives within traditional structures, there is a sense of reluctance and inertia to take any action which they see as being in vain, and choose instead to conform to the parameters of an ideal youth, defined by these structures. This innate sense of duty and obligation to traditional and fixed structures while on the one hand providing security and a sense of belonging and identity, necessitates the need to make compromises and could be seriously limiting young people's aspirations and development of self and independence, particularly if they are to compete and collaborate with their peers around the world.

Thus, there is an urgent need to empower youth by reviewing and developing new policy levers, tools and mechanisms to support them in realising their future plans and to provide them with opportunities to reach out and interact with their counterparts around the world.

There are some existing support mechanisms in place for youth provided by the government, private sector and civil society in Turkey.

There was a sense also that there could be better co-ordination and synergies not just at a national level, for example between the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and the Ministry of National Education, but also at the local level such as youth councils under municipalities. However, this area of youth policy cannot be the sole responsibility of national and local governments and it was acknowledged that there are diligent NGOs in the field working with youth along with other actors, but the advocacy aspect of their work is again limited and awareness and profile could be more prominent.

The second prominent feature of existing youth policy and support was a perception that there were significant barriers which marginalised some young people and that any support came with strings attached i.e. the stipulated criteria for eligibility to receive support was too rigid and identified strongly with the values and beliefs of the institution concerned, reducing inclusivity and diversity. As a result, the support fell some way short of empowering youth and out of reach from those who needed it the most.

This was also the case for NGOs that support young people: in determining the beneficiaries, young people's world views, beliefs or cultural backgrounds are taken into primary consideration, instead of their needs or potentials. Explicitly or implicitly, this practice is permeated into government and private sector support policies as well. To compound matters further there was a perception among those who have the chance to receive support to think of it as a favour, rather than recognition and reward provided based on their own merits and characteristics. Young people felt indebted to the supporting institutions and continue to feel obligated to repay their debt in the form of upholding and ongoing commitment to the values of those who support them. This suggests that adding to the lack of sufficient support, the structure of available support mechanisms that indebts youth rather than empowers is an important issue to be dealt with.

Without the presence of a strong, inclusive and effective support system, the extent to which young people feel empowered is determined by 'empowerment drivers' as set out below. Young people's gender, education level, strength of their ties with urban/rural life, family or community support they receive and the skills they have come to the fore as empowering drivers. Among all these, gender is the most prominent one. Being a woman is generally equated with being less empowered, and in some cases disempowered, compared to young men in the same situation. The second important factor is the level of education. The further young people progress through the education system, the chances of feeling empowered also increase. Family and community affiliation are also important drivers of empowerment, which has a determinative impact on other drivers as well. A family's socio-economic status, how urbanised they are and the presence of a community for support have an impact on young people's place in the workforce and their social status.

Added to this, having skills is an important supporting driver, particularly when others are lacking and to compensate. In today's world, 21st century skills like English language skills, self-expression and networking come to the fore, and this is clearly reflected in the future priorities of young people who participated in the research.

Figure 49: Youth empowerment matrix

		Privileged		Connected		Disconnected	
		Most empowered	Some empowered	Moderate empowered	Less empowered	Least empowered	Disempowered
Drivers	Gender	Male	Female	Male	Male	Female	Female
	Education	High school and university degree	University degree	High school	Lower than high school	High school or lower	High school or lower
	Urban versus rural	Urban past	Fully urbanised	Urbanised with limited rural connections	Recently urbanised with strong rural connections	Urban with some rural connections	Recently urbanised with strong rural connections
	Family	Middle and high SES	Well educated, high SES	Middle and low SES	Low SES	Lowest SES	Middle and low SES
	Community	Belonging to a community group. (Conservative/ religious or secular political community support)	Secular social network	Non-member of cultural or religious communities	Member of religious communities	No community support	Strong cultural and religious community relations
	Skills	Conformity with traditional-patriarchal and modern values at the same time. Familiar with urban business jargon	International experience, foreign language, high level of hard skills along with soft skills. Familiar with international business jargon	Vocational, technical skills. Valuable for industry. No soft skills. Familiar with technical vocational jargon	Unqualified for industry. Familiar with popular religious jargon	Unqualified service provider. (Care and domestic services). Familiar with housework jargon	Domestic life experience, care services, familiar with domestic work jargon
Outcome	Agenda	Improving career and keep being loyal to community	Career and family	Bread winner. Earning for family	Be employed by support of community. Earning for family	Contribution to family budget	Marriage, family
	Future plan	Entrepreneur/ politician/ bureaucrat/ manager	Entrepreneur/ manager (private sector)	Public servant/ high level company-industry worker	Public servant/ SME worker (taxi driver)	Marriage with a better conditioned man	Marriage

The drivers and characteristics allow us to attempt to cluster young people into groupings based on their level of empowerment. There is a clear emerging classification consisting of three groups, among which transitions are very difficult in terms of some empowering drivers and almost impossible in terms of others. These groups are privileged, connected and disconnected. The research suggests that those who are the most empowered are those in the privileged category.

This group is largely composed of young men from middle- and upper-class families with high school or university degrees and an affiliation with a cultural, religious or political community. It is noted that coming from a decent family or having ties with a supportive community is necessary but not enough for young women. Even when these conditions are met, we still see a good level of education, international know-how, familiarity with business jargon and a good level of hard and soft skills are required for young women to be empowered. This means many of the skills and features found not necessary for young men are required from young women. In addition, the responsibility of raising a family and household chores are still expected to be undertaken by women.

Young men, on the other hand, can find themselves a place among some empowered, if not among the most empowered by improving their skills and actively participating in the workforce, even though they are deprived of family or community support. The likelihood of young women without a university degree being located in the more empowered side of the table falls greatly. As a matter of fact, while around 70 per cent of female university graduates are employed, this figure drops to just 15 per cent of primary school graduates. [118]

In summary, having strong ties with family or community, being male, having a graduate/postgraduate education, 21st century skills and hard work, increase young people's level of empowerment. This could be perceived as the ingredients and the template for success and a key consideration for government, private and civil sectors to keep forefront in their minds when developing support mechanisms for young people which are most needed by them to become empowered individuals managing their own lives.

The results of the research have been shared with a group of young people from various universities and youth NGOs during a workshop. We discussed the results with them and asked for their youth policy recommendations. Below are some of the most emphasised recommendations young people come up with. Note that these reflect the views of young people themselves, not the research team or the British Council.

Improve quality and inclusive access to education (in all forms) and preparing young people for work and the wider world

- There was consensus among participants in the discussions that the most prevalent issue facing youth is the poor quality of education both in high schools and universities. Young participants emphasised lack of universal standards of academic life. They expect the government to take measures to assure the quality of education in universities, which would support them to acquire a level of qualification allowing collaboration and competition with their peers around the world, not just in Turkey. Universities need to be able to provide academic instruction based on agreed international standards, as well as providing young people with appropriate skills to prepare them for the workforce and ongoing professional and career development.

- The second emphasis was on non-formal education. According to the majority of participants, there should be more extra-curricular spaces for young people focusing on learning skills through experience, developing learning opportunities out of the hierarchical formal education. These should feel different from classroom methods to allow those who have not flourished in formal education to participate, as well as extending to those young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). They should be practical in nature and support life skills.

- It was emphasised that the actual support mechanisms provided by state and non-profits should be more inclusive and accessible. There was a perception among young people that there were significant barriers to entry in the form of religious, cultural and political credentials that had to be demonstrated to be eligible for support. This should be reconsidered and replaced with a more meritocratic set of criteria referring to capabilities and competences. One recommendation was to review course design and curriculum content to ensure inclusivity and diversity in all its forms, embracing the diversity of youth in Turkey. Teacher training in terms of gender and diversity sensitisation as well as curriculum content from a pluralistic and inclusive perspective would go a long way towards improving this issue.

- Last, there was an expectation from young people that the government should reassess the current examination system. A system that would encourage young people to use 21st century skills and knowledge, for example critical thinking and reasoning, English language, communication and self-expression, should be emphasised in addition to the academic pursuit. Young people were of the opinion that the current examination system places too much emphasis on learning by rote and regurgitation of facts as well as placing intense pressure on students (and parents) to succeed and anything else (not university degree at a prestigious institution) was tantamount to failure, which resulted in disillusionment and disempowerment.

Empowering young people to be independent and active participants in their society and taking greater ownership of their own futures

Participants in the review process agreed that the issue of independence is a major problem for young people. Many felt that the current young generation's issues around autonomy were more than simply a conflict between generations. The consensus was that young people need to develop as independent individuals and take responsibility and ownership of their own lives in a way that does not put them into conflict with families, community leaders and governments, but at the moment there is more emphasis on the community and country, rather than the individual's needs and skills and that a balance was needed.

Some of the policy ideas revealed through discussions under this title are as follows:

- Social support, coupled with free and quality formal education, should be a priority of the government in order to offer an alternative, or an addition to the support provided by families and other communities in young people's lives. This would allow them to develop the confidence and skills to become more independent. Empowering young people to make their own decisions would require policies aiming to support the social and economic rights of young people. This is particularly important for those groups or individuals for whom family support is not readily available. Financial support arrangements in other countries should be explored to give a wider range of options to finance education opportunities and to allow young people to take ownership of their education and make informed choices.

- Civil society has a unique vantage point and has a key role to play in maintaining regular dialogue and knowledge sharing with government and institutions to ensure that the spectrum of young people is represented at the heart of youth policymaking and the needs of individuals and collectives are balanced and equitable.

- At the same time, civil society should also work with policymakers and wider society to devise projects and campaigns that would challenge current stereotypes of youth and in instances the perception of 'independent youth' in society as being an issue rather than a quality to be nurtured and encouraged, particularly if Turkey is to compete and collaborate on the world stage. Projects should also be inclusive and target young people, parents and the community at large within which they live.

- Civil society and local policymakers and legislatures should also collaborate and devise projects supporting localised participation in active citizenship, for example how to raise a complaint, engage with city planners or even open spaces for community participation and engagement in local decision making. This would develop young people's experience of participation away from the tensions associated with larger-scale or national politics, all the while strengthening their skills and attributes to enable them to participate and be engaged citizens rather than observers.

Supporting an inclusive society with tolerance and respect for all young people

One of the issues discussed at length was around discrimination and mistrust towards some identities and the strong influence of patriarchal, communitarian and authoritarian values shaping these perceptions and value judgements. According to the views of many participants, the majority of citizens hold deep resentment towards the LGBT community, non-Muslims and Syrian refugees. They believe that this sentiment has an impact on families and communities, and youth are influenced by these approaches and perpetuate them. Young people believe this is an issue that cannot be tackled by governments alone. Civil society, academia, opinion formers, media and the private sector as well as policymakers should play an active role in embodying the spirit as well as the letter of equal citizenship. Discussants emphasised that unless pluralism is accepted by the majority of youth, and such values practised in their daily lives, there will be continued discrimination and resentment against certain identities, and the very silence of young people will be complicit in allowing this to go unchecked. Policy proposals to address this are:

- The government and local authorities/municipalities should ensure there are suitable spaces and opportunities for young people to socialise, particularly as this would allow them to engage with young people outside their traditional domain, and from diverse backgrounds. This could take the form of youth and sports clubs which would appeal to a large cross-section of society and allow young people to discuss and reach a better understanding through play, recreation and socialisation.

- Government and civil society should explore campaigns to increase recognition and acceptance of people from different groups, such as LGBT communities, Syrian refugees and non-Muslims, and should take proactive steps to fight against hate speech and crimes against these groups. Policies focusing on enhancing equal citizenship and participation rights should be devised to eliminate discriminatory attitudes towards these groups. Policymakers should also be aware of how social media can support such a campaign.

Civil society, the government and the private sector should adopt gender-sensitive policies particularly in relation to young people. This should start at a young age (in basic and primary education); gender stereotypes (for boys and girls) should be challenged and gender considerations should be at the heart of policymaking. In all the recommendations e.g. policies, projects and campaigns, each should be devised taking into consideration the needs of young women and girls – but not at the detriment of boys and men who should also be aware and encouraged to be active participants and partners in any future solution.

> RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The Next Generation Turkey research was designed to examine aspects of youth in Turkey in an inclusive and comprehensive way.

The research used a mixed methodology consisting of quantitative and qualitative tools, along with innovative research models (fuzzy cognitive mapping and netnography).

With this framework in mind, a three-phase methodology was planned. Each phase of the research design was devised to build on the findings of the previous phase and was used to uncover areas for deeper analysis (Figure 50).

Figure 50: Next Generation Turkey research phases

Phases	Stages	Purpose	Data collection tools
Exploratory study	Literature review	• to create a macro picture of youth in Turkey, based on statistical data • to review and summarise prominent works in the field of youth studies • to identify areas that needed further investigation.	Literature screening, 150+ sources
	Policy audit	• to review youth policies and services of public, private and civil institutions • to identify the areas that need to be developed.	Policy screening
	Netnography	• to reveal the online discourses shaped by and shaping youth in Turkey.	Internet and social media screening
	In-depth interviews	• to determine basic issues regarding young people's experiences of being young in Turkey.	15 in-depth interviews, ages 18–30
Qualitative phase	Turkey representative research	• to collect up-to-date data on topics most studied in the literature • to describe various youth clusters and similarities and differentiations among them.	2,524 surveys in 12 cities
	Deep-dive interviews	• qualitative investigation of core issues regarding youth.	93 in-depth interview assisted fuzzy cognitive mappings

Exploratory study

The exploratory study aimed to deepen knowledge and understanding of youth in Turkey and reveal a macro picture to help create a background upon which other phases of the research could be established. This comprised reviewing existing literature and youth policies of the public, civil and private sectors, as well as screening internet and social media for youth discourses and interviewing young people with different characteristics. This phase was also designed to highlight areas requiring further investigation. This phase of the research included four different data collecting tools:

Literature review – A total of 150+ sources, including statistical databases from national and international institutions (TurkStat, OECD, ILO etc.), quantitative and qualitative youth research in the form of online reports, books, articles in peer-reviewed journals and other academic studies were reviewed and prominent findings were collected.

Policy audit – Youth policies of public institutions and civil society organisations, along with private sector initiatives, were examined through reviewing first- and second-hand sources, such as constitutional, legislative and regulative documents, national and international reports and policy documents. Discussions among scholars and opinion leaders in the field regarding the current situation were also reviewed.

Netnography – Social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), online discussion boards, e-dictionaries, online news, news commentaries and columns were searched with keywords. Relevant content was collected for a meaningful time period and analysed.

In-depth interviews – 15 in-depth interviews were conducted with young people from different backgrounds. A semi-structured question form was used in the interviews and the interviews took 60 minutes on average. In selection of the interviewees, it was ensured that the sample consisted of subjects as diverse as possible so that young people with various ethnic, cultural, political and religious identities and socio-economic, educational and employment backgrounds were represented.

Quantitative phase

Quantitative research was designed to serve two main purposes. First, it aimed to collect up-to-date data on topics most widely studied in the literature such as education, employment, internet and social media use, and civil and political participation of youth. Second, it aimed to identify differences and similarities between youth categories based on variables such as age group, gender, occupational status and marital status to learn more about shared and differing characteristics of youth in Turkey.

Quantitative research involved a Turkey representative survey study conducted in 12 cities with 2,524 respondents. The sample universe is 16,497,246 (the total population of men and women aged between 18 and 30 living in rural and urban areas). To represent this population with a ±2 per cent margin of error and 95 per cent confidence level, the minimum sample size is 2,401. It is estimated that this sample size represents sub-categories at certain levels. For example, this sample size represents the gender and age sub-categories within a margin of error of 2.7 per cent and the education level and gender dual subdivisions (e.g. high school graduate women) with a minimum margin of error of five per cent. Also, this sample size has a minimum error margin of about ten per cent at the level of regional representation.

The sample of the research involved randomly selected subjects within the quotas determined to provide the highest level of representation of Turkey's youth population. The survey was conducted in 12 cities selected from the 12 regions from the first level of the Turkish Statistics Unit Classification (NUTS1) and the number of interviews to be made in each city was distributed according to the population ratio of its region.

The quotas used in the selection of the sample are listed below:

- Turkey Statistics Unit Classification Level 1 (NUTS1)
- Age (18–24, 25–30)
- Sex
- Education level

The 12 cities of the research were: Adana, Ankara, Bursa, Çanakkale, Diyarbakır, Erzurum, İstanbul, İzmir, Kayseri, Samsun, Trabzon and Van.

A comprehensively structured survey form was designed. In the designing of the survey form, socio-demographic, cultural and values-based peculiarities of Turkey were taken into consideration. The question set included questions from the Next Generation research series and previous Turkey representative research conducted by other institutions in order to make comparisons. Other questions were designed by the research team in accordance with the research problem. Interviews were conducted face-to-face using tablet computers (CAPI) and took approximately 45 minutes.

The data obtained from the survey study was coded and turned into a database. The SPSS (Statistical Program for Social Science), Microsoft Excel and primary software programmes for the analysis and manipulation of the data were used.

The measures below were taken to ensure data quality
and confidentiality.

- Surveys were conducted with tablet computers and data from each survey
  was immediately transmitted to the encrypted database over the internet.
  Data loss was minimalised.
- Field supervisors in each city joined the field team to observe possible
  mistakes, help with any troubleshooting, and make any necessary
  adjustment with the interviewers.
- Neither the interviewers, nor any third parties had access to surveys
  conducted on the tablet computers or the online database. The database
  was analysed by the research team and the personal information of
  participants was not and will not be shared with any people, institution or
  organisation.
- Periodical logic checks of collected data were made during the fieldwork
  and additional surveys were conducted to replace erroneous surveys in the
  same geographical area and in a randomised fashion.

Age group, gender, occupational
status, marital status, and household
income variables were used to make
comparative analysis among
youth categories.

The gender breakdown of the sample
was 48 per cent women and 52 per cent
men. The age distribution was 57 per
cent for the 18–24 age group and 43
per cent for the 25–30 age group.
Distribution among other variables can
be seen in the figures below:
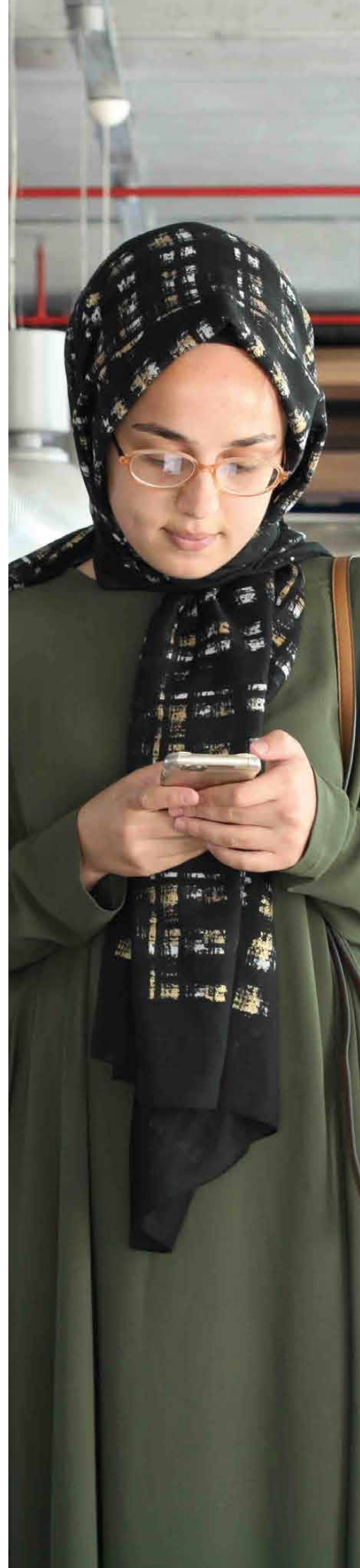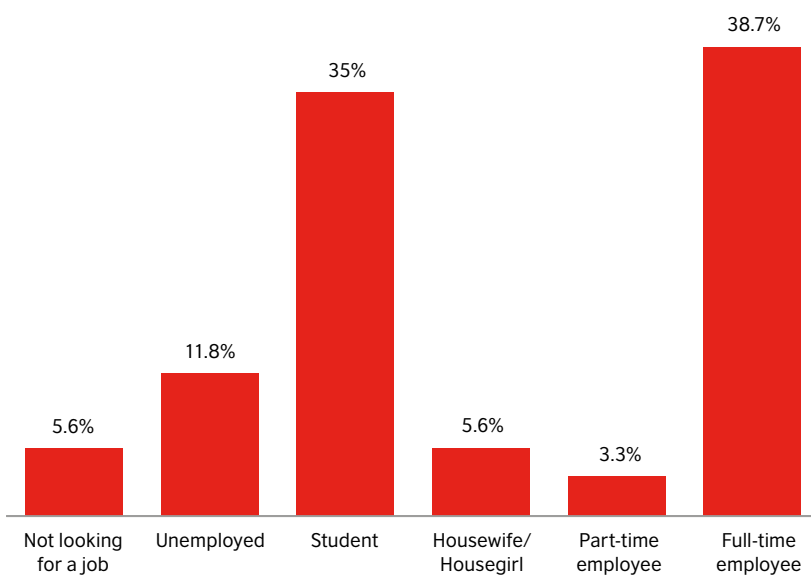
Figure 51: Sampling distribution: occupational status

Not looking for a job	Unemployed	Student	Housewife/ Housegirl	Part-time employee	Full-time employee
5.6%	11.8%	35%	5.6%	3.3%	38.7%

Figure 52: Sampling distribution: marital status
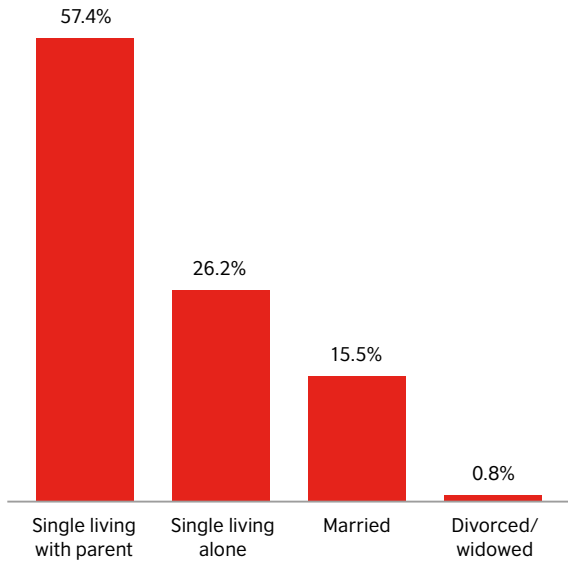
Figure 53: Sampling distribution: household income

Lower than 2,000 TL a month
2,000–2,999 TL a month
3,000–4,999 TL a month
Higher than 5,000 TL a month
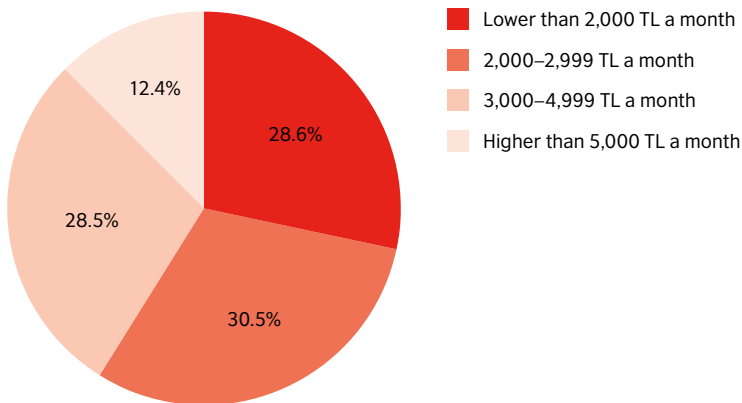
Qualitative research

The objective of the qualitative phase was to expand descriptive analysis of youth in Turkey through in-depth investigations. In this stage, a total of 93 in-depth interview assisted fuzzy cognitive mapping (FCM) studies were conducted. A semi-structured interview guide and FCM sheets were used in interviews. Sampling was based on socio-demographic variables like gender, age, religion/belief, sexual orientation, educational status, occupational status and disability/chronic illness status. To ensure a proportionate distribution, a short screening question form was completed before the interviews.
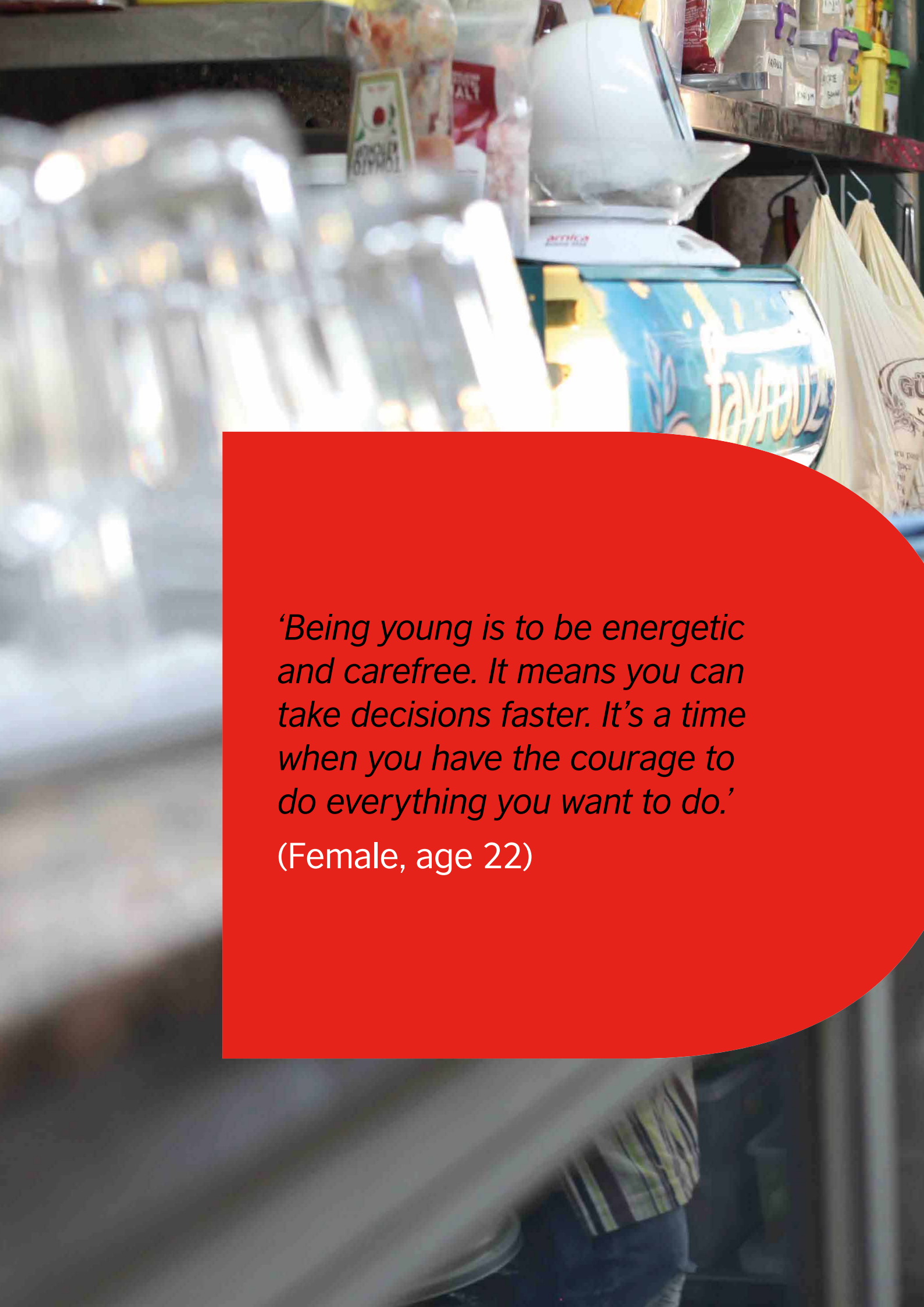
For the cognitive mapping study, a central concept was presented to young people: 'Setting up/ensuring their future'. Then we asked them to think about the barriers/negative effects or sources of support/positive effects regarding how they want to set up/ensuring my future and list whatever came to their minds. Cognitive maps were then created by young people themselves by placing the concepts of the list around the central concept, identifying the relationships with arrows and scoring the relationship between the concepts from -3 to +3 which also showed the nature of the effect as positive or negative. The concepts were then transformed into categorical concepts and the maps were processed to achieve an aggregated map, representing the perception of youth regarding their future plans.

Figure 54: Fuzzy cognitive mapping summary [119]

Density	17.42%
Total number respondents	93
Total number factors	60
Total number connections	627
Number transmitter	3
Number receiver	0
Number ordinary	56
Number no connection	1
Number self loops	22
Number regular connections	605

The figure above is an overall evaluation of the aggregated map of 93 participants. It tells us that 60 categorical concepts were placed in young people's maps and 627 relations were established between these concepts (Figure 54).

The interviews took approximately 90 minutes. Voice recordings were made if participants gave their consent and notes were taken in cases where there was no consent. Voice recordings were then transcribed, notes were digitised and analysed.

'Being young is to be energetic and carefree. It means you can take decisions faster. It's a time when you have the courage to do everything you want to do.'

(Female, age 22)

> # APPENDIX 1 –
> # COGNITIVE MAPPING

Cognitive mapping study gives us a sense of what young people see as barriers or supporting factors in terms of their future plans. The aggregated map of 60 categorical concepts emerging in the individual cognitive maps of young people can be seen on the following page.

Figure 55: Aggregated FCM of sources of support and barriers affecting future plans [120]
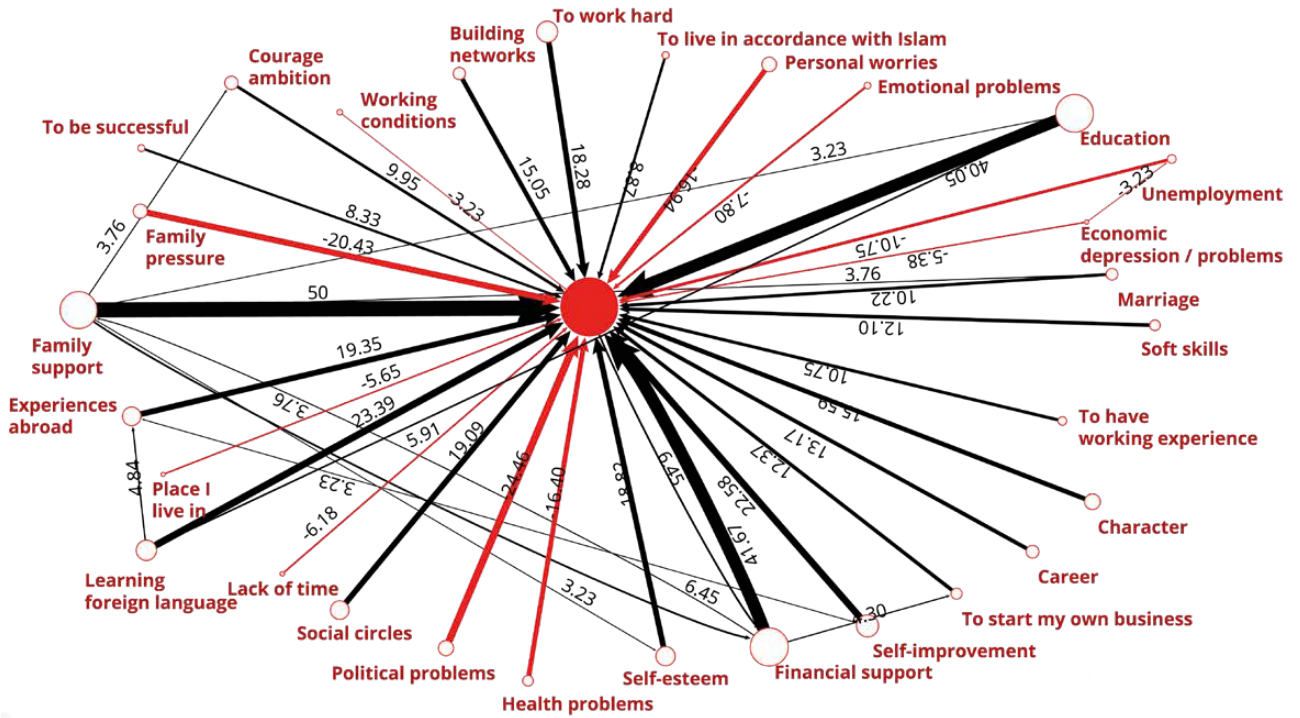
An evaluation of the aggregated map shows us both the number and the strength of the concepts that have a negative relationship with the central concept (i.e. affecting young people's future plans negatively – red arrows) are lower than those positive concepts that are perceived to support future plans (black arrows). The strongest concepts in the map are family support, financial support and education. These three concepts can be considered as the support mechanisms that are indispensable for young people's future plans. Learning a foreign language, self-improvement and experiences abroad are also outstanding positive factors in the map, closely followed by social circles (Figure 55).

According to the map, the factors that affect young people's future plans in the negative direction do not come to the fore. On the other hand, among the negative factors, politically related issues are the strongest ones. This also supports the finding that the political agenda puts a lot of pressure on the daily lives of young people. Among the negative effects, political issues are followed by family pressure. In other words, while family support is the strongest positive influence for young people in establishing their future, family pressure is regarded as the second strongest negative impact.

One of the most striking relationships with the central concept is the strong ties between financial support and family. This means that young people see the family as a source of financial support. The concepts of 'to have savings', 'to start my own business' and 'to have goods/properties' have rather poor connections with the concept of financial support. This shows that young people need strong financial support but they are not inclined to think about sources other than what the family provides. Relations between family support and courage/ambition and self-esteem also show the importance of moral support from the family for young people. In addition, when we observe the correlations in the map, we understand that the foreign experience is related to learning foreign languages and self-improvement, and that unemployment is perceived to be related with the economic crisis.

The table on the following page shows us the factors that young people from different categories see as barriers or sources of support in terms of setting up/ensuring their futures.

The distribution of the concepts according to age groups indicate that family support and education are more important for the 18–24 age group, and young people in the 25–30 age group seem to need more financial support. Another highlight of the table is that the family pressure is seen by young people in the 25–30 age group as a problem at the same level as the young people in the 18–24 age group. Family support, on the other hand, is slightly lower for the 25–30 age group then the 18–24 age group. This shows that as young people grow up, they can weaken the support ties with the family, but the level of family pressure stays the same (Figure 56).

Distribution of perceived barriers and sources supports by gender show that after family support, young men prioritise financial support, while young women prioritise education. While the concepts of young men concentrate on the first three strongest factors, young women include other concepts such as learning foreign languages, self-improvement and experiences abroad. This suggests that young women have varied investments when it comes to considering their future plans, although more young men introduce the positive concept of entrepreneurship and thus directing their own future.

The most important difference between young women and men is around the concept of unemployment. Young women bring this concept to their maps five times more often than men. One conclusion is that unemployment is more of an obstacle for young women, who need to be employed in order to reach some freedoms that are regarded as given for young men.

Unsurprisingly, those in the NEET category see life differently from their peers. Negative factors affecting future plans, except for political issues, are highlighted more by young people from this category and family pressure ranks first among these factors. Perhaps inevitably, concepts such as character, self-esteem, emotional problems and personal worries are stronger for NEET young people.

Finally, the distribution of positive/negative factors among young people from categories 'single living alone', 'single living with parents' and 'married' shows that married young people are highly differentiated from their single peers. While family support is more strongly regarded as a factor that affect future plans by married young people, single people living alone are less inclined to see family support as a factor affecting future plans; on the flipside, family pressure is also low for them.

Figure 56: Sources of support and barriers affecting future plans by youth categories[121]

	Total n: 93	18–24	25–30	Female	Male	Student	Working	NEET	Single Living with Parents	Single Living Alone	Married
Family support	50.0	59.4	44.1	51.0	48.8	54.5	57.6	26.9	55.4	44.1	47.2
Financial support	41.7	42.0	48.5	39.7	44.0	38.1	53.0	17.3	39.7	44.1	41.7
Education	40.1	50.5	30.9	43.1	36.3	42.0	39.4	28.8	40.2	41.4	33.3
Learning foreign language	23.4	29.7	17.6	29.4	16.1	30.7	25.0	0.0	29.3	21.7	0.0
Self-improvement	22.6	26.4	20.6	24.5	20.2	30.7	15.2	11.5	25.5	27.0	-11.1
Experiences abroad	19.4	21.7	19.1	29.9	6.5	21.6	19.7	15.4	19.6	23.7	0.0
Social circles	19.1	19.3	22.1	18.6	19.6	19.9	24.2	1.9	17.9	19.7	22.2
Self-esteem	18.8	24.1	14.0	24.0	12.5	20.5	15.9	25.0	17.9	24.3	0.0

	Total n: 93	18–24	25–30	Female	Male	Student	Working	NEET	Single Living with Parents	Single Living Alone	Married
To work hard	18.3	24.1	12.5	19.1	17.3	18.8	21.2	5.8	14.1	22.4	22.2
Character	15.6	20.8	10.3	18.6	11.9	16.5	13.6	21.2	14.7	20.4	0.0
Building networks	15.1	16.0	16.2	16.7	13.1	18.8	15.9	3.8	17.4	13.2	11.1
Career	13.2	17.5	8.8	14.2	11.9	12.5	15.2	13.5	15.8	13.2	0.0
To start my own business	12.4	13.2	13.2	6.4	19.6	2.8	22.7	11.5	10.9	12.5	19.4
Soft skills	12.1	13.7	11.8	12.7	11.3	20.5	6.1	1.9	6.0	19.7	11.1
To have working experience	10.8	9.9	14.0	12.3	8.9	9.1	13.6	11.5	15.2	5.3	11.1
Marriage	10.2	11.8	9.6	8.3	12.5	6.3	18.9	3.8	8.2	9.9	22.2
Courage/ambition	9.9	11.8	8.8	7.8	12.5	12.5	11.4	0.0	9.8	9.2	13.9
To live in accordance with Islam	8.9	14.2	2.2	12.3	4.8	11.4	6.1	1.9	4.9	15.8	0.0
To be successful	8.3	10.8	5.9	9.3	7.1	9.1	6.1	13.5	8.2	10.5	0.0
Problems of the education system	-3.0	-3.3	-2.9	-1.0	-5.4	-6.3	0.0	0.0	-2.2	-4.6	0.0
Working conditions	-3.2	-4.2	-2.2	-3.9	-2.4	-9.7	9.1	-7.7	2.2	-10.5	0.0
Economic depression/problems	-5.4	-5.7	-5.9	-2.0	-9.5	-5.7	-4.5	0.0	2.2	-12.5	-13.9
Place I live in	-5.6	-8.0	-2.9	-6.9	-4.2	-10.2	-2.3	0.0	-11.4	0.0	0.0
Lack of time	-6.2	-7.1	-5.9	-5.4	-7.1	-5.1	-6.8	-9.6	-9.2	-1.3	-11.1
Emotional problems	-7.8	-12.7	-1.5	-9.3	-6.0	-9.1	-3.0	-17.3	-9.8	-4.6	-11.1
Unemployment	-10.8	-11.8	-11.0	-16.7	-3.6	-5.7	-14.4	-25.0	-7.6	-10.5	-27.8
Health problems	-16.4	-17.0	-18.4	-21.6	-10.1	-13.1	-19.7	-23.1	-16.3	-12.5	-33.3
Personal worries	-16.9	-22.6	-11.0	-19.6	-13.7	-9.7	-22.0	-25.0	-17.9	-16.4	-13.9
Family pressure	-20.4	-21.2	-22.8	-22.5	-17.9	-18.2	-22.0	-28.8	-28.3	-9.2	-27.8
Political issues	-24.5	-26.4	-25.7	-24.0	-25.0	-30.1	-28.0	-1.9	-25.0	-24.3	-22.2

> # APPENDIX 2 –
> # SAMPLING

Figure 57: Quantitative survey sampling

		n.	%
Total		2524	100%
Age	18–24	1443	57%
	25–30	1071	43%
Gender	Female	1217	48%
	Male	1307	52%
Province	İstanbul	481	19%
	Ankara	215	9%
	İzmir	302	12%
	Bursa	244	10%
	Adana	277	11%
	Çanakkale	95	4%
	Samsun	130	5%
	Kayseri	169	7%
	Erzurum	84	3%
	Van	148	6%
	Diyarbakır	282	11%
	Trabzon	97	4%
Marital status	Single/divorced/widowed	2130	84%
	Married	392	16%
Occupation status	Not looking for a job	140	6%
	Unemployed	297	12%
	Student	878	35%
	Housewife	141	6%
	Part-time employee	83	3%
	Full-time employee	972	39%
NEET		661	26%
Income level	Lower than 2,000	722	29%
	2,000–2,999	771	31%
	3,000–4,999	719	28%
	Higher than 5,000	312	12%

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