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Turkey

NOT FREE

32
/100

<u>Political Rights</u>	16 /40
<u>Civil Liberties</u>	16 /60

LAST YEAR'S SCORE & STATUS

32 /100 **Not Free**

Global freedom statuses are calculated on a weighted scale. See the methodology.



Overview

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his Justice and Development Party (AKP), which have ruled Turkey since 2002, have become increasingly authoritarian in recent years, consolidating significant power through constitutional changes and by imprisoning opponents and critics. A deepening economic crisis and the upcoming elections in 2023 have given the government new incentives to suppress dissent and limit public discourse.

Key Developments in 2022

- An electoral law passed by the AKP-led parliamentary majority in March lowered the parliamentary entry threshold from 10 percent to 7 percent and changed the way seats are distributed among party alliances. Opposition parties criticized its provisions as an attempt to obstruct a broad opposition alliance ahead of 2023 elections and to control vote-counting processes. The law also exempted the president from rules that ban ministers from using state resources for electoral campaigns.
- In October, the parliament approved a law that introduced a prison sentence of up to three years for individuals deemed to promote false information on social media. Press freedom advocates and opposition groups criticized the law's vague language and warned that it could be used as a tool to silence independent journalists.
- Istanbul mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, of the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP), was convicted in December of insulting state institutions. İmamoğlu is considered a key challenger to Erdoğan, and the case against him was widely viewed as politically motivated. The conviction of the CHP's Istanbul chair, Canan Kaftancıoğlu, for insulting the president was upheld in May.
- In April, an Istanbul court convicted prominent philanthropist Osman Kavala and seven civil society leaders of conspiring to overthrow the government, sentencing Kavala to life in prison and each of the others to 18 years. In June, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) again ruled against the government of Turkey over its failure to free Kavala in accordance with a 2019 ECHR decision, which stated that his detention was politically motivated and that he should be released.

Political Rights

A. Electoral Process

A1 0-4 pts

Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections?

2 / 4

In 2018, Turkey instituted a presidential system of government that makes the president the chief national authority and grants the office sweeping executive powers. The president is directly elected for up to two five-year terms but is eligible to run for a third term in the event of early elections. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan served as prime minister from 2003 to 2014, and as president since then. Because Erdoğan's first term ended early due to the 2017 referendum, he is eligible to run for a third term in 2023, which, if secured, would last until 2028.

Turkey's 2018 general elections were held under a state of emergency that had been in place since a 2016 coup attempt. Erdoğan, who leads the AKP, won the presidential race with 52.6 percent of the vote in the first round. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) criticized the election, reporting that electoral regulators often deferred to the ruling AKP, that state-run media favored the AKP in its coverage, and that Erdoğan repeatedly accused legitimate political opponents of supporting terrorism during the campaign.

A2 0-4 pts

Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections?

2 / 4

The unicameral Grand National Assembly has 600 seats. Lawmakers are elected to five-year terms by proportional representation. Parties need at least 7 percent of the national vote to join the parliament as of 2022.

In the 2018 elections, the AKP joined the far-right Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) to form the People's Alliance, which won 53 percent of the vote, amounting to 344 seats. The opposition Nation's Alliance, led by the CHP and including the İyi Party (IP) and two smaller parties, won 34 percent of the vote and took 189 seats.

The pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP) won 11 percent of the vote, gaining 67 seats.

The OSCE described the 2018 elections as marred by the AKP's misuse of state resources to gain an electoral advantage and noted that the opposition claimed that last-minute changes to electoral laws and failure to follow standard procedures for the selection of polling locations benefitted the ruling party. Reports of irregularities such as proxy voting were prevalent in the southeast, the HDP's stronghold.

A3 0-4 pts

Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies?

1 / 4

The judges of the Supreme Electoral Council (YSK), who oversee all voting procedures, are appointed by AKP-dominated judicial bodies and often defer to the AKP in their decisions.

A new electoral law passed in March 2022 lowered the parliamentary entry threshold from 10 percent to 7 percent and changed the way parliamentary seats are distributed among party alliances. Opposition parties criticized the threshold changes as an attempt by the AKP to scuttle a broad opposition alliance, saying the lower threshold was designed to encourage smaller parties to break from a unified opposition bloc. The new law modified procedures for the selection of judges who oversee elections and control vote-counting process. Previously, the top-ranking judge in a district would select the judges responsible for any challenges to the vote count; the new law prescribes that those judges be selected in a draw, making it more likely that AKP-aligned judges appointed in recent years would oversee the processes. The law also exempted the president from rules that ban ministers from using state resources for their campaigns.

B. Political Pluralism and Participation

B1 0-4 pts

Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings?

2 / 4

Turkey maintains a multiparty system, with five major parties in the parliament. Parties are required to organize chapters and hold congresses in at least half of Turkey's provinces no later than six months before an election in order to participate.

Opposition leaders face politically motivated prosecutions and other harassment that affects their parties' ability to function. Members of the HDP have faced regular such prosecutions since 2015, after a peace process with the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) collapsed and the government accused the pro-Kurdish HDP of serving as a proxy for the PKK. (The PKK is now designated as a terrorist organization by Turkey, as well as by the United States and European Union [EU]). The HDP's offices are regularly raided by police and attacked by far-right mobs.

Other opposition leaders also face politically motivated prosecutions and violent attacks. In December 2022, the mayor of Istanbul—Ekrem İmamoğlu of the CHP, widely considered a potential challenger to Erdoğan—was convicted of insulting state institutions and barred from politics, in a case widely considered to be politically motivated. Members of İmamoğlu's staff remain under investigation over alleged links to the PKK and other groups designated as terrorist organizations. In May 2022, an appeals court upheld the prison sentence of the CHP's Istanbul chair, Canan Kaftancıoğlu, who was convicted in 2019 of insulting the president. Kaftancıoğlu, who assisted with İmamoğlu's 2019 mayoral campaign, was also banned from running for office. Former HDP cochair Selahattin Demirtaş remains in prison, after being detained in 2016 for "terrorist propaganda." In 2020, the ECHR had ruled that his detention was politically motivated and ordered his release.

Metin Gürcan, a founding member of the opposition Democracy and Progress Party (DEVA) and a political commentator, was jailed in November 2021 on espionage charges in connection with his research. He later said the research in question involved reports he had been preparing for diplomatic missions of Italy

and Spain, and that the information within was compiled from open sources. He was released in May 2022 but rearrested two days later after his release was challenged in court; he faces up to 35 years in prison if convicted.

B2 0-4 pts

Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections?

2 / 4

President Erdoğan and the AKP assert partisan control over the YSK, judiciary, police, and media. In recent years, they have aggressively used these institutional tools to weaken or co-opt political rivals, limiting the opposition's ability to build voter support and gain power through elections. Despite these challenges, the opposition won control of most major urban centers in the 2019 municipal elections.

Opposition leaders face obstacles even after winning elections. The government has replaced dozens of HDP mayors with trustees since the 2019 elections and has obstructed newly elected CHP mayors—including Istanbul mayor İmamoğlu—from carrying out their duties. Opposition leaders have been arrested and charged in politically motivated cases with offenses ranging from terrorism to insulting the president.

B3 0-4 pts

Are the people's political choices free from domination by forces that are external to the political sphere, or by political forces that employ extrapolitical means?

3 / 4

The AKP's institutional dominance threatens to make the state itself an extension of the party that can be used to change political outcomes. The government's influence over the media also tilts the electoral playing field heavily in favor of the ruling party.

B4 0-4 pts

Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, racial, religious, gender, LGBT+, and other relevant groups) have full political

1 / 4

Political rights are experienced unevenly. Critics charge that the AKP favors Sunni Muslims, pointing to an overhaul of the education system that favored Islamic education in secular schools and promoted the rise of religious schools in the 2010s. The AKP also expanded the Directorate of Religious Affairs, using this institution as a channel for political patronage. Among other functions, the party uses the directorate to deliver government-friendly sermons in mosques in Turkey, as well as in countries where the Turkish diaspora is present.

While members of Turkey's non-Sunni Alevi community and non-Muslim citizens hold seats in the parliament, the government's crackdown on opposition parties where they are concentrated has seriously harmed their political rights and electoral opportunities. While the Kurds, Turkey's largest ethnic minority, are represented in politics, pro-Kurdish parties face regular harassment by the government via hate speech, politically motivated prosecutions, and disinformation in progovernment media.

Women and LGBT+ individuals remain underrepresented in politics and in leadership positions in government. Women occupy 104 parliamentary seats, or 17 percent of the assembly. A handful of LGBT+ candidates have run for office, but LGBT+ people remain politically marginalized, in part because the government uses public morality laws to restrict advocacy for LGBT+ rights.

While some refugees in Turkey, including nearly 4 million Syrians, have gained citizenship in recent years, there is no clear path for gaining citizenship status. Anti-immigrant sentiment among the public is high, and politicians who are openly discriminatory toward refugees have entered the political scene.

C. Functioning of Government

C1 0-4 pts

Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government?

2/4

Erdoğan controls all executive functions, rules by decree, and makes all policy decisions. Since 2016, he has overhauled Turkey's ministries and agencies, purging tens of thousands of civil servants and replacing them with political loyalists. He exerts effective control over the legislature through his leadership of the AKP; lawmakers' capacity to provide policy contributions has greatly eroded under the new presidential system in effect since 2018.

Erdoğan frequently intervenes against ministries and independent public bodies that defy his wishes. For example, he replaced Turkey's central bank chief three times between 2019 and 2021 and fired three of the bank's top executives in 2021, the latter move prompting a rare backlash from Turkey's top business association. In January 2022, Erdoğan removed the head of Turkey's Statistical Institute (TÜİK) less than a year after his appointment, which many attributed to TÜİK's growing political influence amid worsening inflation rates.

C2 0-4 pts

Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective?

1 / 4

Corruption remains a major problem, including at the highest levels of government. Enforcement of anticorruption laws is inconsistent, and anticorruption agencies are ineffective, creating a culture of impunity. A handful of holding companies obtain a vast portion of public tenders and control most of Turkey's media networks. The government has seized hundreds of businesses and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) since 2016, appointing trustees to manage billions of dollars in assets.

In 2021 and 2022, notorious mafia boss Sedat Peker published a series of videos in which he levied an array of accusations—including murder, rape, corruption, and drug trafficking—against prominent government figures, including Interior Minister Süleyman Soyulu. Although opposition parties have made multiple requests for parliamentary and judicial inquiries into the allegations, the ruling AKP-led coalition has quashed the motions and no authority has opened an investigation into Peker's claims.

C3 0-4 pts

Does the government operate with openness and transparency?	O / 4
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Turkey's political and legal environment has made democratic oversight of the government nearly impossible. Despite laws guaranteeing access to information, the government withholds information on the activities of state officials and institutions. Public officials are widely accused of publishing distorted data to downplay Turkey's problems, including COVID-19 infection rates and inflation and unemployment rates.

In March 2022, the TÜİK filed a criminal defamation complaint against an economic research group after it published unofficial data showing the inflation rate as being much higher than what had been disclosed by the government. Civil society leaders and journalists are routinely denied access to government officials, meetings, and events.

Civil Liberties

D. Freedom of Expression and Belief

D1 0-4 pts

Are there free and independent media?	1 / 4
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Most Turkish media networks are owned by businesses that depend on public tenders or have close ties to President Erdoğan. Mainstream media reflect government positions and often carry identical headlines. Although independent outlets exist, they face tremendous political pressure and are routinely targeted for prosecution. Media outlets are often censored, fined, or shut down, and journalists are detained regularly. Business elites with close ties to Erdoğan have been accused of bribing journalists and orchestrating negative press against the opposition.

The most prominent journalist arrested in 2022 was Sedef Kabaş, who was detained in January for criticizing President Erdoğan on live television and was sentenced in March to two years and four months in prison. Journalists were detained at various protests throughout the year. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), Turkey was the world's fourth-largest jailer of journalists in 2022, with 40 journalists in prison at the year's end; the group noted that Turkish authorities had arrested 25 Kurdish journalists in the second half of 2022, all of whom were jailed and charged with terrorism over alleged links to the PKK. Reporters have faced physical attacks, notably those who cover politics, corruption, or crime.

The members of Turkey's state broadcast regulator, the High Council for Broadcasting (RTÜK), are appointed by the AKP-controlled parliament. The RTÜK continued to fine independent networks that critiqued the government in 2022, issuing 54 against five television networks all of which are independent or opposition-aligned. Since 2019, RTÜK has required international online video producers to obtain licenses in order to operate in Turkey. In February 2022, RTÜK warned Euronews, Voice of America, and Deutsche Welle that they were in violation of the rule, and blocked access to the latter two in June after they refused to comply.

Authorities also continue to block and censor content on Turkish media. After a deadly bomb attack in Istanbul in November 2022, RTÜK issued a media ban on the topic that lasted 10 hours. In October, the AKP-led majority approved a law that introduced a prison sentence of up to three years for individuals deemed to promote false information on social media. Press freedom advocates and the opposition heavily criticized the law's vague language and warned that it could be used as a tool to further silence independent journalists. In December, a court ordered the first arrest under the law, placing a Kurdish journalist in pretrial detention for publishing a post on Twitter about the alleged sexual assault of a 14-year-old girl by police officers and soldiers. The journalist was released after his lawyer filed an objection, though the case remained pending at year's end.

Since 2020, the government has forced major social media companies, including Facebook and YouTube, to maintain offices in the country and comply with government demands to take down content. Companies that refused to comply have received hefty fines and advertising bans.

D2 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private?

2 / 4

Sunni Islam is the majority religion in Turkey. While the constitution defines a secular state and guarantees freedom of religion, there are limitations on the rights of both recognized and unrecognized religious minorities. The national curriculum mandates compulsory religious education, and while non-Muslim students and Alevis are officially exempted from these courses, they have difficulty opting out of them in practice. Although Jews, Orthodox Christians, and Armenian Catholics are officially recognized as religious minorities in Turkey, disputes over property and prohibitions on training of clergy remain a problem. Alevis and non-Muslims also continue to be targeted with hate speech and mob attacks. In 2022, violent attacks against Alevi institutions rose significantly; between July and August, at least five Alevi NGOs and places of worship were attacked and vandalized.

D3 0-4 pts

Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination?

1 / 4

Academic freedom, never well respected in Turkey, was weakened further by the AKP's purge of government and civil society workers after the 2016 coup attempt. The government has since dismissed thousands of academics and educators for their perceived leftist, Gülenist, or PKK sympathies. More than a thousand scholars have been investigated and hundreds prosecuted for declaring their support for peace between the government and the PKK. University students are routinely detained for holding peaceful demonstrations against government policies.

The government and university administrations routinely intervene to prevent academics from researching sensitive topics, encouraging self-censorship among scholars. President Erdoğan obtained the power to appoint rectors at public and private universities in 2018 and has used it to intervene in academic institutions' affairs.

D4 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution?

1/4

While citizens continue to voice their opinions openly in private, many exercise caution about what they say publicly. Ordinary people have faced criminal prosecution for incitement or insulting the president, as have public figures. In August 2022, Turkish pop star Gülşen was arrested for “inciting hatred” after joking during an April performance about religious education. Released in September, she was banned from leaving Turkey until her case was decided.

The government heavily monitors and censors the Turkish internet, contributing to an atmosphere of self-censorship. The vaguely written disinformation law that took effect in October 2022 significantly expanded the scope of activities on social media deemed criminal and introduced a three-year maximum prison sentence. The government forced Turkey’s internet providers to restrict access to Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and some Telegram servers in the aftermath of a deadly bomb attack in Istanbul in November 2022.

E. Associational and Organizational Rights

E1 0-4 pts

Is there freedom of assembly?

1/4

Authorities routinely ban gatherings organized by government critics, while progovernment rallies are allowed and enjoy police protection. Police frequently use force to break up peaceful protests. In 2022, security forces used tear gas, pepper spray, and other violent tactics to disperse demonstrators at May Day protests, Istanbul and Ankara LGBT+ pride parades, Women’s Day celebrations, marches against gender-based violence (GBV), protests against price hikes and soaring inflation, and other major gatherings. Police arrested dozens of protesters

at the Ankara pride parade, and more than 200 people at the Istanbul pride parade.

The police routinely break up the weekly vigils and commemorations organized by the Saturday Mothers, a group that protests forced disappearances associated with a 1980 coup d'état, and arrest members of the group, most of whom are elderly women. In June 2022, the police took 16 human rights defenders at the group's 900th vigil into custody. A trial against 46 demonstrators who attended the 700th Saturday Mothers vigil in 2018 is ongoing.

Authorities cracked down on music festivals, a staple of cultural life for Turkish youth, in 2022. Governors and mayors in multiple provinces canceled or banned at least 12 music festivals and concerts between May and August, using various pretexts including environmental concerns. Festival organizers argued that they had all the necessary permits and saw no grounds for the cancelations.

E2 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights– and governance-related work?

1 / 4

The government frequently targets independent civil society groups. Since 2016, it has shut down more than 1,500 foundations and associations. Leaders of remaining NGOs face harassment, arrests, and prosecutions. A 2020 law subjects NGOs to yearly audits and gives the Interior Ministry the power to appoint trustees to the boards of NGOs facing criminal investigation. In 2021, the government froze the assets of 770 NGOs on the spurious grounds of terrorism financing.

Turkey's politicized judiciary has convicted several prominent human rights activists, including the former head of Amnesty International Turkey, on bogus terrorism charges in an apparent effort to intimidate civil society actors and stifle human rights advocacy. In March 2022, police raided the homes of and detained 24 women's rights defenders in the Kurdish-majority city of Diyarbakir. Of them, 11 were arrested on terrorism charges two days later, and the entire episode prompted condemnation from Turkish human rights groups.

In April, an Istanbul court convicted prominent philanthropist Osman Kavala and seven other celebrated civil society leaders of conspiring to overthrow the government. Kavala was sentenced to life in prison, while the other defendants received 18-year sentences. The events drew sharp criticism from international and domestic rights groups, and the ECHR in July ruled that Turkey had violated its previous, 2019 ruling calling for Kavala's release.

Also in April, a court upheld a prison sentence for human rights lawyer and co-chair of the Human Rights Association (İHD), Eren Keskin, who since 2016 has faced multiple charges relating to terrorism membership and insulting the government. The İHD's other co-chair, Öztürk Türkdoğan, was acquitted that month of the same charge, but still faces two additional criminal proceedings.

E3 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations?

1/4

Union activity, including the right to strike, is limited by law and in practice. Anti-union activities by employers are common and legal protections are poorly enforced. A system of threshold requirements limits unions' ability to secure collective-bargaining rights. Trade unions and professional organizations face government interference and retaliation for activities disruptive to authorities' wishes, such as when a 2018 strike organized to protest unsafe working conditions on the site of the new Istanbul airport was broken up. Union leaders are frequently arrested during annual May Day demonstrations.

F. Rule of Law

F1 0-4 pts

Is there an independent judiciary?

1/4

Judicial independence has been severely compromised, as thousands of judges and prosecutors have been replaced with government loyalists since 2016. Under the presidential system that took effect in 2018, members of Turkey's Board of

Judges and Prosecutors (HSK), which oversees judicial appointments and disciplinary measures, are appointed by the parliament and the president rather than by members of the judiciary. As a result, prosecutors and judges often toe the government line. Judges who rule against the government's wishes have been removed and replaced, while those who convict Erdoğan's critics have been promoted.

Politically motivated prosecutions target politicians, journalists, academics, and students. In May 2022, the Court of Cassation upheld three sentences against the CHP's Istanbul chair, Canan Kaftancıoğlu, for "insulting a public official," "insulting the president," and "degrading the state." The Constitutional Court has shown some independence since 2019 but is not free from political influence and often delivers rulings in line with AKP interests.

F2 0-4 pts

Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters?	0 / 4
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Severe violations of due process in the judicial system persist. Defendants are often held in lengthy pretrial detention that can last up to seven years. Prosecutors often wait months before unveiling charges and produce lengthy accounts that often lack evidence. In many cases, lawyers defending people accused of terrorism face arrest themselves. Lower courts often defy rulings by higher courts that they are legally bound to implement.

The case against Turkish philanthropist Osman Kavala has been riddled with due process violations. Accused of attempting to overthrow the government in 2017, Kavala was held in pretrial detention for more than a year before he saw his indictment. He has endured two trials since 2019, wherein judges who ordered his release were replaced between hearings without explanation, alongside other procedural anomalies. After he was exonerated in 2020, Kavala was immediately rearrested under different charges. In April 2022, judges in the second trial sentenced him to life in prison. The ECHR in July published a ruling that Turkey had violated its previous, 2019 ruling calling for Kavala's release.

F3 0-4 pts

Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies?

1/4

Turkish authorities are regularly accused of torturing prisoners. Prosecutors do not consistently investigate allegations of torture or abuse in custody, and the government has resisted the publication of a European Committee for the Prevention of Torture report on its detention practices.

While the threat of terrorism has decreased since 2018, a bomb attack in Istanbul in November 2022, which the government blamed on the outlawed PKK, killed six people and injured more than 80. Turkey remains at war with the PKK and civilians in the country's Kurdish-majority southeast continue to grapple with effects of the conflict.

F4 0-4 pts

Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population?

1/4

Although Turkey's laws guarantee equal treatment of all citizens, religious, ethnic, and sexual and gender minorities suffer varying degrees of discrimination. Alevis and non-Muslims face systemic discrimination in schools and the public sector. The government's war with the PKK is used to justify discriminatory measures against Kurdish citizens, including the prohibition of Kurdish festivals. Kurdish schools and cultural organizations, many of which had opened while peace talks were taking place, have been investigated or shut down since 2015.

Although women make up a growing part of the workforce, gender inequality is a pressing issue. While same-sex relations are not legally prohibited, LGBT+ people face widespread discrimination, police harassment, and violence. Laws do not protect people from discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, and LGBT+ people are banned from serving in the military. Top state officials frequently engage in homophobic hate speech; President Erdoğan in 2020 defended Turkey's head of religious affairs after he linked homosexuality to disease and societal decay. The government continues to censor LGBT+ content in the media, including on Netflix.

Turkey hosts more than 4 million refugees and migrants, most of them from Syria, according to the government. Refugees have no clear path to citizenship and their movement is restricted to their provinces of registration, outside of which they not allowed to live or work. Most refugee children lack access to education, and most adults lack employment permits. Popular resentment against refugees and discriminatory rhetoric against refugees among politicians has been increasing, and in 2022 and many refugee homes and businesses faced violent mob attacks. Amid this political atmosphere, residency permits for refugees and migrants have become increasingly difficult to obtain and to renew. Reports also point to a growing number of deportations. Nearly 60,000 Syrian refugees relocated from Turkey to Turkish-controlled zones in Syria in 2022. While the Turkish government calls these returns “voluntary,” international NGOs have disputed the nature of the relocations, calling them forced deportations. According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), Turkish authorities arbitrarily arrested and deported hundreds of male Syrian refugees in 2022.

G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights

G1 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education?

1/4

Freedom of movement is limited in some regions and for groups treated with suspicion by the government. In southeastern Turkey, movement is limited due to the conflict between the government and the PKK. More than 125,000 public sector workers who were fired or suspended following the coup attempt in 2016 have since been unable to find employment due to an atmosphere of guilt by association and cannot travel abroad as their passports have been canceled. Refugees continue to face legal and practical obstacles to free employment and movement within the country.

G2 0-4 pts

Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors?

1 / 4

Private property rights are legally enshrined, but for the last decade, critics or opponents of the government have been subjected to intrusive tax and regulatory inspections. Since 2016, the assets of hundreds of companies, NGOs, and media outlets deemed to be associated with terrorist groups have been confiscated. From 2016–18, at least \$11 billion in private business assets, ranging from corner stores to large conglomerates, were seized. The developments have severely harmed public confidence in the rule of law and free enterprise.

G3 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance?

2 / 4

Turkey's GBV and femicide rates are among the world's highest, and women's rights activists largely blame this environment on a culture of impunity enabled by the government and judiciary. Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention, an international treaty to prevent GBV, in 2021 removed key legal protections for women facing domestic abuse. Police are reluctant to intervene in domestic disputes and few women's shelters exist. Erdoğan and the AKP consistently campaign to dissuade women from seeking divorce and to bear at least three children. Contraception, while legal, is increasingly difficult to access. Child marriages, although illegal, often take place, mainly performed through unofficial religious ceremonies or by fraudulently obtaining marriage licenses using false identification.

G4 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation?

1 / 4

The weakness of labor unions and the government's increasing willingness to act against organized labor have undermined equality of opportunity, protection from

economic exploitation, and workplace safety. Workplace accidents have become frequent in recent years and laborers have little recourse if injured. According to the Health and Safety Labor Watch (İSiG), at least 1,843 workers died in work-related incidents in 2022. Only a tiny portion of refugees have work permits. Turkey's informal economy is as big as about a third of its overall economy, and migrant and refugee workers are especially vulnerable to economic exploitation in unregulated industry.



On Turkey

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Country Facts

Global Freedom Score

32/100 Not Free

Internet Freedom Score

30/100 Not Free

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