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Country Background Note Turkey

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Preface

Purpose

This note provides a summary of and links to country of origin information (COI) for use by Home Office decision makers handling particular types of protection and human rights claims. It is not intended to be an exhaustive survey of a particular subject or theme.

It is split into two main sections: (1) general background to the country concerned, including demography and geography; and (2) issues which may be relevant to protection claims. Unlike country policy and information notes, they do **not** contain an analysis of the COI.

Decision makers **must**, however, still consider all claims on an individual basis, taking into account each case's specific facts.

Country of origin information

The country information in this note has been carefully selected in accordance with the general principles of COI research as set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), dated April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation's (ACCORD), [Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual, 2013](#). Namely, taking into account the COI's relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

The structure and content of the country information section follows a [terms of reference](#) which sets out the general and specific topics relevant to this note.

All information included in the note was published or made publicly available on or before the 'cut-off' date in the country information section. Any event taking place or report/article published after this date is not included.

All information is publicly accessible or can be made publicly available, and is from generally reliable sources. Sources and the information they provide are carefully considered before inclusion.

Factors relevant to the assessment of the reliability of sources and information include:

- the motivation, purpose, knowledge and experience of the source
- how the information was obtained, including specific methodologies used
- the currency and detail of information, and
- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources.

Multiple sourcing is used to ensure that the information is accurate, balanced and corroborated, so that a comprehensive and up-to-date picture at the time of publication is provided of the issues relevant to this note.

Information is compared and contrasted, whenever possible, to provide a range of views and opinions. The inclusion of a source, however, is not an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a brief footnote; full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the [bibliography](#).

Feedback

Our goal is to continuously improve our material. Therefore, if you would like to comment on this note, please email the [Country Policy and Information Team](#).

Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

The [Independent Advisory Group on Country Information](#) (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to support him in reviewing the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of approach of COI produced by the Home Office.

The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office's COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy. The IAGCI may be contacted at:

Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

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London, SW1V 1PN

Email: chiefinspector@icibi.gov.uk

Information about the IAGCI's work and a list of the documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector's pages of the [gov.uk website](#).

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Country information

Section 1 updated: 16 January 2019

1. Geography and demography

1.1 Key geographic and demographic points

Full country name:	Republic of Turkey ¹
Area:	Total: 783,562 sq km Land: 769,632 sq km Water: 13,930 sq km ²
Flag:	 ³
Population:	81,257,239 (July 2018 estimate) ⁴
Capital city:	Ankara ⁵
Other key places:	See Main population centres .
Position:	Southeastern Europe and Southwestern Asia (that portion of Turkey west of the Bosphorus is geographically part of Europe), bordering the Black Sea, between Bulgaria and Georgia, and bordering the Aegean Sea and the Mediterranean Sea, between Greece and Syria. ⁶
Languages:	Languages used are Turkish (the official language), Kurdish, and other minority languages. ⁷ For more information, see: Ethnologue's Languages of Turkey .

¹ BBC, Turkey Country Profile, 10 July 2018, [URL](#)

² CIA World Factbook, Turkey, Geography, last updated 8 January 2019, [URL](#)

³ CIA World Factbook, Turkey, last updated 8 January 2019, [URL](#)

⁴ CIA World Factbook, Turkey, People and society, last updated 8 January 2019, [URL](#)

⁵ CIA World Factbook, Turkey, People and society, last updated 8 January 2019, [URL](#)

⁶ CIA World Factbook, Turkey, Geography, last updated 8 January 2019, [URL](#)

⁷ CIA World Factbook, Turkey, People and society, last updated 8 January 2019, [URL](#)

Ethnic groups:	<p>Turkish 70-75%, Kurdish 19%, other minorities 7-12% (2016 estimate).⁸</p> <p>The constitution provides a single nationality designation for all citizens and does not expressly recognize national, racial, or ethnic minorities except for three non-Muslim minorities - Armenian Orthodox Christians, Jews, and Greek Orthodox Christians. Other ethnic minorities in Turkey include Assyrians, Jafaeris, Yezidis, Kurds, Arabs, Roma, Circassians, and Laz⁹.</p>
Religion:	<p>Muslim 99.8% (mostly Sunni), other 0.2% (mostly Christians and Jews).¹⁰</p>

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1.2 Map of Turkey

1.2.1 The CIA World Factbook published the following map¹¹:



1.2.2 Other maps:

- [Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, Turkey maps](#)

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1.3 Administrative divisions

1.3.1 81 provinces (iller, singular - ili); Adana, Adiyaman, Afyonkarahisar, Agri, Aksaray, Amasya, Ankara, Antalya, Ardahan, Artvin, Aydin, Balikesir, Bartin, Batman, Bayburt, Bilecik, Bingol, Bitlis, Bolu, Burdur, Bursa, Canakkale, Cankiri, Corum, Denizli, Diyarbakir, Duzce, Edirne, Elazig, Erzincan, Erzurum, Eskisehir, Gaziantep, Giresun, Gumushane, Hakkari, Hatay, Igdir,

⁸ CIA World Factbook, Turkey, People and society, last updated 8 January 2019, [URL](#)

⁹ USSD HR Report 2017, Turkey, Section 6, 20 April 2018, [URL](#)

¹⁰ CIA World Factbook, Turkey, People and society, last updated 8 January 2019, [URL](#)

¹¹ CIA World Factbook, Turkey, last updated 8 January 2019, [URL](#)

Isparta, Istanbul, Izmir [...], Kahramanmaras, Karabuk, Karaman, Kars, Kastamonu, Kayseri, Kilis, Kirikkale, Kirklareli, Kirsehir, Kocaeli, Konya, Kutahya, Malatya, Manisa, Mardin, Mersin, Mugla, Mus, Nevsehir, Nigde, Ordu, Osmaniye, Rize, Sakarya, Samsun, Sanliurfa, Siirt, Sinop, Sirnak, Sivas, Tekirdag, Tokat, Trabzon (Trebizond), Tunceli, Usak, Van, Yalova, Yozgat, Zonguldak¹²

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1.4 Physical geography

1.4.1 Other notable points:

- The 3% of Turkish territory which lies in Europe is known as European Turkey, Eastern Thrace, or Turkish Thrace; the 97% of the country in Asia is referred to as Anatolia¹³.
- High central plateau (Anatolia); narrow coastal plain; several mountain ranges¹⁴.

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1.5 Main population centres

1.5.1 Major cities, with their population sizes, are:

Istanbul 14.751 million; Ankara (capital) 4.919 million; Izmir 2.937 million; Bursa 1.916 million; Adana 1.73 million; Gaziantep 1.632 million (2018).¹⁵

1.5.2 The most densely populated area is found around the Bosphorus in the northwest where 20% of the population lives in Istanbul. With the exception of Ankara, urban centers remain small and scattered throughout the interior of Anatolia; an overall pattern of peripheral development exists, particularly along the Aegean Sea coast in the west, and the Tigris and Euphrates River systems in the southeast¹⁶.

1.5.3 The following map shows the population density of Turkey:¹⁷

¹² CIA World Factbook, Turkey, Government, last updated 8 January 2019, [URL](#)

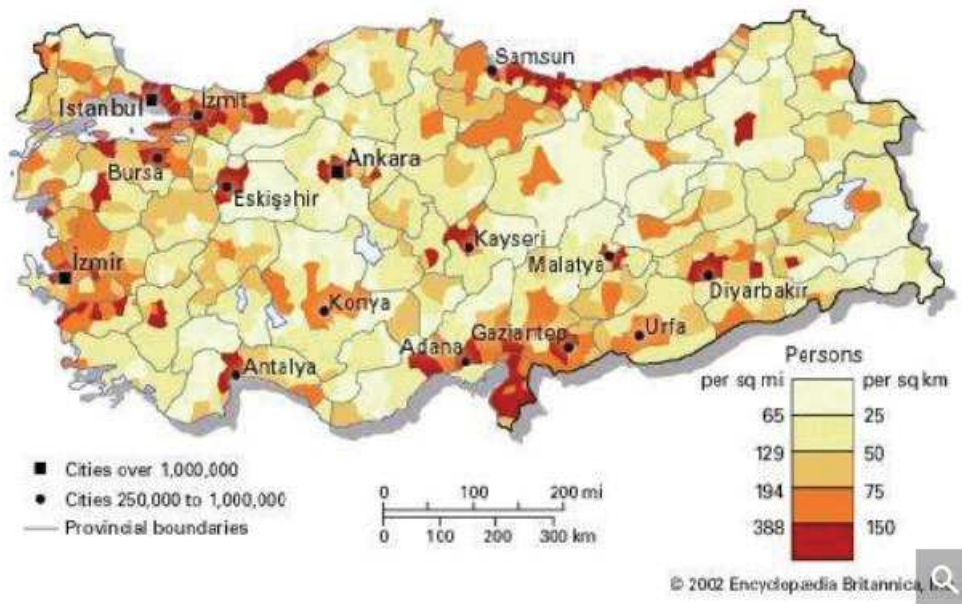
¹³ CIA World Factbook, Turkey, Geography, last updated 8 January 2019, [URL](#)

¹⁴ CIA World Factbook, Turkey, Geography, last updated 8 January 2019, [URL](#)

¹⁵ CIA World Factbook, Turkey, People and society, last updated 8 January 2019, [URL](#)

¹⁶ CIA World Factbook, Turkey, Geography, last updated 8 January 2019, [URL](#)

¹⁷ Encyclopaedia Britannica, Turkey, Settlement patterns, last updated 25 November 2018, [URL](#)



Population density of Turkey.

Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.

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1.6 Transport links

1.6.1 Roads are by far the most important carriers of both freight and passengers. In addition to domestic traffic, there is a large and growing international freight movement across Turkey between Europe and the Middle East. This has been made possible by massive state investment in the construction of a modern road network linking all the main towns. Buses are widely used. City thoroughfares in Turkey are generally congested.

Coastal shipping routes are important freight carriers, particularly along the Black Sea coast; the main international ports are Istanbul, İzmir, Mersin (İçel), İskenderun, and İzmit.

The state airline and several international carriers provide air links through Istanbul, Ankara, and İzmir, and there is an internal network linking these cities with more than a dozen provincial centres. Airports on the Aegean and Mediterranean coasts at Dalaman and Antalya have been improved and cater to the growing tourist charter traffic.¹⁸

1.6.2 There are 55 major domestic and international airports in Turkey¹⁹.

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¹⁸ Encyclopaedia Britannica, Transportation, last updated 25 November 2018, [URL](#)

¹⁹ GoTurkeyTourism.com, Airports in Turkey, 2018, [URL](#)

2. Economy

2.1.1 The following table contains some key points:

Currency	Turkish lira ²⁰
Exchange rate	1 GBP = 7.3113 Turkish lira (November 2018) ²¹
GDP per capita	\$10,592 (2017) ²² (this is equivalent to approximately £8,051)

2.1.2 Other notable points:

- Employment by occupation: agriculture: 18.4%; industry: 26.6%; services: 54.9% (2016)²³
- Unemployment rate: 10.9% (2017 est.)²⁴
- 21.9% live below the poverty line (2015 estimate)²⁵
- There is a social security system in place; see [Medical and healthcare provision](#)
- Ranked 64 out of 187 countries in the [2017 Index produced by the UN Human Development Programme](#).
- Transparency International ranked Turkey at number 81 out of 180 countries in the [Corruption Perceptions Index 2017](#), with a score of 40 out of 100, where 0 is 'highly corrupt' and 100 is 'very clean.'^{26,27}

2.1.3 For further information about the economy, see:

- Encyclopaedia Britannica: [Economy](#)
- CIA World Factbook: [Economy](#)

2.1.4 For further information about corruption, see:

- [Freedom in the World 2018, Turkey](#), published by Freedom House.
- Reporters Without Borders published an article, dated July 2018, on the sensitivities of reporting on corruption in Turkey, available [here](#).²⁸
- [Turkey corruption report](#) published by Business Anti-Corruption Portal, last updated June 2018.
- [USSD HR Report 2017, Turkey](#), published by US Department of State on 20 April 2018 (see Section 4).

²⁰ CIA World Factbook, Turkey, Economy, last updated 8 January 2019, [URL](#)

²¹ HMRC, November 2018: Monthly exchange rates, updated 29 October 2018, [URL](#)

²² World Bank, Turkey, Overview, last updated 11 October 2018, [URL](#)

²³ CIA World Factbook, Turkey, Economy, last updated 8 January 2019, [URL](#)

²⁴ CIA World Factbook, Turkey, Economy, last updated 8 January 2019, [URL](#)

²⁵ CIA World Factbook, Turkey, Economy, last updated 8 January 2019, [URL](#)

²⁶ Transparency International, Corruption Perceptions Index 2017, 21 February 2018, [URL](#)

²⁷ Transparency International, Turkey page, [URL](#)

²⁸ Reporters Without Borders, 'Dangers of covering corruption [...]', 17 July 2018, [URL](#)

3. History

3.1.1 Key Timeline

Ottoman Age 1299–1923	The Ottoman Beylik (similar to a Principality) rapidly expanded throughout the fourteenth century and became the Ottoman Empire, which ruled over a vast territory on three continents and lasted for 623 years until the end of the First World War. ²⁹
World War I 1914 –1918	The weakening of the Empire continued until World War I. The Ottoman Empire entered the First World War in 1914 on the side of the allied powers and emerged defeated from the war in 1918, compelled to sign the Mondros Armistice on October 30, 1918. Under the terms of this Armistice, the territories of the Ottoman Empire were occupied by Britain, France, Russia, and Greece. This was the end of the Ottoman Empire. ³⁰
Turkish National Liberation War 1919-1922	The Turkish National Liberation War was an attempt to create a new state from the ruins of an Empire. Under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, a small army of volunteers fought and won a war against the leading powers of the time. The victory led to the signing of the Lausanne Peace Treaty on July 24, 1923, with Great Britain, France, Greece, Italy and others. The Treaty recognized the creation and international borders of a Turkish State and guaranteed its complete independence. ³¹
Republic of Turkey 29 October 1923 onwards	<p>The Republic was proclaimed on October 29, 1923. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was elected as the first president of the Republic of Turkey.</p> <p>As president for 15 years, Atatürk introduced a broad range of reforms in the political, social, legal, economic, and cultural spheres that were virtually unparalleled in any other country.</p> <p>A new political and legal system was created, based on the principles of parliamentary democracy, human rights, national sovereignty and division of powers, private ownership and secularism, and the separation of religion and state affairs.</p> <p>A new, secular education system was established, the Arabic alphabet was changed into the Latin alphabet, and new civil and criminal codes were adapted from European models. Turkish women received equal rights under the law such as the right to vote and be elected to public office. These</p>

²⁹ Turkish Cultural Foundation, 'A brief outline of Turkish history,' undated, [URL](#)

³⁰ Turkish Cultural Foundation, 'A brief outline of Turkish history,' undated, [URL](#)

³¹ Turkish Cultural Foundation, 'A brief outline of Turkish history,' undated, [URL](#)

	changes brought a predominantly Muslim nation in line with Western civilization and universal values. ³²
2016	Coup attempt fails. ³³
2017	Referendum approves switch from parliamentary to presidential system, significantly increasing President Erdogan's powers. ³⁴
2018	President Erdogan re-elected as president with 'extensive new executive powers', a 'weakened' parliament and 'the post of prime minister abolished' ³⁵ .

3.1.2 For further information, see:

- BBC: [Turkey country profile, Timeline](#).
- Encyclopaedia Britannica: [History](#).

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Section 4 updated: 13 December 2018

4. Media and telecommunications

4.1.1 Key media/telecommunications points

International dialling code:	+90 ³⁶
Internet domain:	.TR ³⁷
Broadcast media:	Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) operates multiple TV and radio networks and stations; multiple privately owned national television stations and up to 300 private regional and local television stations; multi-channel cable TV subscriptions available; more than 1,000 private radio broadcast stations (2009). ³⁸
Newspapers	Hurriyet - mass-circulation daily Hurriyet Daily News - English-language version of Hurriyet Milliyet - mass-circulation daily Cumhuriyet - opposition daily Yeni Asir - daily Sabah - daily, English-language pages ³⁹

³² Turkish Cultural Foundation, 'A brief outline of Turkish history,' undated, [URL](#)

³³ BBC, Turkey Country Profile, 10 July 2018, [URL](#)

³⁴ BBC News, Turkey election: Erdogan win ushers in new presidential era, 25 June 2018, [URL](#)

³⁵ BBC News, Turkey election: Erdogan win ushers in new presidential era, 25 June 2018, [URL](#)

³⁶ Country Code, Turkey Country Code, [URL](#)

³⁷ The Guardian, 'Internet domain names: a complete list,' 24 November 2009, [URL](#)

³⁸ CIA World Factbook, Turkey, Communications, 8 January 2019, [URL](#)

³⁹ BBC, Turkey Profile – Media, 25 July 2017, [URL](#), last accessed: 13 December 2018

4.1.2 Other notable points:

- For links to various Turkish media (press, television, radio and internet), see the [BBC profile](#).⁴⁰
- For information about the law in relation to the media, see the '[Freedom of the Press 2017](#)' report⁴¹ by Freedom House (Legal environment).
- Media freedom deteriorated dramatically in the aftermath of the coup attempt in July 2016.⁴²
- Reporters Without Borders ranked Turkey at number 157 out of 180 countries for press freedom in 2018.⁴³ Freedom House declared Turkey's 'press freedom status' as 'not free' in 2017.⁴⁴
- The military, Kurds and political Islam are highly sensitive topics, coverage of which can lead to arrest and prosecution. It is common for radio and TV stations to have their broadcasts suspended for airing sensitive material.⁴⁵
- State broadcaster TRT introduced broadcasts in Kurdish, banned for many years, under reforms intended to meet EU criteria on minorities. Some overseas-based Kurdish TVs broadcast via satellite.⁴⁶
- Around 46 million Turks were online by late 2015. Websites are subject to blocking.⁴⁷
- For further information about the situation for journalists in Turkey, see:
 - [Platform for Independent Journalism \(P24\)](#)
 - [Committee to Protect Journalists](#)
 - [Reporters Without Borders](#)
- For further information on Kurdish media and related restrictions, see the Country Policy and Information Note on [Turkey: Kurds](#).

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Section 5 updated: 9 December 2018

5. Citizenship and nationality

- 5.1.1 A child receives citizenship from his or her parents, not through birth in the country. Only one parent needs to be a citizen to convey citizenship to a child. In special cases in which a child born in the country cannot receive citizenship from any other country due to the status of his or her parents, the child is legally entitled to receive Turkish citizenship.⁴⁸

⁴⁰ BBC, 'Turkey profile – media,' 25 July 2017, [URL](#)

⁴¹ Freedom House, 'Freedom of the Press 2017,' Turkey, 7 November 2017, [URL](#)

⁴² Freedom House, 'Freedom in the World 2017,' Turkey, 7 November 2017, [URL](#)

⁴³ Reporters Without Borders, 2018 World Press Freedom Index, [URL](#)

⁴⁴ Freedom House, 'Freedom of the Press 2017,' Turkey, 7 November 2017, [URL](#)

⁴⁵ BBC, 'Turkey profile – media,' 25 July 2017, [URL](#)

⁴⁶ BBC, 'Turkey profile – media,' 25 July 2017, [URL](#)

⁴⁷ BBC, 'Turkey profile – media,' 25 July 2017, [URL](#)

⁴⁸ USSD HR Report 2017, Turkey, Section 6, 20 April 2018, [URL](#)

5.1.2 For further information, see:

- [Turkish Citizenship Law](#).
- See Country Policy and Information Note on [Turkey: Gülenist movement](#) for information about the withdrawal of passports, and subsequent statelessness, for some of those suspected of involvement in Gülenism.

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Section 6 updated: 13 December 2018

6. Official documents

- 6.1.1 The Nüfus Kayıt Örneği (or Nüfus Aile Tablosu) is a document of birth record or an extract of civil registry. It can be used to prove a person's identity when applying for a visa, a job, a pension, or employment.⁴⁹ Further detail is available in this [information response](#) published by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada in September 2016.
- 6.1.2 The Nüfus Cüzdanı, Nüfus Hukuk Cüzdanı or Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Nüfus Cüzdanı is an identification document carried by all Turkish citizens. It is the main form of identification used in Turkey and it is mandatory to have one. The card is required in order to work, access health and social services, register to vote, access Turkish courts, obtain a passport or driver's licence, register for school and university, own property and/or a vehicle, and to obtain phone, internet, and home utilities.⁵⁰
- 6.1.3 Further information, including details of the electronic form of the card, is available in this [information response](#) published by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada in June 2015.⁵¹
- 6.1.4 The website for the [US Embassies and Consulates in Turkey](#) provides information about marriage documents and divorce certificates.

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⁴⁹ Canadian IRB, TUR105610.E, 13 September 2016, [URL](#)

⁵⁰ Canadian IRB, TUR105166.E, 12 June 2015, [URL](#)

⁵¹ Canadian IRB, TUR105166.E, 12 June 2015, [URL](#)

Key issues relevant to protection claims

Section 7 updated: 5 December 2018

7. Alevi

- 7.1.1 'Alevi' is the term used for a large number of heterodox (holding unorthodox opinions) Muslim Shi'a communities with different characteristics. Alevi constitute the largest religious minority in Turkey. For further information, see Country Policy and Information Note on [Turkey: Alevi](#).

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Section 8 updated: 16 January 2019

8. Children

8.1 Education

- 8.1.1 In Turkey, 39% of adults aged 25-64 have completed upper secondary education, much lower than the OECD average of 74% and one of the lowest rates in the OECD.⁵²
- 8.1.2 Turkey's performance in mathematics, reading and science has improved markedly since 2003, when Turkey was among the lowest-performing OECD countries. A main driver for these improvements was the Basic Education Programme, launched in 1998, which included a compulsory education law. Since the launch of this programme, the attendance rate among primary students increased from around 85% to nearly 100%, while the attendance rate in pre-primary programmes increased from 10% to 25%.⁵³
- 8.1.3 Several projects implemented over the past decade have addressed equity issues. These include the Girls to Schools Now campaign, that aims to ensure that all girls aged 6 to 14 attend primary school; a registry to identify non-schooled children; the Education with Transport programme, which benefits students who have no access to school; and the Complementary Transitional Training Programme, which tries to ensure that 10-14 year-olds acquire a basic education even if they have never been enrolled in a school or if they had dropped out of school.⁵⁴
- 8.1.4 For further information, see:
- [Education at a Glance 2018, Turkey](#), published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which includes information about male/female and regional educational differences.⁵⁵
 - [How's life? 2017, Turkey](#), published by the OECD.
 - [Education Under Attack 2018](#), published by the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack.

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⁵² OECD, 'How's Life? 2017,' Turkey, Education, undated, [URL](#)

⁵³ OECD, 'How's Life? 2017,' Turkey, Education, undated, [URL](#)

⁵⁴ OECD, 'How's Life? 2017,' Turkey, Education, undated, [URL](#)

⁵⁵ OECD, 'Education at a Glance 2018,' Turkey, Country note, undated, [URL](#)

8.2 Child abuse

- 8.2.1 The US State Department report for 2017 noted that ‘child abuse was a problem’. The law authorizes police and local officials to grant various levels of protection and support services to victims of violence or to those at risk of violence. It requires the government to provide services to victims, such as shelter and temporary financial support, and empowers family courts to impose sanctions on those responsible for the violence⁵⁶.
- 8.2.2 See also the joint report by The Williams Institute/UCLA School of Law/All Survivors Project ["Destroyed from within," sexual violence against men and boys in Syria and Turkey](#), published in September 2018.
- 8.2.3 See U.S. Department of State report on [‘Trafficking in Persons Report 2018: Country Narratives: Turkey’](#), published in June 2018.

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8.3 Child labour

- 8.3.1 Children in Turkey perform dangerous tasks in seasonal agricultural work and in small and medium manufacturing enterprises. Although the government has made meaningful efforts to improve the situation, provisions related to the minimum age for work do not meet international standards.⁵⁷
- 8.3.2 For further information, see the US Department of Labor’s report, [2017 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor](#).⁵⁸

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8.4 Forced and underage marriage

- 8.4.1 See the Country Policy and Information Note on [Turkey: Women fearing gender-based violence](#).

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Section 9 updated: 5 December 2018

9. Gülenist movement

- 9.1.1 See Country Policy and Information Note on [Turkey: Gülenist movement](#).

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Section 10 updated: 3 September 2019

10. Human rights defenders

- 10.1.1 The DFAT 2018 report noted that Article 33 of the Constitution guarantees the right to form associations but allows for restrictions of this right by law on national security grounds. The report went on to say:

‘Several organisations in Turkey advocate for human rights and conduct other civil society activities. These groups have public profiles including websites, and publish reports in Turkish and English that are often highly critical of the government. Measures taken under the state of emergency,

⁵⁶ USSD HR Report 2017, Turkey, Section 6, 20 April 2018, [URL](#)

⁵⁷ US DoL, ‘2017 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor,’ Turkey, 20 September 2018, [URL](#)

⁵⁸ US DoL, ‘2017 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor,’ Turkey, 20 September 2018, [URL](#)

however, have significantly limited their ability to function. Many human rights defenders have either ceased their activities altogether or significantly wound them back, including by self-censoring their reports. International human rights observers have expressed strong concerns that a reduction in human rights monitoring, combined with the granting of extensive additional powers to security forces...increases the likelihood of human rights violations.’⁵⁹

10.1.2 The International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) reported in July 2019:

‘Over the past two decades, the not-for-profit sector in Turkey has grown in size and played a significant role in providing services and contributing to the democratization of the country. There has been a roughly 50 percent increase in civil society organizations’ membership and activity since 2000. As of July 2019, there are around 117, 290 associations and 4,915 new foundations (established after the Republic) operating alongside many informal organizations, such as platforms, initiatives, and groups. Their areas of work are mostly concentrated in social solidarity, social services, education, health, and various rights-based issues.’⁶⁰

10.1.3 In the 2019 Turkey Report, published 29 May 2019, The European Commission stated:

‘There has been serious backsliding regarding civil society as it has come under continuous pressure, notably in the face of a large number of arrests of activists, including human rights defenders. There is also public stigmatisation of independent civil society organisations and a recurrent use of bans of demonstrations and other types of gatherings. The space for civil society organisations working on fundamental rights and freedoms has further shrunk...However, civil society has remained active and involved in public life as far as possible. Pro-government organisations continued to gain a more visible role and opportunities for representation.’⁶¹

10.1.4 For further information see:

- Amnesty International, [Turkey: Deepening backslide in human rights: Amnesty International submission for the UN Universal Periodic Review, 35th Session of the UPR Working Group](#), August 2019
- International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, [Country profile on legal issues affecting NGOs](#), 12 July 2019
- United States Department of State, [Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2018, Turkey](#), 13 March 2019 (Section 5. Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Abuses of Human Rights)
- European Commission, [Turkey 2019 Report](#), 29 May 2019 (Section 2, Fundamentals First: Political Criteria and Rule of Law Chapters)
- Council of Europe - Parliamentary Assembly, [Report on the situation of opposition politicians and the state of democracy](#), 22 January 2019, and

⁵⁹ DFAT, Country Information Report, Turkey, Human Rights Defenders, 9 October 2018, [URL](#)

⁶⁰ INCL, ‘Civic Freedom Monitor: Turkey’, 12 July 2019, [URL](#)

⁶¹ European Commission, Turkey report, 29 May 2019, [URL](#)

[Turkey needs to put an end to arbitrariness in the judiciary and to protect human rights defenders](#), 8 July 2019

- Human Rights Watch, [World Report 2019, Turkey](#), 17 January 2019 (Human Right Defenders)
- Australian Department of Foreign Affairs (DFAT), [Country Information Report, Turkey](#) (section 3.57-3.60), 9 October 2018

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Section 11 updated: 5 December 2018

11. Kurdish issues

- 11.1.1 See Country Policy and Information Notes on [Turkey: Kurds](#), [Turkey: Kurdistan Worker's Party \(PKK\)](#) and [Turkey: Kurdish political parties](#).

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Section 12 updated: 7 June 2021

12. Medical and healthcare provision

- 12.1.1 See Country Policy and Information Note on [Turkey: Medical and healthcare provision](#).

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Section 13 updated: 5 December 2018

13. Military service

- 13.1.1 See Country Policy and Information Note on [Turkey: Military service](#).

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Section 14 updated: 13 December 2018

14. Political system

- 14.1.1 [Constitution of the Republic of Turkey \(consolidated as of 2001\)](#)⁶².
- 14.1.2 Following the elections of June 2018, Turkey moved from a parliamentary to a presidential system, giving President Erdogan new powers. Further information is available on the [BBC website](#). This article also includes information about the other parties taking part in the elections and their results and comment about the fairness of the elections⁶³.
- 14.1.3 Further information about the parties which took part in the elections of 24 June 2018 is available on the [TRT website](#).⁶⁴
- 14.1.4 See Country Policy and Information Notes on [Turkey: Kurdistan Worker's Party \(PKK\)](#) and [Turkey: Kurdish political parties](#).

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15. Sexual orientation and gender identity

⁶² Constitution of the Republic of Turkey (consolidated as of 2001), 17 October 2001, [URL](#)

⁶³ BBC News, 'Turkey election: Erdogan win ushers in new presidential era,' 25 June 2018, [URL](#)

⁶⁴ TRT World, 'Turkey elections 2018: Understanding the political parties,' 23 June 2018, [URL](#)

- 15.1.1 See Country Policy and Information Note on [Turkey: Sexual orientation and gender identity](#).

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16. Women

- 16.1.1 See Country Policy and Information Note on [Turkey: Women fearing gender-based violence](#).
- 16.1.2 See also the October 2018 publication by the Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence's report '[Baseline Evaluation Report Turkey](#)'.

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Version control

Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **5.0**
- valid from **9 June 2021**

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Changes from last version of this note

Minor amendments made.

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