Turkish Soft Power and Public Diplomacy in Western Thrace and the Dodecanese

Political attitudes[1]

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Abstract

Soft power was adopted by the AKP as the main pillar of Turkish FP within the "Strategic Depth" doctrine that Ahmet Davutoglu envisaged. Emphasis was placed on soft power policies and establishment of public diplomacy agencies which would form an integral part of Turkish Grand Strategy. Turkish soft power is exercised on the Muslim minorities of Western Thrace and the Dodecanese. Turkey employs strategic communication to reach the new imagination it aspires to foster. Its actors strive to project Turkey's story and nation brand.[2] According to Ibrahim Kalin: "The task of the new Turkish Public Diplomacy is to tell the story of the new Turkey to a wide-ranging audience across the globe. As Turkey overcomes its old fears and builds a new identity for itself, the process of change transforming the country will have a deep impact on Turkish domestic and foreign policy."[3] As a result of the effort to promote the brand Turkey, great care to establish public diplomacy agencies, has been taken. The reorientation of Turkish politics ensured that the Turkish diaspora society would be

[1] **This is a draft manuscript, please do not circulate or cite without the authors' permission.**
[2] Gaye Asli Sancar, *Turkey's Public Diplomacy : its Actors, Stakeholders and Tools,* in Turkey's Public Diplomacy ed. Senem Cevik and Philip Seib, (NY, Palgrave, 2015),15
[3] Ibrahim Kalin, Soft Power and Public Diplomacy in Turkey, Perceptions, Autumn 2011, Volume 16, pp.5-23

continually influenced by various Turkish organizations regarding language, identity and culture.[4]

This paper is focusing on the response of Muslim communities of Western Thrace on soft power policies and public diplomacy. More specifically, minority attitudes on political issues will be analyzed.

keywords: soft power, Western Thrace Muslim minority, Dodecanese.

[4] Huseyin Cicek, Neo-Ottoman Soft Power: AKP's Strategic Use of Turkish-Islamic Organizations in the German -Speaking Diaspora, ZFAS, Accessed 19April 2024

Soft Power and Public Diplomacy

In his book "Bound to Lead, The Changing Nature of American Power," Nye introduces soft power as the force of the ability to attract and persuade, to make others desire to follow you, to identify themselves with you, to be like you because they feel that their survival and international standing go through your acceptance and your approach. Soft power entails attraction, appeal, admiration, even love. There is no coercion and violence, countries and policy makers follow your example because they want to, because they have been convinced that there is no other way. The leader who exercises soft power applies democratic practice, represents values that people want to adopt and, under his protective presence, survive in the international system. Consent is a key word.[5]Legitimacy, another. In the words of Erdogan's foreign policy adviser Ibrahim Kalin "political legitimacy has become an integral part of international relations in the 21st century."[6]

Early in 2006 Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense, said of the Bush Administration's global war on terror, "In this war, some of the most critical battles may not be in the mountains of Afghanistan or the streets of Iraq but in newsrooms in New York, Cairo, London and elsewhere"[7]. The Edward R. Murrow Center of Public diplomacy, in one of its early brochures, provided a definition and summary objective of what Edmund Gullion, Dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University called "Public Diplomacy" back in 1965: ""Public diplomacy deals with the influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies. It encompasses dimensions of international relations beyond traditional diplomacy; the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries; the interaction of

[5]Joseph Nye, *The Power to Lead* (Athens: Papazisis, 2009), 49.
[6]Ibrahim Kalin, "Soft Power and Public Diplomacy in Turkey," *PERCEPTIONS: Journal of International Affairs* 16 (2011): 5–23.
[7]Joseph Nye, *The Future of Power*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2011), 24.

private groups and interests in one country with another; the reporting of foreign affairs and its impact on policy; communication between those whose job is communication, as diplomats and foreign correspondents; and the process of intercultural communications."[8] According to Nicholas Cull, a University of Southern California historian, public diplomacy is based on five elements of statecraft that complete the list of tasks that every public diplomacy should implement : listening to the foreign audience; advocacy, mobilizing the consent or blunt the criticism from the foreign audience; cultural diplomacy; student exchange diplomacy and international broadcasting.[9]

A short history of the minorities

The Treaty of Lausanne

The Treaty of Lausanne, which stills dictates the relationship between Greece and Turkey was signed on July 24th, 1923. The Convention of Population Exchange was to be a landmark for the history of both countries, since it shaped their geography and their population. One year after the signing of the agreement, 700,000 people were forced to relocate and refugee status was granted to over a million people that were forced to abandon their homeland since the Balkan Wars in 1912-1913. For the Greek Government it was an epilogue to their tragic departure from Asia Minor, for the Turkish one it was a new beginning.[10] Riza Nur, member of the Turkish delegation to Lausanne, wrote in his memoirs: "The most significant development was that all these people who had weakened the country over the centuries, either by organizing

[8]Nicholas Cull, "Public Diplomacy before Gullion," in *The Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy*, ed. Nancy Snow and Philip Taylor (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 19.
[9]Nicholas Cull, "How We Got Here," in *Towards a New Public Diplomacy: Redirecting U.S. Foreign Policy*, ed. Philip Seib (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 24.
[1010] Onur Yildirim, *The 1923 Population Exchange* in Greek- Turkey Population Exchange, ed. Konstantinos Tsitselikis, (Athens : Kritiki, 2006) 68.

rebellions or siding with foreign states, would be forced to leave. As a result, the creation of a solely Turkish state was an enormous responsibility."[11] Venizelos, on the other hand, saw it as an "agreement whereby the Muslim population of Greece would leave since the Christian population of the Ottoman Empire had already been forced to abandon their homeland".[12]

The upheaval in the lives of nearly 2 million people was enormous and in many cases the population objected to their relocation, especially in areas where they were asked to do so peacefully. It was a blatant violation of human rights. According to Onur Yildirim, " After the abolition of the principal institution in charge of implementing the Convention, namely the Mixed Commission, on December 28,1933 the refugees on both sides, with their pending social, economic and political problems, were pushed to the background of history, a development that found its expression in the political rhetoric of the ruling elite and the historical discourse of the newly fashioned national biographies of both countries".[13]

Both Greeks and Turks experienced great challenges during the first quarter of the 20th century, experiences that were to largely dictate the events of the next decades. The formation of different narratives will be taken into consideration while examining the plight and the adversities of both nationalities.

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[11] A.Aktar, *Homogenizing the Nation, Turkifying the Economy: The Turkish Experience of Population Exchange Reconsidered* in Hirschon R. (ed) Crossing the Aegean: An Appraisal of the 1923 Compulsory Population Exchange Between Greece and Turkey (New York- Oxford: Bergham Books, 2003) 87.

[12] Atlantis newspaper, New York, 18.3.1929.

[13] Onur Yildirim, The 1923 Population Exchange in Greek- Turkey Population Exchange, ed. Konstantinos Tsitselikis, (Athens : Kritiki, 2006) 87.

Demographic details

Between the Balkan Wars and WW1, the number of Muslim refugees who arrived in Anatolia and Istanbul amounted to 413,922 . The Director of the Department of Tribes and Refugees, Hamid Bey, on March 12, 1917, stated that the number of refugees in the Ottoman-held areas had reached 700,000 since the outbreak of WW1.[14] By the end of the Convention of Population Exchange another 388,146 Muslims would also flee for a country which was in a deplorable state. In fact, on November 10,1923 Ismet Pasa himself announced in the Grand Assembly that "the exchange problem is a matter of life for us. It is the most urgent and greatest problem of our state. It is a matter that our politics cannot neglect, and it has put us in great need and sorrow."[15]

At the same time, the number of Greeks who arrived in Greece since the beginning of the Balkan Wars was 535,000. By the end of 1928 1,104,216 people of Greek origin came from Thrace, Asia Minor, Pontus and Istanbul.[16]

The second article of the convention would prove to be the most controversial one since according to it, "the Greek inhabitants of Constantinople and the Moslem inhabitants of Western Thrace shall not be included in the population exchange".[17] This state of affairs has been a landmark for Greek-Turkish differences and a definitive point of friction. These people's lives would never again be the same and their status would determine their life forever. Nevertheless, their fate was not the same. In 1922, there were 115,000 Muslims in W.Thrace and now they are 125,000. Out of the 120,000 Greeks, about 2,000 still live in Istanbul. The evacuation procedure was not easily

[14] Justin McCarthy, *The Muslim Refugees in Turkey,* in Population History of the Middle East and the Balkans(New York :Gorgias Press,2010)96
[15] Onur Yildirim, The 1923 Population Exchange in Greek- Turkey Population Exchange, ed. Konstantinos Tsitselikis, (Athens : Kritiki, 2006) 101.
[16] A.A Pallis, Collection of Main Statistics of Population Exchange. (Athens 1929)4.
[17] Lausanne Conference, 818.

safeguarded, and a humanitarian crisis ensued, at least as far as the Greek refugees are concerned. As for the Muslims, with the exception of those from Western Thrace who were evicted by the Greek troops, they were boarded on ships from various ports of Greece in a less tense environment and under relatively better conditions.[18]

For the casual reader, this is just a small paragraph in terms of world history. However, both sides have their own story to tell and since the outcome of the narrative is still relevant regarding identity and social conduct, they will be taken into consideration.

Western Thrace Muslim Minority

Ibrahim Kalin contends that Muslims in the West, be it immigrants, converted to Islam or second and third generation citizens, are "important actors and have a significant role to play". He calls such communities "Islam Diaspora" [19]. Minorities in Thrace, as minorities in the Balkans in general, are vestiges of the once thriving Ottoman Empire and reminders of the multicultural character of the area before the domination of the nation state. The Muslim population of Thrace before the Treaty of Lausanne was as follows:

Turks 76,45%, Pomaks 19,76%, Roma, 2,11% Circassians 1,68% and the total population was 118.903.

In article 45 of the Treaty of Lausanne, Greece agreed to grant certain rights to the Muslims remaining in its territory. 106.000 Muslims remained within the communities of Komotini, Xanthi and Didimoticho.

The word most frequently uttered by Greece and Turkey regarding their Muslim and non-Muslim minorities respectively, is most probably 'reciprocity' and this word has

[18] Onur Yildirim, The 1923 Population Exchange in Greek- Turkey Popopulation Exchange, ed. Konstantinos Tsitselikis, (Athens : Kritiki, 2006) 129.
[19] Ibrahim Kalin, *Islam and the West,* (Athens: Papazisi, 2012)45

been used by administrators in both states to restrict the minority rights of the two communities, thus holding their own citizens hostage.[20]

The Pomaks and the Roma

Pomaks are a population group distributed in Greece and Bulgaria and the estimated number in Greece is 35000-45000 in the prefectures of Xanthi and Komotini. Historians report that Pomaks' conversion to Islam started in the 16th century under Selim I. According to DNA analyses and HLA genes frequencies, the population groups that are genetically closer to the Pomaks are Bulgarians and Greeks[21]

There was a strong population of Roma in Thrace even before the Treaty of Lausanne. Turkish policy in the region, taking advantage of the terrible economic status of the Roma, tried to assimilate them, offering them a strong identity, a sense of belonging and, often, economic assistance. [22]

The Dodecanese Muslim Minority

Muslims have been living in Rhodes and Kos since 1522, as subjects of the Ottoman Empire. In the late 19th and 20th centuries, significant numbers of Muslims of Turkish origin settled on these islands[23]. In 1912, when the Dodecanese islands were ceded to Italy, there was an estimated Muslim population of 11.000. After the incorporation of the Dodecanese into the Greek state in 1947, the great majority became Greek citizens. Although they were not officially recognized as a minority, they were given special status for the waqf and the Turkish schools, of which there were nine in Rhodes and

[20] Konstantinos Tsitselikis, *Old and New Islam in Greece,*(London, Martinus Nijhoft Publishers, 2012)52
[21] Angelos Syrigos, *Greek-Turkish Relations,* (Athens, Patakis, 2014) 206
[22] Anastasios Lavrentzos, *Thrace at a Threshold,* (Athens, Pragmatia, 2013)23
[23] Konstantinos Tsitselikis,*Old and New Islam in Greece: From Historical Minorities to Immigrant Newcomers* (Leiden: Brill,2011)

three in Kos.[24] The Greek population census of 1951 listed 4750 Muslims in the Dodecanese. In total, 10.000 migrated to Turkey since -on account of the Cyprus conflict- life became difficult for them. One of the first actions undertaken by the Greek administration was to abolish the funding of Turkish teachers.[25] Discrimination in the fields of health and education, sabotage of shops, fields and cattle were common.[26] It has been suggested that the Muslims in Kos and Rhodes, who have not been protected by international treaties have been the most severely affected by tensions between the two countries and this is the reason they were more easily integrated than the Muslims in W. Thrace. The cosmopolitan nature of the islands as well as the globalization processes and the promise of economic prosperity through tourism made a peaceful coexistence possible. Today about 3000 live in Rhodes, scattered around the island and 1500 in Kos, concentrated in the city of Kos and the village Platani(Germe in Turkish). Turkish is hardly spoken. The Muslims of both islands have difficulty in keeping their identity.[27]

[24] Marianthi Georgalidou and Konstantinos Tsitselikis(eds) *Linguistic and Community Otherness in 20th Century Dodecanese* (Athens: KEMO, Papazisi,2016) p.361-395
[25] Mustafa Kaymakci, Rodos ve İstanköy Türklüğü Ansiklopedisi. İzmir: Rodos ve Onikiada Türkleri Kültür ve Dayanışma Derneği Yayınları.
[26] Kira Kayrikonski, The ethnic Turks in Kos and Rhodes: Reflections on Culture and Rights, in T*he Forgotten Turkish Identity of the Aegean Island: The Turkish Identity in Rhodes and Kos,* ed Mustafa Kaymakci and Cihan Ozgun, (Konya:Egitim, 2018) 131
[27] Mustafa Kaymakci and Cihan Ozgun,*The Recent History of the Rhodes and Kos Turks,* (Izmir: Karsiyaka,2015)71

This research will attempt to cover the districts of

a. Evros (Municipality of Didimotychon)
b. Xanthi
c. Rodopi
d. the Islands of Rhodes and Kos

Evros	146582
Xanthi	110868
Rodopi	109447
Rhodes	124581
Kos	36986

2021 census.

The sub-group on which the research will focus are the permanent residents of the above-mentioned districts which have been named Muslim minorities.

Evros	9000
Xanthi	42000
Rodopi	66000
Rhodes	3500
Kos	2000

This is a breakdown of the questionnaires conducted in Thrace and the Dodecanese.

			sex		Place of Residence		Age range				
		%	M	F	Thrace	Dodecanese	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69
Evros	***20***	**6,3**	6,1	6,5	7,6	0,0	6,9	3,6	6,6	10,0	16,7
Xanthi	***128***	**40,1**	45,9	30,8	48,5	0,0	62,5	54,6	21,1	12,5	16,7
Rodopi	***116***	**36,4**	31,1	44,7	43,9	0,0	12,5	32,7	57,9	62,5	16,7
Kos	***22***	**6,9**	5,1	9,8	0,0	50,0	5,6	6,4	7,9	7,5	8,3
Rhodes	***22***	**6,9**	8,2	4,9	0,0	50,0	8,3	2,7	3,9	7,5	33,3
No answer	***11***	**3,4**	3,6	3,3	0,0	0,0	4,2	0,0	2,6	0,0	8,3

We have also conducted interviews with minority leaders in the following fashion:

	male	female
Evros		1
Xanthi	4	4
Rodopi	6	
Kos		2
Rhodes	1	

The nature of the population and the specific, sensitive circumstances should be taken into consideration, which was a major difficulty of the research.

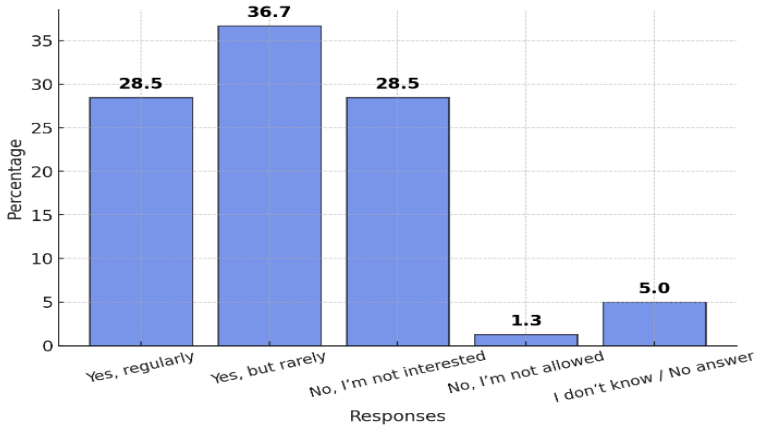
Access to Turkish culture

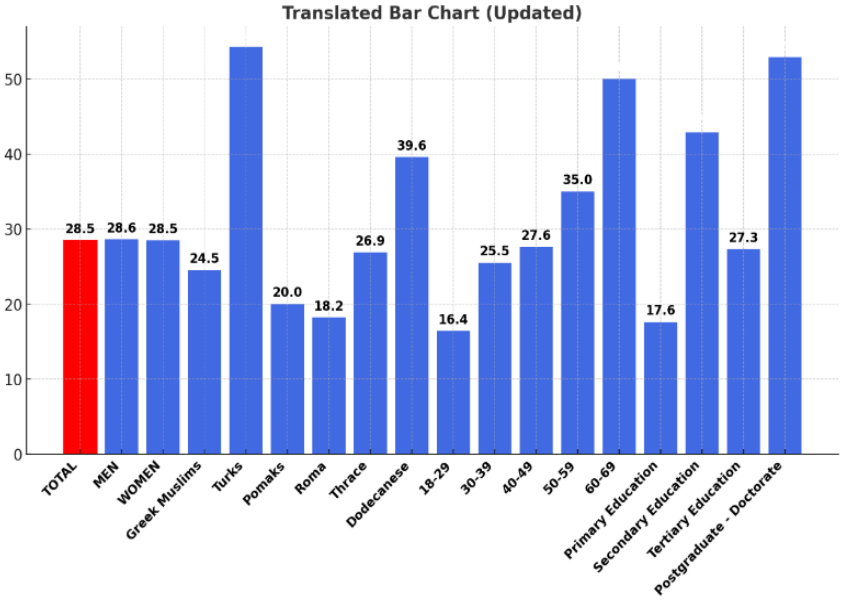
In the past, there were complaints on the part of the minority that access to Turkish soft power was denied by the Greek authorities, or severely obstructed. Nowadays, this claim seems to be invalid, and the only complaints focus on lack of educational tools, poor facilities and shortage of teaching staff. Factors that are present in the whole spectrum of the Greek education system, however. Turkish culture has been prominent in the areas examined since Ottoman years and indeed though the AKP years when Turkish soft power has become a strategic tool of Turkish diplomacy, it has an enhanced presence in everyday life. Answers to the question will indicate the initial level of engagement of the minority to Turkish culture. Overall, the data illustrates that most people in the sample engage with Turkish culture, and among ethno-religious groups, self-identified Turks demonstrate the strongest regular access, while Greek Muslims, Pomaks, and Roma display more mixed or occasional engagement. Looking at the table, 28.5% of respondents say they have regular access to Turkish culture, and 36.7% report having rare access. Another 28.5% of respondents state they are not interested in having such access. These findings suggest that around two-thirds (65.2%) of participants enjoy some form of access to Turkish culture, whether frequent or infrequent, whereas nearly a third remain uninterested. “Especially in the villages, access to any form of culture is the TV, Turkish TV in particular”, Murat, a 35-year-old Pomak teacher explains.

Among self-identified Greek Muslims, about 24.5% have regular access and 36.4% rare access, while 34.8% are not interested. Self-identified as Turkish respondents display the highest percentage of regular access (54.3%) and a substantial share of rare access (43.5%), suggesting a stronger link between their own ethnic background and readiness or ability to engage with Turkish culture.

Pomaks report rare access (41.8%), while 20.0% have regular access and 32.7% are not interested. The Roma category has small numbers, but the data indicates that 45.5% access Turkish culture rarely, while 27.3% do not show interest.

Younger participants (18–29) register 26.4% regular and 36.1% rare access, while “Yes, but rarely” leads at 36.1%, with “Yes, regularly” following at 26.4%. Around 30.6% express disinterest. Ages 30–39 portray a similar tendency, with “Yes, but rarely” at 35.5% and “No, not interested” at 31.8%. “Yes, regularly” stays around 25.5%.In Ages 40–49 “Yes, but rarely” peaks at 42.1%.“Yes, regularly” remains at 27.6%, reflecting moderate regular participation. In Ages 50–59 “Yes, but rarely” reaches 45.0%.“Yes, regularly” rises to 35.0%, showing a noticeable core of frequent engagers. In Ages 60–69 & 70–79 “Yes, regularly” surges to 50% and 60%, respectively. However, there is also heightened disinterest (up to 40%) in the oldest bracket. Overall, younger groups have rare engagement, while older respondents are more polarized between consistent participation and outright disinterest.





Most importantly, while the main complaint of the minorities in the past was denial of access on the part of the Greek authorities, this is not valid any longer. Interestingly, around 2/3 of the minority enjoy some access to Turkish culture, with self-identified as Turks leading. There is an unexpectedly high percentage in the Dodecanese, where people are regarded as more westernized. The elderly's percentage is also peaking, which shows a warmer attitude to Turkish culture than younger ages.

Minority Associations. Do people participate in their activities?

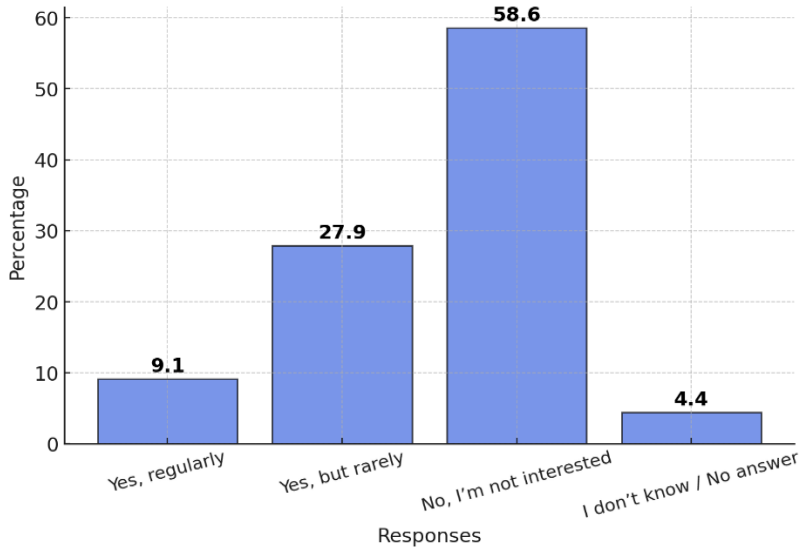
Minority associations have been the main pillar of public diplomacy and as in all minority cases, they are entrusted with maintaining a spirit of the "mother country" and an effort to sustain patriotism and a sense of belonging. The Turkish consulates are active both in Thrace and the Dodecanese, assisting the associations in various ways, providing a bridge between them and Turkey. At the same time, and with the forces of globalization more ubiquitous than ever, this is a war all diasporas give across the globe, and it is a difficult one.

Overall, participation in Turkish minority associations is not extremely widespread, with only around 9.1% of all respondents regularly involved. A further 27.9% participate rarely, while the bulk—58.6%—are uninterested. Turkish-identifying individuals stand out for their high participation rates, while other groups remain more detached. Age and educational levels both influence participation in nuanced ways, but the gist is that engagement is modest, and a significant majority opts out entirely. This finding underscores the niche role these associations may play within the broader social landscape, as well as the strong connection between self-identified Turks and minority organizations. Mr. Ozan, a former politician says: "I do go to the associations events, it is a great opportunity to get together with old friends and relatives"[28]. "The young do not participate in our events, unfortunately, they are attracted to the western lifestyle"[29], Mr. Mustafa, a village Imam, adds. Asli, a 33-year old doctor says " Very few young people participate in associations, and they mainly want to gain something from the consulate"[30], Asli, a self-identified Greek says. On the other hand, Banou, who

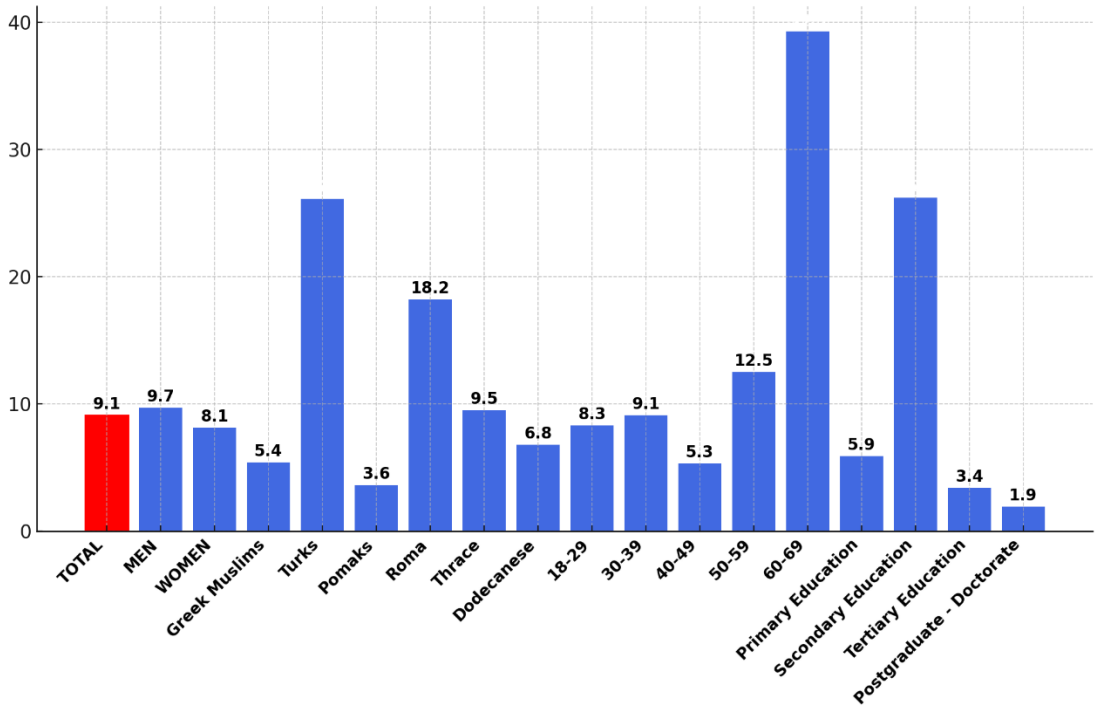
[28] Interviewee no.14, Xanthi
[29] Interviewee no.2, Rodopi
[30] Interviewee no.12, Xanthi

identifies herself as Turkish, says “Yes, I do try and take part in the associations and the events they organize. They guarantee our solidarity. If they are gone, then our identity will be gone, our people will be gone”[31]. Mr. Selim a 50-year-old teacher says that the Consulate is behind the various Muslim organizations and they people who run them get paid by the Turkish government[32].

It is obvious that the associations are more popular in Thrace, where there are more choices and opportunities. However, the not interested section is the dominant trend with 58% in Thrace and a striking 70,5% in the Dodecanese. Mrs. Elvan, says that the Association in Kos has about 40 members, most of whom have properties in Turkey and only want to get on with the Turks.”[33]

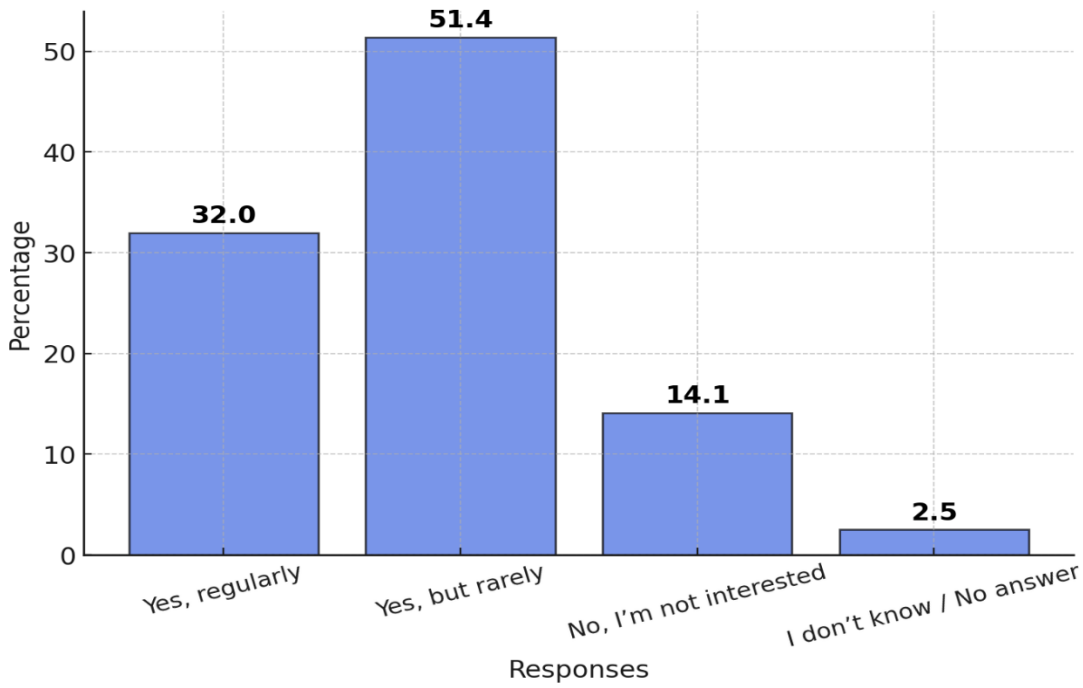


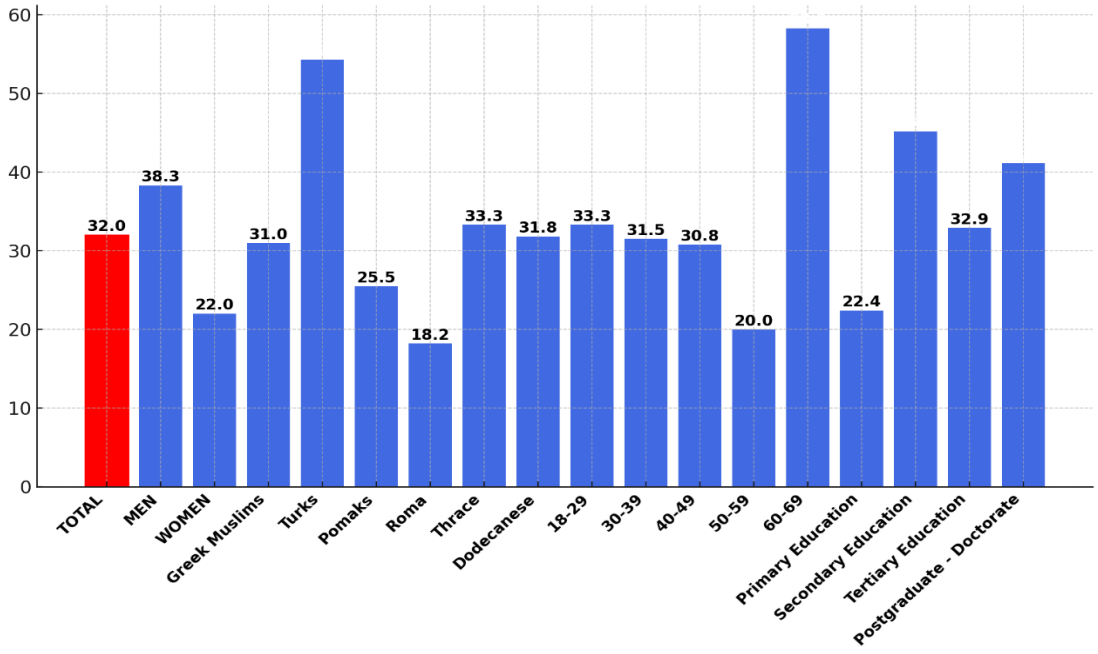
[31] Interviewee no13, Xanthi.
[32] Interviewee no.1, Rodopi
[33] Interviewee no.16, Kos.



Most importantly, minority associations are obviously in decline and their appeal is based predominantly on older individuals self-identified as Turks. All evidence points to that direction but again this is a sign of the times in a globalized world. The minority is polarized between the ones who are partial to the Consulate and the minority associations and the ones who shun both. The latter ones think that religion is the only aspect of their lives that distinguishes them from the Greek Christians.

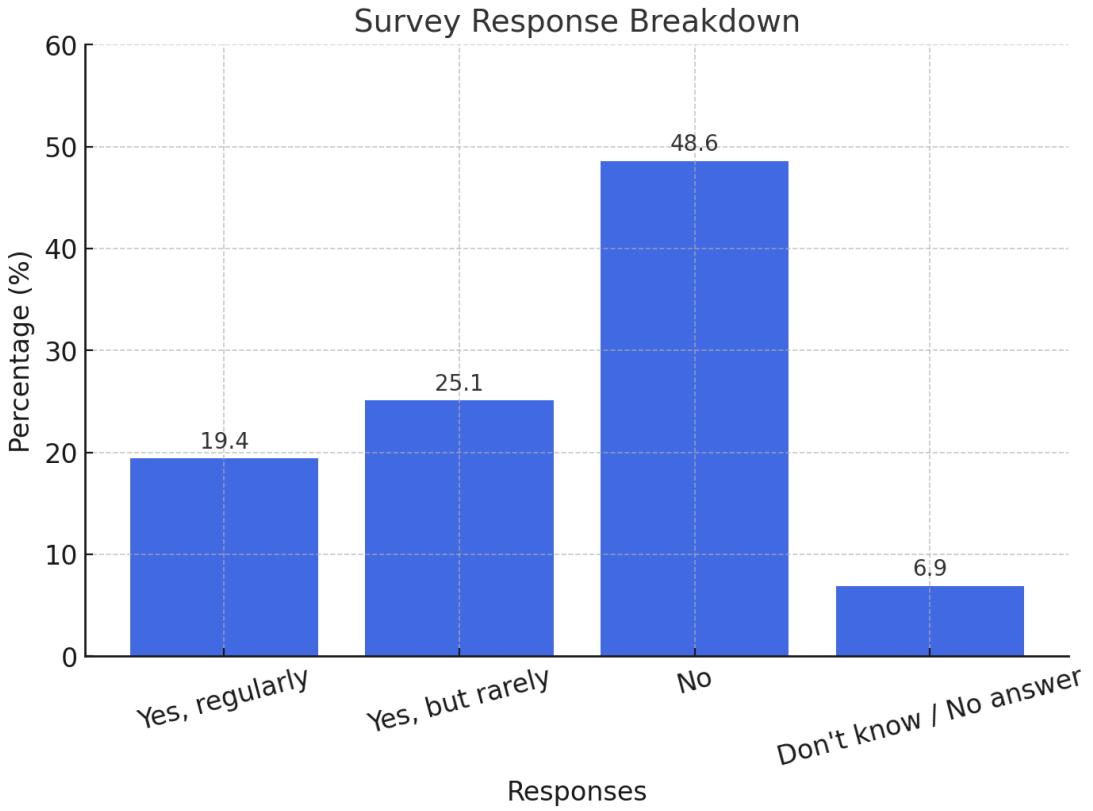
Do you attend religious ceremonies at the mosque?

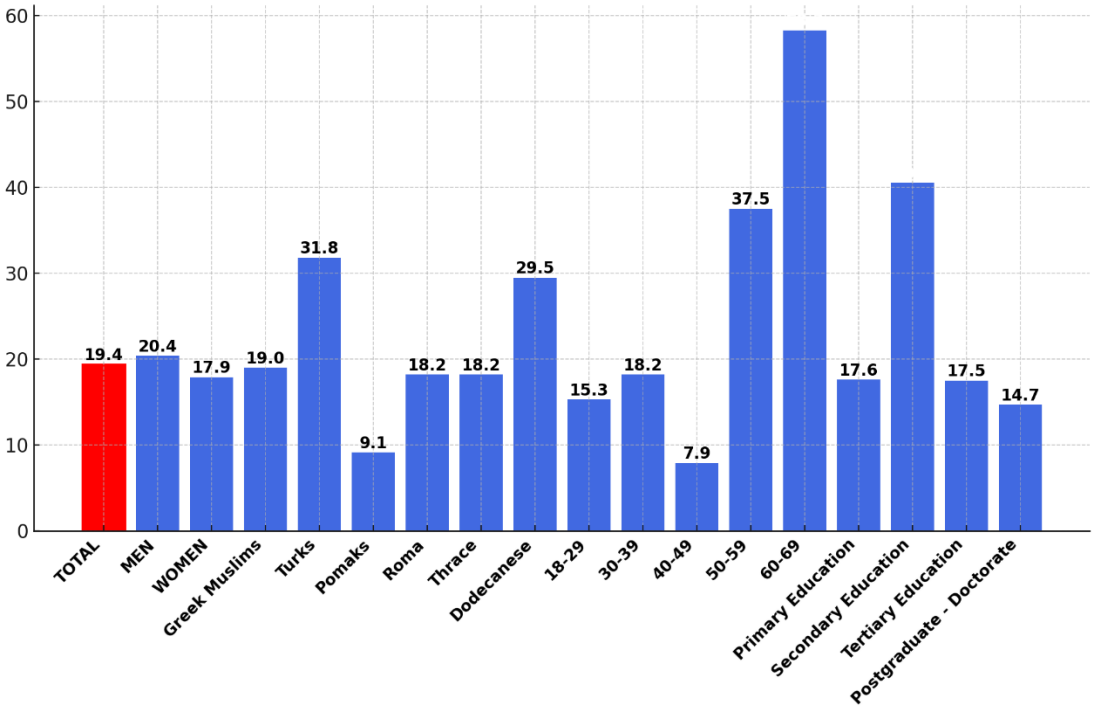




Looking at the total (first column), 32.0% of respondents state they attend mosque ceremonies regularly, and 51.4% attend but rarely. This means that more than four in five people (83.4%) visit the mosque for religious ceremonies at least occasionally. Meanwhile, 14.1% are simply not interested, and a small fraction (2.5%) do not know or prefer not to answer. This high combined rate of attendance (regularly or rarely) suggests a strong overall engagement with religious life among respondents and makes religion a pillar of their identity.

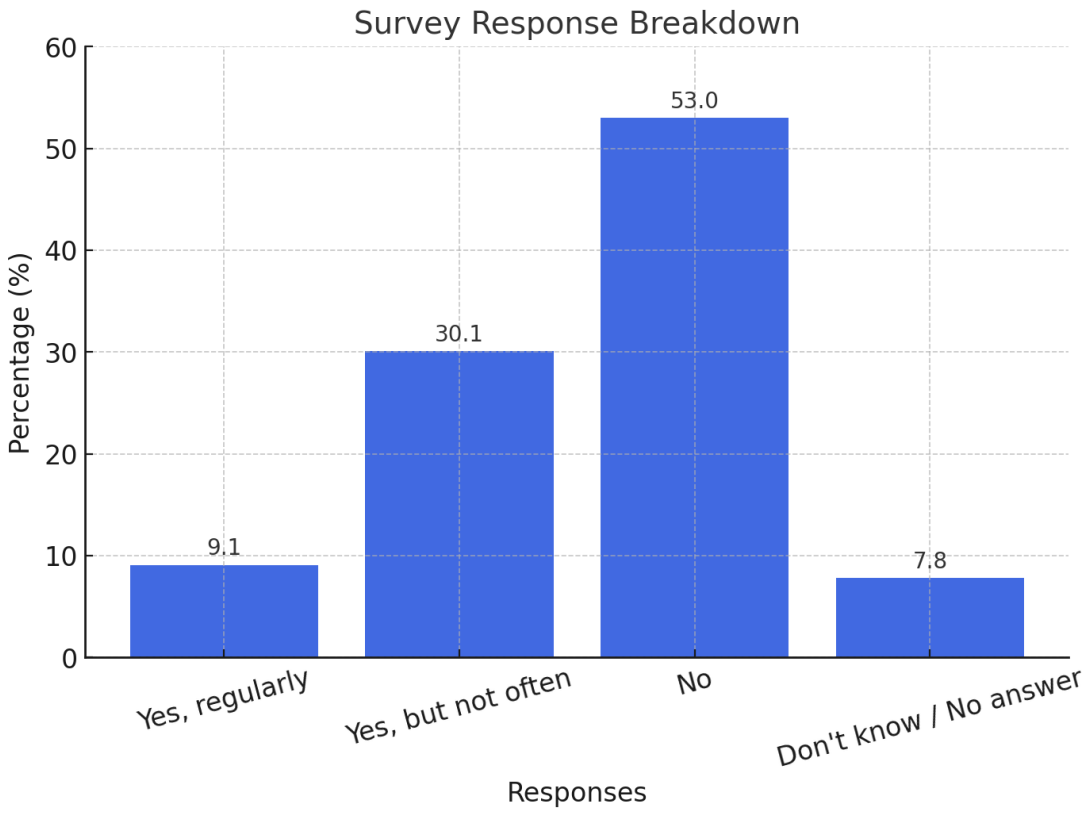
Do you regularly watch Turkish news on TV or listen to Turkish radio stations?"





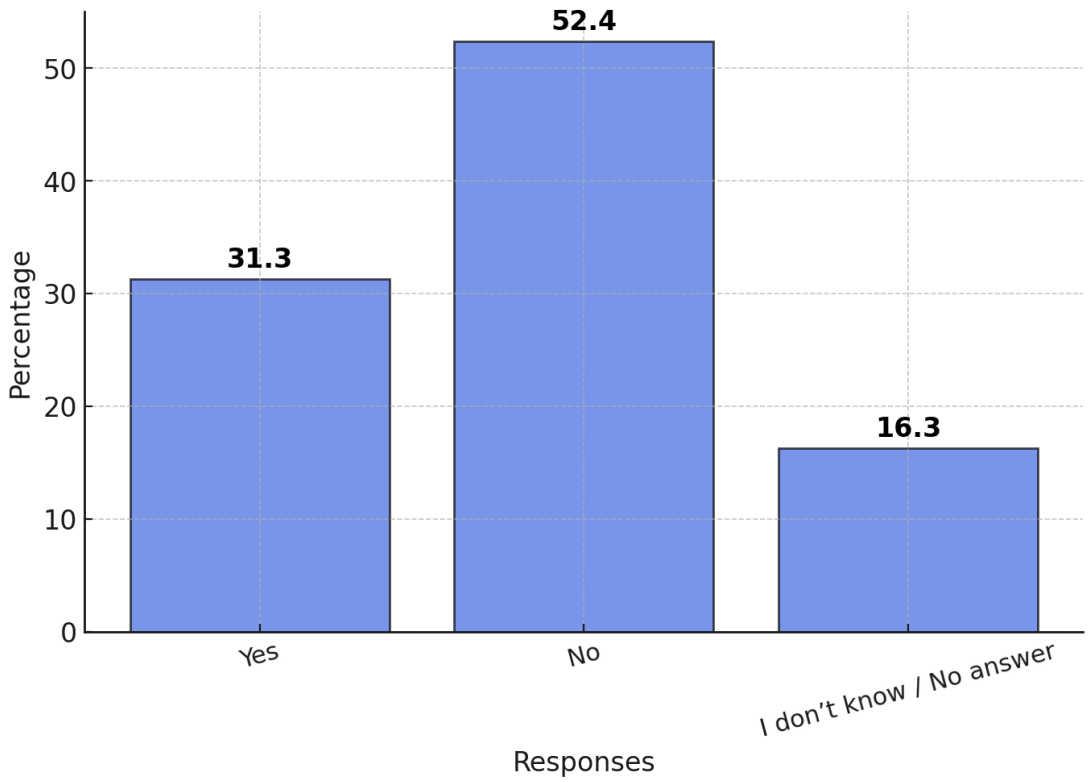
19.4% of respondents say they regularly follow Turkish news or radio stations, while 25.1% do so rarely. Together, roughly 44.5% of participants have some degree of engagement. By contrast, 48.6% explicitly say “No,” indicating they do not follow Turkish media, and 6.9% do not know or prefer not to answer. This suggests moderate involvement. However, the acceptance of these media is catholic and its impact factor is considerable.

Do you read Turkish newspapers or books?



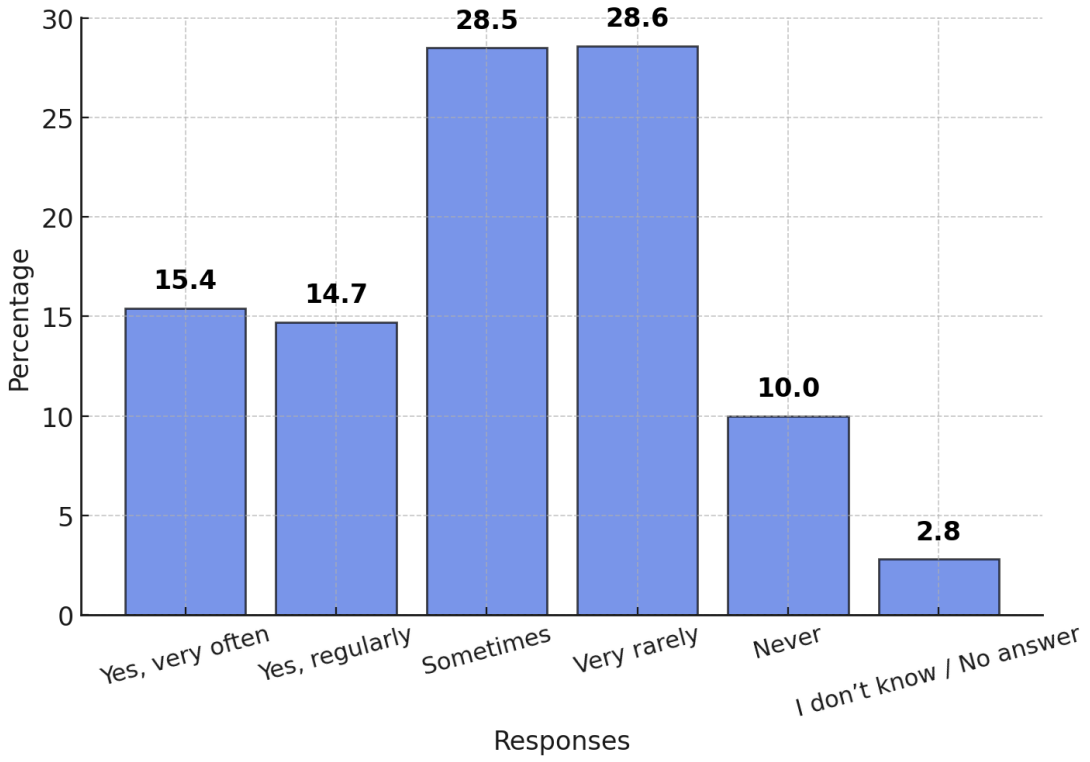
9.1% of respondents say they regularly read Turkish newspapers or books, and an additional 30.1% read them occasionally (but not often). Together, that is close to 39.2% who engage in some form of Turkish-language reading. On the other hand, a majority—53.0%, do not read such materials, while 7.8% do not know or prefer not to answer. This proves that there is a minority which is heavily involved while the strong majority remains indifferent to media that require planning and effort to follow.

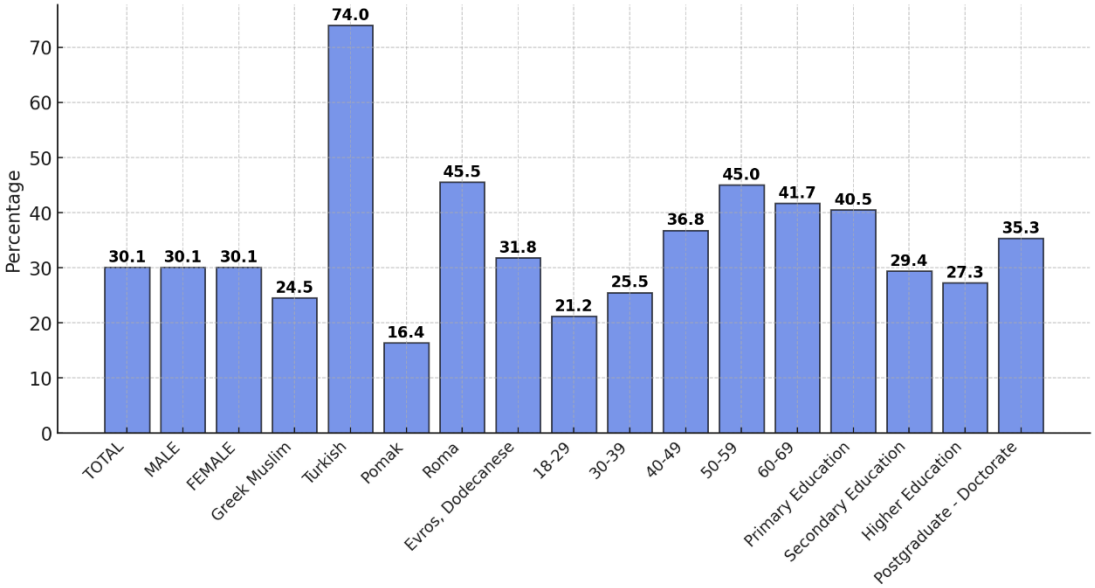
Do you support Turkish football teams?



31.3% say “Yes,” they support Turkish football teams, while 52.4% say “No.” Another 16.3% do not know or prefer not to answer. This indicates that roughly one in three respondents expresses support for Turkish clubs, slightly over half do not, and a notable minority is uncertain or unwilling to provide a response. Again, engagement that requires little effort seems to be more widely acceptable.

Do you travel to Turkey?



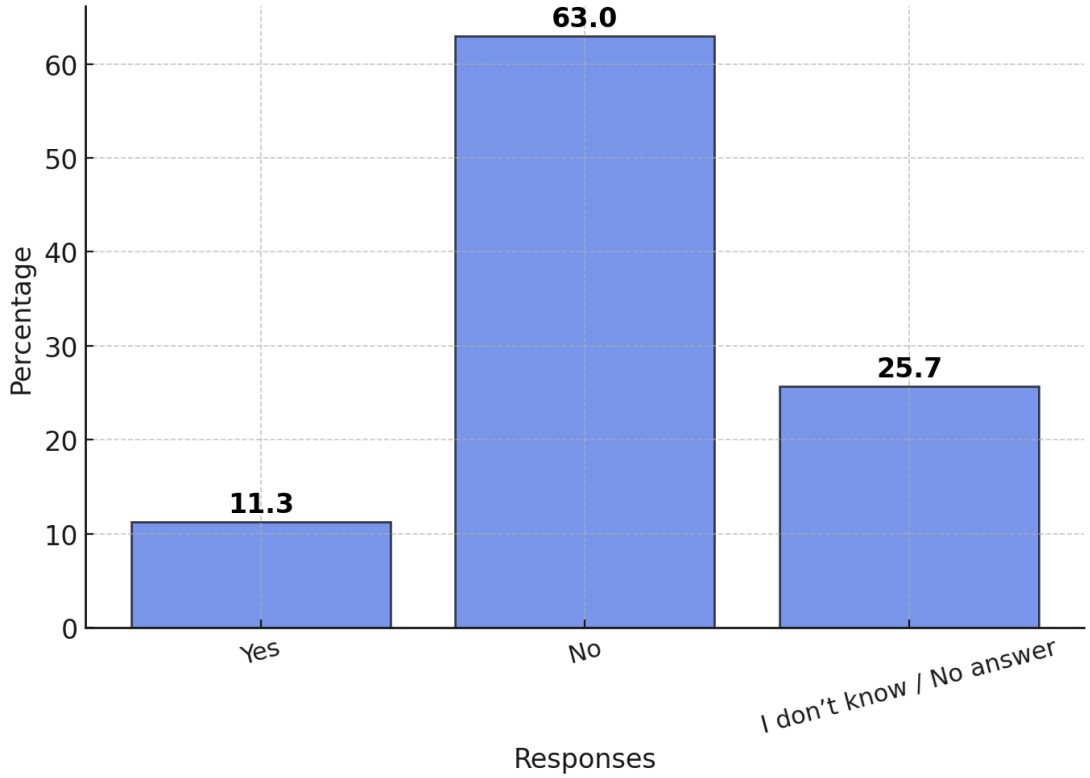


15.4% say they travel to Turkey very often, and another 14.7% travel regularly.

Hence, nearly **30%** of the sample visits Turkey on a frequent basis. Additionally,

28.5% do so “Sometimes” and another 28.5% “Rarely.” Altogether, about **87%** have traveled to Turkey at least at some point. Meanwhile, 10.0% never visit Turkey, and 2.8% did not answer or don’t know. These results underscore that the majority have traveled to Turkey, although many go “rarely” rather than consistently. Still, only a small percentage of the population has not been to the country, which suggests that there is engagement.

Are you aware of the Maarif Foundation and its opportunities for studying in Turkey?



11.3% of respondents say they are aware of the Maarif Foundation, while 63.0% indicate they are not. An additional 25.7% do not know or prefer not to answer. This implies that only about one in nine participants is informed about Maarif’s educational opportunities in Turkey, whereas the majority—nearly two-thirds—profess no knowledge. The remaining quarter are unsure or unwilling to respond. This

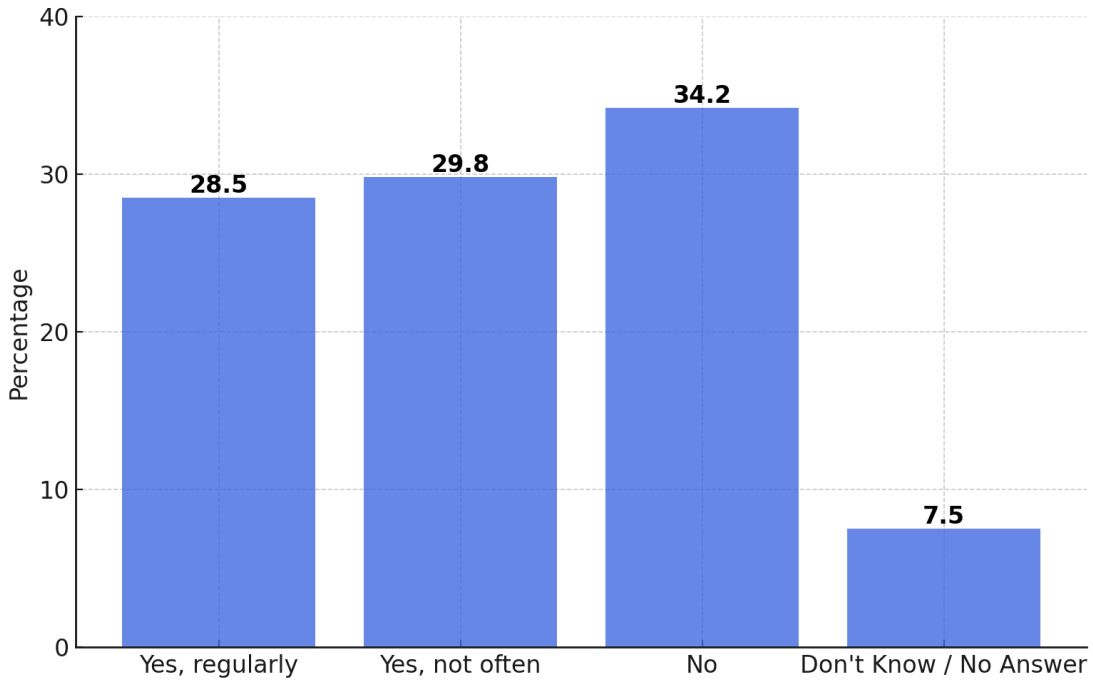
suggests that the foundation has not been able to reach the population although the nature of the sample might explain a detachment from higher education, namely that it is an aspiration alien to them.

Do you try to buy Turkish brands like Waikiki, Mavi, Istikbal, use Ziraat Bankasi, etc?

Apart from the obvious economic benefits they confer, prevalent Turkish brands also play a cardinal role in Turkey's image abroad. Much effort is being put into establishing national brands, which contribute to familiarity, reputation and quality. Turkish Airlines is the leading Turkish brand and there are others which have made their presence felt in the Balkans like, Ziraat Bank, Istiklal furniture, LC Wakiki clothing, Mavi Jeans. The Turkish promotion group which operates the website https://askturkiye.com/en aims "to increase the perception of Turkish goods and promote the diversity and quality of Turkish products"[34]

28.5% say they regularly purchase or use Turkish brands and services, with another 29.8% doing so infrequently. Together, that's roughly 58.3% who engage in at least some form of Turkish-brand consumption. Meanwhile, 34.2% say "No," and 7.5% do not know or did not respond. Thus, a majority—nearly six in ten—have at least some exposure to Turkish brands or banks, though the largest single block (34.2%) are not interested, plus a small segment (7.5%) remains uncertain.

[34] Türkiye Promotion Group, *Türkiye Promotion Group Official Website*, accessed February 20, 2025, https://turkiyepromotiongroup.com/en/Home/TurkiyePromotionGroup.

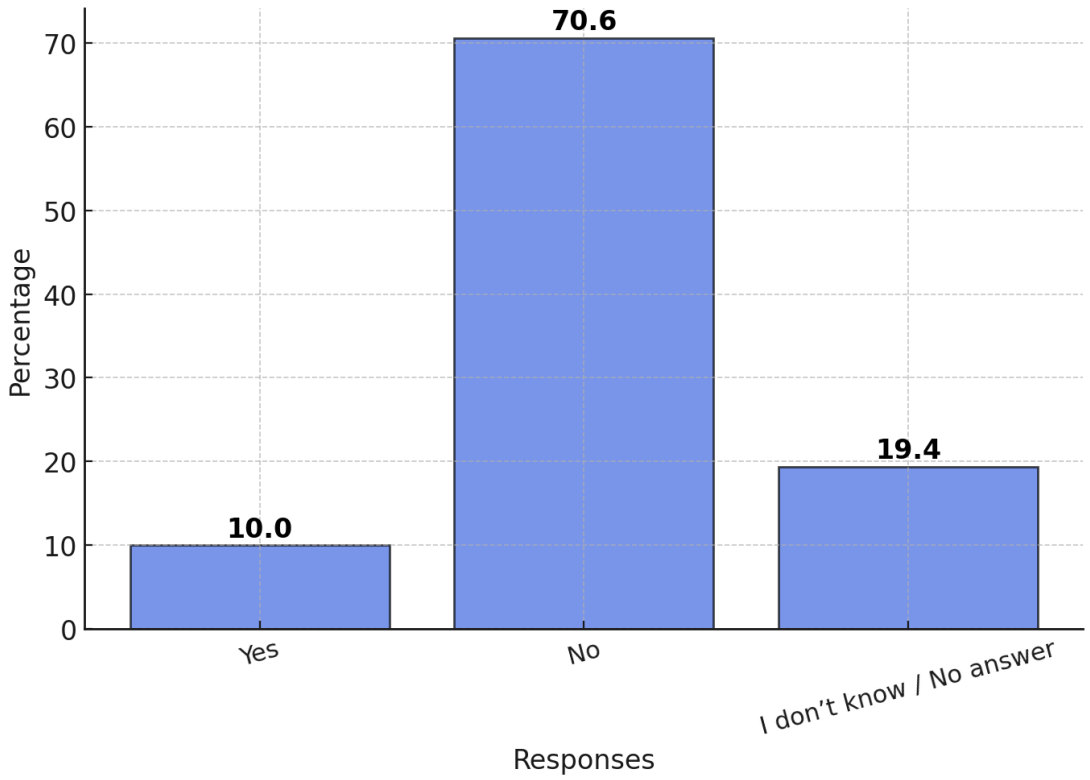


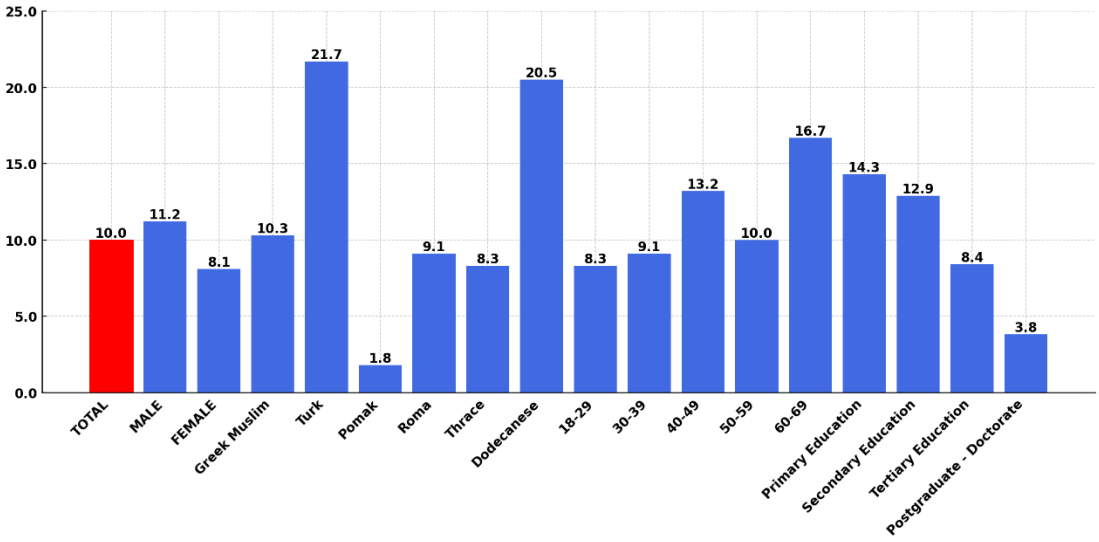
Most importantly, Turkish brands play their own role in forming opinions about brand Turkey. They are purchased by around 2/3 of the minority members and this suggests a tendency to trust the standard of the Turkish service or product.

Do you follow Turkish politicians on Social Media?

Following Turkish politicians on social media is a clear indication either of approval or of an intense interest not only of their activities and opinions but also of the country they represent. Albeit political, the question tries to elicit the degree of approval or/and success of Turkish public diplomacy initiatives.

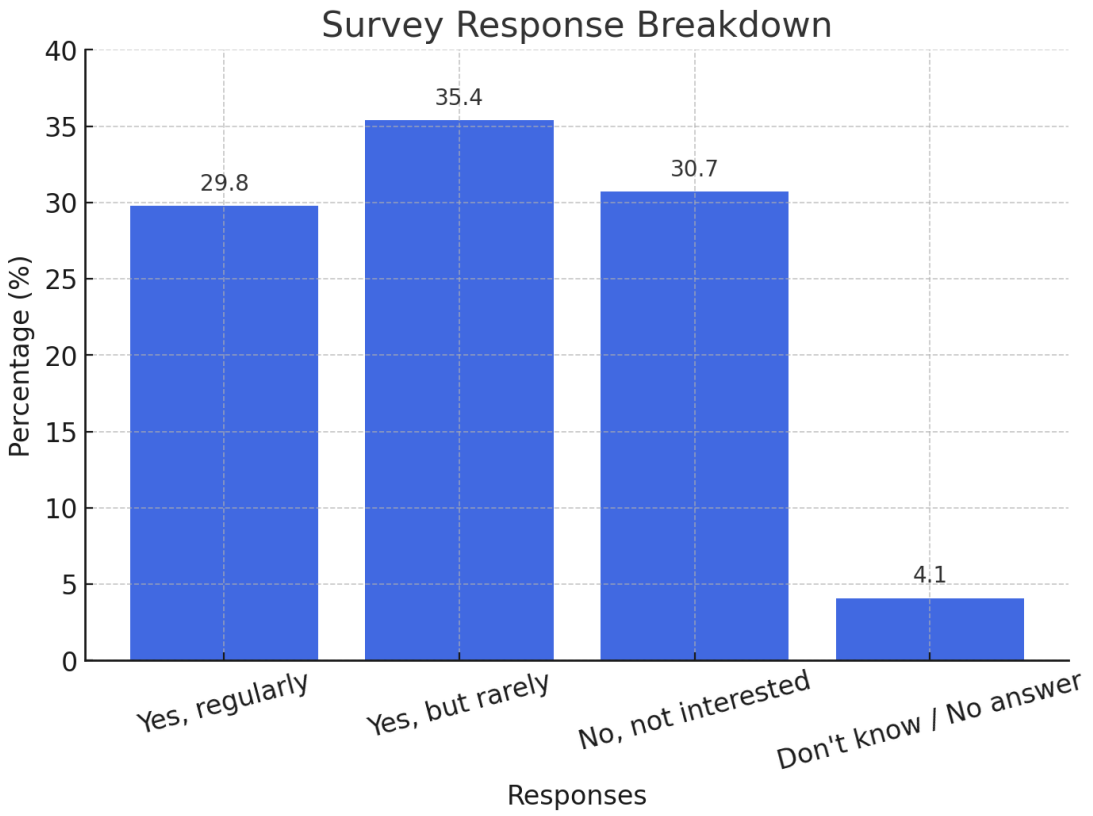
10.0% of respondents indicate they follow Turkish politicians on social media, while 70.5% say they do not. Another 19.4% do not know or do not answer. This suggests that, overall, only about one in ten participants engages with Turkish politicians' social media profiles, whereas a clear majority stays away. A substantial minority remains uncertain or unwilling to disclose their stance.

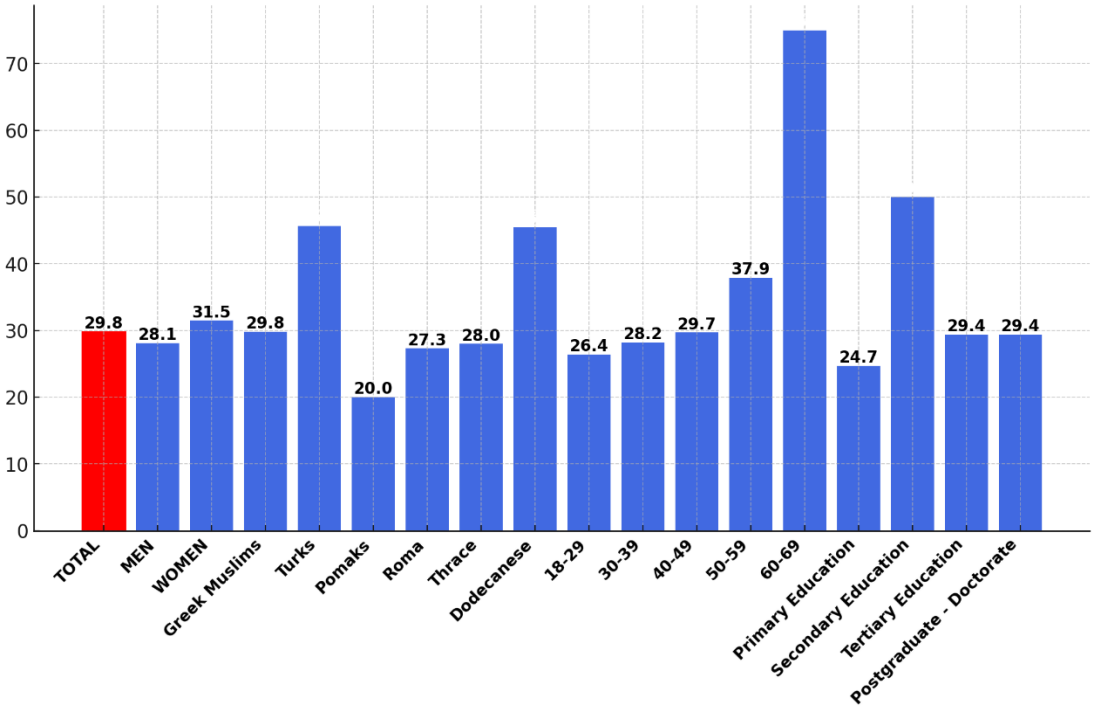




Most importantly, self-identified Turks lead the way and 1/5 of them follows Turkish politicians on social media. The same applies to Dodecanese. However, with only 10% following a Turkish politician, there is minimal impact.

Do you watch Turkish TV series?



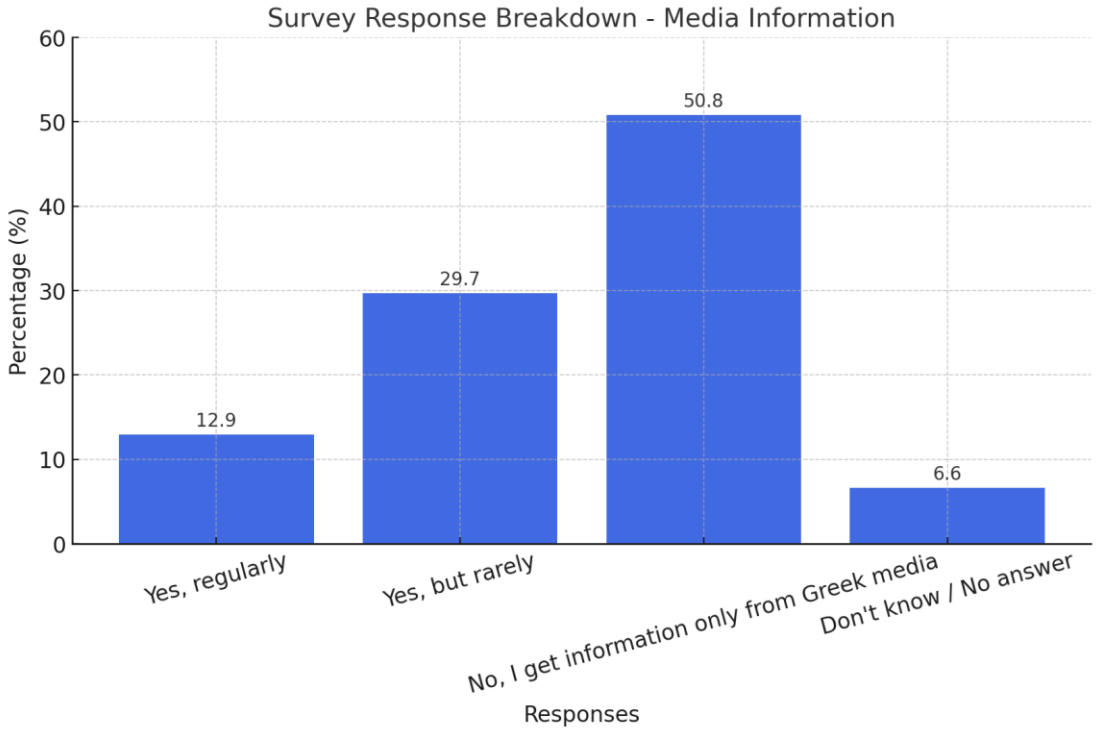


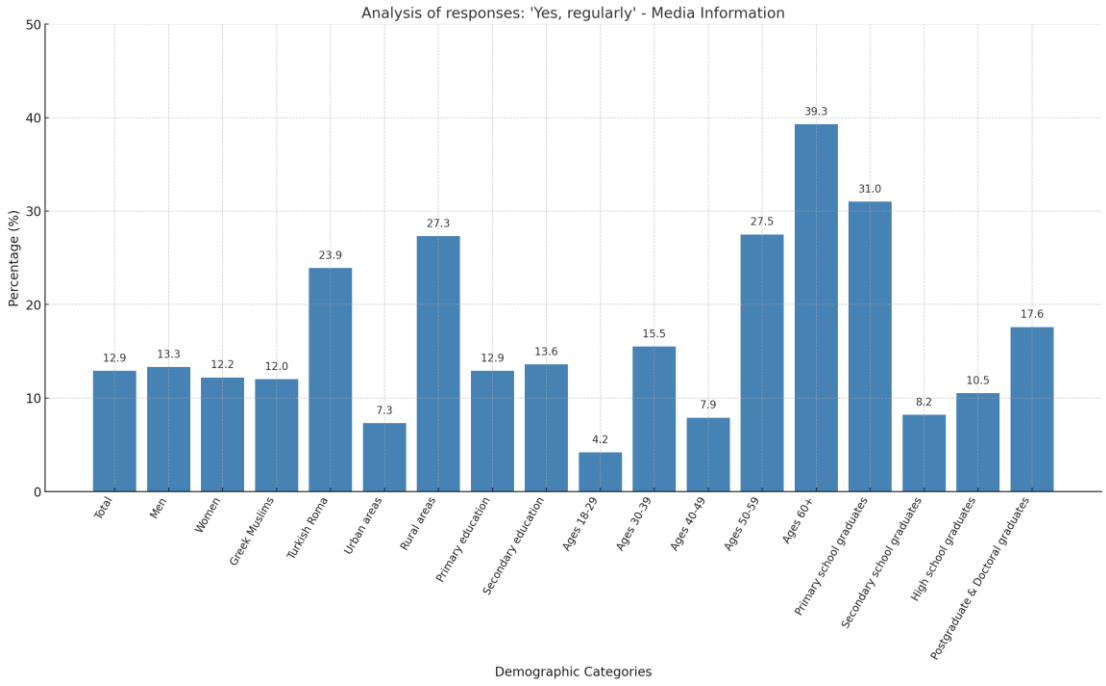
From the first column (**Total**), 29.8% of respondents say they regularly watch Turkish TV series, while 35.4% report watching them only rarely. Another 30.7% are simply not interested, and 4.1% do not know or prefer not to answer. This means that roughly two-thirds (65.2%) of the sample have some level of engagement (regularly or occasionally), whereas about one-third (30.7%) show no interest. These figures highlight that Turkish TV series are moderately popular within this population, though not overwhelmingly so.

Overall, Turkish TV series appeal to roughly two-thirds of participants, with a moderate split between regular and occasional viewers. Women show a slightly stronger inclination than men to watch, and Turks (by ethno-religious identification) stand out as the most engaged group. Meanwhile, Pomaks and certain other categories have a higher proportion of “not interested”. Age and education further diversify these pattern-older respondents and those with primary education exhibit some of the highest rates of consistent viewership, while middle-aged and secondary-educated individuals are more likely to be ambivalent or uninterested.

The percentage is astounding. People are partial to Turkish series. However, it remains to be seen whether they adopt the ideals and perspectives they promote.

Do you listen to minority radio stations and/or visit minority websites?





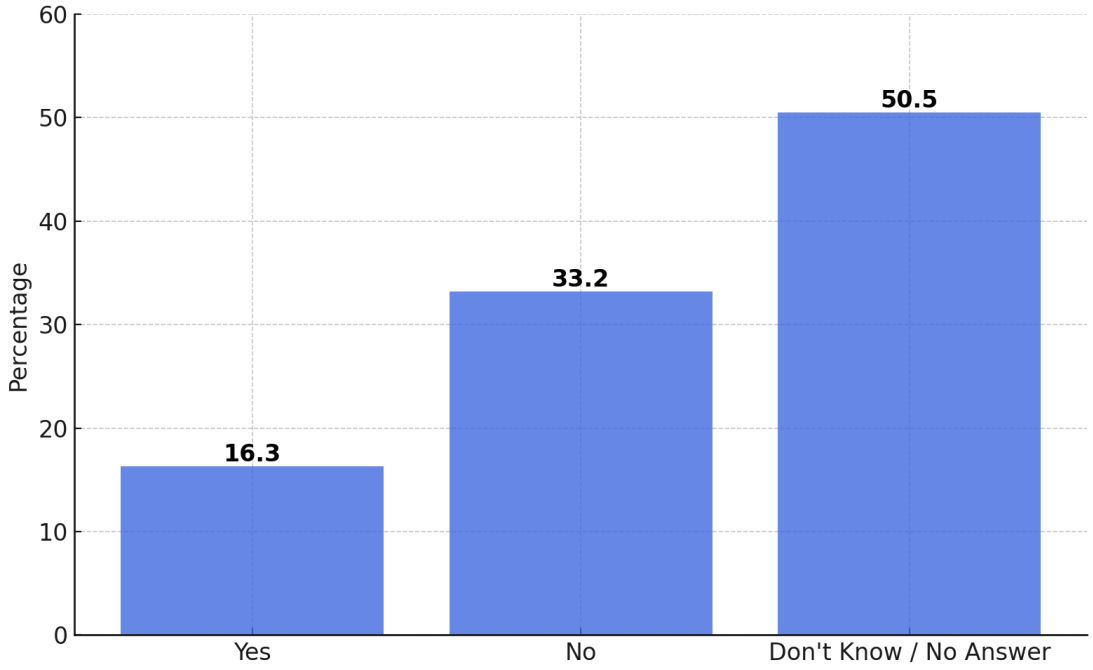
12.9% of respondents say they regularly access minority radio stations or websites, and an additional 29.8% do so occasionally. Together, approximately 42.7% are at

least somewhat engaged with minority media. Meanwhile, half (50.8%) rely exclusively on Greek media, and 6.6% do not know or did not respond. Thus, nearly one in two do not seek out minority-targeted media at all, whereas a little over two in five engage, whether frequently or sporadically.

In summary, about 43% of respondents use minority-targeted radio stations or websites at least occasionally, whereas slightly over half exclusively consume Greek media. Self-identified Turks and Roma exhibit the strongest usage rates, while Greek Muslims and Pomaks lean more toward mainstream Greek media. Men use minority media marginally more than women, and older adults (50–69) show a greater tendency for "regular" engagement compared to younger groups. Education also plays a role: primary-educated individuals post the highest "regular" rates, while secondary-educated respondents rely heavily on Greek sources.

The research asked various questions trying to establish the presence of Turkish soft power and the impact of Public Diplomacy initiatives on the minorities. The research moved on to establish attitudes on social-economic issues as well as on political issues affecting Turkish politics and Greek-Turkish relations. This paper will concentrate solely on political issues.

Erdogan's targeting of Gulenists



Overall,16.3% agree that Erdoğan was justified in targeting Gülenists post-2016, while 33.2% think he was not justified. A substantial 50.5%—half of all respondents—either do not know or prefer not to say. This indicates that although there is a noticeable minority that supports Erdoğan's actions (around one in six), and roughly one in three who disagree, the largest group by far is uncertain or unwilling to express an opinion.

Men appear more inclined to side with Erdoğan's decisions (22.4%) compared to women (6.5%). However, the overall pattern remains the same: a plurality of both men and women either do not know or do not wish to respond, with women showing an especially high "Don't know / No answer" rate (58.5%).

Only 12,5% of Greek Muslims said "Yes," 35.9% "No," and 51.6% do not know or no answer. Turks reported a 32.6% "Yes," 15.2% "No," and 52.2% remain uncertain.

Pomaks reported a 16.4% “Yes,” 47.3% “No,” and 36.4% were uncertain. Roma reported a 18.2% “Yes,” 36.4% “No,” and 45.5% uncertain. Self -identified Turks have the highest rate of agreement (32.6%), well above the total average (16.3%). In contrast, Pomaks lean somewhat negative (47.3% “No”), with around one in six (16.4%) agreeing that Erdoğan was justified. Greek Muslims mirror the overall “No” rate but also have over half uncertain. Among Roma, the sample size is small, but the distribution is fairly split among the three categories. Those who do not disclose their identity show the greatest uncertainty (73.9%).

In Thrace 16.7% said “Yes,” 36.7% “No,” 46.6% were uncertain. In the Dodecanese: 18.2% said “Yes,” 18.2% “No,” while 63.6% were uncertain. Mrs. Elvan, from Kos says that “ the 2016 coup was staged and Erdogan used it to attack the Gulenists”.[35]

Thrace reflects the overall trend relatively closely, whereas the Dodecanese features equal “Yes” and “No” (both 18.2%) but a higher portion of uncertainty (63.6%).

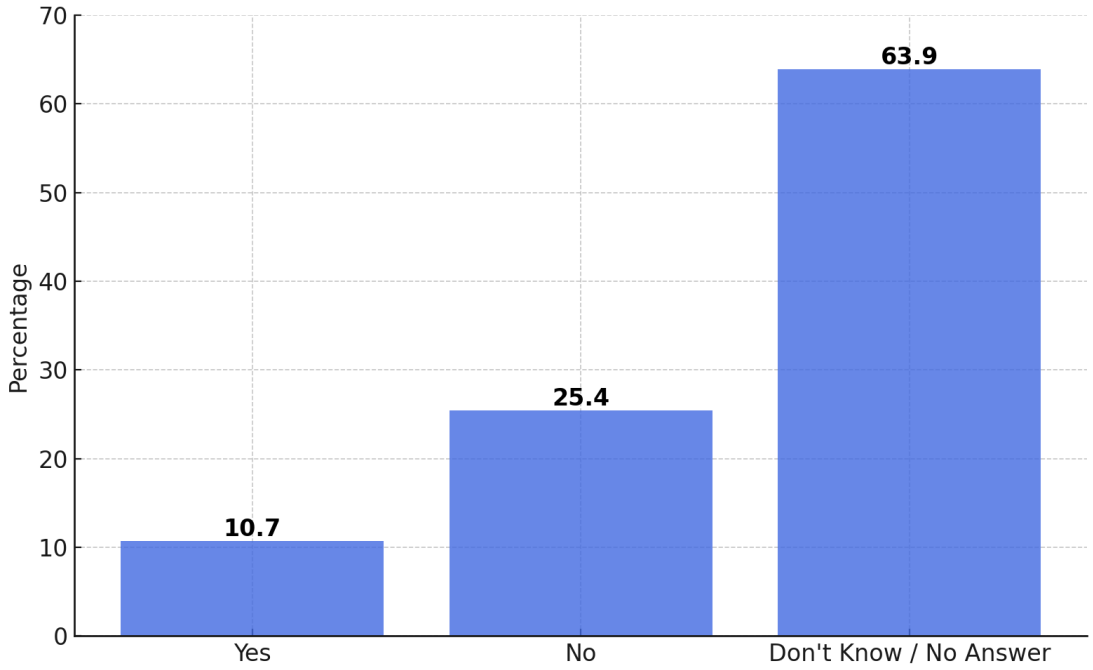
Support for Erdoğan in targeting the Gülenists shows significant variation across age groups, with a notable trend of higher support among older respondents. Among 18–29-year-olds, only 15.3% express support, while 65.3% remain uncertain, indicating widespread ambivalence. Support increases slightly in the 30–39 group to 19.1%, though 43.6% are still uncertain and 37.3% oppose. Midlife groups (40–49 and 50–59) show similar patterns, with support levels of 9.2% and 17.5%, respectively, but opposition is higher in both groups (40.8% and 42.5%). Interestingly, the 60–69 age group displays the highest levels of uncertainty (58.3%), alongside 25.0% support and relatively low opposition (16.7%). The 70–79 group stands out with 60.0% expressing support, though the small sample size likely skews this result. Overall, the data

[35] Interviewee 16

reflects significant uncertainty across most cohorts, coupled with relatively low support among younger and midlife respondents.

Overall, opinions on whether Erdoğan was justified in targeting Gülenists after 2016 are deeply split, with a small segment (16.3%) endorsing his actions and roughly a third (33.2%) disagreeing. However, the most striking feature is the extensive uncertainty: about half of respondents either do not know or decline to offer a view. Support is highest among self-identified Turks, the older age group (particularly 70–79, though that sample is small), and those with primary education. Women, younger adults, higher-educated respondents, and Pomaks are more likely to say “No” or express uncertainty. The findings point to a wide divergence in perspectives, influenced by identity and demographic factors, and a pervasive reluctance or inability to give a definitive answer on a politically sensitive topic.

Gezi park protests



Overall, 10.7% of respondents consider the Gezi Park protests justified, while 25.4% believe they were not justified. A significant 63.9% do not know or choose not to answer. These figures suggest that only about one in ten clearly supports the idea that the protests were legitimate, and roughly one in four disagrees. However, the largest group—nearly two-thirds—remains uncertain or unwilling to give a definitive stance.

Men are notably more inclined to say “Yes” (14.3%) than women (4.9%). Yet both men and women show around a quarter saying “No,” with women slightly higher (26.0%). In both groups, though, a majority is unsure (over 60%). This indicates that while men have a marginally stronger tendency to endorse the protests, neither gender expresses strong clarity overall. This might suggest an indifference to political issues or a denial to go into more sensitive issues.

10.3% of Greek Muslims answered “Yes,” 23.4% “No,” 66.3% were unsure.

Only 10.9% of self-identified Turks answered “Yes,” 32.6% “No,” and 56.5% were uncertain. Pomaks at a percentage of 12.7% said “Yes,” 29.1% “No,” 58.2% were uncertain. Roma answered yes at a percentage of “9.1%”, 45.5% “No,” 45.5% were uncertain.

Turks and Pomaks have similar patterns: around 10–13% “Yes,” a higher “No,” and roughly half uncertain. Roma stands out for a 45.5% “No,” though the absolute numbers may be few. Meanwhile, those who did not disclose their identity show the highest uncertainty (82.6%).

Thrace reflects the overall distribution (about 1 in 10 supports the protests, nearly 3 in 10 oppose, and the rest don’t know). Dodecanese has slightly more people answering “Yes” relative to “No,” yet a large majority (75.0%) are uncertain.

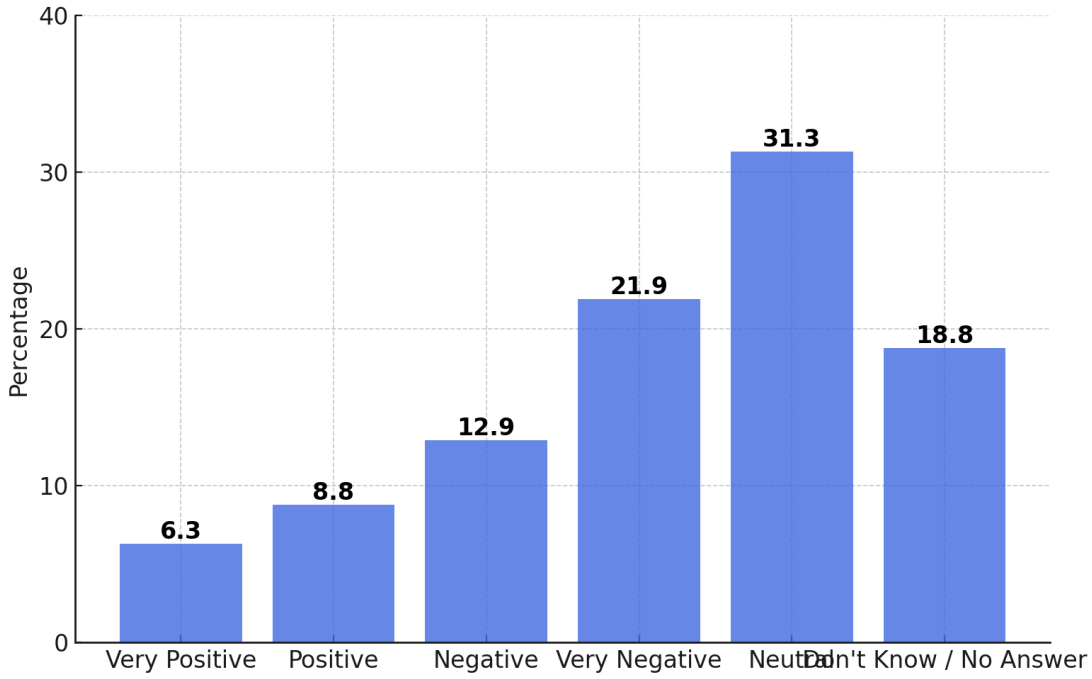
Among individuals aged 18–29, a significant 73.6% were uncertain, while 8.3% expressed support (“Yes”) and 18.1% opposed (“No”). In the 30–39 group, support rose to 15.5%, while 22.7% opposed, and 61.8% remained uncertain. The 40–49 age group exhibited similar uncertainty at 65.8%, with lower support at 7.9% and 26.3% opposition. The 50–59 group showed the highest opposition at 45.0%, with only 5.0% support and 50.0% uncertain. Among those aged 60–69, 16.7% supported the protests, 25.0% opposed, and 58.3% were uncertain. Lastly, the 70–79 demographic, though based on a very small sample, displayed 20.0% support, 26.7% opposition, and 53.3% uncertainty. Overall, a majority in all groups expressed uncertainty, with opposition generally rising with age.

Interestingly, postgraduates appear more supportive (20.6% “Yes”) and less negative (11.8% “No”), though two-thirds still remain unsure. Those with only primary

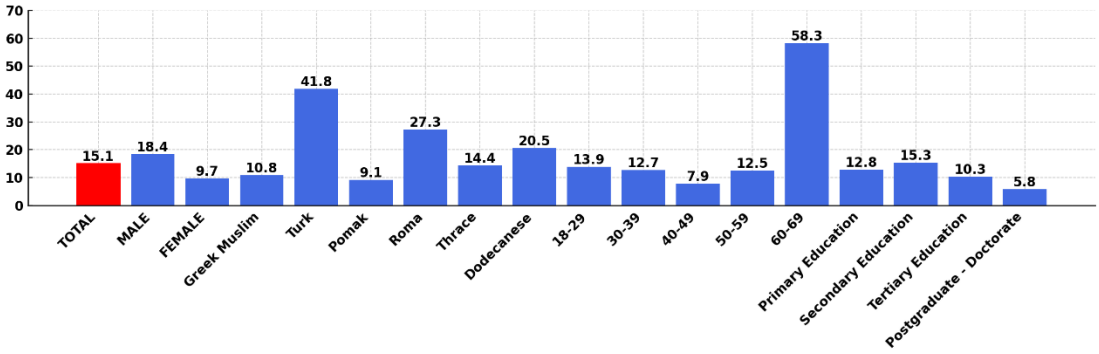
schooling exhibit the highest “No” rate (40.5%), while those with tertiary or secondary education are overwhelmingly uncertain.

In short, clear support for the Gezi Park protests is relatively low—about one in ten overall—though it varies modestly by group. Men, postgraduates, and certain older individuals lean somewhat more in favor, while respondents with primary education or among the Roma group express higher opposition. The dominant pattern, however, is widespread uncertainty: in nearly every subgroup, the largest portion declines to give a definitive opinion. Mr. Vidimi, from Kos says that “people here are concerned about making a decent living, not about politics” . This extensive “Don’t know / No answer” highlights the delicate or perhaps distant nature of the Gezi Park issue for most participants, underscoring significant ambivalence or reluctance to comment on a controversial political event.

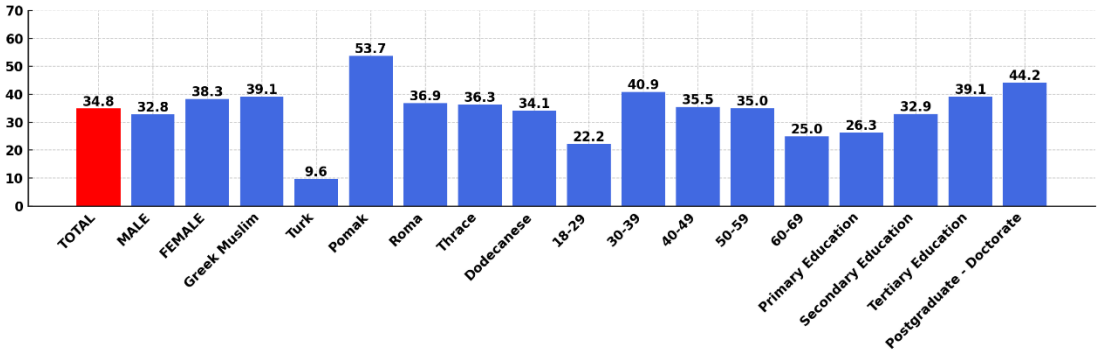
Opinions on Erdogan



Very positive and positive



Very negative and negative



Public opinion on Erdoğan shows a diverse range of sentiments, highlighting a polarized view of his leadership. A minority, 6.3%, holds a very positive opinion, with an additional 8.8% expressing generally positive sentiments. However, a significant portion of the population views him negatively, with 12.9% reporting a negative opinion and a substantial 21.9% expressing very negative sentiments. Neutral perspectives make up the largest category at 31.3%, suggesting a considerable group remains ambivalent or undecided in their evaluation. Additionally, 18.8% either don’t know or chose not to answer, indicating uncertainty or reluctance to disclose their stance. distribution underscores a complex and divided public perception of Erdoğan.

Men reported “Very positive” 8.7%, “Positive” 9.7%, “Negative” 12.8%, “Very negative” 19.9%, “Neutral” 29.6%, “Don’t know” 19.4%

Women’s account was “Very positive” 2.4%, “Positive” 7.3%, “Negative” 13.0%, “Very negative” 25.2%, “Neutral” 34.1%, “Don’t know” 17.9%

Men show slightly higher enthusiasm: about 18.4% combine “Very positive” and “Positive,” while women are at 9.7%. However, women lean more heavily toward “Very negative” (25.2% vs. 19.9% for men). Both genders have a substantial neutral block (30–34%), and roughly one in five men and one in six women remain unsure.

Only 6.5% of Greek Muslims said they are “Very positive,” 4.3% “Positive,” 13.0% “Negative,” 25.0% “Very negative,” 31.0% “Neutral,” 20.1% chose to say they “Don’t know.”

Self-identified Turks had the highest combined positivity (13.0% “Very positive,” 28.3% “Positive” = 41.3%), relatively low negativity (2.2% “Negative,” 4.3% “Very negative”), 47.8% remained neutral.Only 1.8% of Pomaks were “Very positive,” 7.3% “Positive,” 20.0% “Negative,” 32.7% “Very negative,” 27.3% neutral, 10.9% don’t know. Roma reported a 9.1% “Very positive,” 18.2% “Positive,” 0.0% “Negative,” 36.4% “Very negative,” 9.1% neutral, 27.3% don’t know (small sample).

Turks stand out with the highest positive sentiment (over 40% combined). Pomaks show much stronger negativity (32.7% “Very negative”) and a comparatively low positive share (9%). Greek Muslims mirror the overall pattern with about one-fourth “Very negative” and a large neutral portion. Roma are polarized, with some “Very positive” (9.1%) but more “Very negative” (36.4

In Thrace 6.1% were “Very positive,” 8.3% “Positive,” 12.5% “Negative,” 23.9% “Very negative,” 32.6% neutral, 16.7% don’t know. In the Dodecanese 9.1% were “Very positive,” 11.4% “Positive,” 18.2% “Negative,” 15.9% “Very negative,” 31.8% neutral, 13.6% uncertain.

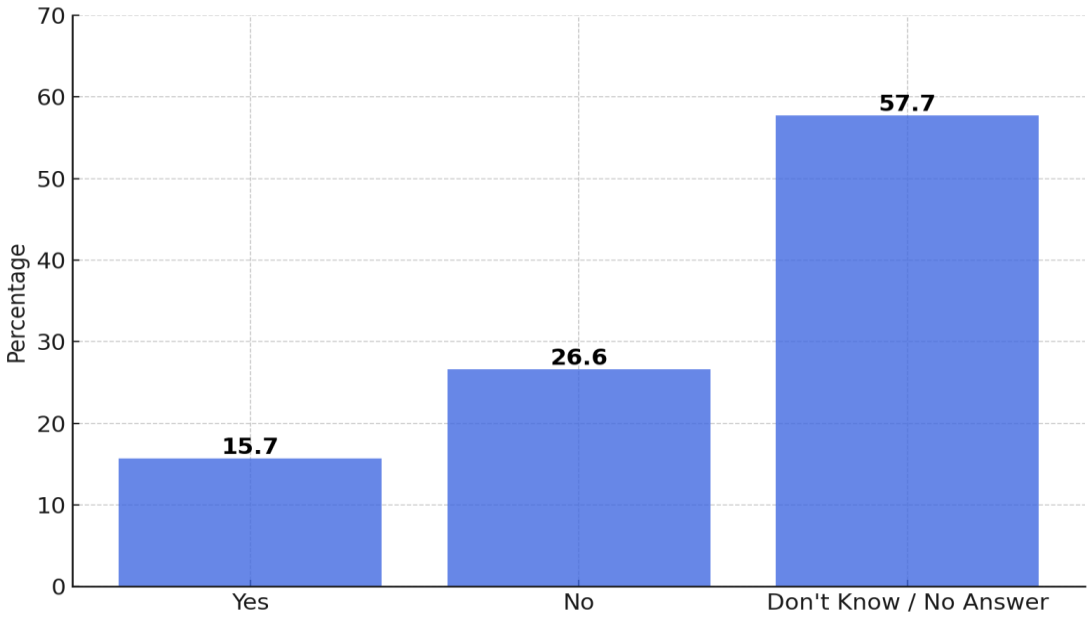
Among young adults aged 18–29, views are predominantly neutral (31.0%) or uncertain (20.1%), with low combined positivity (10.7%) and approximately 38% negative. The 30–39 age group exhibits lower overall positivity and a high share of "Very negative" opinions (26.4%), indicating stronger disapproval. For those aged 40–49, neutrality dominates at 47.4%, positivity is minimal (7.9%), and a combined 35.6% hold negative or very negative views. In the 50–59 group, neutrality remains high (37.5%), but there's a slight increase in positivity (22.5% combined), alongside 35% negativity. The 60–69 cohort shows more balanced sentiments, with approximately 25% expressing positivity, 16.7% negativity, and 16.7% uncertainty, while the rest are neutral or missing. For those aged 70–79, the smallest sample, opinions are mixed, with noticeable neutrality, some positivity, and some negativity, reflecting a diverse but less defined set of views.

People receiving primary education or less reported a 21.4% “Very positive,” 21.4% “Positive,” 7.1% “Negative,” 19.0% “Very negative,” 11.9% neutral, 19.0% said that they don’t know. Secondary education graduates said that they are 5.9% “Very positive,” 9.4% “Positive,” 12.9% “Negative,” 20.0% “Very negative,” 41.2% neutral, 10.6% don’t know. Tertiary education graduates said that they are 3.5% “Very positive,” 7.0% “Positive,” 14.0% “Negative,” 25.2% “Very negative,” 31.5% neutral, 18.9% uncertain.2.9% of postgraduate graduates said they are “Very positive,” 2.9% “Positive,” 17.6% “Negative,” 26.5% “Very negative,” 29.4% neutral, 20.6% don’t know. Those with only primary schooling appear substantially more positive (over

40% total “Very positive” + “Positive”), whereas higher education levels lean more negative or neutral, with a considerable fraction also uncertain.

In summary, views on Erdoğan range widely, with about 15% total positive and 35% total negative, while the largest single group (31%) opts for neutrality. Men are generally a bit more positive than women, though women lean more “very negative.” Turks as an ethno-religious group stand out for their notably higher positivity, whereas Pomaks, Greek Muslims, and others show greater negativity or neutrality. Education and age also shape perceptions—those with primary-level education or who identify as Turkish are more favorable, while higher-educated respondents tend to be more negative or neutral. Across most demographics, a significant portion remains neutral or unsure, reflecting a complex and nuanced stance toward Erdoğan in this population.

Grey zones in the Aegean



15.7% of respondents say “Yes,” there are grey areas in the Aegean, while 26.6% say “No.” A clear majority—57.7%—either does not know or chooses not to answer. This breakdown indicates that only about one in six believes gray areas exist, roughly one in four believes they do not, and a notable portion (over half) is uncertain or unwilling to offer an opinion. The high “Don’t know / No answer” suggests considerable ambiguity, lack of information, or reluctance to express a stance on this potentially sensitive issue.

Although both genders have a majority in the “Don’t know / No answer” column, men are slightly more likely to say “Yes” (16.8% vs. 13.8% for women), whereas women lean somewhat more toward “No” (29.3% vs. 25.0% for men). Overall, there is no stark contrast, but the data shows neither group offers a strong definitive consensus on the existence of gray areas.

Greek Muslims were positive at a percentage of 15.2% “Yes,” 29.3% said “No,” and 55.4% were uncertain.

Turks were more positive with 26.1% “Yes,” 15.2% “No,” 58.7% were uncertain.

10.9% of Pomaks answered “Yes,” 40.0% “No,” 49.1% were uncertain.

18.2% of Roma answered “Yes,” 9.1% “No,” 72.7% were uncertain

Turks stand out as more likely to say “Yes” (26.1%) than other groups, though most (58.7%) still do not take a clear position. Pomaks are more inclined to say “No” (40.0%), with roughly half uncertain. Roma present a small but noteworthy pattern: 18.2% “Yes” vs. 9.1% “No,” but nearly three-quarters are unsure.

In Thrace 17.8% answered “Yes,” 29.2% “No,” 53.0% were uncertain.

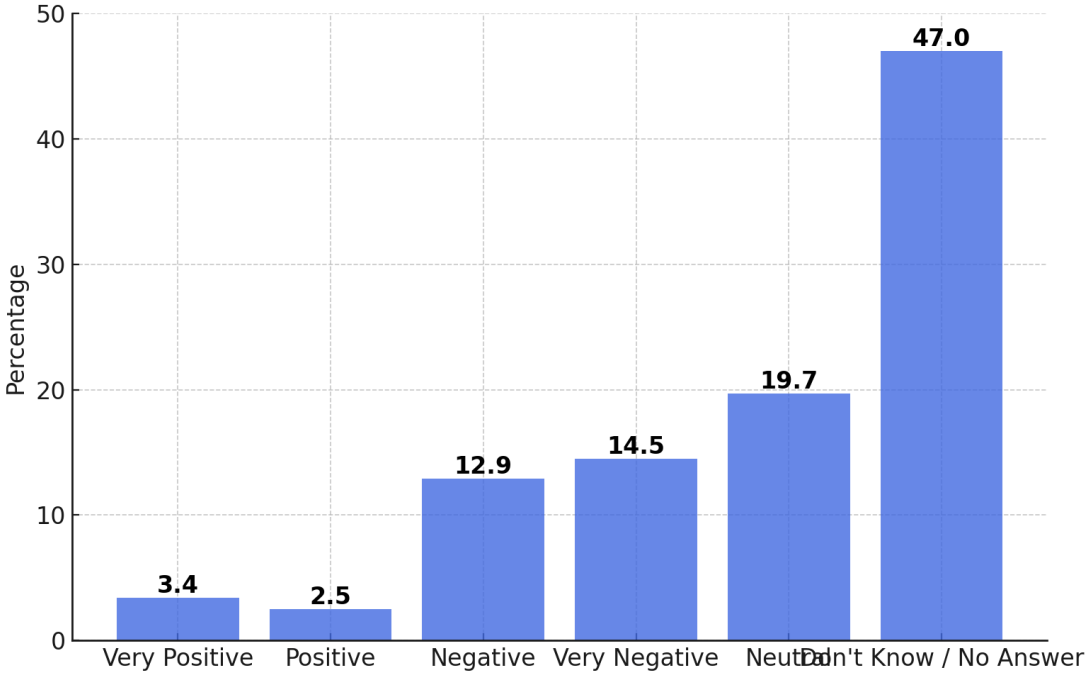
In the Dodecanese 4.5% answered “Yes,” 18.2% “No,” 77.3% remain uncertain.

Beliefs about the existence of grey zones in the Aegean vary significantly across age groups, with a high degree of uncertainty dominating responses. Among those aged 18–29, a striking 72.40% denying, and 15.0% affirming. Among the 60–69 cohort, uncertainty spikes again to 66.7%, with an even split (16.7%) between "Yes" and "No" responses. In the 70–79 age group, uncertainty reaches its peak, with 100.0% of respondents expressing no definitive stance, highlighting a lack of clarity or engagement on the issue across the population, particularly among older age groups..2% are uncertain, with only 11.1% affirming and 16.7% denying the concept. In the 30–39 group, uncertainty decreases slightly to 52.7%, but both "Yes" (21.8%) and "No" (25.5%) responses increase, reflecting a more divided opinion. For ages 40–49, uncertainty remains significant at 51.3%, though skepticism is more pronounced, with 35.5% saying "No" and 13.2% affirming. The 50–59 group exhibits similar trends, with 45.0% uncertain,

Respondents with primary education or below have a higher “Yes” rate (21.4%) but also a high uncertainty. Secondary and tertiary levels feature more “No” answers, around 29–31%. Postgraduates stand out with 29.4% “Yes,” nearly matching the “No” share (26.5%), though less than half remain uncertain—relatively lower than other subgroups but still significant.

The data shows that the question of whether there are grey areas in the Aegean elicits considerable uncertainty (58% overall). Only 16% definitively say “Yes,” while around 27% say “No.” Turks (26.1%) and those with primary or postgraduate education appear somewhat more likely to affirm “Yes,” whereas Pomaks and certain age groups (40–59) lean more toward “No.”

Mavi Vatan



3.4% have a “Very positive” view of Mavi Vatan, and 2.5% a “Positive” view, totaling just under 6% favorability. Meanwhile, 12.9% say “Negative,” and 14.4% say “Very negative,” bringing overall negativity to around 27%. Another 19.7% are “Neutral,” while the largest share — 47.0% — “Don’t know or do not answer.” These figures suggest that fewer than one in ten respondents hold a positive opinion of Mavi Vatan, while more than one in four feel negatively about it, and nearly half are uncertain or unwilling to form a clear position.

Men and women both lean far more toward uncertainty or negativity than positivity. Men register slightly higher positivity combined (about 7.7% total vs. 3.2% for women), but women are more likely to be neutral (24.4%). Both groups have a large “Don’t know” fraction near or above 44%.

Only 2.2% of Greek Muslims were “Very positive,” 3.3% “Positive,” 14.1% “Negative,” 15.8% “Very negative,” 16.8% neutral, 47.8% remain uncertain.

Turks answered 13.0% “Very positive,” 4.3% “Positive,” 8.7% “Negative,” 4.3% “Very negative,” 43.5% neutral, 26.1% remain uncertain. Mr. Ilhan, who identifies himself as “a Muslim of Turkish origin” says that “ the issue of Mavi Vatan and the grey zones in general must be discussed and a middle solution must be found, while going to the Hague is not a bad idea”.[36]

Pomaks: answered 0.0% “Very positive,” 0.0% “Positive,” 14.5% “Negative,” 21.8% “Very negative,” 18.2% neutral, 45.5% uncertain.

Roma: answered 9.1% “Very positive,” 0.0% “Positive,” 0.0% “Negative,” 27.3% “Very negative,” 9.1% neutral, 54.5% uncertain

Turks stand out as the only group with a double-digit “Very positive” rate (13.0%). They also show the smallest “Very negative” share (4.3%). In contrast, Pomaks lean more negative (36.3% combined for negative/very negative). Greek Muslims reflect the general pattern, with nearly half uncertain. Roma show a smaller positivity offset by a quarter (27.3%) “Very negative,” and a majority uncertain.

In Thrace: 3.4% were “Very positive,” 2.7% “Positive,” 13.3% “Negative,” 15.5% “Very negative,” 22.3% neutral, 42.8% were uncertain.

In the Dodecanese 4.5% were “Very positive,” 2.3% “Positive,” 11.4% “Negative,” 11.4% “Very negative,” 9.1% neutral, 61.4% uncertain.

[36] Interviewee no3, Komotini

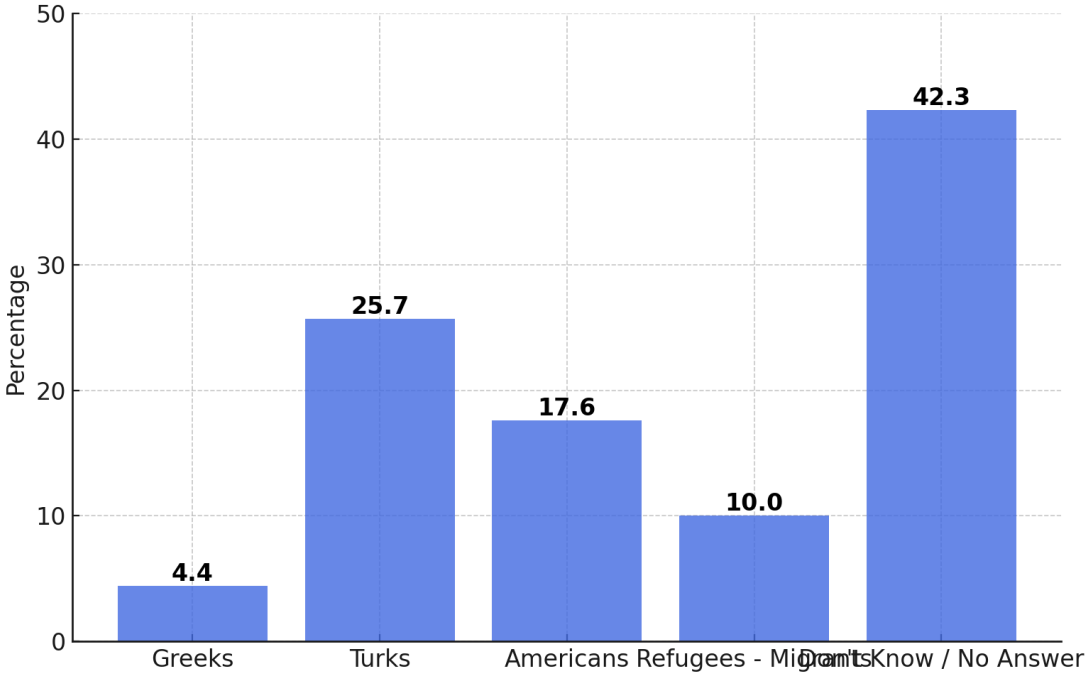
Public opinion on *Mavi Vatan* (Blue Homeland) varies widely across age groups, with uncertainty being a recurring theme. Among those aged 18–29, there are no "Very positive" views, some "Positive" opinions, moderate negativity, and nearly half of respondents uncertain. The 30–39 group shows limited positivity (5.5%), notable negativity with 18.2% "Very negative," and about half uncertain. For ages 40–49, 18.4% are negative and 14.5% very negative, while nearly 40% remain neutral and about a quarter are uncertain. Among the 50–59 demographic, 5.0% express "Very positive" views, 2.5% are "Positive," and a combined 32.5% are negative or very negative, with 35.0% neutral and 25.0% uncertain. In the smaller sample of the 60–69 group, negativity accounts for around 18.6%, with some neutrality and about half uncertain. The 70–79 cohort, also small, includes some "Very positive" opinions but is largely dominated by respondents indicating they "Don't know," highlighting significant uncertainty about *Mavi Vatan* across all age brackets**.**

Those with **only primary education** stand out for a higher “Very positive” rate (16.7%), but negativity (19.0% “Very negative”) also features, and nearly half remain unsure. Secondary and tertiary respondents are less likely to be “very positive” and more likely to be uncertain. Postgraduates are typically in the uncertain category (50%).

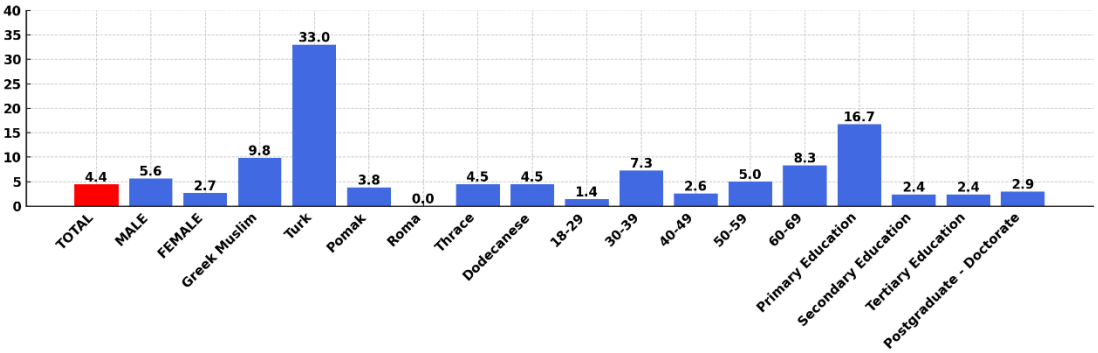
Overall, opinions on Mavi Vatan remain unclear for almost half of respondents (47% “Don’t know / No answer”). About 6% express positive attitudes, whereas 27% are negative or very negative. Turks and those with only primary schooling show slightly higher positivity, while Pomaks lean more negative, and most groups hover between neutrality and uncertainty. Men are marginally more favorable than women, but both sexes, along with most demographic subgroups, remain predominantly uncertain or

negative, highlighting Mavi Vatan as a topic that either few embrace positively or many prefer not to judge decisively.

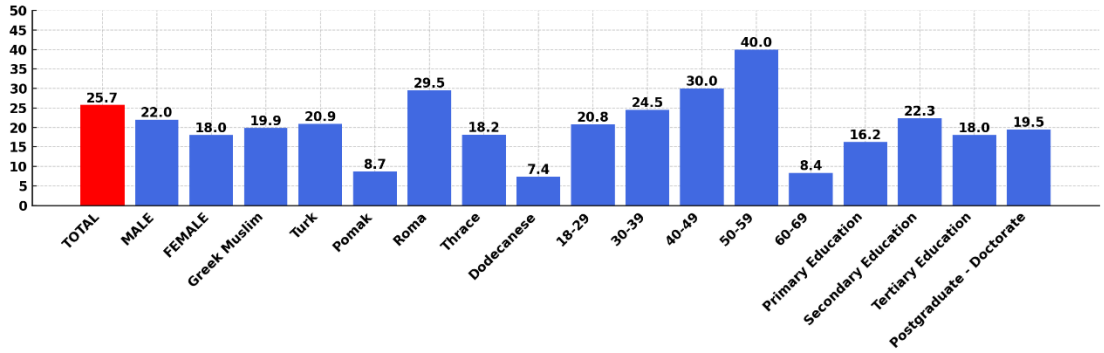
Responsibility for the events in Evros, 2020



The Greeks



The Turks



Public opinion on who is responsible for what happened in Evros reveals a wide range of perceptions, with significant uncertainty. A substantial 42.3% of respondents either don't know or choose not to answer, reflecting a lack of consensus or awareness. Among those who expressed an opinion, 25.7% attribute responsibility to the Turks, making it the most commonly cited group. The Americans are blamed by 17.6%, while 10.0% hold refugees or migrants accountable. Only a small minority, 4.4%, point to the Greeks as responsible. These responses highlight diverse perspectives on the incident, with many remaining uncertain or hesitant to assign blame.

5.6% of men blame the Greeks, 23.0% the Turks, 22.4% the Americans, 9.7% refugees, and 39.3% uncertain. 2.4% of women blame the Greeks, 30.1% the Turks, 9.8% the Americans, 10.6% refugees, and 47.2% uncertain. Men are more inclined to say the Americans (22.4%) compared to women (9.8%), while women are more likely to blame the Turks (30.1% vs. 23.0% for men). In both groups, a large portion remains unsure, with women showing a higher "Don't know / No answer" rate (47.2%). 3.8% of Greek Muslims blame the Greeks, 29.9% the Turks, 12.5% the Americans, 11.4% refugees, and 42.4% uncertain. Mr. Selim, a 51-year-old self identified as Greek Muslim says that " the events in Evros were staged by Erdogan to

push the Europeans to give more money for the refugees".[37]13.0% of Turks blame the Greeks, 8.7% the Turks, 45.7% the Americans, 13.0% refugees, 19.6% were uncertain.

1.8% of Pomaks blame the Greeks, 30.9% Turks, 18.2% Americans, 9.1% refugees, 40.0% were uncertain. Roma: 0.0% Greeks, 45.5% Turks, 0.0% Americans, 0.0% refugees, 54.5% uncertain (small sample).

Turks as an identity group uniquely point most strongly to the Americans (45.7%), while a smaller fraction (8.7%) blames the Turks. Roma heavily blame the Turks (45.5%), though over half remain unsure. Greek Muslims generally align with the overall pattern of blaming Turks (29.9%) and a significant share remains uncertain. Pomaks also point primarily to the Turks (30.9%) but show considerable uncertainty (40.0%).

In Thrace 4.5% answered the Greeks, 29.2% Turks, 20.1% Americans, 11.0% refugees, 35.2% uncertain.In the Dodecanese: 4.5% answered the Greeks, 11.4% Turks, 6.8% Americans, 6.8% refugees, 70.5% uncertain (small sample).

Residents of Thrace follow the overall trend—chiefly blaming Turks (29.2%)—but with a slightly higher share pointing to Americans (20.1%) than the overall average. In the Dodecanese, the "Don't know" rate is notably high (70.5%), while fewer blame Turks or Americans. Those who do not specify a region are entirely uncertain (100.0%).

Perceptions of responsibility for what happened in Evros vary significantly across age groups, with uncertainty dominating most responses. Among the youngest group, 18–

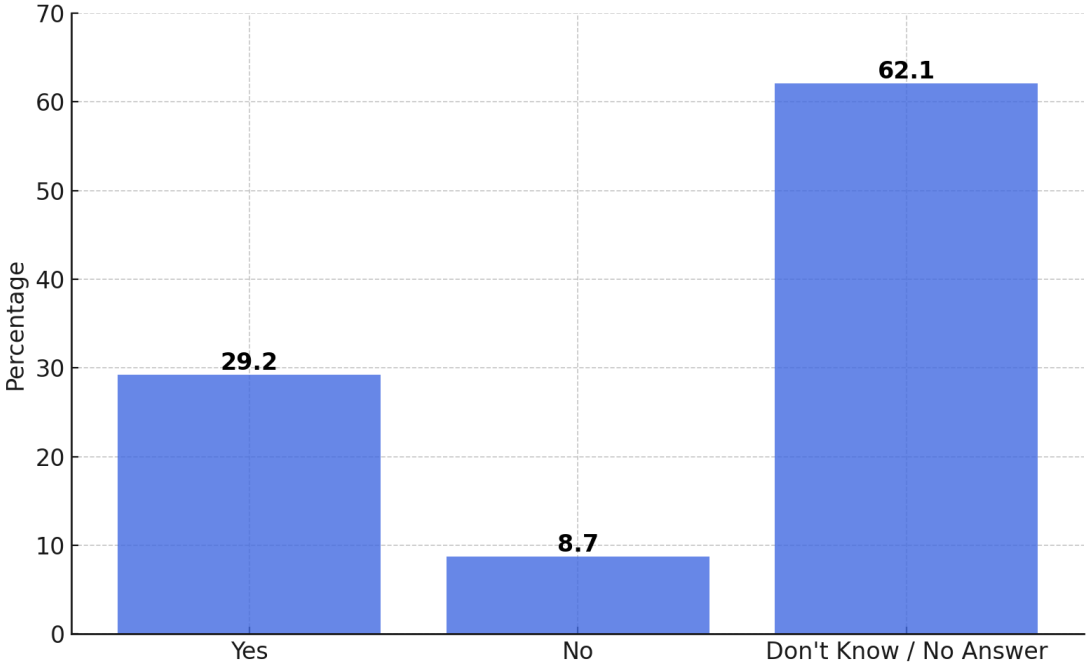
[37] Interviewee no.1, Komotini

29, 63.9% are uncertain, while 20.8% blame the Turks, 5.6% the Americans, 8.3% refugees, and only 1.4% the Greeks. In the 30–39 group, uncertainty decreases to 39.1%, with higher attribution to the Turks (24.5%) and Americans (19.1%), alongside 10.0% blaming refugees and 7.3% the Greeks. The 40–49 demographic shows the highest blame toward the Turks (30.3%) and Americans (28.9%), with 15.8% attributing responsibility to refugees, 2.6% to Greeks, and 22.4% uncertain. For ages 50–59, 40.0% blame the Turks, 20.0% the Americans, 7.5% refugees, 5.0% Greeks, and 27.5% remain uncertain. Among the 60–69 group, uncertainty surges to 75.0%, with equal attribution (8.3% each) to Greeks, Turks, and Americans, and no blame directed at refugees. In the 70–79 cohort, a very small sample, all respondents are uncertain, reflecting a lack of engagement or knowledge among older populations. This distribution highlights both generational differences and widespread uncertainty about the events in Evros**.**

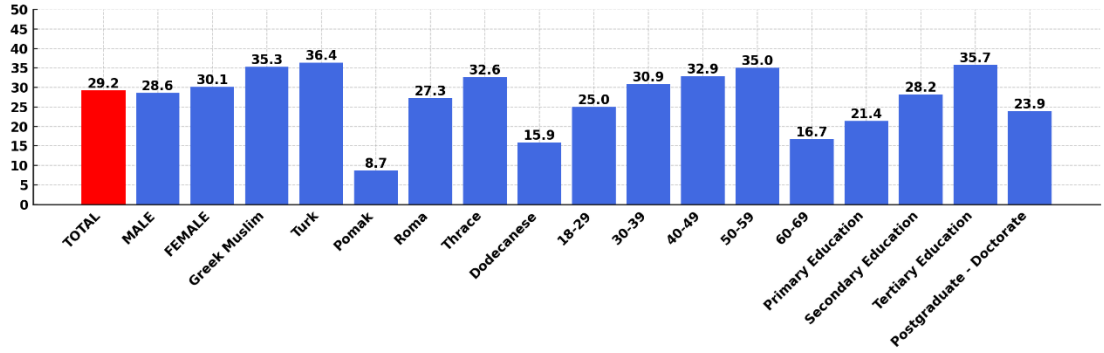
Respondents with primary education are most likely to blame Greeks (16.7%), whereas others blame Turks at a higher rate (22–30%). “Don’t know” remains high across all education levels.

In general, the largest single category is “Don’t know / No answer” (42.3%). Of the specified culprits, the Turks are named most frequently (25.7%), followed by the Americans (17.6%) and then refugees (10.0%). Very few (4.4%) blame the Greeks. Gender and age differences reflect variations in who is held responsible, but overall uncertainty is prevalent, especially among older cohorts and certain regional or identity groups. Turks as an identity group predominantly blame the Americans, whereas Roma and many others tend to point to the Turks. These findings underscore the complexity and sensitivity surrounding the 2020 Evros events, with a substantial portion of respondents preferring no clear attribution.

Are the Greeks right about Turkish irredentism?



Analysis of Yes answers



29.2% of the respondents answered “Yes” and 8,8% “No” while a striking 62,1% gave no answer. Thus, nearly one in three respondents (29.2%) believes the Greeks are justified in their concerns about Turkish irredentism. By contrast, fewer than one in ten (8.8%) says they are not, and over three in five (62.1%) remain uncertain or choose not to reply. This large “Don’t know” category underlines that many respondents are hesitant or unwilling to take a definitive position on this sensitive issue.

Both men and women hover around 28–30% “Yes,” while fewer than 10% in each group say “No.” A strong majority of each remains uncertain, though women are slightly less unsure (60.2%) than men (63.3%). Overall, the gender gap is modest: men and women give nearly the same proportions of “Yes” and “No,” with men marginally more undecided.

Greek Muslims answered 35.3% “Yes,” 6.0% “No,” 58.7% were uncertain.

8.7 percent of Turks while 13.0% said “No,” 78.3% were uncertain.

Pomaks reported a 36.4% “Yes,” 12.7% “No,” 50.9% uncertain.

Roma: reported a 27.3% “Yes,” 9.1% “No,” 63.6% uncertain (small sample).

Greek Muslims and Pomaks show notably higher “Yes” rates (35.3% and 36.4%), suggesting stronger agreement with Greek concerns about Turkish irredentism. Turks

stand out in having more “No” (13.0%) than “Yes” (8.7%), though the greatest portion (78.3%) is uncertain. The Roma group generally follows the overall pattern of considerable uncertainty.

In Thrace : 32.6% said “Yes,” 9.8% “No,” 57.6% were uncertain.

In the Dodecanese: 15.9% “Yes,” 4.5% “No,” 79.5% uncertain (small sample).

Thrace is slightly above the total average for “Yes” (32.6% vs. 29.2%), whereas in the Dodecanese, the key feature is the extremely high uncertainty (79.5%). Those not specifying region are entirely unsure. Mrs. Nestrin says that “there is irredentism on behalf of Turkey and she is afraid that something terrible will happen in the future”.[38]

Belief in Turkish irredentism varies across age groups, with uncertainty dominating responses, particularly among older demographics. Among those aged 18–29, 25.0% believe in Turkish irredentism, 6.9% do not, and a significant 68.1% remain uncertain. Optimism grows in the 30–39 group, where 30.9% express belief, 10.9% reject it, and 58.2% are unsure. The 40–49 age group follows a similar trend, with 32.9% “Yes,” 6.6% “No,” and 60.5% uncertain. Belief peaks among those aged 50–59, with 35.0% expressing affirmation, 12.5% rejection, and 52.5% uncertain. However, belief drops significantly in the 60–69 demographic, where only 16.7% say “Yes,” 8.3% say “No,” and uncertainty rises to 75.0%, likely reflecting the smaller sample size. Among the 70–79 cohort, uncertainty is absolute, with 100.0% providing no definitive answer. These results highlight a mix of belief and hesitation across age groups, with younger and middle-aged groups more inclined toward belief but widespread uncertainty overall.

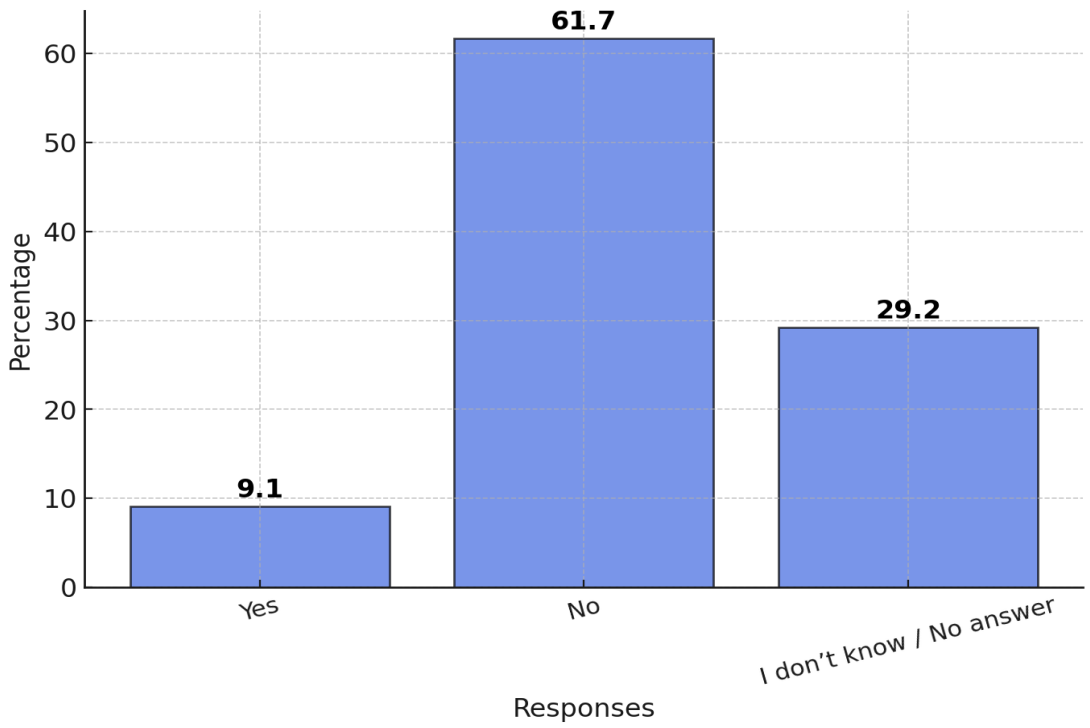
[38] Interviewee no.18, Kos

Primary or less educated individuals reported a 21.4% “Yes,” 16.7% “No,” 61.9% uncertain. Secondary graduates reported a 28.2% “Yes,” 8.2% “No,” 63.5% uncertain. Tertiary education graduates reported 35.7% “Yes,” 6.3% “No,” 58.0% uncertain. Postgraduate graduates answered 23.5% “Yes,” 14.7% “No,” 61.8% remain uncertain.

Respondents with tertiary education are most likely to say “Yes” (35.7%), and “No” remains below 10%. At the primary level, “No” is relatively higher (16.7%), though still overshadowed by “Yes” (21.4%). In all groups, uncertainty exceeds 50%.

Overall, about three in ten respondents concur that Greeks are correct about Turkish irredentism, fewer than one in ten disagree, and the largest share (over 60%) is uncertain. Subgroups such as Greek Muslims, Pomaks, those in Evros, middle-aged adults, and tertiary-educated individuals tend to be more inclined to say “Yes,” whereas Turks more often say “No” (though a majority remain unsure). Across nearly every demographic, uncertainty dominates the responses, reflecting the complexity and sensitivity of this geopolitical concern.

Do visits by Turkish politicians make you feel more secure about your future?



Only 9.1% of respondents say that Turkish political visits increase their sense of future security, whereas 61.8% state that they do not feel more secure. Another 29.2% do not know or choose not to answer. Thus, the predominant sentiment (nearly two-thirds) is that such visits do not provide additional reassurance. A sizeable minority remains uncertain or unwilling to disclose their views, highlighting potential ambivalence or sensitivity around the topic.

10.7% of men answer “Yes,” 59.2% answer “No,” and 30.1% don’t know or don’t respond.6.5% of women say “Yes,” 65.9% say “No,” and 27.6% are unsure or declining to answer.While men and women both show a majority responding “No,” men are slightly more open to feeling more secure (10.7% vs. 6.5%) and are also marginally likelier to say they do not know (30.1% vs. 27.6%). Women are somewhat

firmer in their negativity, at 65.9%.Greek Muslims answered 4.9% “Yes,” 72.3% “No,” 22.8% uncertain.Turks were significantly more positive, with 34.8% “Yes,” 15.2% “No,” and 50.0% unsure.Pomaks were negative. 3.6% said“Yes,” 72.7% “No,” 23.6% unsure. 18.2% of Roma answered “Yes,” 45.5% “No,” 36.4% don’t know/no answer.

Clearly, Turks stand out: over a third say visits by Turkish politicians boost their future security. In contrast, Greek Muslims and Pomaks exhibit a strong inclination toward “No” (both above 70%), while the Roma group, though small in sample size, skews more supportive than Greek Muslims or Pomaks. Nearly half of those who did not disclose identity remain uncertain.

In Thrace: 8.7% answered “Yes,” 62.9% “No,” 28.4% unsure. In the Dodecanese respondents reported 13.6% “Yes,” 63.6% “No,” 22.7% uncertain. Both Thrace and Dodecanese broadly echo the overall pattern, dominated by “No” answers. Dodecanese has a modestly higher “Yes” response (13.6%) than Thrace (8.7%), while those who did not respond to the region question show a very high rate of uncertainty (47.8%).

Most respondents across the age spectrum tend not to feel secure when Turkish politicians visit, with “No” percentages exceeding half in every category from 18–29 (69.4%) through 50–59 (57.5%). Younger adults (18–29 and 30–39) display particularly low “Yes” rates at 6.9% and 8.2%, respectively, which aligns with high “No” responses of around 69%. Although the 40–49 and 50–59 groups each have a slightly lower “No” share—55.3% and 57.5%—they still reflect a clear majority. By contrast, the 60–69 category splits evenly among “Yes,” “No,” and “Unsure” (33.3% each), while the 70–79 bracket is divided among 20% “Yes,” 40% “No,” and 40%

“Unsure.” Both older categories likely represent small sample sizes and thus warrant cautious interpretation.

Younger to middle-aged cohorts mostly reject the notion that Turkish political visits enhance their security, whereas older adults (60+) show more balanced or positive views—though these numbers may be inflated by small sample sizes.

26,2% of respondents with Primary Education or less reported “Yes,” 52.4% were negative while 21.4% were uncertain. Secondary education’s percentages were 9.4% “Yes,” 63.5% “No,” 27.1% uncertain.

Tertiary education graduates were negative,5.6% “Yes,” 65.0% “No,” 29.4% were unsure. Postgraduate graduates reported 5.9% “Yes,” 58.8% “No,” 35.3% unsure.

Interestingly, those with only primary education are more likely (26.2%) to feel secure, in contrast to higher educational levels, where “Yes” remains under 10%. Tertiary and postgraduate groups are the least apt to say “Yes,” though a large fraction remains uncertain.

Overall, visits by Turkish politicians inspire confidence in only about one in ten respondents. Most either do not feel more secure or remain undecided. The largest positive response emerges among self-identified Turks, and a small subset of older or less formally educated participants also incline toward “Yes.” By contrast, Greek Muslims and Pomaks exhibit a decidedly negative stance, as do women and those with higher education. The findings suggest that perceptions of Turkish political visits vary widely by ethno-religious identity, age, and schooling, with cultural affiliation playing a key role in determining whether such visits are seen as reassuring or irreleva

CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that there is a certain degree of success in Türkiye's public diplomacy initiatives. 2/3 of the respondents said that they enjoy some access to Turkish culture while 1/3 participate in minority associations and the events they organize. 85% of the respondents attend mosque rituals at some point, indicating an affiliation to the Muslim faith. Half of the respondents watch Turkish TV, visit Turkish news sites and listen to Turkish radio stations, 40% read newspapers and books. 70% watch Turkish series and buy Turkish products while 90% travel to Turkey at some point. There is regional, age, racial variation but the overall conclusion to be drawn is that Turkish soft power is present in the population with a certain degree of acceptance and impact.

Regarding the minorities' stance on controversial political issues, only 16% agree that Erdogan was justified in targeting Gulenists while only 10% consider the Gezi Park protests justified. At the same time only 15% of the respondents expressed positive opinions on Erdogan. Only 15% agreed that there are grey zones in the Aegean and 6% are positive about the Mavi Vatan doctrine. A minute 4% think that the Greeks were responsible for the 2020 events in Evros while 25,7% accuse the Turks. 30% think that Greeks are right about Turkish irredentism. Surprisingly, even respondents who were positively disposed towards Turkish soft power pillars, show particular unwillingness to adopt a Turkish stance on bilateral political issues.

Most noticeably, a striking 50%-60% of the respondents gave no answer to these politically sensitive questions. Taking into consideration the interviews conducted, these indicate indifference to political issues combined with a desire to distance themselves from anything that may disrupt the way of life and cause problems.

Although there is a tendency not to remain indifferent to Turkish soft power, there is a decline to conform to Turkish political pursuits, something we can call **unrequited soft power.** It is the kind of soft power that is accepted by a part of the population, recognized by it, forming positive perceptions for the state that exercises it but yields no results in the political arena, where other socio-economic factors prevent it from achieving the intended goals.

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