

Turkey

Ethnicity in Turkey

Group selection

The group sizes have been chosen according to the CIA World Fact Book (⁴⁵⁷¹): Turkish 70-75%, Kurdish 18%, other minorities 7-12%. The Turkish ethnic group is clearly dominant in terms of its size whereas both the Kurdish, being the second biggest ethnic group, as well as the Roma are listed due to their relative size and the state-led discrimination both have witnessed throughout the whole period of observation. Thus, we identify three politically relevant ethnic groups in Turkey: **Turks, Kurds, and Roma**

⁴⁵⁷¹ [Central Intelligence Agency, 2008]

Power relations

As the successor state of the multiethnic Ottoman Empire, the Turkish Republic evolved with a profound legacy of heterogeneity on its shoulders. Discriminatory policies against certain groups of the population based on their ethnicity are hence widely regarded as a continuation of measures taken in the late Ottoman Empire and aimed at the same direction, “namely minority assimilation or (even) emigration” (⁴⁵⁷², 911ff). Despite being (partly) recognized and protected by the Lausanne Treaty, most of the minorities of Turkey faced persistent discrimination (cf. ⁴⁵⁷³, 128). Tolerance towards minorities did not characterize republican Turkish politics (cf. ⁴⁵⁷⁴). Thus, we only identify one period.

⁴⁵⁷² [Bora, 2002]

⁴⁵⁷³ [Grigoriadis, 2009]

⁴⁵⁷⁴ [Turan, 1984]

1946-2017

Turks: After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the modernist Muslim elites associated with the state and began to search for “ethnic roots of the founders of the Ottoman state and eventually concluded that they were Turks” (⁴⁵⁷⁵, 3). The fact that Turkish was “the language of the state and a large section of the population, also helped turn Turkishness into a political category” (ibid.). Non-Turkish Muslims are considered part of the Turkish nation, “but only as long as they are willing to assimilate and embrace Turkishness” (⁴⁵⁷⁶, 32). In practice, “ethnicity is (thus) an important component in the definition of the Turkish nation” (ibid.). “The Turkish Constitution does not acknowledge the presence of minority languages. At the same time, it provides public funding for the preservation and promotion of the Turkish language, history, and culture” (⁴⁵⁷⁷, 15). As the judicial framework explicitly grants social

⁴⁵⁷⁵ [Karpát, 2004]

⁴⁵⁷⁶ [Lundgren, 2007]

⁴⁵⁷⁷ [Minorities Rights Group International, 2007]

and political privileges to Turks according to the aforementioned definition, the Turkish ethnic group is coded as having monopoly power throughout.

Kurds: With 18% the Kurds comprise almost one fifth of the whole population in Turkey. However, due to the long standing policy of Turkification, a process of substantial assimilation controlled by the Turkish Republic, it is rather difficult to measure the exact size of the Kurdish ethnic group in Turkey. Until 1991, this policy had denied the very existence of a distinct Kurdish ethnicity. Kurds explicitly suffer from discrimination that includes serious restrictions on the use of their language and any expression of their culture, as well as on political organizing. The political life of Kurds in Turkey is problematic with displays of “Kurdishness” being restricted (cf. ⁴⁵⁷⁸). Nevertheless there have been several attempts to organize in the political arena: in 1990, ten pro-Kurdish members of parliament broke off from the Social Democrats and founded the People’s Labor Party (HEP). In 1993 the HEP was outlawed, just like its successors the Democratic Labor Party (DEP) in 1994 (cf. ⁴⁵⁷⁹, 866) as well as the “ethnic Kurdish” People Democratic Labor Party (HADEP) in 2003 (⁴⁵⁸⁰, 40). Despite of a slight improvement in the judicial framework in the recent years and after the beginning of the so-called “solution process” (⁴⁵⁸¹), not much changed in practice.

⁴⁵⁷⁸ [Minorities at Risk Project, 2009]

⁴⁵⁷⁹ [Bozarslan, 2002]

⁴⁵⁸⁰ [Kalaycioglu Carkoglu, 2007]

⁴⁵⁸¹ [US Department of State, 2014]

In the June 2015 general elections, the HDP’s entry into parliament marked the first time a party advocating Kurdish rights crossed the election threshold. However, their representatives did not become a power-sharing partner in the cabinet and in 2016, arrests of Kurdish politicians only confirmed their status as discriminated ⁴⁵⁸².

⁴⁵⁸² [US Department of State, 2016]

The Kurdish ethnic group is coded as “discriminated” throughout (⁴⁵⁸³; ⁴⁵⁸⁴).

⁴⁵⁸³ [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2012]

⁴⁵⁸⁴ [US Department of State, 2014]

Roma: As for the Kurds, estimations about the actual size of the Roma ethnic group in Turkey differ acutely. Several legislative provisions in the Turkish judiciary single out Roma for “discriminatory treatment” (⁴⁵⁸⁵, 4). Until its abrogation in 2006, the Law on Settlement stated at Article 4 that “those that are not bound to the Turkish culture, anarchists, migrant gypsies, spies and those that have been deported, are not recognized as migrants” (ibid). In September 2002, Turkey ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. In this Convention, “ethnicity is not mentioned specifically as a prohibited ground of unequal treatment in Turkey, which limits the legal protections against discrimination afforded Roma in Turkey. Erdogan’s AKP regime has engaged in a so-called “Romani Opening” since late 2009/early 2010. For the first time, the discrimination of Roma was officially acknowledged as a problem and the government announced efforts to improve the situation; in practice, not much has changed in recent years (⁴⁵⁸⁶; Gençoglu-Onbasi, 2012; ⁴⁵⁸⁷) Roma in Turkey are

⁴⁵⁸⁵ [European Roma Rights Centre, 2009]

⁴⁵⁸⁶ [European Commission, 2013]

⁴⁵⁸⁷ [US Department of State, 2014]

regularly subjected to discrimination in almost all aspects of their lives" (ibid). Given these facts, the Roma ethnic group is coded as "discriminated" throughout.

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Political status of ethnic groups in Turkey

From 1946 until 2017

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Turkish	0.75	MONOPOLY
Kurds	0.18	DISCRIMINATED
Roma	0.0066	DISCRIMINATED



Figure 940: Political status of ethnic groups in Turkey during 1946-2017.

Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Turkey

From 1946 until 2017

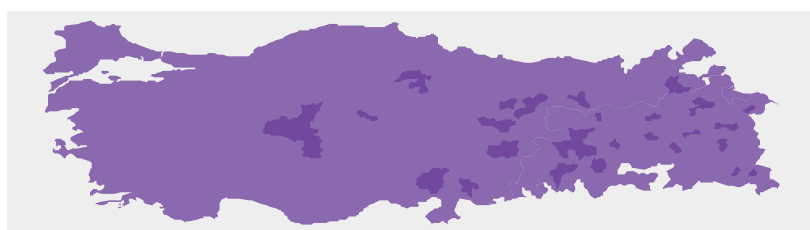


Figure 941: Map of ethnic groups in Turkey during 1946-2017.

Group name	Area in km ²	Type
■ Turkish	627 399	Regionally based
■ Kurds	177 241	Regionally based
■ Roma		Migrant

Table 314: List of ethnic groups in Turkey during 1946-2017.

Conflicts in Turkey

Starting on 1974-06-19

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Cyprus	Government of Turkey		1974-06-19			

Starting on 1983-04-30

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Turkey	PKK	Kurds	1983-04-30	Explicit	Yes	Yes

Starting on 1987-12-30

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Turkey	Devrimci Sol		1987-12-30			
Government of Turkey	MKP		1987-12-30			
Government of Turkey	TAK	Kurds	2005-04-29	Explicit	Yes	
Government of Turkey	YSK	Turkish	2016-07-14	No	Yes, from EGIP	No

Starting on 2015-07-22

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Turkey	IS		2015-07-22			