

Turkey - Geography And Demographics

Turkey occupies about 780 square kilometers. Approximately 97 percent of its land area lies in Asia, on an extended peninsula called Anatolia. The country has seas on three sides: The Black Sea on the north, the Aegean on the west, and the Mediterranean to the south. The straits of the Bosphorous and the Dardanelles, which along with the Sea of Marmara link the Black Sea to the Aegean and Mediterranean Seas, is an important international waterway and is completely under Turkey's control. Turkey borders on Greece and Bulgaria in the west, on the republics of Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia to the north, and Syria, Iran, and Iraq to the east. This significant geographical location places Turkey amid the Balkans, the states of the former Soviet Union, Central Asia, and the Middle East, and has forced Turkey to be an active player in geopolitics.

Over the past fifty years, Turkey has also absorbed waves of immigrants and refugees in large numbers. In this context, recent immigrants have come from the Balkans, as well as those who fled the political turmoil in Iran in the 1980s, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and Iraq after the Gulf War in 1990. Turkey is the centerpiece of a very unstable region, both geographically and politically, and its institutions have shown remarkable resilience in dealing with an unending series of crises.

Turkey's gross national product (GNP) per capita is estimated to be about \$2,986 U.S. (SIS 2000). The economy is based mostly on agriculture, along with the construction industry, mining, textiles, and tourism. Turkey's chief exports include cement, citrus fruits, cotton, figs, hazelnuts, hides and leather goods, minerals, sultana raisins, textiles, and tobacco. Its chief imports are chemicals

and related products, natural gas and crude oil, electrical and transportation equipment, rubber, and plastics. The percentage of households below poverty line is estimated to be 14.2 percent (SPO 1997).

About 35 percent of the population lives in rural areas, and 65 percent in urban areas. However, the rate of urbanization has been so rapid that sociologists have defined this process as "the ruralization of towns and cities." The three most populous cities of Turkey are Istanbul, Ankara (the capital), and Izmir. The population of Istanbul rose from about five million in 1965 to over ten million in 2000. There is also a small population of nomadic pastoralists, but their numbers, never high, are decreasing rapidly as animal husbandry loses its economic significance, and urban areas steadily expand. The country has eighty-one provinces and is divided into seven regions that feature significantly different climatic, economic, and social conditions. These are the Marmara, the Aegean, the Mediterranean, Central Anatolia, the Black Sea, Eastern Anatolia, and Southeastern Anatolia. This diversity is also reflected in the dynamics of regional family structures, which adds to the complexities in the rapidly expanding urban configurations.

Citing this material

Please include a link to this page if you have found this material useful for research or writing a related article. Content on this website is from high-quality, licensed material originally published in print form. You can always be sure you're reading unbiased, factual, and accurate information.

Highlight the text below, right-click, and select "copy". Paste the link into your website, email, or any other HTML document.

`Turkey - Geography And Demographics`

Copyright © 2009 Net Industries - All Rights Reserved

Other Free Encyclopedias :: Marriage and Family Encyclopedia :: Marriage and Family Encyclopedia (To-Z) :: Turkey - Geography And Demographics, Family Life And Structure, Issues Related To Family Life, Changes In Family Life

Turkey - Family Life And Structure

Turkey has a young age structure: 10 percent of the population is under five years of age and 32 percent below the age of fifteen. The percentage of the population sixty-five and over, however, constitutes only 6 percent of the total. Life expectancy is sixty-six years for men and seventy-one years for women. (TDHS 1998, p. 4). The literacy rate in 1998 was 94 percent for men, and 74 percent for women (UNICEF 2001), but few adults have progressed beyond primary school.

Households. Households in Turkey hold an average of 4.3 persons. In urban areas, this figure drops to an average of four persons; in rural areas, it rises to 4.9. Only 5 percent of Turkish households are single-person households, while two in every five households have five or more members (TDHS 1998:4).

Today, about 70 percent of Turkish households are *nuclear*, with at least one child and both parents, and 20 percent of households are *extended* families, married couple living with other kin, mostly the parent(s) or other relatives of the husband. Even when a household is classified as nuclear, most often close extended family members will be living in very nearby. About 5 percent of households can be defined as *dispersed* families, in which single parents or some kinfolk living together. Polygamous households are statistically negligible, but remain despite their illegality.

Marriage. Since the enactment of the republic's 1926 Civil Code, municipal authorities perform marriages in a secular ceremony. Marriages carried out only by religious authorities are considered legally invalid, so people who want to be united in a religious marriage must do so after their official service. Nevertheless, despite this clear requirement, it is estimated that religious marriages (those not accompanied by civil ceremonies) often take place, especially in the eastern and southeastern parts of Anatolia. Therefore, the number of marriages appears lower than it actually is because religious marriages are not included in official statistics (SIS Marriage Statistics 1997).

Even taking only the official statistics into account, however, marriage is almost universal in Turkey. By the time women have reached their early thirties, 93 percent are or have been married, and by the end of their reproductive years, only 2 percent of women have never married. The 1998 Turkish Demographic and Health Survey found 15 percent of women aged fifteen to nineteen to be married (THDS 1998). Divorce rates are very low. The crude divorce rate of Turkey is less than one per thousand per year, quite low when compared to international divorce rates, and much lower than those of Europe. In 1999, the crude divorce rate was 0.49 per thousand.

The diversity of marriage ceremonies and customs reflect the regional, urban, rural, ethnic, and socioeconomic differences within the country. In rural areas (35%) and small towns (30%), the girl's family receives a dowry from the groom's family. Newcomers to metropolitan areas (25%) are not always able to give a dowry to the bride's family. Among the established population in metropolitan areas (10%), many couples marry later, after they complete their education. Parents give their children substantial presents and may assist them financially, at least in early married life. There are many colorful varieties of weddings, but most couples marry with the bride wearing a white wedding dress, and the groom a dark suit.

Fertility. Turkish families greatly value children, and the desire to have children is universal. Traditionally, families prefer boys over girls. Women at the start of the twenty-first century gave birth to an average of 2.6 children. Childbearing occurs often between the ages of fifteen and nineteen, with the highest fertility rate among women between twenty and twenty-four. There are, however, wide variations in fertility levels among regions, with the highest rate in the east (4.2 children per woman) and lowest in the west (2.0 children). Women living in the east marry nearly two years earlier than those living in the west. Fertility also varies widely with urban and rural residence, with women living in rural areas having an average of almost one child more than those living in urban areas. Education levels affect fertility levels, with those lacking a primary education

having an average of almost one child more than women who have primary education, and 2.2 children more than those with at least a secondary-level education (TDHS 1998). Overall, when asked how many children they would choose to have if they could live their lives over, women gave an average ideal family size of 2.5 children, which is very close to actual fertility rates.

Maternal and child health. For many years Turkey has been troubled by infant and child mortality rates that are higher than might be expected, given the economic and demographic figures of the country and other development criteria. The infant mortality rate (a reflection of overall child health in a society) is about forty per thousand, and among children under five, the mortality rate was about forth-eight per thousand in the late 1990s. Infant and child mortality rates declined in the past decade. However, the infant mortality rate in the rural areas is about 1.6 times higher than in urban areas. Infant mortality rates are lower than the national average in the western and southern regions, close to the national average in the central and northern regions, and nearly 1.5 times higher than the national average in the eastern region (TDHS 1998). Among other factors, children's chances of survival are closely related to the parent's levels of education (Gürsoy 1992).

Medical care is another important factor in the reduction of mortality rates, which drop significantly if the mother has received both antenatal and delivery care from health professionals. If she has received neither, under-five mortality can be as high as 116 per thousand and infant mortality as high as 95 per thousand. About three-fourths of births now occur in health facilities, although this figure varies from around 44 percent in the east to 87 percent in the west. About 80 percent of all births are assisted by either a doctor or a qualified midwife-nurse. Infants born less than two years after a sibling have a considerably higher chance of dying. For these children, mortality risks are 2.8 times higher than for children born after an interval of four years or more (TDHS 1998).

Almost all babies are breastfed. The median duration of breastfeeding is twelve months. Most children are also given supplementary foods and liquids at an early age, which medical authorities consider not only unnecessary, but a potential source of infection. Twenty percent of children under age five are short for their age; this is more prevalent in rural areas, in the east, and among children of uneducated mothers (TDHS 1998).

Citing this material

Please include a link to this page if you have found this material useful for research or writing a related article. Content on this website is from high-quality, licensed material originally published in print form. You can always be sure you're reading unbiased, factual, and accurate information.

Highlight the text below, right-click, and select "copy". Paste the link into your website, email, or any other HTML document.

`Turkey - Family Life And Structure`

Copyright © 2009 Net Industries - All Rights Reserved

Other Free Encyclopedias :: Marriage and Family Encyclopedia :: Marriage and Family Encyclopedia (To-Z) :: Turkey - Geography And Demographics, Family Life And Structure, Issues Related To Family Life, Changes In Family Life

Turkey - Issues Related To Family Life

Because almost the entire adult population is married, the meaning and quality of marital and family life are extremely important and dominate the social, sexual, economic, and cultural aspects of adult life. No public or private initiative, for example, may be considered without reference to its possible impact on the somewhat idealized environment of the "average" Turkish family. Much of the urban informal economy, for example, relies on home-based work, engages the labor of women, but is conceived in family and kin-terms (White 1994, 2000).

With the lives of most adult Turks defined by their roles and positions in these family systems, their status and worth as individuals are closely linked to the public perception of the family's strengths and extended relationships. This is positive in some ways, in that every person has a place in the family; that the weak, the aged, and the handicapped are seen primarily as family responsibilities and not the sole concern of the state; and that the extended family functions as a single unit in times of stress, whether due to natural disasters (Turkey is located in a highly active earthquake zone), economic instability, medical emergencies, or threats in general from the outside world.

Just as the family protects its individual members, however, so must they unite to protect the family and its honor in terms of both public behavior and popular perception. This duty is an important mark of individual worth. One does not do things that will embarrass the family or tarnish its public image, and this rule is rigidly enforced. For example, female sexual purity, or honor before marriage must be preserved at all costs. In certain regions, honor is preserved in an extreme form of *honor killings*, whereby male kinsmen may kill their errant daughters or sisters. In similar fashion, feuds between families may force individual male family members to take revenge for killings of their own kinfolk or become targets themselves. Both honor killings and feuds are against the law, but given the strength of customs in certain regions, they prevail.

The patriarchal structure of society means girls are subject to a much stricter code of sexual purity, and that in general, they are rarely given the opportunities available to boys. In rural areas, every member of the family works, but girls look after siblings and carry goods to the field, while boys tend animals. In towns, girls help mothers while boys follow fathers to work and coffeehouses. The heads of families arrange most marriages, and girls are trained to be subservient to males in most situations. This pattern was changing, but remained the dominant feature of married life at the start of the twenty-first century.

The children of working families are also viewed as economic contributors from an early age, with schooling a secondary consideration. As the family ascends the

ladder of economic wellbeing, however, this picture changes dramatically, and education becomes much more important. A larger middle class is developing, slowly, and this shift has profound implications for the family structure.

Within a male-dominated society, and one that prizes masculine codes of behavior, the discipline within a family is frequently harsh and may be based on physical punishment. This does not rule out affection, togetherness, or mutual love, but a stern system of respect has a strict code of discipline at its core.

Citing this material

Please include a link to this page if you have found this material useful for research or writing a related article. Content on this website is from high-quality, licensed material originally published in print form. You can always be sure you're reading unbiased, factual, and accurate information.

Highlight the text below, right-click, and select “copy”. Paste the link into your website, email, or any other HTML document.

`Turkey - Issues Related To Family Life`

Copyright © 2009 Net Industries - All Rights Reserved

Search content...

[Other Free Encyclopedias](#) :: [Marriage and Family Encyclopedia](#) :: [Marriage and Family Encyclopedia \(To-Z\)](#) :: [Turkey - Geography And Demographics, Family Life And Structure, Issues Related To Family Life, Changes In Family Life](#)

Turkey - Changes In Family Life

Only a generation ago, the majority of Turkish families lived in rural areas, and every member of the family had a place, a position, and a function. Young

children and the elderly were cared for, everyone else contributed what he or she could. With the onset of industrialization and urbanization, however, the extended family network came under great strain. Fewer of the elderly, for example, can now live with their sons or daughters in small urban apartments, and so they must make other arrangements. The urge to acquire more material goods (televisions, automobiles, mobile telephones, etc.) has become more important, and the family may enjoy the benefits of a consumer society only by reducing its contributions to the extended family.

Faced with perceived threats towards the traditional Turkish family in 1990, the Prime Ministry Division for Family Research convened the First National Assembly on the Family (*Aile Surasi*). Attended by selected scholars, social service professionals, civil representatives, politicians, bureaucrats, and the media, the assembly developed multiple policy recommendations in family-related areas of economic life, health and nutrition, and other areas, with resolutions calling for increased child-care services and more public attention to the care of the elderly.

Constant change is a permanent aspect in most Turkish families. Some of this change is reflected in national statistics, but some is not. Change has also rearranged family values and priorities, to the extent that suicides, for example, rose because more people simply could not cope with modern life. Suicides have been uncommon in Turkey, but analysis suggests that the most prevalent reasons in 1998 were related to family and marital life, with 26 percent of suicides attributed to incompatibilities and conflicts within the family. Additionally, 13 percent of suicides were due to emotional relationships or the inability to marry the person of one's choice. These two categories together account for the majority of suicides. Most suicides occur in relatively young age groups (15–34), with women being more prone to suicide (SIS 1998).

As Turkey strives to become a successful member of the European Community, it is also changing its Civil Codes (2002), with profound implications for the rights

of the individual, the legal status of women, children's rights, democratic practices, and social services.

Increasingly, the European and American models, through mass media, films, international agreements, more foreign tourists (more than 9 million in 2001), along with the explosive development of the Internet, are influencing the younger generation and providing alternatives to the traditional family structure.

Literally, and often painfully, Turkey has, in the words of a former politician "leapt an era" and moved in a lifetime from being an insular, predominantly rural, and conservative society to a prominent player in the larger world, in almost every category of modern development. This change is continuing, with constant reliance on and modifications of traditional family structures throughout Turkey.

Bibliography

Anadan-Unat, N. (1981). *Women in Turkish Society*. Leiden, the Netherlands: E. J. Brill.

Arat, Y. (1989). *The Patriarchal Paradox: Women Politicians in Turkey*. Rutherford, NH: Furleigh Dickinson University Press.

Bultay, T., ed. (2000). *Employment and Training Project Labour Market Information (TOR 6) Informal Sector*. Ankara: State Institute of Statistics Prime Ministry Republic of Turkey.

Delaney, C. (1991). *The Seed and the Soil: Gender and Cosmology in Turkish Village Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Duben, A., ed. (1986). *Family in Turkish Society, Sociological and Legal Studies*. Ankara: Turkish Social Science Association.

Duben, A., and Behar, C. (1991). *Istanbul Households: Marriage, Family and Fertility 1880-1940*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Gürsoy, A. (1992). "Infant Mortality: A Turkish Puzzle?" *Health Transition Review* 2(2)131–149.

Gürsoy, A. (1994). "Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children." In *The Basics of Maternal and Child Health*, ed. O. Neyzi. Istanbul: Institute of Child Health, Istanbul University/UNICEF.

Gürsoy, A. (1995). "Child Mortality and the Changing Discourse on Childhood in Turkey." In *Children in the Muslim Middle East*, ed. E. W. Fernea. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Gürsoy, A. (1996). "Abortion in Turkey: A Matter of State, Family, or Individual Decision." *Social Science & Medicine* 24(4):531–542.

Kagitçibasi, Ç., ed. (1982). *Sex Roles, Family and Community in Turkey*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Kagitçibasi, Ç. (1996). *Family and Human Development Across Cultures—A View from the Other Side*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Measure DHS+ Macro International Inc. (1999). *Turkey Demographic and Health Survey 1998 Summary Report*. Ankara: Hacettepe Institute of Population Studies.

Ministry of Health General Directorate of Mother and Child Health and Family Planning, Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies, Demographic and Health Surveys Macro International Inc., (1995). *Trends in Fertility, Family Planning, and Childhood Mortality in Turkey, Findings from National Demographic Surveys and Population Censuses*. Ankara: Author.

State Institute of Statistics, Prime Ministry, Republic of Turkey. (2001). *Statistical Indicators 1923–1998. Ankara. Census of Population Provisional Results*. Ankara: Author.

State Institute of Statistics, Prime Ministry, Republic of Turkey. (2001). *Suicide Statistics 1998*. Ankara: Author.

State Institute of Statistics, Prime Ministry, Republic of Turkey. (2001). *Divorce Statistics 1999*. Ankara: Author.

State Institute of Statistics, Prime Ministry, Republic of Turkey. (2000). *Household Labour Force Survey Results*. Ankara: Author.

State Institute of Statistics, Prime Ministry, Republic of Turkey. (1999). *Marriage Statistics 1997*. Ankara: Author.

State Institute of Statistics, Prime Ministry, Republic of Turkey. (1995). *Women in Statistics 1927–1992*. Ankara: Author.

State Institute of Statistics, Prime Ministry, Republic of Turkey, and International Labor Organization. (1997). *Child Labor in Turkey 1999—Türkiye’de Çalışan Çocuklar 1999* (In Turkish).

United Nations Development Programme. (1999). *Human Development Report, Turkey 1999*. Ankara: Author.

UNICEF. (2001). *The State of the World's Children 2001*. New York: Author.

White, J. (1994). *Money Makes Us Relatives, Women's Labor in Urban Turkey*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

White, J. (2000). "Kinship, Reciprocity, and the World Market." In *Dividends of Kinship, Meanings and Uses of Social Relatedness*, ed. P. P. Schweitzer. New York: Routledge.

AKILE GURSOY

Citing this material

Please include a link to this page if you have found this material useful for research or writing a related article. Content on this website is from high-quality, licensed material originally published in print form. You can always be sure you're reading unbiased, factual, and accurate information.

Highlight the text below, right-click, and select “copy”. Paste the link into your website, email, or any other HTML document.

`Turkey - Changes In Family Life`