



Boğaziçi University
Sociology Data Lab

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2024 Turkish Social Values Study

Migration Report



2024 Turkish Social Values Study Migration Report

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Executive Summary

Based on the results of the 2024 Turkey Social Values Study (TSVS), this report provides an overview of survey findings on migration, nationalism, and religiosity in Turkey. Supported by TUBITAK 1001, TSVS was conducted using the Computer-Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI) method. A total of 1,587 persons across Turkey participated in the study which utilized a representative sample based on a multi-stage cluster sampling design.

In recent years, migration has become a polarizing issue in the Turkish context, particularly in local and presidential elections (Balta et al.; Elçi et al.). Given migration's growing importance, the TSVS aimed to examine general attitudes toward migration and migrants in Turkey. As national and international scholarship highlights the impact of individual factors such as nationalism and religiosity on attitudes toward migrants, the TSVS also focused on these dimensions. In this context, this Migration Report presents the TSVS's key findings on general attitudes toward migrants, contact, and perceptions of threat.

Attitudes toward migrants: Based on the study findings, participants' perceptions of the total number of migrants in Turkey were higher than their perceptions of the number of migrants living in their neighborhood and the total number of migrants officially registered, according to the Turkish Statistical Institute (TURKSTAT 2024).

Share of space: The survey data indicates that the vast majority of participants have little contact with migrants in their daily lives. As such concerns and perceptions of threat regarding migration may be less related to actual negative experiences of direct contact and more related to increased negative media coverage and political mobilization around anti-migrant attitudes.

Executive Summary

The findings indicate that various factors shape perceptions of threat and evaluations of contact. In the study, nationalism (sense of national belonging, national pride, and perceptions of national superiority), religiosity (religious practices, nature, and strength of faith), and demographic characteristics affect participants' attitudes towards migration and migrants in different ways.

Migration and Threat: Drawing on statements exploring real and symbolic threats, the findings indicate that migrants were perceived as a threat to labor market participation, and that national identity and national superiority variables influenced this perception. However, nationalist tendencies alone were insufficient to explain anti-migrant attitudes, highlighting the need for further research. Regarding health and access to healthcare, participants' responses suggest that perceptions of threat relate more to access to healthcare as a resource than concerns around migration and public health.

Assessment and Policy Recommendations: The TSVS findings highlight the need for further comprehensive research addressing anti-migrant attitudes. Future research will help explore changes in attitudes, influential variables, and the persistence of anti-migrant sentiments in more depth. Scientifically grounded research on migration can provide policymakers, civil society organizations, and other relevant actors with insights into society's attitudes toward migration and migrants. Furthermore, TSVS and future research can support migration and integration management policies and initiatives by identifying areas where social tensions need to be reduced. Recognizing that migration will remain a political issue in the foreseeable future, it is necessary to develop long-term policies grounded in scientific, evidence-based research.

The Turkish Social Values Study (TSVS), supported by TÜBİTAK 1001, aims to provide representational insights into the value orientations and attitudes of Turkish citizens. Economic and demographic fluctuations following the COVID-19 pandemic, combined with ongoing uncertainties from climate change and natural disasters, have reinforced feelings of threat and insecurity in society, making it necessary to examine social values within the framework of the “risk society” theory. With this in mind, the TSVS aims to better understand issues perceived as social problems and raise awareness of them among researchers, policymakers, and the wider public. Therefore, the study examines changes in social values through three fundamental issues that have emerged as risk factors after the pandemic:

- Fertility intentions in the context of family and gender
- Tendency to believe in conspiracy theories
- Attitudes toward migrants

This report uses TSVS data to examine Turkish citizens' perceptions and attitudes toward migrants, drawing on respondents from diverse age, gender, religious, educational, and income groups. The study examines the frequency and nature of participants' contact with migrants and perceived threats associated with access to resources while analyzing the impact of respondents' religiosity and nationalism sentiments on their anti-migrant attitudes.

The TSVS measures changing values across Turkey through a nationally representative survey. Consistent with other international studies in the field, data were collected using the Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) method.

The TSVS sample was designed to be representative of all Turkish-speaking citizens aged 18 and older residing in Turkey. Respondents were selected using random probability sampling methods at every stage. Data were collected according to the Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics Level 2 (NUTS-2) classification. Accordingly, a multistage cluster sampling design was employed based on Turkey's 26 NUTS-2 subregions, which group the country's 81 provinces by socioeconomic similarity.

The sample selection process consisted of three stages in line with the multistage cluster sampling design. In the first stage, researchers identified 262 geographic clusters (Primary Sampling Units, PSUs), each consisting of 100 households, across Turkey's 26 NUTS-2 geographic subregions. In the second stage, a total of 19 addresses were selected from each PSU through simple random sampling, including 14 primary and 5 reserve addresses. In the third stage, one respondent was selected from each address using the last birthday method. It was not necessary to activate the reserve sample during the data collection process.



262 PSUs (Primary Sampling Unit)



$262 \times 19 = 4978$ Households

Main sample: $262 \times 14 = 3668$

Reserve sample: $262 \times 5 = 1310$

↓
Last Birthday Technique

The TSVS included 1,587 respondents. It examined participants' values and attitudes regarding fertility intentions, conspiracy theories, and migration through a range of quantitative measures. The data collected were cleaned and analyzed using the statistical software program STATA. This report focuses on the items relating to migration, nationalism, and religiosity.

1.2

Sociodemographic Characteristics

Figure 1.2.1 Gender Distribution, N=1587

According to **Figure 1.2.1**, 61.6% of the TSVS survey sample consists of women and 38.4% of men.

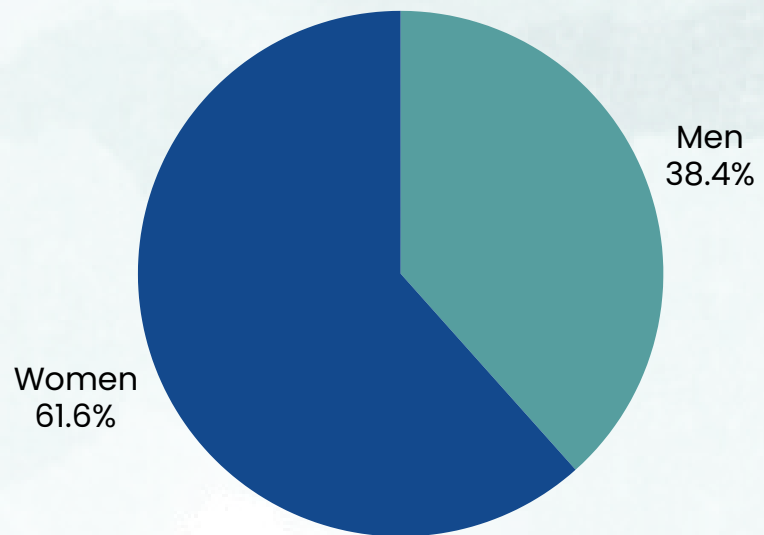
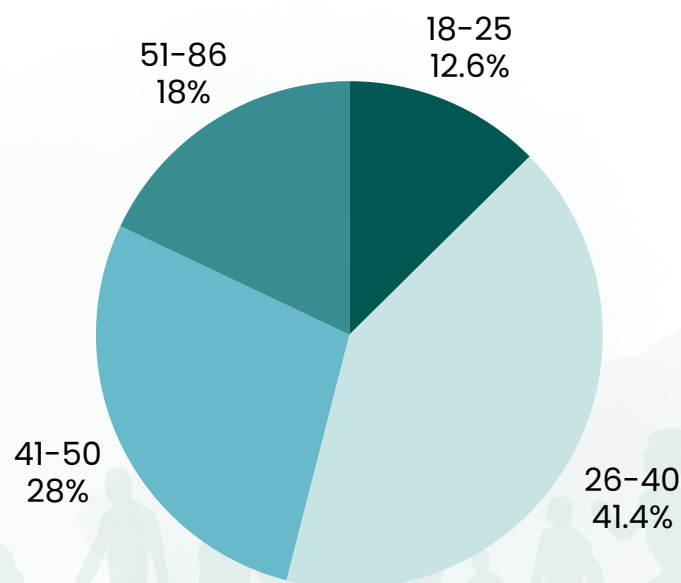
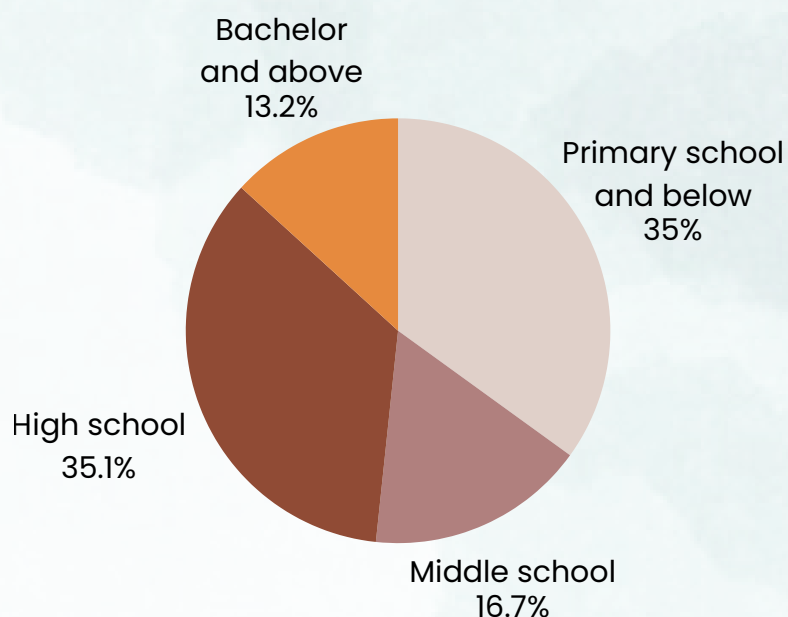


Figure 1.2.2 Age Distribution, N=1587



As shown in **Figure 1.2.2**, the ages of the survey participants range from 18 to 86. When participants are classified by age group, it is observed that 12.6% are in the 18–25 age group, 41.4% are in the 26–40 age group, 28% are in the 41–50 age group, and 18% are in the 51–86 age group.

Figure 1.2.3 Educational Attainment, N=1587



The educational attainment of the survey participants ranges from "never attended school" to "master's degree and above." Based on their highest level of education, 35% of respondents have completed 'primary school or below' while 16.7% have completed 'middle school'. 35.1% of participants finished 'high school' and the remaining hold a university degree. In addition, 35.1% of participants have completed high school, and the remaining 13.2% have obtained a university degree or higher.

Figure 1.2.4 Employment Status, N=1586

When classified by employment status, 53.5% of the respondents are employed either full-time or part-time, 14.3% are unemployed, and 32.2% are homemakers

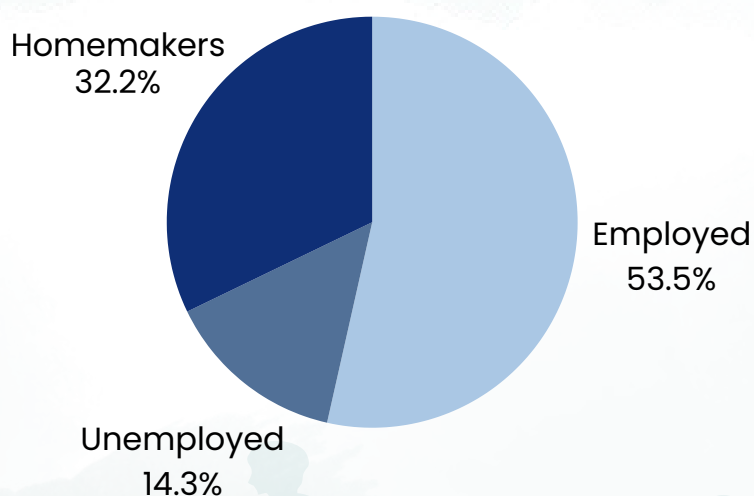


Figure 1.2.5 Income Comfort, N=1587

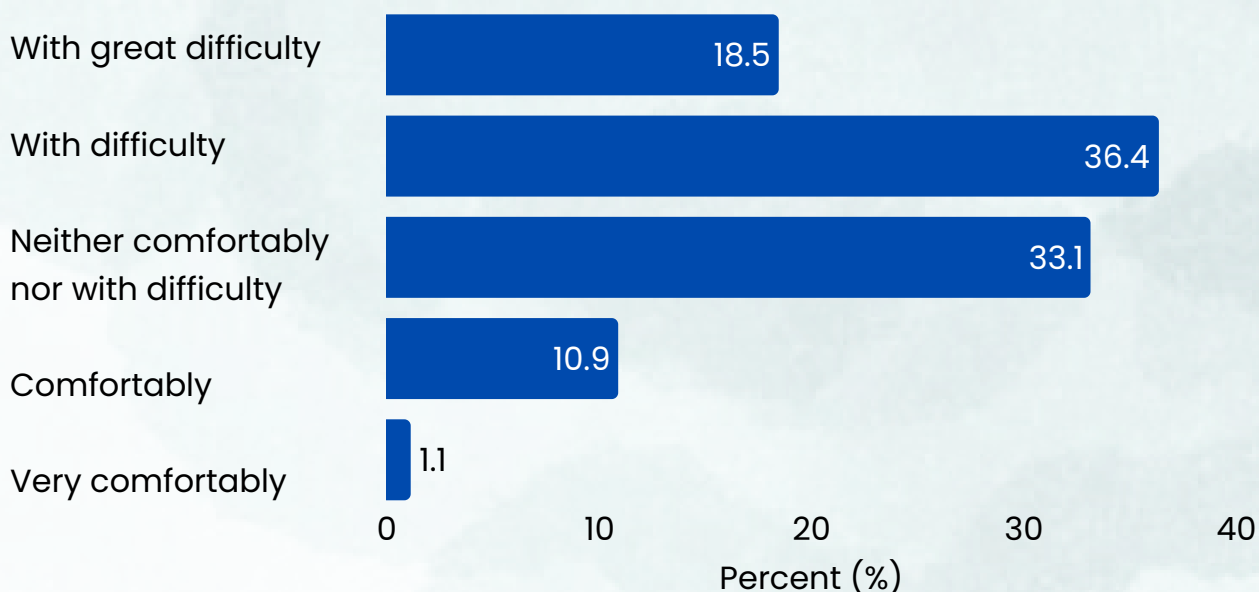
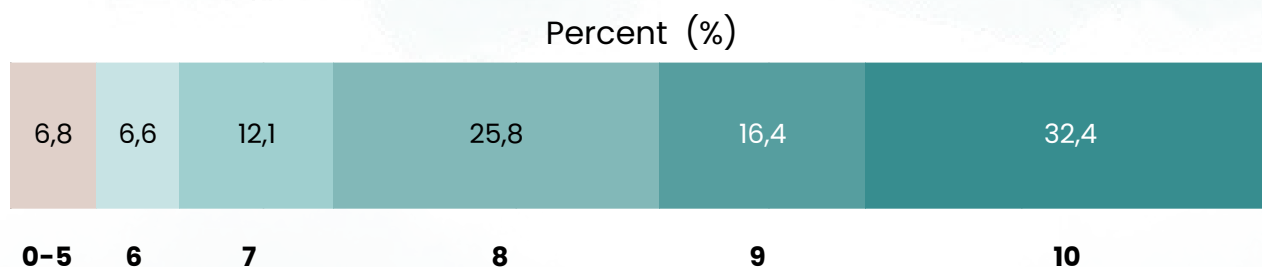


Figure 1.2.5 shows the distribution of participants' responses about their perceived comfort level by household income. According to the study, 18.5% answered "With great difficulty," 36.4% "With difficulty," and 33.1% "Neither comfortably nor with difficulty." In contrast, 10.9% of all participants stated they get by "comfortably" on their household income, while only 1.1% stated that they get by "very comfortably".

Figure 1.2.6 Importance of Religion, N=1582



According to **Figure 1.2.6**, 32.4% of participants rated religion as "Extremely important," giving it the highest score (10). Those who gave a score of 9 accounted for 16.4% of participants, while those who gave a score of 8 accounted for 25.8%. Combined, the three highest categories (8, 9, 10) account for 75% of respondents who identify religion as highly important in their lives.

On the other hand, responses in the 0–5 range account for only 6.8% of participants. This indicates that a low level of religious importance occupies a very small share of the sample.

Figure 1.2.7 Pride in Being Turkish, N=1575

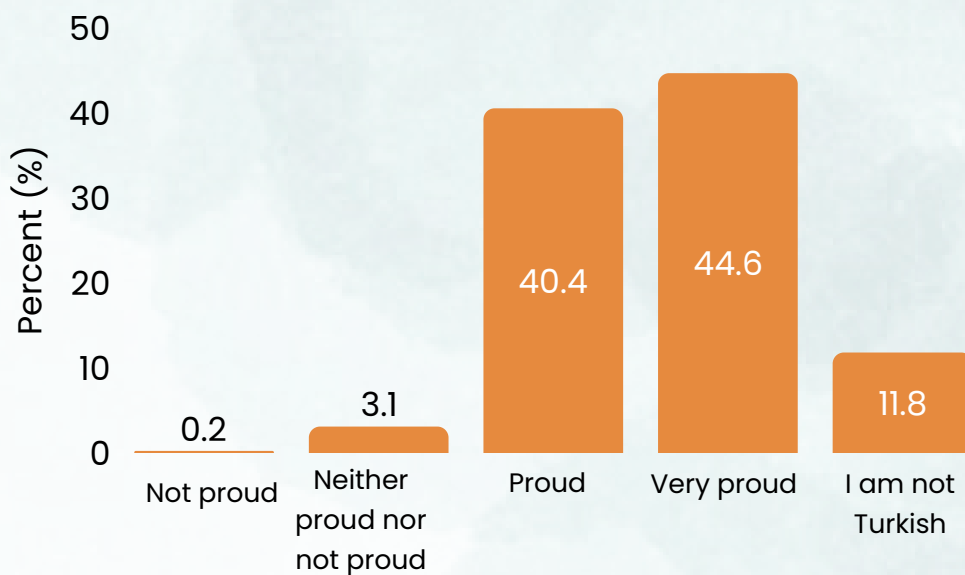


Figure 1.2.7 shows the distribution of participants' responses to the question, "How proud are you to be Turkish?"

A large majority of participants, approximately 85%, said they were proud to be Turkish, while 3.1% indicated they felt neither proud nor unproud. In contrast, 0.2% of participants said they were not very proud to be Turkish, and none selected the "Not proud at all" option. Meanwhile, 11.9% of the participants stated that they are not Turkish.

Figure 1.2.8 Attachment to Turkey , N=1583

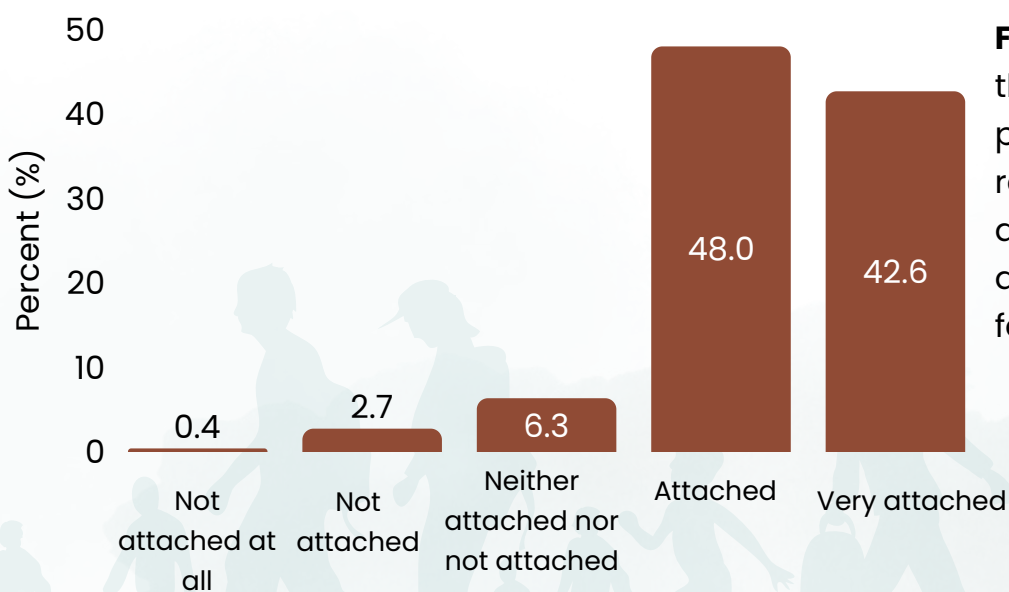


Figure 1.2.8 shows the distribution of participants' responses to the question, "How attached do you feel to Turkey?"

While more than 90% of participants stated that they feel attached to Turkey, 6.3% said they feel neither attached nor detached. In contrast, only a small proportion of participants (3.1%) stated that they do not feel attached.

Figure 1.2.9 Turkey's Superiority , N=1581

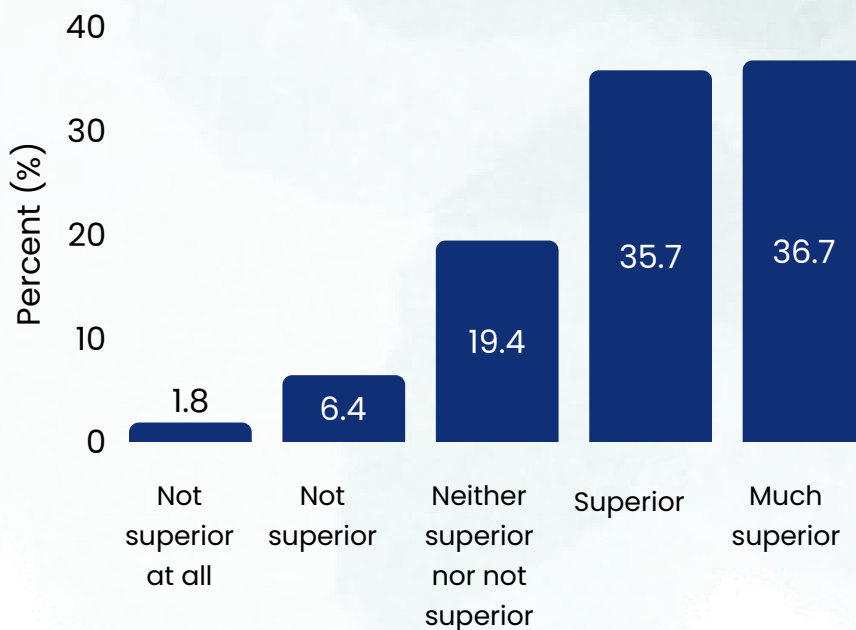


Figure 1.2.9 shows the distribution of participants' responses to the question, "In general, where do you place Turkey compared to other countries?"

72.4% of participants stated that Turkey is superior to other countries, while 8.2% stated that it is not. Those who believe Turkey is neither superior nor inferior account for 19.4% of all respondents.

Figures 1.2.7, 1.2.8, and 1.2.9 show data on the level of nationalism, indicating that the vast majority of survey participants responded in ways consistent with nationalist tendencies.

1.3

Approach to Migration & Migrants

In this report, the term migrant rather than immigrant will be used in keeping with the TSVS survey. As various terms are used in Turkish to refer to different categories of non-citizens, the survey used the term 'göçmen' and this report will use the 'migrant'. The survey questions were formulated to encompass different categories of non-citizens, including 'foreign nationals', 'refugees', or 'asylum seekers'. In this context, the term 'migrant' refers to diverse individuals, whether persons under international protection (e.g. refugees, asylum seekers, etc.) or foreign nationals who have come to Turkey for various reasons such as work or family reunification.

The survey questions do not specifically mention any particular nationality; rather, they aim to measure a general perception of 'migrants'. Given that Syrian refugees, in particular, constitute a significant portion of the non-citizen population in Turkey, it was anticipated that participants' responses might be influenced by their attitudes towards this group. Therefore, at the beginning of the survey's "Migration" section, interviewers provided participants with the following information: "By migrants, we mean all foreign nationals living within the borders of our country", with the aim of communicating a broader conceptualization of the term.



Turkey and Migration

Migration processes have affected Turkey in diverse and multifaceted ways since the founding of the Republic. Over the years, Turkey has received refugees and migrants, served as a transit route, and been a place of emigration, but migration only became a focal point of public debate in the 2010s, following the arrival of Syrian refugees (İçduygu & Bayraktar Aksel, 2023). This protracted displacement gradually brought migration to the forefront of public discourse.

The xenophobia that has been on the rise in recent years reached its peak with migration becoming a central part of election agendas during the 2019 local elections. Issues relating to migrant integration, presence, and deportation featured prominently on the agendas of political parties and candidates during both the 2019 local elections and the 2023 presidential election (Balta et al. 2023). This situation highlights the sensitivity of the immigration issue in public and the role it plays in political polarization.

The Turkish state was developing its migration management infrastructure as public interest in migration grew. One objective of migration management policies is to address threats and perceived risks through regulation. In 2024, Turkey hosted 4.3 million foreign nationals, including individuals with statuses such as Temporary Protection, International Protection, and short-term residence permits (TURKSTAT, 2025). Despite increasing measures to regulate migration and asylum, anti-migrant rhetoric has been increasing in Turkey. This rhetoric is generally shaped by economic concerns (unemployment, resource allocation), security anxieties (crime rates), cultural differences, and fears regarding demographic change.

Disinformation and prejudices circulating on social media and in certain media outlets contribute to the strengthening of anti-migrant attitudes. Political actors using this rhetoric also heighten the potential for social tension.

2

Attitudes Towards Migrants

How the public perceives the number and proportion of migrants is critical to understanding attitudes toward migrants. In this section, utilizing the TSVS data, we examine participants' perceptions of the number of migrants in Turkey in general and in their environs, as well as their levels of concern about migration.

Existing literature indicates that misperceptions about the number of migrants are widespread, and these perceptions are generally shaped by media representations, political discourse, and personal experiences (Pettigrew, 1998; Stephan et al., 2005; Meuleman et al., 2019). Scholarship highlights that in societies where anti-immigrant narratives are prevalent, the gap between actual numbers and perceived numbers widens extensively (Ceabanu and Escandell, 2010). Limited research in Turkey suggests that Turkish society tends to overestimate the number of immigrants, leading to negative attitudes toward migration (Fisunoğlu and Sert, 2018).



Figure 2.1 Perception of the proportion (%) of immigrants living in Türkiye, N=1579

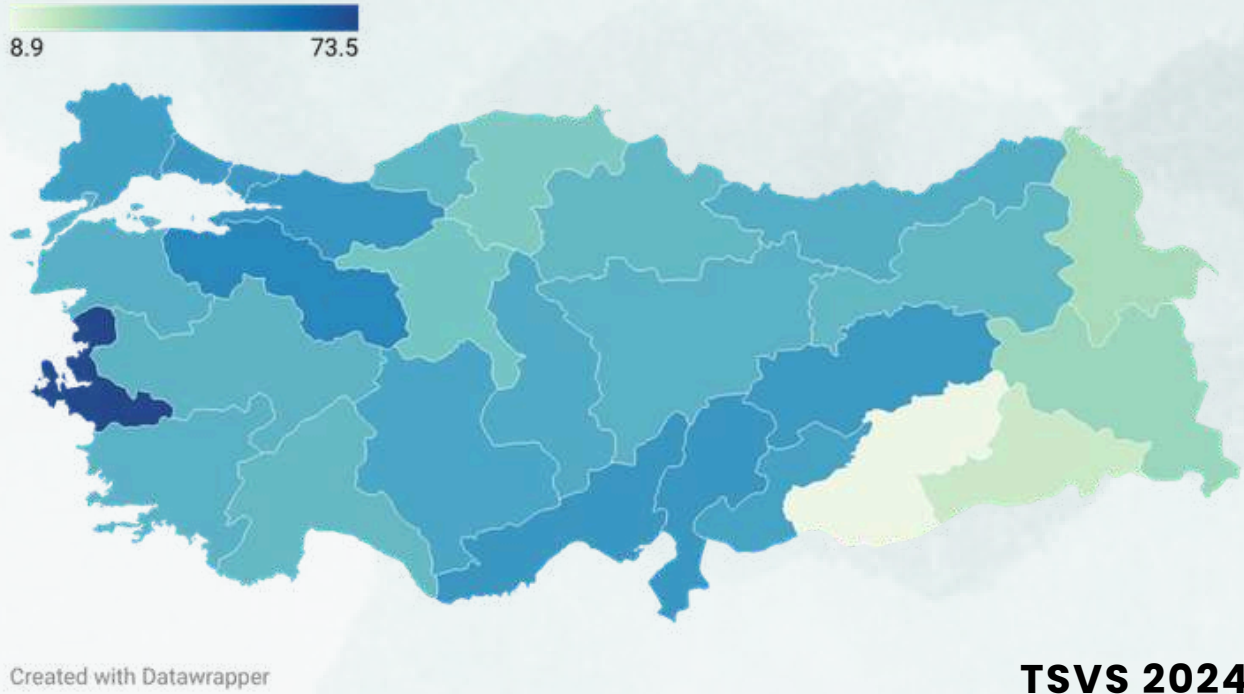
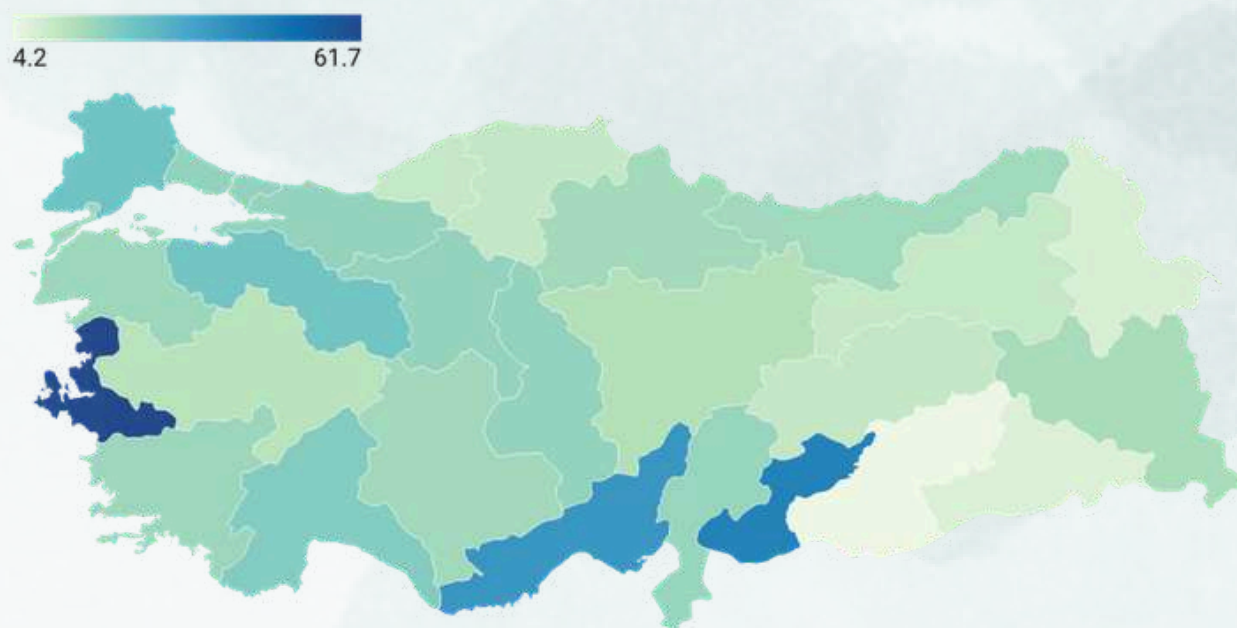


Figure 2.1 shows the averages of participants' responses to the question of how many people out of 100 living in Turkey they believe are migrants. The averages are broken down by the 26 regions of the NUTS-2* classification. The question measures participants' general perceptions of the number of migrants in Turkey at the national level.

Based on the map, respondents in Izmir had the highest perception of migrants in Turkey compared to other regions. Respondents in Izmir indicated that 73.5 out of every 100 people in Turkey are migrants. In Central Anatolia, the Mediterranean, and the Black Sea regions, this rate remains moderate, ranging between 30% and 40%. Lower scores were observed in the Southeastern Anatolia Region and the eastern part of the Eastern Anatolia Region, with the lowest rate, 8.9 out of every 100 people, reported in the sub-regions of Diyarbakır and Şanlıurfa.

*For the NUTS-2 region table, see page 50

Figure 2.2 Participant's perception of the proportion (%) of migrants in their local environs, N=1587



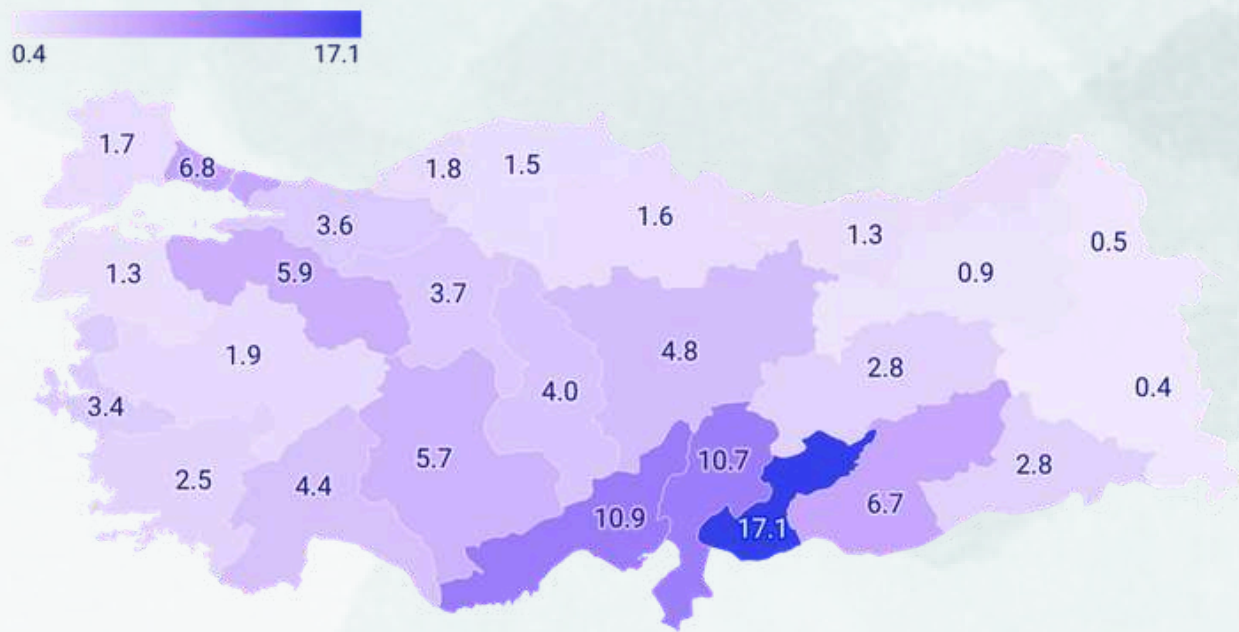
TSVS 2024

Figure 2.2 shows the average responses to the question of how many of the 100 people in their neighbourhood are migrants, broken down by the 26 regions of the NUTS-2 classification. This question measures participants' perceptions of migrants' presence in their immediate surroundings.

Presenting the highest rate, participants in the Izmir region reported that 61.7 percent out of 100 people in their surroundings are migrants. The lowest rate was observed in the Diyarbakır and Şanlıurfa subregions, where participants indicated that 4.2 out of every 100 people in their surroundings were migrants.

Looking at the map, it is striking that the data shows a significant decrease compared to the map illustrating perceptions of migrants in Turkey. Even in provinces where perceptions of migrant presence are generally high across Turkey, many participants' perceptions of migrants in their immediate surroundings do not align with this broader perception.

Figure 2.3 Ratio of the Total Foreign Population to the General Population in Turkey according to TURKSTAT Data (2024)



Created with Datawrapper

TURKSTAT 2024

Figure 2.3 uses data from the Turkish Statistical Institute's International Migration Statistics 2024 (TURKSTAT 2025) and shows the percentage of registered foreign residents in Turkey relative to the total population.

Based on the data, the Southeastern Anatolia corridor (Gaziantep, Adıyaman, Kilis) has the highest proportion of registered foreign residents, at 17.1%. This region is followed by neighboring regions (the Mersin-Adana and Şanlıurfa-Diyarbakır corridors), with proportions of 10.9% and 10.7%, respectively. The Eastern and Northeastern Anatolia regions (Erzurum, Ağrı, Ardahan, and surrounding areas), by contrast, have the lowest concentration of foreign residents, ranging from 0.4% to 0.5%. Comparing this map with the TSVS data highlights differences in perceptions and the proportions of registered non-citizens.

Figure 2.4 The level of concern regarding the number of migrants in Turkey (%), N=1579

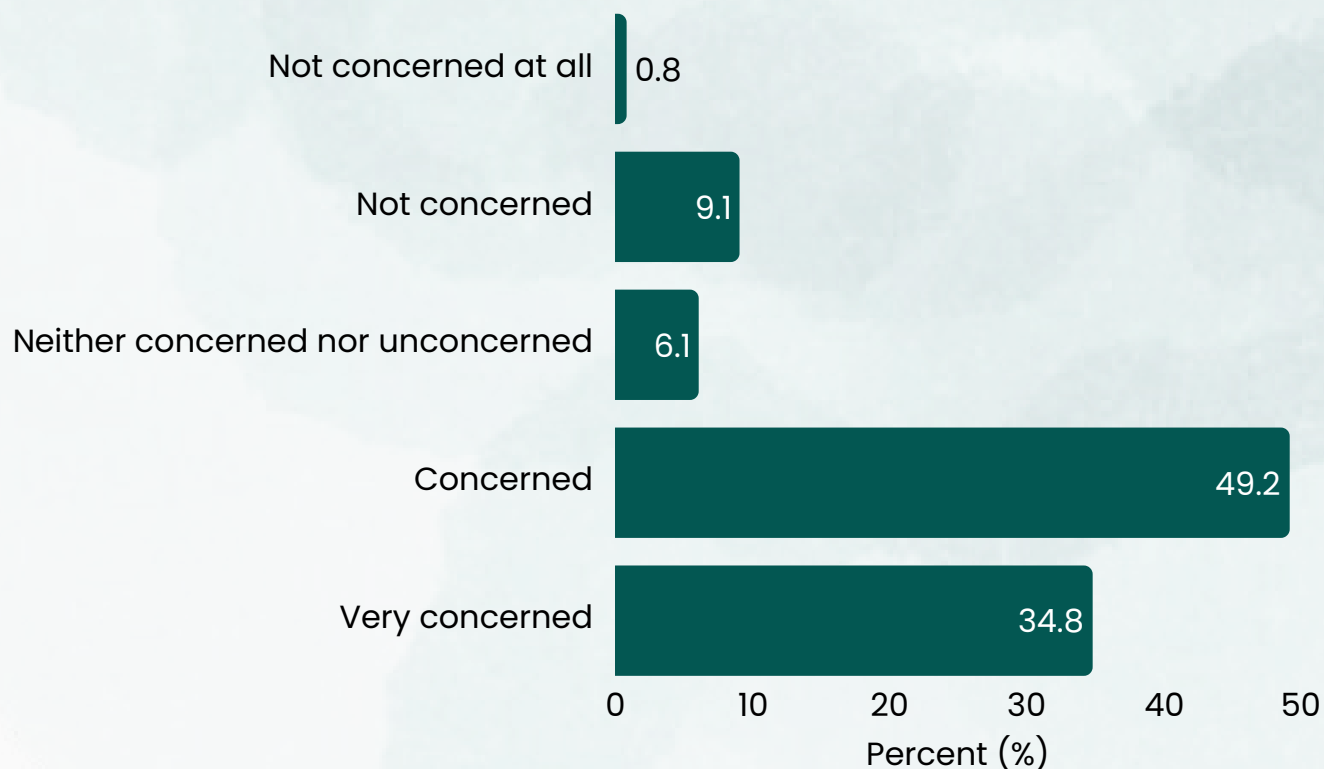


Figure 2.4 shows respondents' level of concern based on perceptions of the number of migrants. On a scale where 1 means "not concerned at all" and 5 means "very concerned," 34.8% of participants stated that they were "very concerned" about the number of migrants in Turkey, and 49.2% stated that they were "concerned." In contrast, 9.9% of participants stated that they were not concerned about the number of migrants.

Section Overview

The findings presented in this section indicate that participants' perception of the total number of migrants in Turkey exceeds both their perception of the number of migrants in their neighborhood and the numbers reported by TURKSTAT (TURKSTAT, 2025). This discrepancy suggests that anti-migrant rhetoric in the media and political discourse influences public opinion more than objective information. The widening gap between the number of migrants published by TÜRKSTAT and the proportion perceived by the public aligns with previous studies' findings (Fisunoglu and Sert, 2018).

In reviewing perceptions by region, the TSVS data indicate that this disparity is most pronounced in the Aegean and the Eastern Black Sea regions. This finding highlights the need for comparative studies across regions to identify key factors influencing perceptions of threat and to track changes over time.

Across the findings presented, more than 80 percent of participants expressed concern about the number of migrants. It is believed that participants' perceptions of the number of migrants in Turkey, based on their subjective experiences, are related to their observed levels of concern.

In the following sections, the public's levels of acceptance of sharing spaces and perceiving migrants as threats will be analyzed. In addition to the levels of concern identified in this section, the public's attitudes toward sharing public spaces with migrants will be analyzed.



3

Sharing of Space

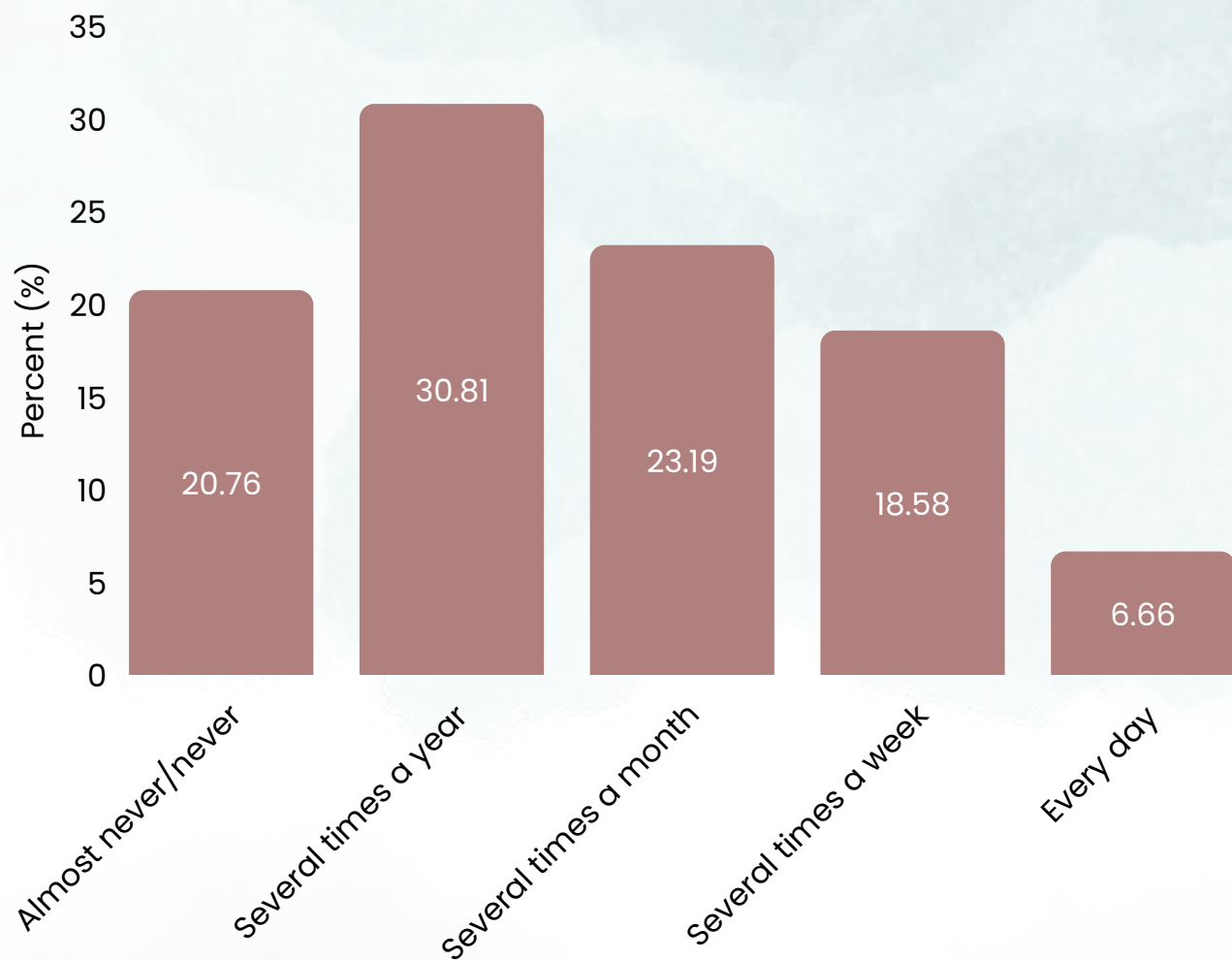
The 'contact hypothesis' concerns the potential of direct contact, under certain conditions, among social groups in reducing prejudice and fostering positive attitudes. Using TSVS data, we will examine participants' frequency of contact with migrants in daily life, the quality of these interactions and their attitudes towards sharing various spaces with migrants.

The contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954) posits that, under appropriate conditions of equal status, cooperation, common goals, and institutional support, direct contact among groups can reduce prejudice and improve intergroup relations. Various studies confirm the contact hypothesis, highlighting the need to test it in the Turkish context (McLaren, 2003). Existing studies have examined the validity of the contact hypothesis in the Turkish context (Acar, 2021; Yaylacı and Bakiner, 2025). Particularly in regions with high concentrations of Syrian migrants, the nature and the frequency of citizens' contact with migrants have been found to significantly influence their attitudes towards migrants (Acar, 2021; Yaylacı and Bakiner, 2025). However, the nature of the contact, positive or negative experiences, and the context in which it occurs such as workplaces, neighborhood or public spaces also play a significant role in shaping these attitudes. In addition, research highlights that individuals' backgrounds, including gender, income level and employment status, also significantly influence their contact with migrants (Newman et al.). Overall, research conducted in Turkey remains limited, presenting a potential gap to be addressed. The following section examines several of these dimensions.



To measure the level of interaction between the local population and migrants, participants were asked about the frequency of their verbal communication with migrants in daily life (e.g. in the market, at work, on public transport, etc.) on a scale where 1 meant “Almost never/never” and 5 meant “Every day.”

Figure 3.1 Frequency of verbal communication with migrants in daily life (in the market, at work, on public transportation, etc.), N=1561



According to **Figure 3.1**, 20.76% of participants reported their contact frequency as Almost never/Never, while 30.81% reported having verbal contact only a few times a year. This indicates that more than half of participants rarely have contact with migrants.

In contrast, 6.66% of participants reported having verbal communication with migrants every day, while 41.77% reported having such communication at least a few times a month.

Figure 3.2 Distribution of the frequency of verbal communication with migrants in daily life (at the supermarket, work, on public transportation, etc.) by gender, N=1561

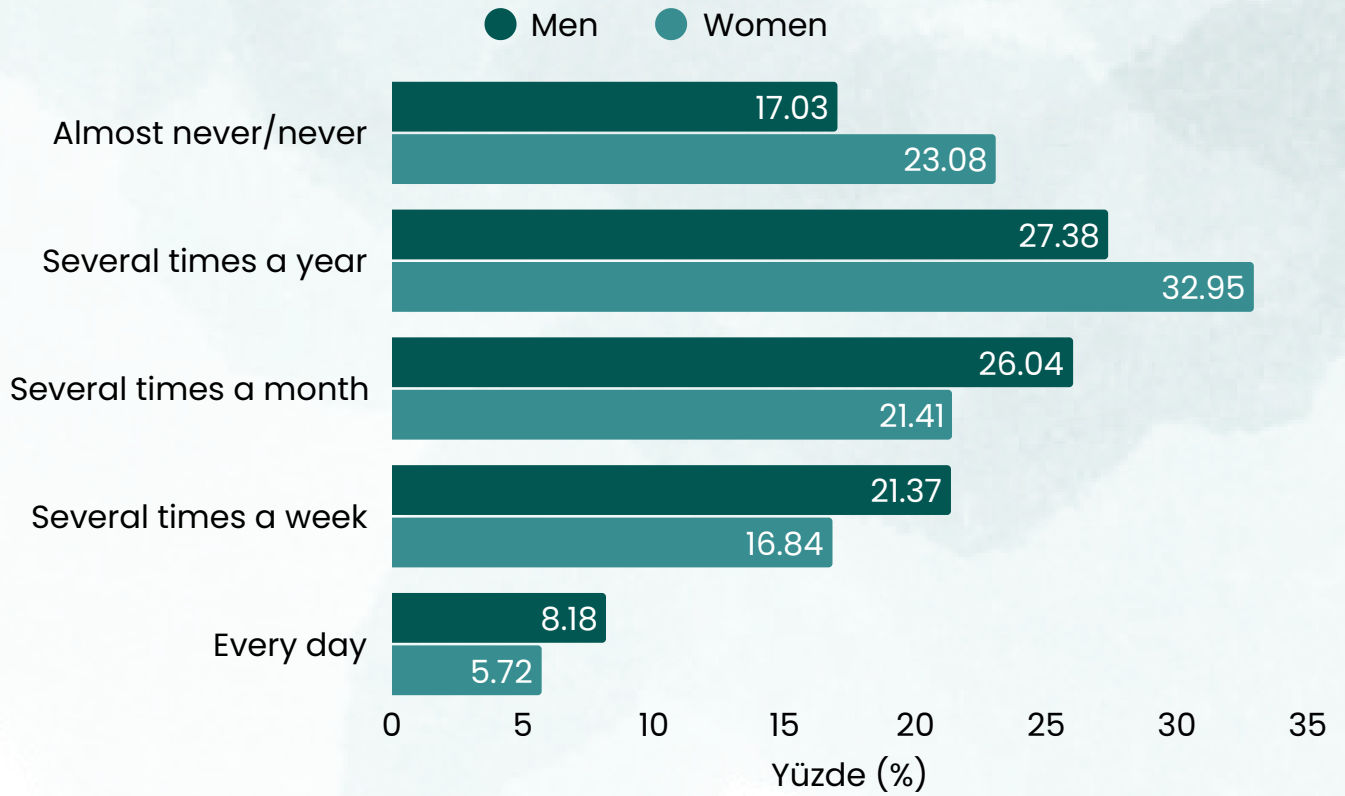


Figure 3.2 shows the distribution of participants' verbal communication with migrants by gender. While 17.03% of men reported their communication frequency as "Almost never/never," this rate is 23.08% among women. A similar difference is observed in the "Several times a year" category, where the proportion of women is 5.57% higher than that of men. Conversely, the fact that the proportion of men increases as the frequency of communication rises indicates that men engage in verbal communication with migrants more frequently than women.

The following questions measure the local population's level of acceptance regarding sharing public and private spaces with migrants.

Figure 3.3 Working in the same workplace with migrants, N=1582

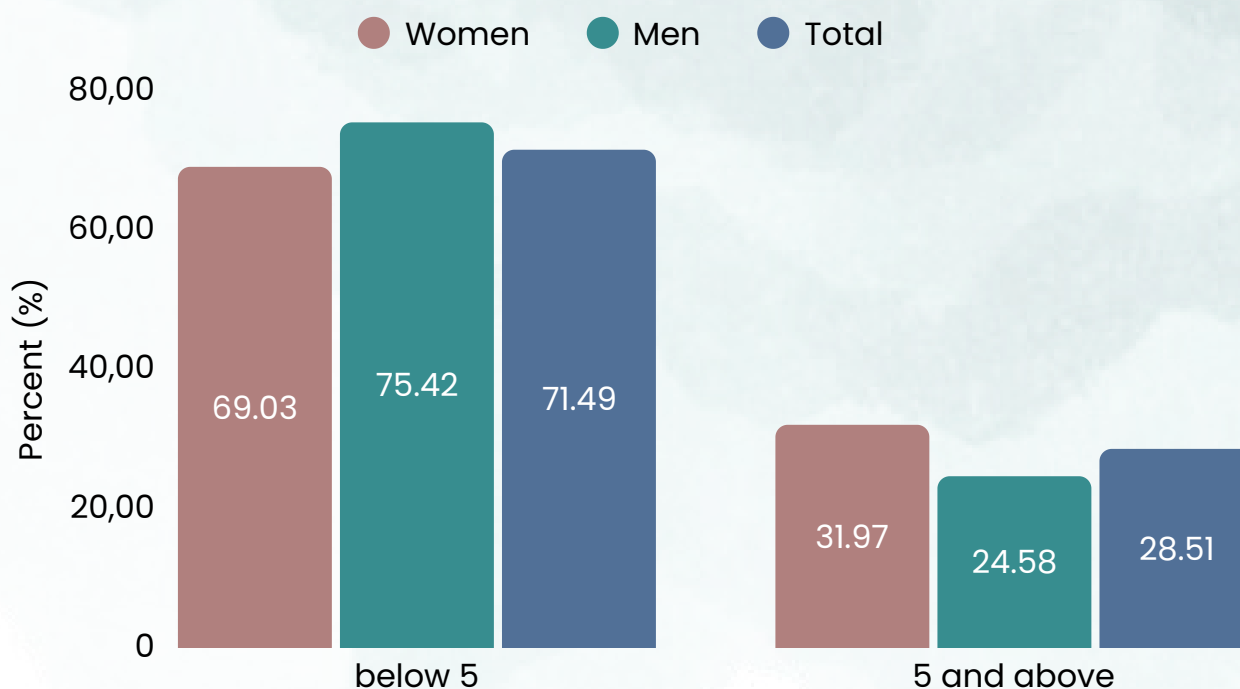


Figure 3.3 shows participants' responses to the question of whether "working in the same workplace with migrants" is acceptable on a scale of 0-10, where 0 means "Never acceptable" and 10 means "Always acceptable," categorized into two groups. Responses are categorized into two groups: 71.49% of participants scored between 0-4 while 28.51% scored between 5-10.

When examined by gender, 75.42% of men and 69.03% of women rated the statement with scores below 5. This indicates that men reject the idea of sharing workplaces with migrants more strongly than women. Women exhibit a more positive attitude towards sharing the same workplace with migrants.

Figure 3.4 Average level of acceptance toward sharing public spaces with migrants by income level, N=1583

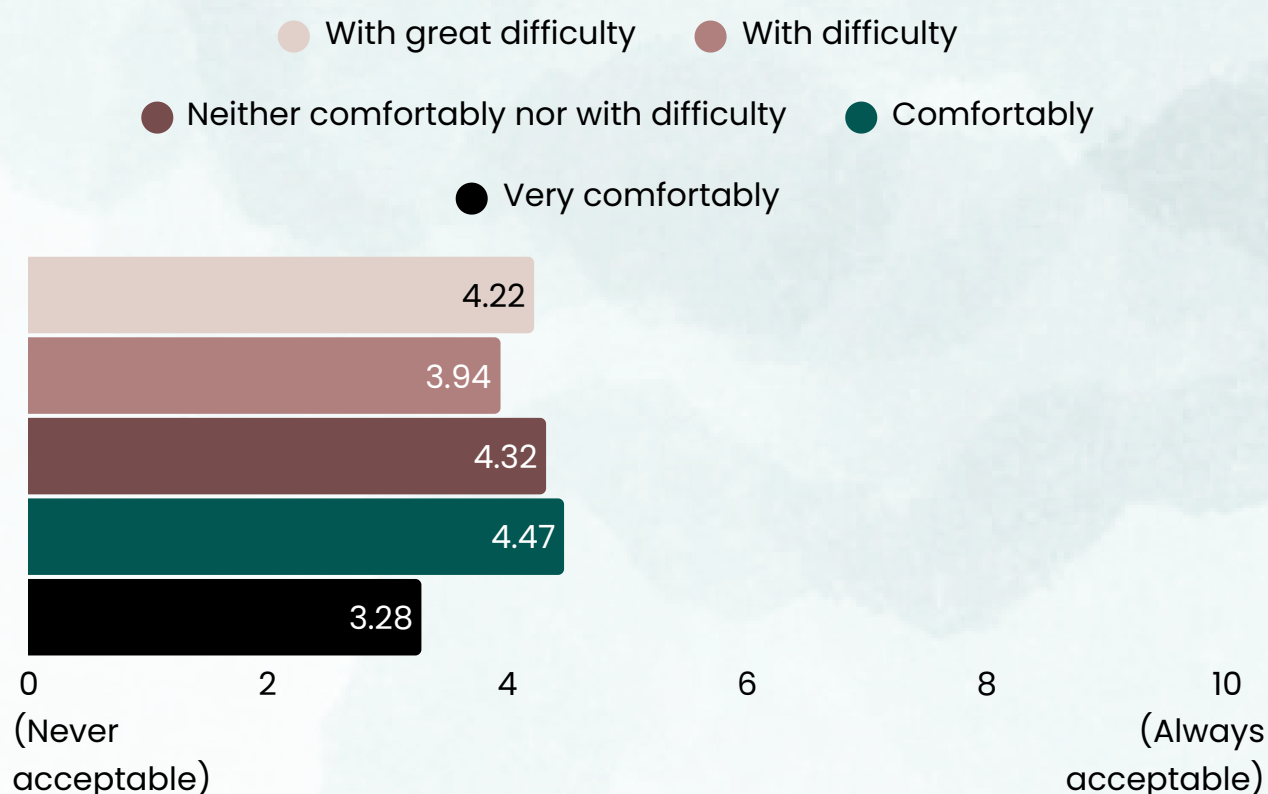


Figure 3.4 shows the average level of acceptance of sharing public spaces such as parks and gardens, based on participants' income comfort levels, on a scale of 0–10, where 0 means “Never acceptable” and 10 means “Always acceptable.” Income comfort was measured using the question “How well does your household income allow you to live?” on a scale of 1–5, where 1 means “With great difficulty” and 5 means “Very comfortably.”

As shown in the figure, the average score regarding sharing public spaces with migrants is below 5 in every income comfort group. The highest score among the groups was 4.47, recorded by those who state that they get by “comfortably”; the averages for those who stated that they get by “with great difficulty” and “neither comfortably nor with difficulty” were closely associated with this score. In contrast, those who responded that they get by “with difficulty” found this statement less acceptable than other categories, with an average score of 3.94.

Strikingly, participants who reported getting by ‘very comfortably’ on their income considered sharing public spaces with migrants the least acceptable (3.28) among all categories.

Figure 3.5 Average level of acceptance of children attending school with migrant children by educational status, N=1584

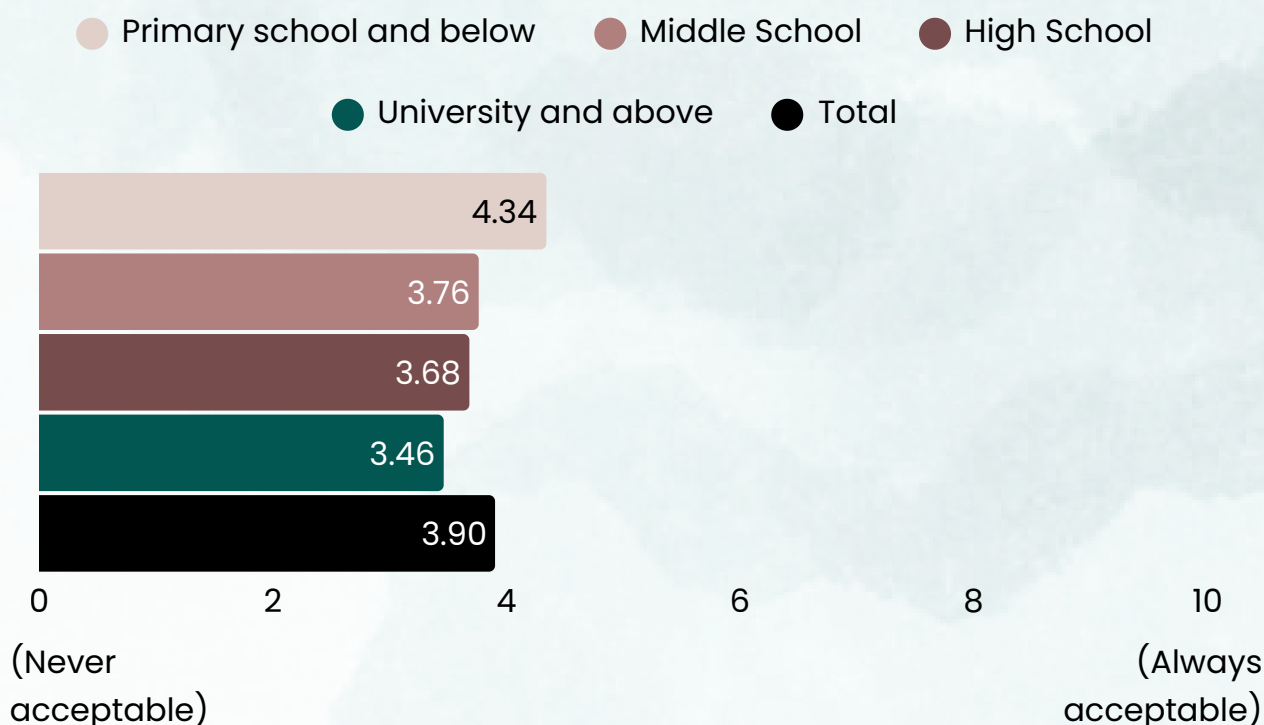


Figure 3.5 shows the extent to which participants accept the idea of their child attending school with migrant children on a scale of 0–10, where 0 means “Never acceptable” and 10 means “Always acceptable,” examined by participants’ self-reported educational status. Educational level was divided into four categories: “Primary school and below,” “Middle school,” “High school,” and “University and above.”

As shown in the figure, the overall average for participants’ acceptance of their children attending the same school as migrant children is 3.90. The highest average is 4.34, found among participants in the “Primary school and below” education group, while those with a middle school education had an average response rate of 3.76. The lowest averages were among participants with a “High School” education (3.68) and those with a “University and above” education (3.46), respectively.

The findings indicate that as the level of education increases, participants become more opposed to sending their children to school with migrant children.

Figure 3.6 Average level of acceptance of granting work permit to migrants by employment status, N=1579

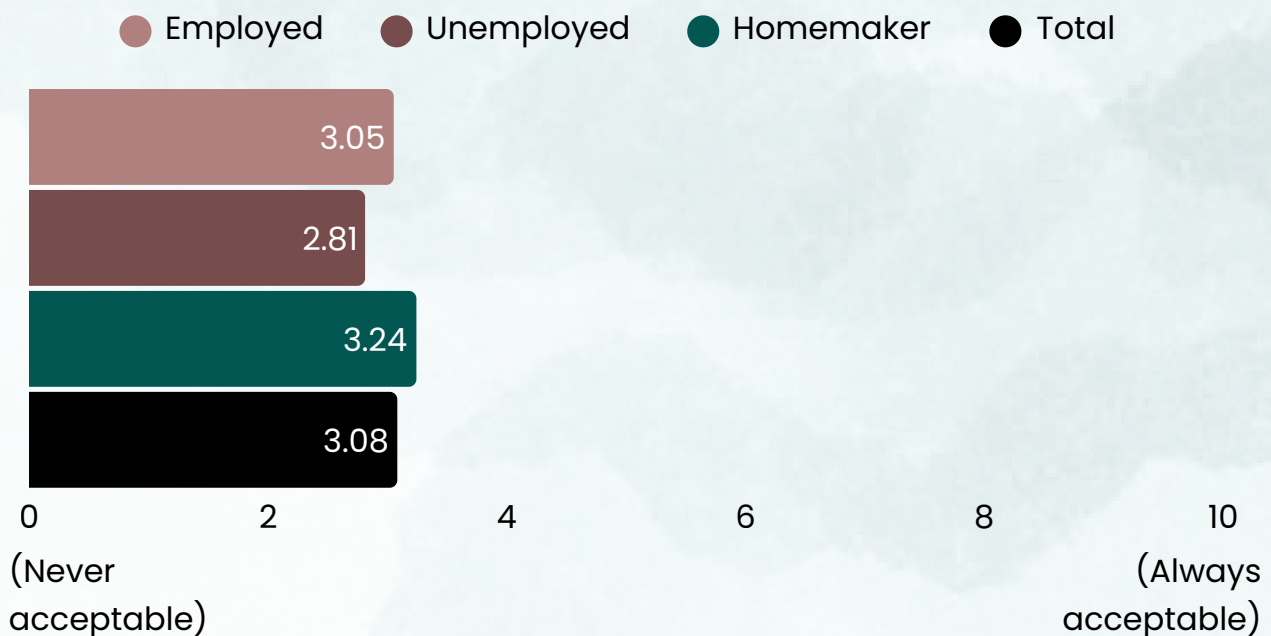


Figure 3.6 shows the average level of acceptance among participants, based on their employment status, on a scale of 0-10, where 0 means “Never acceptable” and 10 means “Always acceptable,” regarding the granting of work permits to migrants. Employment status was divided into three groups: “Employed,” “Unemployed,” and “Homemaker.”

As seen in the figure, the overall average regarding granting work permits to migrants is 3.08. The highest score among the groups is 3.24, recorded among participants who identified as “Housewives,” while the average response from employed participants is 3.05.

Strikingly, the lowest score, 2.81, is the average response from ‘Unemployed’ participants. In other words, participants who are “unemployed” view granting work permits to migrants as less acceptable than the other groups.

To go beyond commonly tested aspects of contact, the study includes questions on neighborly relations to assess citizens' reactions to different migrant groups.

Participants were asked which individuals from different countries and regions they would or would not prefer as next door neighbors. The question was paired with responses on the importance of religion, using a 0-10 scale, with 0 meaning "Not at all important" and 10 meaning "Extremely important."

Figure 3.7 Average preference for neighboring countries from Ukraine and Turkic states by participants' perception of the importance of religion

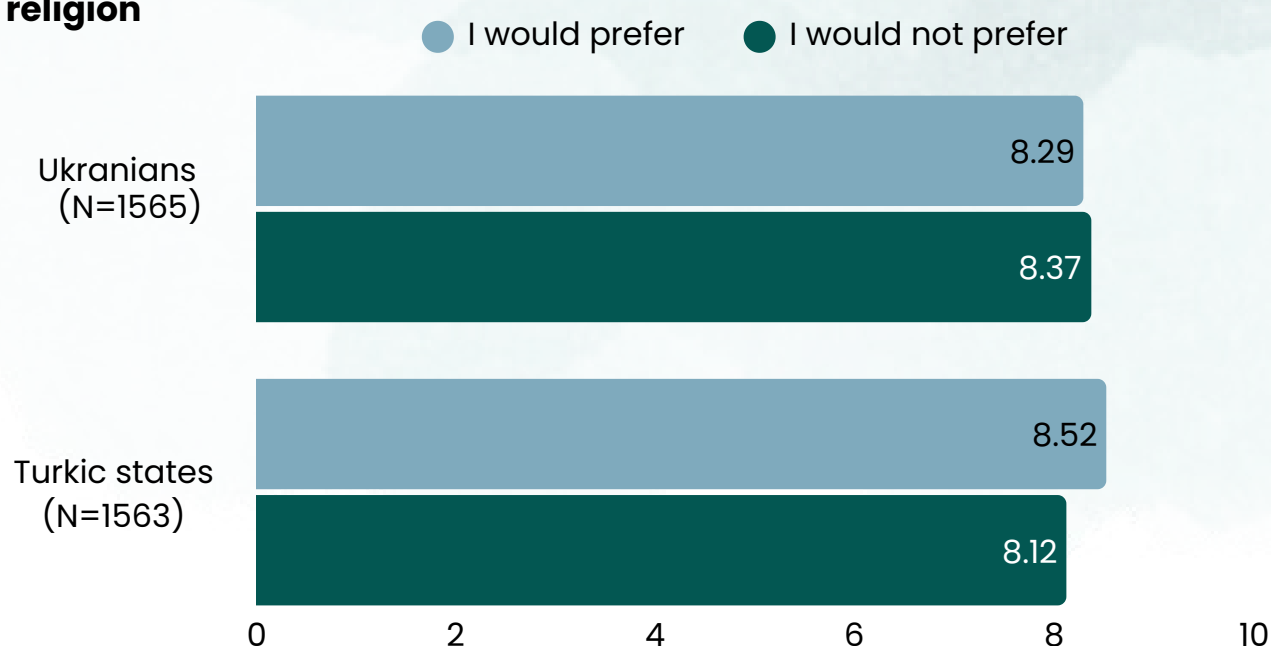


Figure 3.7 presents a side-by-side comparison of average religious importance scores among participants who "prefer" and those who "do not prefer" neighbors from Ukrainian and Turkic states (e.g. Uzbek, Kazakh, etc.).

According to the figure, while the overall averages are quite close at the value of 8, the average religious importance score of those who prefer someone from Turkic states as a neighbor (Mean 8.52) is slightly higher than that of those who do not (Mean 8.12). The average religious importance among those who prefer a Ukrainian neighbor (Mean 8.29) and those who do not (Mean 8.37) is nearly the same. This indicates that the level of religious importance follows a similar pattern in the neighbor preferences of individuals across groups.

Figure 3.8 Preference for Ukrainian neighbors by gender, N=1570

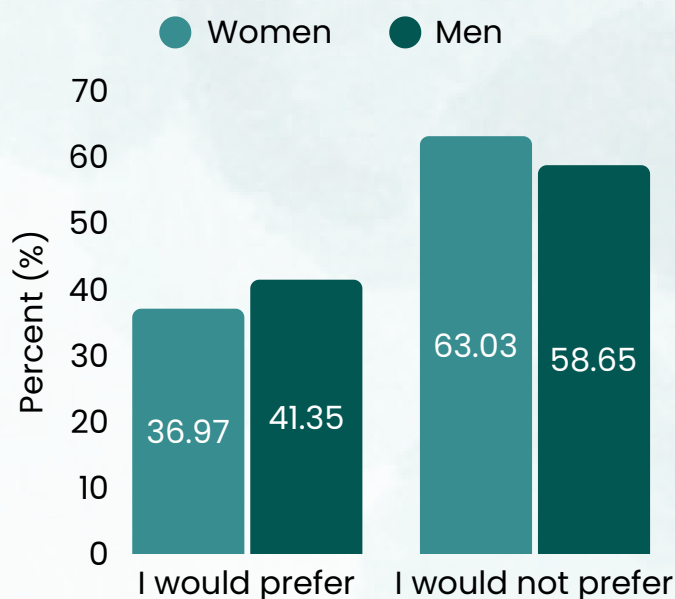


Figure 3.8 shows the gender distribution of participants and their preferences for Ukrainian nationals as neighbors. The percentage of those who said “I would prefer” is lower among women (58.65%) and slightly higher among men (63.03%). In contrast, it is notable that those who said “I would not prefer” are the majority among both genders, although women tend to hold this view more strongly than men.

Figure 3.9 Preference for neighbors from Turkic states by gender, N=1568

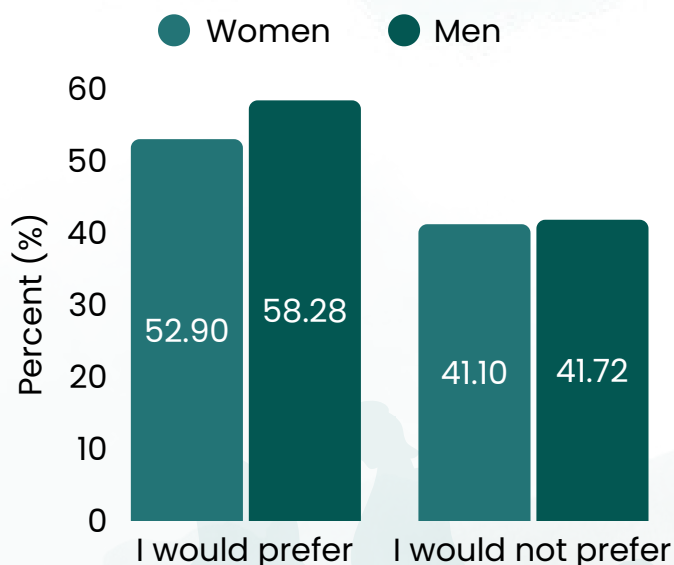


Figure 3.9 shows the gender distribution of participants' preference for having people from Turkic states as neighbors. As with preferences for Ukrainian neighbors presented in **Figure 3.8**, the percentage who said “I would prefer” is lower among women (52.90%) and slightly higher among men (58.28%). In contrast, the percentage who said “I would not prefer” is not a majority for either gender.

Section Review

An analysis of communication frequency with migrants shows that participants do not interact with migrants enough to foster either positive or negative attitudes, as the contact hypothesis suggests. Indeed, one-fifth (20.76%) of participants report they do not communicate with migrants at all in their daily lives. As discussed in the previous section, this trend indicates that the participants' daily lives and social environments do not actually intersect with those of migrants to the extent they perceive. This finding reduces the likelihood that the anxiety levels regarding migrant numbers surface from the participants' actual subjective, day-to-day experiences with migrants. The combination of high perceived threat and infrequent contact highlights the need for further research into the relationship between the frequency and quality of contact and negative attitudes toward migrants in the Turkish context.

In addition, it is hypothesized that participants' preferences regarding neighbors may be influenced by ethnic identity considerations and levels of national attachment, either independently of or in conjunction with their religious attitudes. These findings indicate the need for further research to better observe the intergroup interactions identified.

The observation that negative attitudes toward granting migrants the right to work are most pronounced among non-working participants suggests that migrants are perceived as labor competition. This perceived competition will be examined in greater depth in the following section, where participants' perceptions of migrant-related threats across various domains will be assessed.



4

Migration & Threat

Existing literature shows that the economic effects of migration are not a one-dimensional but a multidimensional process linked to the labor market, public finances, and the welfare system. Migrants' labor force participation, tax payments, social security contributions, and economic activities play a decisive role in public finances. Consequently, the impact of migration on public services varies with migrants' demographic composition, their access to labor markets, and the host country's welfare levels (Dustmann and Frattini, 2014; OECD, 2025).

Debates about the burden on public health and education services are similarly two-sided. While some studies indicate that increased demand reduces service quality, others argue that migrants contribute to the system through their tax payments and economic contributions (Dustmann and Glitz, 2011; Flavin et al., 2018).

The issue of migrants' compliance with the law is also generally debated in terms of crime rates; however, most research shows that migrants do not have higher crime rates compared to the general population—and that an increase in migration rates may even have the opposite effect of reducing crime rates (Light and Miller, 2018; Ousey and Kubrin, 2018).

Current research emphasizes that attitudes toward migrants are linked to perceptions of access to resources and that, as a result, migration is perceived in terms of real or symbolic threat (Uysal and Turper, 2024; Meuleman et al., 2019; Riek et al., 2006; Green et al., 2019; Kurter and Balun, 2022). Real threats refer to perceived competition in access to employment, health care, or social security, while symbolic threats relate to potential changes in social norms, values, or traditions that may result from migration (Stephan et al., 1998; Stephan et al., 2005). Perceived real and symbolic threats influence attitudes toward migration and public demands for restrictive policies, regardless of migration's actual impact on society, the economy, or national culture.

It has been found that contact with migrants, economic well-being, and religiosity influence perceptions of threats related to migration, thereby highlighting the complexity of these perceptions (Caricati 2018; Meuleman et al. 2019; Sulistio, Suryanto, Hadziq, and Bulut 2020; Yitmen & Verkuyten 2017; Koçak 2021; Çırakoğlu et al. 2020; Şar & Kuru 2020).

The following section shows the extent to which participants agreed with statements regarding the impact of migrants on health and employment, using a scale of 1–5 where 1 means “Strongly disagree” and 5 means “Strongly agree.” These responses reveal Turkish society’s concerns and perceptions about the various dimensions of migration.

Figure 4.1 “Migrants close the gap in employment.” (%), N=1581

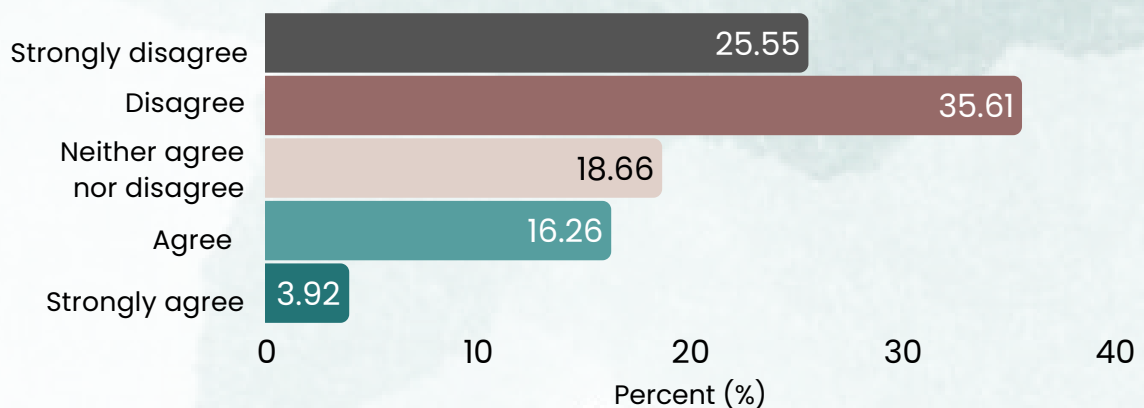
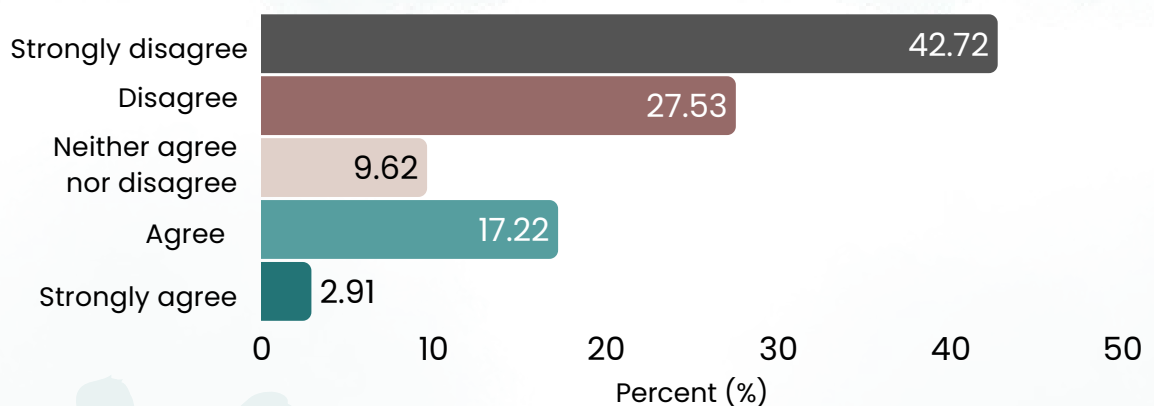


Figure 4.2 “Migrants provide employment by establishing businesses.” (%), N=1580



Figures 4.1 and **4.2** present anti-migrant items to examine perceptions of economic threat. In both statements, the percentages of respondents who answered “I agree” and “I strongly agree” are similar. However, the percentage of respondents who “Strongly Disagree” with the statement that migrants create jobs (42.7%) is higher than the percentage who “Strongly Disagree” that migrants fill employment gaps (25.6%). This indicates that participants strongly downplay (or minimize or reduce) migrants’ economic contribution, particularly in terms of job creation.

Figure 4.3 “Migrants bring infectious diseases to our country.” (%), N=1548

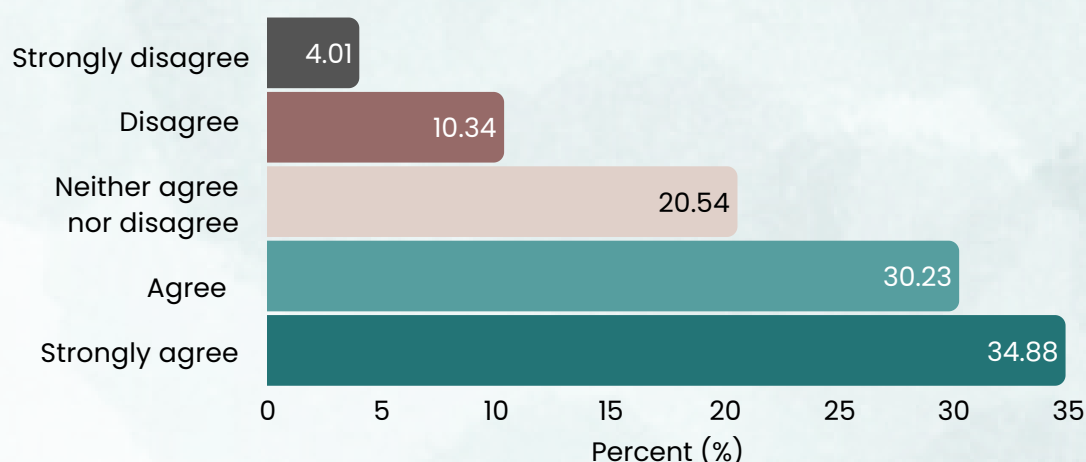
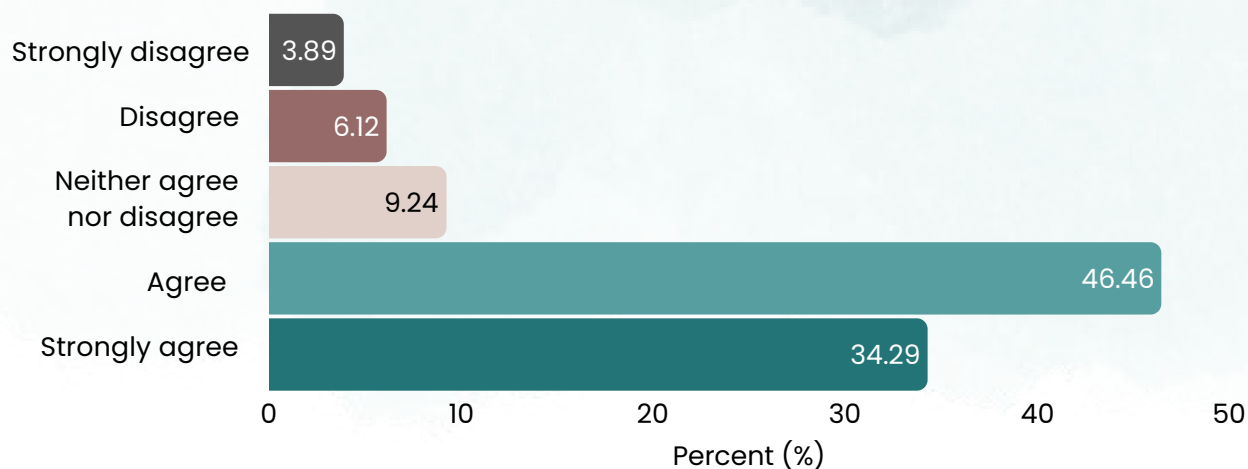


Figure 4.4 “Migrants are a burden to the public health services.” (%), N=1569



Figures 4.3 and **4.4** present results for statements about perceived threats related to public health and the healthcare sector.

As in **Figures 4.1** and **4.2**, the proportions of respondents who answered “Disagree” and “Strongly disagree” are similar for both statements. However, the percentage of respondents who “Agree” with the statement that migrants are a burden on public health services (46.46%) is higher than the percentage who “Agree” that migrants bring infectious diseases (30.23%). This suggests that, rather than public health concerns, the economic and institutional burden on the healthcare system is a more dominant driver of anti-migrant sentiment.

Figure 4.5 Responses to “Migrants close the gap in employment” based on average national attachment and national superiority

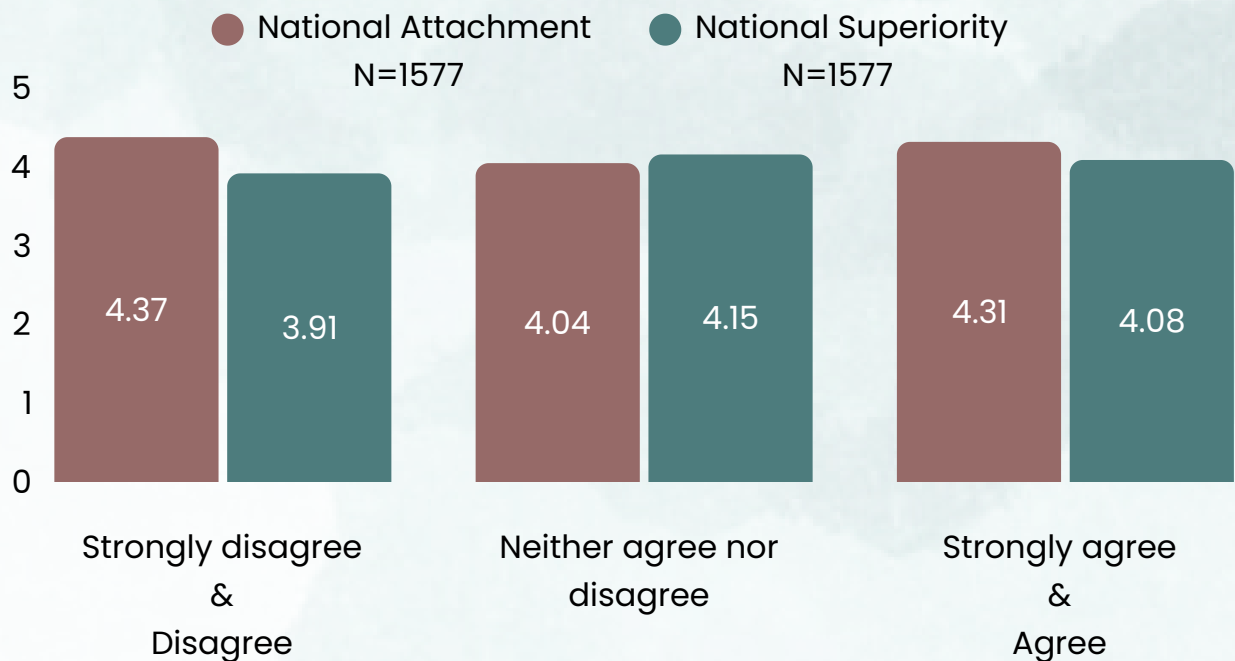


Figure 4.5 shows the distribution of responses to the statement “Migrants close the gap in employment,” according to average scores for national attachment and national superiority. The results indicate that responses to migrants’ economic contribution do not align with either dimension of nationalism. For example, while the average national attachment score among those who disagreed with the statement was highest (Mean 4.37), the average attachment score among those who responded “neither agree nor disagree” was lower (Mean 4.04). In contrast, the lowest average score on the national superiority dimension was observed in the group that disagreed (Mean 3.91). The pattern suggests that reactions to arguments about labor shortages cannot be reduced to a single dimension of nationalism, such as ‘national superiority’. The findings indicate that even among groups with high levels of national identification, it is possible to reject the perceived potential competitive threat posed by migrants in the labor market to some degree.

Figure 4.6 Mean values for national attachment and national superiority based on responses to “Migrants provide employment by establishing businesses.”

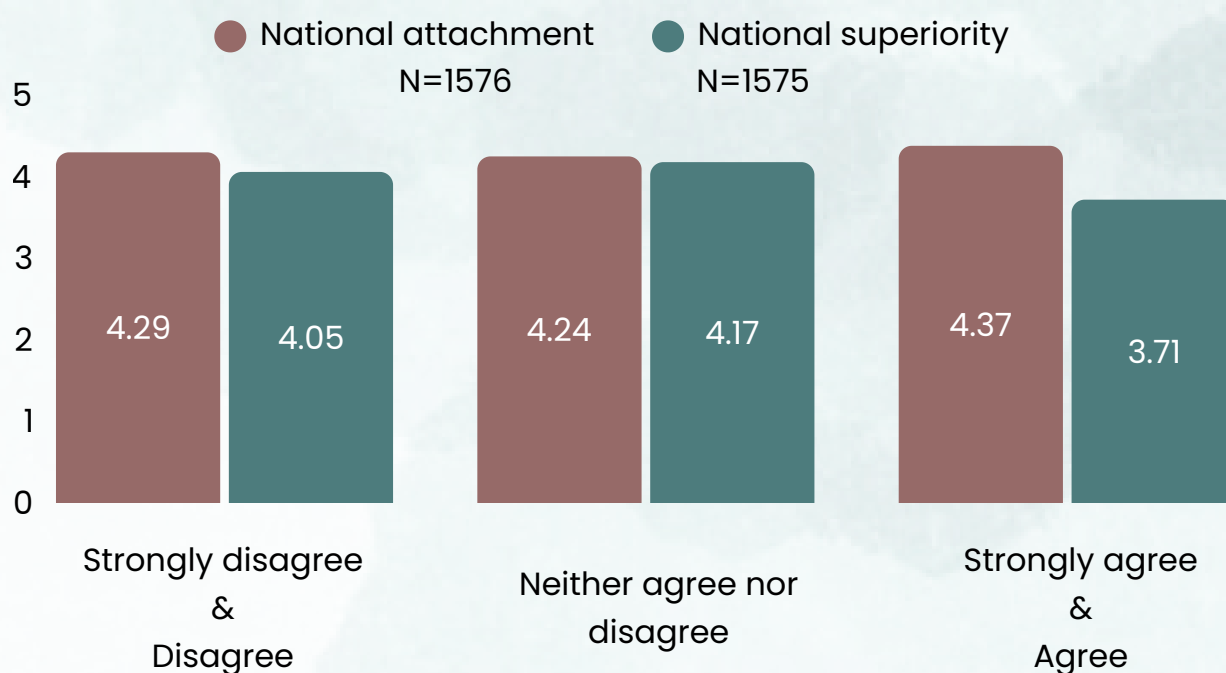


Figure 4.6 shows the distribution of responses to the statement “Migrants provide employment by establishing businesses,” based on the average scores for national attachment and national superiority. Compared with **Figure 4.5**, these two values show a clearer distinction when the economic contribution is framed in terms of job creation rather than “filling the employment gap.” For example, while the average national attachment score among those who agreed with the statement was highest (Mean 4.37), the average national superiority score showed a decline (Mean 3.71). This finding suggests that recognizing migrants’ economic contribution does not necessarily conflict with national attachment, but may be more negatively related to national superiority.

Figure 4.7 Average for national attachment and national superiority based on responses to “Migrants bring infectious diseases to our country.”

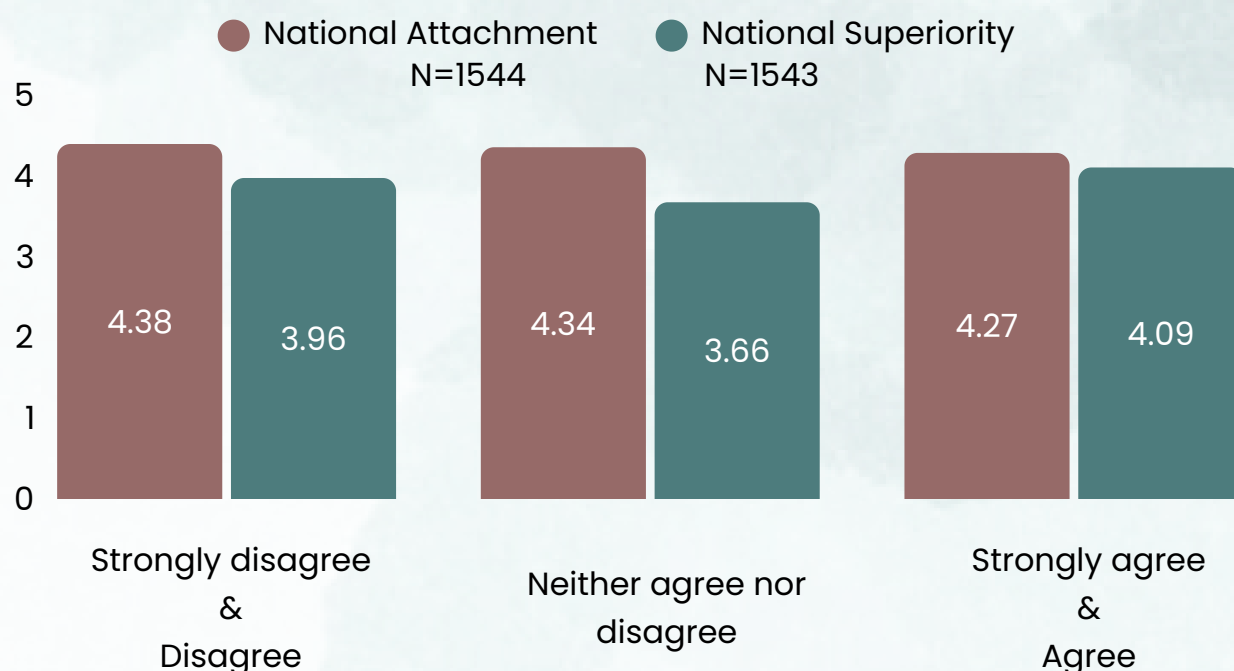


Figure 4.7 shows the distribution of responses to the statement “Migrants bring infectious diseases to our country,” according to the averages for national loyalty and national superiority. When compared to the previous two figures, it can be seen that the average national attachment score has gradually decreased in the perception of threats related to health. In contrast, the average national superiority score among those who agreed with the statement reaches its highest level (Mean 4.09).

Figure 4.8 Average for national attachment and national superiority based on responses to “Migrants are a burden to the public health services.”

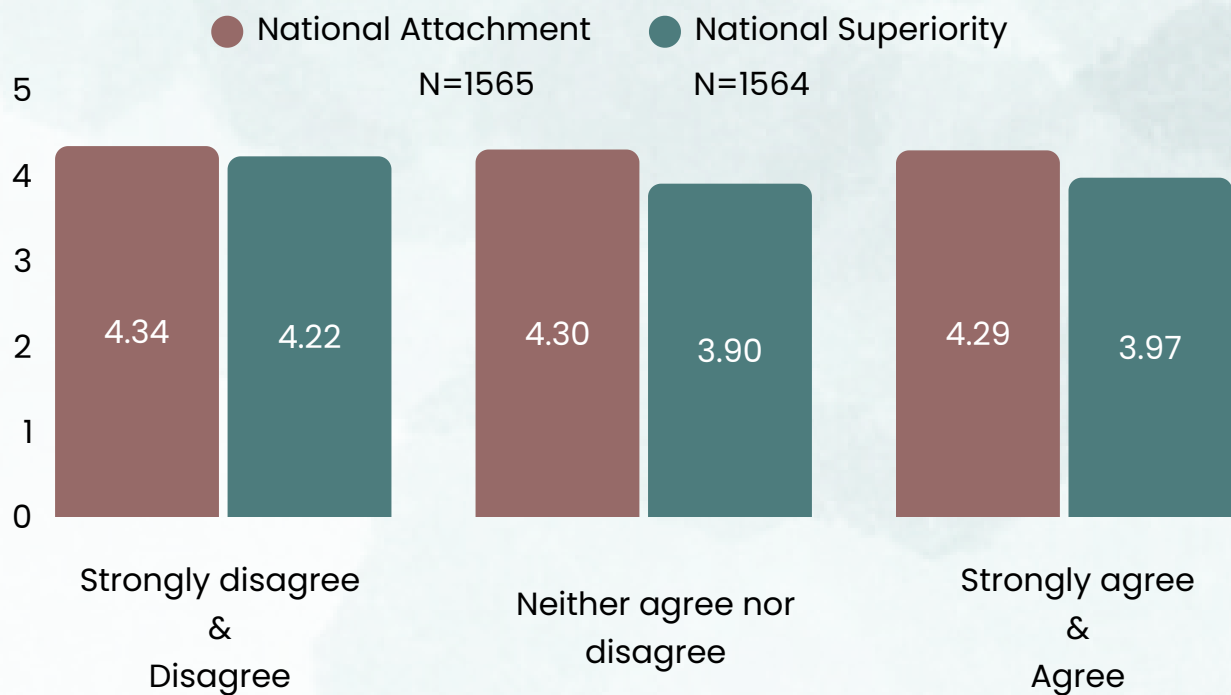


Figure 4.8 shows the distribution of responses to the statement “Migrants are a burden on public health services,” based on the averages for national attachment and national superiority. Compared with **Figure 4.7**, certain differences emerge as the threat narrative on health shifts toward a “burden on institutions”. Accordingly, it is observed that while the average score for national attachment remained relatively stable across response categories, the average score for national superiority reached its highest level in the non-anti-migrant group—that is, among those who did not agree with the statement (Mean 4.22).

Figure 4.9 Average frequency of communication with migrants, based on responses to “Migrants provide employment by establishing businesses.” (N=1556)

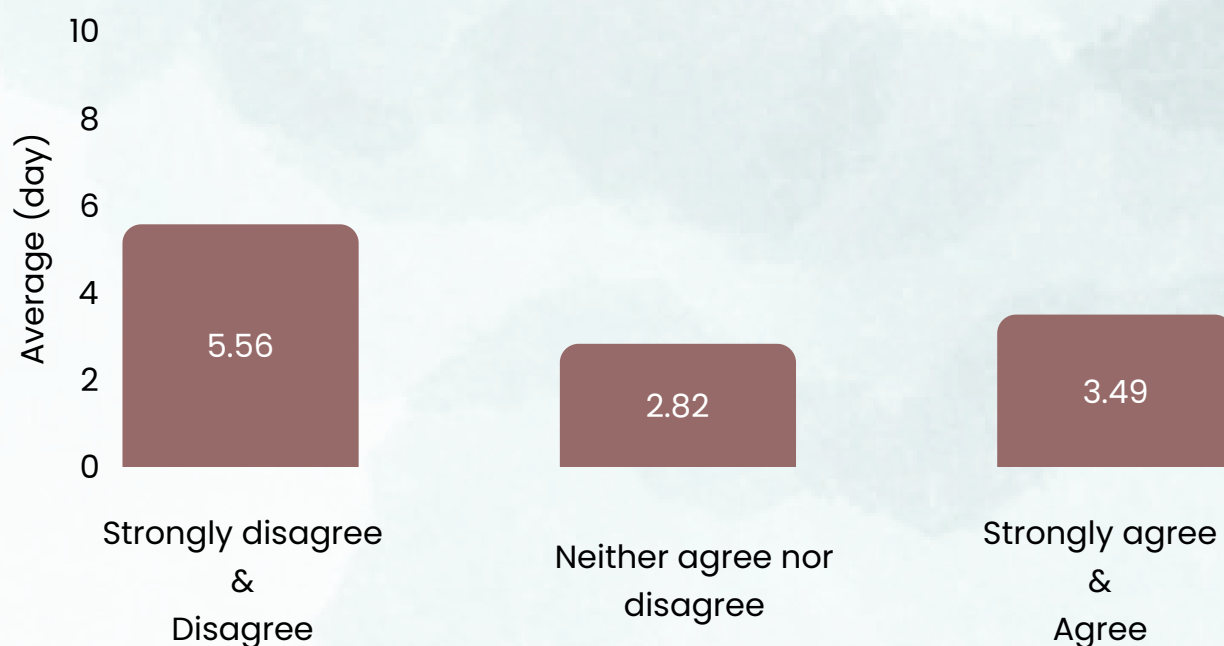


Figure 4.9 shows the distribution of responses to the statement “Migrants provide employment by establishing businesses,” by average monthly frequency of direct contact with migrants.

The contact frequency variable was created from the question represented in **Figure 3.1**. Response categories were converted to an estimated number of contact days per month (e.g. participants who indicated they had contact “every day” were coded as 30 days). As group averages ranged up to a maximum of 5.56 days out of 30, the upper limit of the graph’s vertical axis was capped at 10 days to improve visual clarity and readability.

The findings show that the average contact frequency is highest among the group that does not agree with the statement (Mean 5.56). In contrast, the average contact frequency is lower among the undecided group (Mean 2.82). The average contact frequency among those who agree with the statement is 3.49.

Figure 4.10 Average frequency of contact with migrants, based on responses to “Migrants are a burden to the public health services.” (N=1,545)

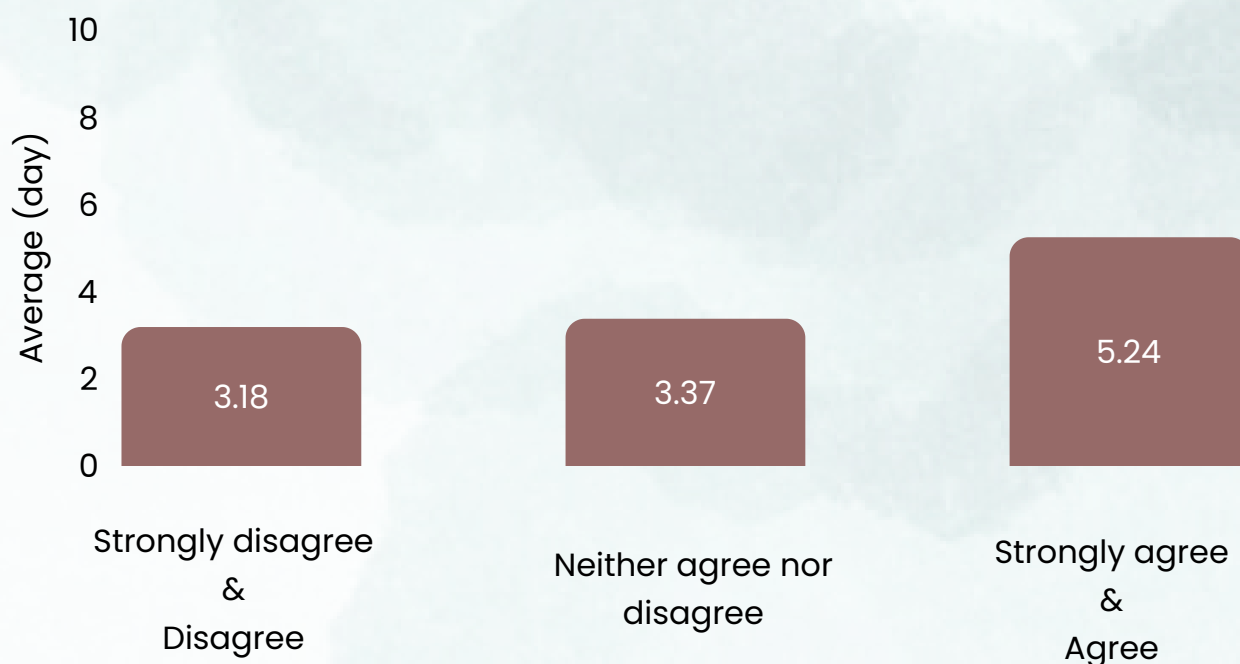


Figure 4.10 shows the distribution of responses to the statement “Migrants are a burden to the public health services,” by average monthly frequency of direct contact with migrants. As noted in **Figure 4.9**, the monthly contact averages, calculated over a 30-day period, have been limited to 10 days on the vertical axis in this graph to ensure visual readability.

The findings indicate that the group agreeing with the statement has the highest average monthly contact frequency (Mean 5.24). Among those who disagree with the statement, this average is 3.18 days, while among those who responded “neither agree nor disagree,” it is 3.37 days. Similar to the findings in **Figure 4.9**, it is observed that the average frequency of direct contact is higher among participants who believe migrants place a burden on the public health system than in other groups.

Section Review

The results in this section highlight interactions between different dimensions of nationalism and anti-migrant statements related to economic participation and public health. Participants did not agree with statements indicating that migrants make a positive contribution to the labor market. Furthermore, it was observed that national attachment and national superiority may play a role in perceiving migrants as a labor market threat. However, the findings indicate that nationalist tendencies do not directly lead to anti-migrant attitudes; rather, there is a complex relationship between nationalist tendencies and attitudes toward migrants.

Participants who agreed with the statement that migrants create jobs by opening businesses had the highest levels of national attachment compared with those who disagreed with the statement or held a neutral stance. A striking finding is that participants who agreed with the same statement scored the lowest on the national superiority scale. This highlights the need to further examine the interaction between dimensions of nationalism and attitudes towards migrants. This observation suggests that agreeing with the statement that migrants support the labor market rather than posing a threat to citizen workers does not necessarily contradict national attachment. Rather, this study indicates that agreeing with this statement is negatively related to national superiority. Furthermore, findings indicating that those who did not agree with the statement that “migrants fill employment gaps” exhibited the highest levels of national attachment but the lowest levels on the national superiority scale highlight a noteworthy aspect to explore further in the context of nationalism and attitudes toward migrants.

When it comes to threats related to health services, it is observed that participants oppose both statements (namely, “Migrants bring infectious diseases to our country” and “Migrants are a burden on public health services”) at similar rates. The higher rates of agreement with the statement about placing a burden on the healthcare system than with the statement on public health concerns suggest that the threat to access to resources is a more decisive factor in anti-migrant attitudes regarding public health.

The findings show that national attachment tendencies do not affect attitudes toward health-related statements, unlike those concerning economic participation. Notably, participants who agree that migrants pose a threat to public health score the highest on the national superiority scale. However, participants who do not support the statement that migrants place a burden on the public health system also score highest on the national superiority scale.

While Turkey has been affected by migration in diverse ways throughout its history, the rise of xenophobia in recent years, migration's inclusion in election agendas, and increased public interest in migration make it necessary to conduct in-depth research into perceptions of and attitudes towards migration.

Accordingly, the TSVS aimed to measure Turkish society's approach to migration and attitudes towards migrants. The findings in this report provide important insights for national and international civil society organizations, policymakers, and government actors working on migration and social integration.

The findings presented indicate that public perceptions concerning the number and proportion of migrants differ significantly from official figures. In particular, the fact that the perceived total number of migrants in Turkey is significantly higher than both the perceived number of migrants in one's neighborhood and the figures reported by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TURKSTAT) highlights the societal impact of anti-migrant rhetoric, which has gained prominence in the media and political arena in recent years. These effects are believed to include societal concern about the number of migrants. However, this research shows that the scope and context of this concern influence the public's perceptions and attitudes toward migrants.



Various studies show that daily contact with migrants shapes perceptions of migrants, depending on the nature of the interaction and the context. To observe these effects, participants were asked about the frequency of their interactions with migrants. The study then measured whether their prejudices and negative attitudes decreased as a result of these interactions. The TSVS survey findings reveal that a significant majority of the public rarely interacts with migrants in daily life, and that a significant portion of the population does not interact with migrants whatsoever.

When examining the public's attitudes toward sharing public and private spaces with migrants, no trend was observed that would facilitate interaction between different groups. Overall, the findings highlight the need to develop and expand inclusion and social integration programs in public spaces such as schools, parks, gardens, and squares.

In addition to the public's tendency to overestimate the number of migrants in Turkey, the limited overlap between people's daily lives and those of migrants reduces the likelihood that anxiety levels regarding migrants stem from everyday experiences with them. Nevertheless, it is believed that within Turkish society, migrants are perceived as a threat to access to resources such as employment, health services, or social security.

The survey findings align with prior scholarship that highlights perceived threats to access to resources. The findings presented here show that nationalist tendencies influence these perceptions, though this effect is complex and nationalist tendencies are not the only influential dimension.

In statements related to the economy, a notable finding is that statements suggesting migrants contribute to the labor market were supported; levels of national attachment are at their highest, while the national superiority scale is at its lowest. Similarly, the observation of the contrasting levels of national attachment and national superiority in relation to the statements suggesting migrants pose a threat to the labor market also makes a striking pattern.

Additionally, for statements concerning migrants' effects on public health and public health infrastructure, as with the economic statements, no significant difference in the national attachment items were observed.

These findings support the conclusion that nationalism does not directly influence the threat to access to resources. It is necessary to observe the interaction and impact of different dimensions of nationalism.

At the same time, national superiority is highest among participants who agree with statements suggesting migrants pose a threat to public health. Notably, participants who do not endorse the statement that migrants place a burden on the healthcare system also show the highest levels of national superiority. In addition, a negative relationship is observed between the frequency of contact with migrants and certain anti-migrant attitudes. The research demonstrates that individuals with more positive attitudes toward migrants have more frequent contact with them. However, further analyses are being conducted to determine whether this relationship is statistically significant.

Based on the findings presented, the following policy recommendations are proposed to address anti-migrant attitudes and counter xenophobia. Given Turkey's status as a signatory to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, it is necessary to ensure a rights-based approach is adopted to protect the right to asylum. It is important to develop and effectively enforce laws fighting hate speech and discrimination. It is also essential to collaborate with media professionals to promote rights-based approaches rather than racial rhetoric. Furthermore, to counter public prejudices and exaggerated perceptions of migration figures, public institutions must ensure migration data is made accessible regularly and transparently. At the local level, funding must be directed towards municipalities to further develop inclusion programs in public spaces, and best practices identified in this area should receive longer-term support and be scaled up.

It is necessary to strengthen social integration through school-based educational programs that include parents, as well as through diverse projects; in particular, leverage women's constructive attitudes toward migrant employment as a supportive element in these projects. In addition, institutions should consider organizing social awareness campaigns that highlight migrants' contributions to the economy and the healthcare system. Implementing recommendations at different political and social levels will significantly strengthen social integration and build a more inclusive Turkey. Multidimensional approaches developed in this direction will help establish migration management policies on a more sustainable foundation while laying a solid groundwork for achieving long-term socioeconomic stability and social peace.

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Appendix

Düzey 2 Kod	Bağlı Olduğu İller
TR10	İstanbul
TR21	Tekirdağ, Edirne, Kırklareli
TR22	Balıkesir, Çanakkale
TR31	İzmir
TR32	Aydın, Denizli, Muğla
TR33	Manisa, Afyonkarahisar, Kütahya, Uşak
TR41	Bursa, Eskişehir, Bilecik
TR42	Kocaeli, Sakarya, Düzce, Bolu, Yalova
TR51	Ankara
TR52	Konya, Karaman
TR61	Antalya, Isparta, Burdur
TR62	Adana, Mersin
TR63	Hatay, Kahramanmaraş, Osmaniye
TR71	Kırıkkale, Aksaray, Niğde, Nevşehir, Kırşehir
TR72	Kayseri, Sivas, Yozgat
TR81	Zonguldak, Karabük, Bartın
TR82	Kastamonu, Çankırı, Sinop
TR83	Samsun, Tokat, Çorum, Amasya
TR90	Trabzon, Ordu, Giresun, Rize, Artvin, Gümüşhane
TRA1	Erzurum, Erzincan, Bayburt
TRA2	Ağrı, Kars, Iğdır, Ardahan
TRB1	Malatya, Elazığ, Bingöl, Tunceli
TRB2	Van, Muş, Bitlis, Hakkâri
TRC1	Gaziantep, Adıyaman, Kilis
TRC2	Şanlıurfa, Diyarbakır
TRC3	Mardin, Batman, Şırnak, Siirt