

ABOUT THE PROJECT

This research has been funded by the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom Turkey Office under its #LiberalHomeworksOnline initiative. Istanbul Economics Research was appointed to undertake the research and disseminate the results through its website www.turkiyeraporu.com following an open call.

METHODOLOGY

A survey of 1200 individuals over 18 years old across Turkey was undertaken. The survey was undertaken using Computer Aided Phone Interview (CATI) methodology in 12 cities across Turkey. The sample was randomly selected and the data collected is statistically significant at the national level with 95% confidence interval and +/- 2.5 pp accuracy.

INTRODUCTION

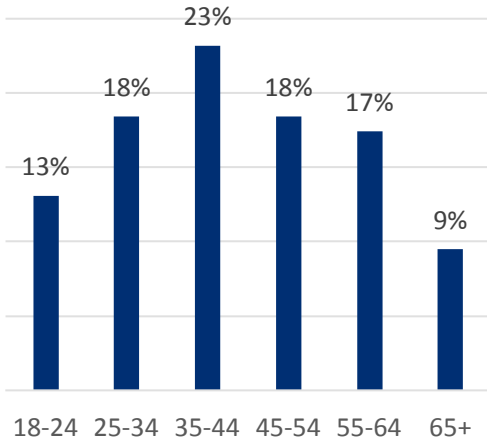
This study aims to understand the perception of fundamental rights in Turkey. In this respect, the public opinion survey aimed to measure both the knowledge on fundamental rights and the importance attached to these rights by the society. In measuring knowledge, the survey focused on population's general awareness of fundamental rights and what they perceive as their fundamental rights. On the attitude side, the survey focused on the need and the importance of fundamental rights. Finally, particular attention has been given to developments vis-à-vis tracking of individuals during the governments' fight against the COVID-19 pandemic to understand the limits of the society in giving up their privacy in return for health and security services to be provided by the government.

This study comes at a time when autocratic tendencies around the world are being driven by populist right wing leaders. The economic fragilities regarding income inequality have been exacerbated by the economic fall out of the COVID-19 pandemic. Going forward, there is more room for autocratic leaders and their governments to increase their grasp on power by making use of the disgruntlement and feeling of injustice among larger sections of the society.

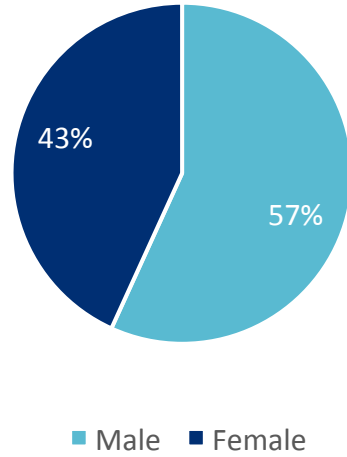
The report is composed of three sections: First section gives an overview of the demographics of the sample, second section presents the findings related to perception of fundamental rights both from the perspectives knowledge and importance, and finally the third section presents findings on the perception of the society regarding the government tracking of individuals within the context of fighting the pandemic and beyond.

SECTION 1: DEMOGRAPHICS

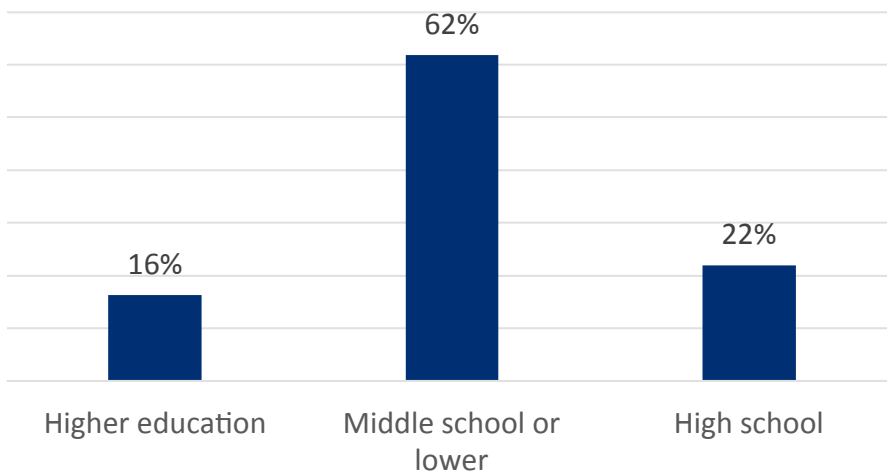
Age breakdown of the sample



Gender breakdown of the sample



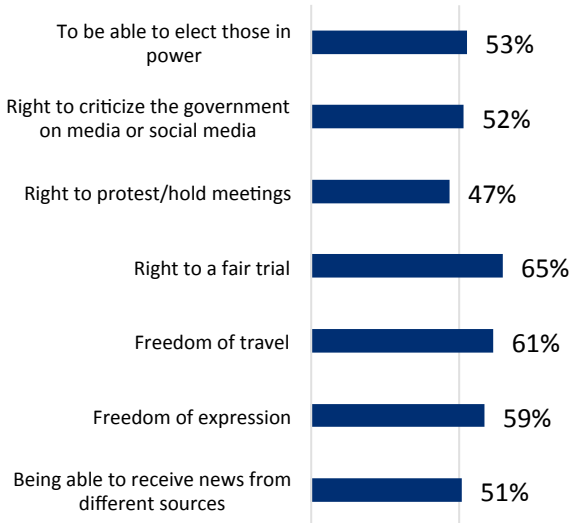
Educational attainment of the respondents



SECTION 2: THE PERCEPTION OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

The respondents were first asked to report on their perception of what fundamental rights are. Only “right to protest/hold meetings” appeared to be not seen as a fundamental right by the majority of the respondents. “Right to a fair trial”, “freedom of travel” and “freedom of expression” were ranked the highest by 65%, 61% and 59% of the respondents respectively.

Which of the choices do you consider as your fundamental right(s)?

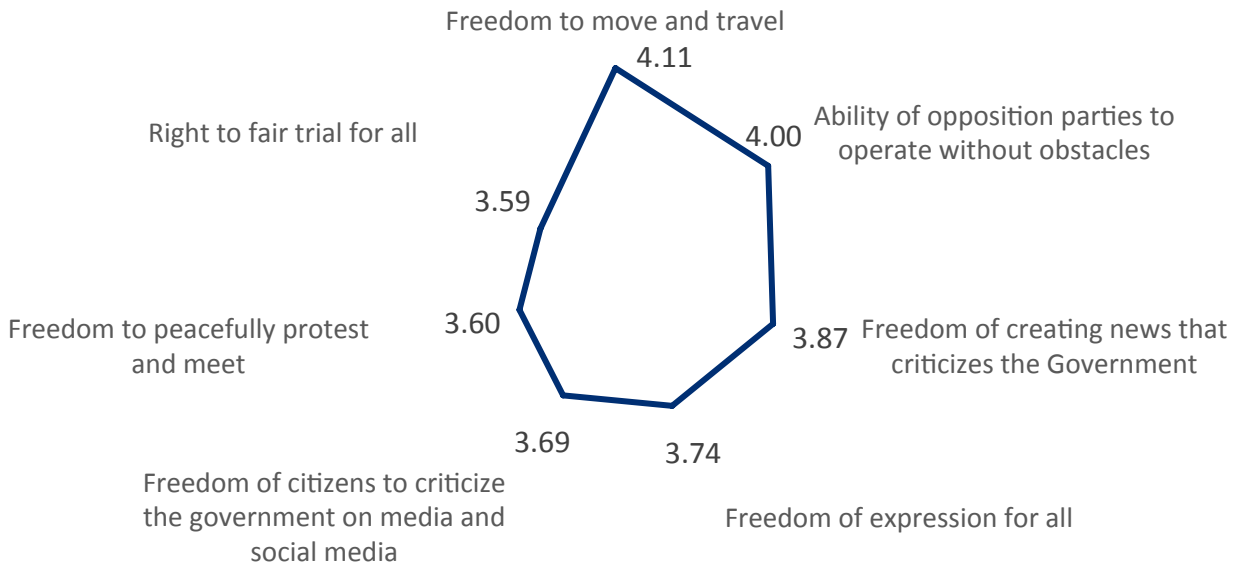


It is worthy of mentioning here that whilst “freedom of expression” is seen as a fundamental right by 59% of the participants “right to protest/hold meetings” is seen as a fundamental right by only 47% of the participants. This shows that there are alternating views among the respondents to the extent of freedom of expression.

The right that was perceived most as a fundamental right was the same, “right to a fair trial”, for the participants between 25-65. Priority was “freedom expression” for those aged between 18 and 24. Finally, it was “to be able to elect those in power” for those over 65 years old. The runner up for the same age group was “right to travel” which may have been an amplified results since the survey was undertaken during COVID-19 restrictions for that age group had already been in place for almost 2 months.

Age Group	Priority Fundamental Right
18-24	Freedom of expression (73%)
25-34	Right to a fair trial (66%)
35-44	Right to a fair trial (65%)
45-54	Right to a fair trial (65%)
55-65	Right to a fair trial (60%)
65+	To be able to elect those in power (64%)

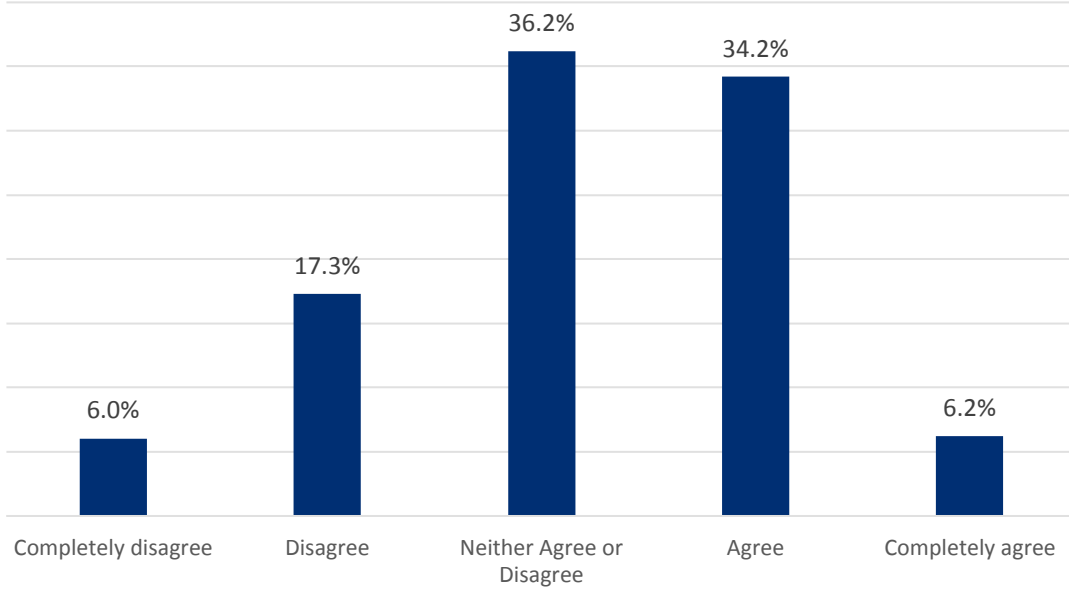
On a scale of 1 to 5, how important are the following for you to have in your country?
(1: not important at all, 5: very important)



The perception of what is a fundamental right and their importance differ. Whilst “right to a fair trial” was considered to be a fundamental right by the highest share of respondents its importance is the lowest. On the other hand, “freedom of travel” remains high in both questions. “Ability of opposition parties to operate without obstacles” remain the second highest, showing the demand for plurality in governance. “Freedom of expression” and “ability of opposition parties to operate without obstacles” score the highest among the age group 18-24.

	Right to fair trial for all	Freedom of expression for all	Freedom of citizens to criticize the government on media and social media	Freedom to peacefully protest and meet	Freedom to move and travel	Ability of opposition parties to operate without obstacles	Freedom of creating news that criticizes the government
18-24	3.92	4.02	3.38	3.09	4.11	4.02	3.63
25-34	3.53	3.63	3.71	3.57	4.00	3.83	3.82
35-44	3.66	3.78	3.69	3.60	4.05	3.97	3.81
45-54	3.80	3.85	3.81	3.67	4.07	3.95	3.85
55-64	3.26	3.49	3.82	3.88	4.19	4.20	4.17
65+	3.30	3.71	3.62	3.74	4.35	4.16	3.88

To what extent do you agree with the statement that the state may restrict fundamental rights when it deems necessary?

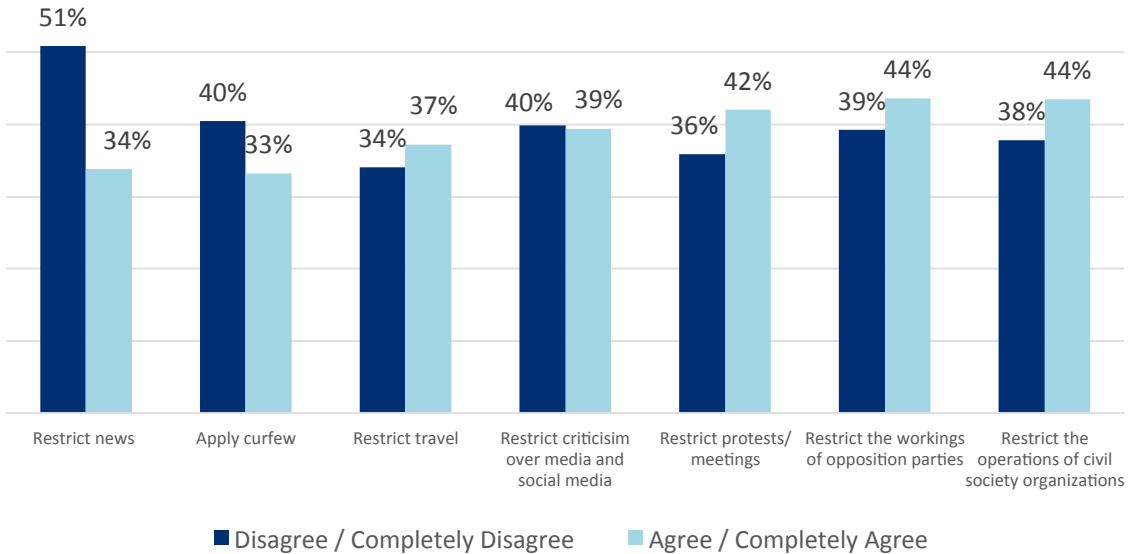


A little over 40% of the participants answered “agree” or “completely agree” to the statement that the state may restrict fundamental rights when deemed necessary. Participants in disagreement with the statement were 23% whereas 36% stated that they neither agree nor disagree.

Table below shows the breakdown by political party affiliation of the respondents. As highlighted in orange, the division appears to be on the right/left political preferences. Whereas AK Party, MHP and İYİ Party voters are more likely to agree with the statement, CHP and HDP party voters have the highest share of disagreement among parties.

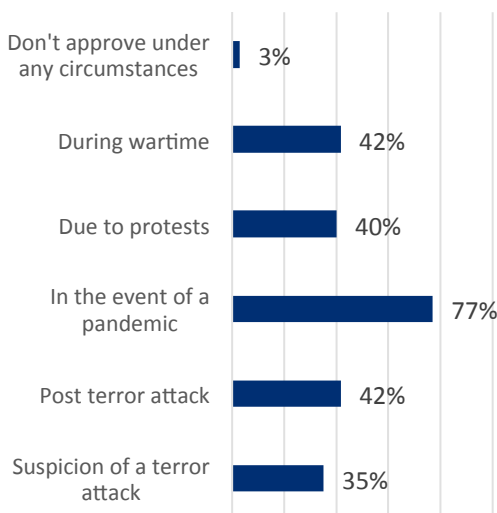
	Disagree / Completely Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree / Completely Agree
AK Party	18.1%	27.5%	54.4%
CHP	36.8%	40.3%	22.9%
HDP	23.7%	43.6%	32.7%
İYİ Party	14.3%	53.7%	32.0%
MHP	18.7%	37.3%	44.1%

Under extraordinary circumstances, to what extent do you agree with the following measures to be taken by the government?



Next, the participants were asked to evaluate their level of agreement to a series of actions that the government may take under extraordinary circumstances. Most disagreement was shown to “restrict news”. On average, around 40% of the respondents agrees to government restrictions on liberties under extraordinary circumstances.

Under which of the following circumstances would you approve a curfew?



The respondents are more likely to approve a curfew in extraordinary circumstances that can be readily defined. To be more clear, the respondents stated that they would approve a curfew given the occurrence of an event rather than the expectation of it.

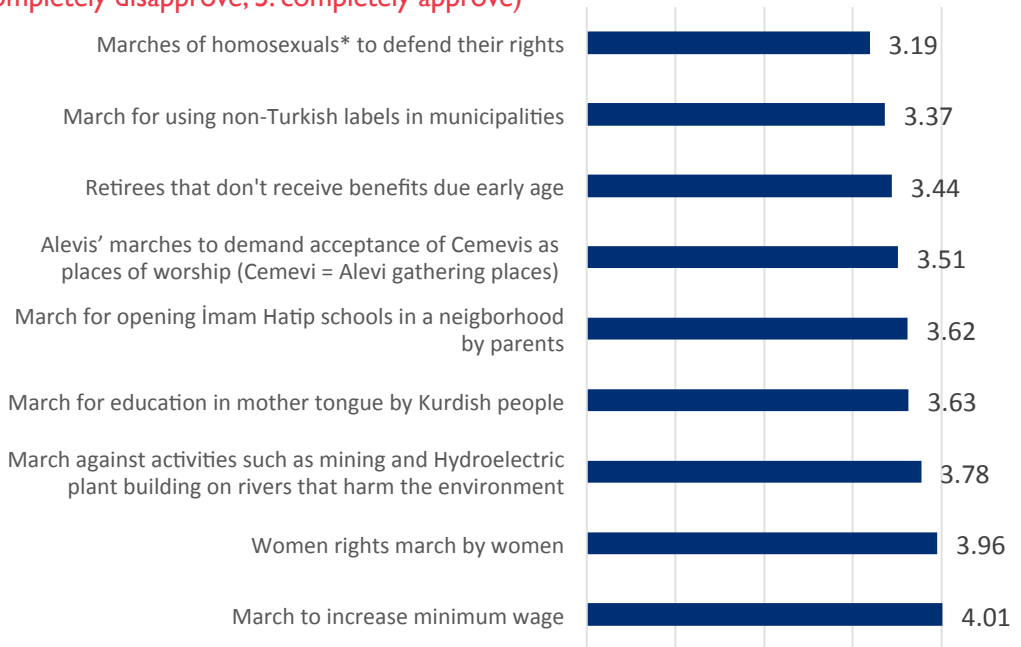
The approval rate for a curfew was the lowest, albeit not by a large margin, for “suspicion of a terror attack”.

Expectedly, the approval for a curfew is the highest for “in the event of a pandemic”.

	Suspicion of a terror attack	Post terror attack	In the event of a pandemic	Due to protests	During wartime	Don't approve under any circumstances
Middle school or lower	36.2%	40.8%	76.4%	42.2%	40.4%	3.3%
High School	32.6%	41.4%	75.1%	38.7%	45.5%	2.2%
University	34.8%	46.7%	83.1%	35.4%	42.4%	1.9%
Masters / PhD	29.6%	35.4%	74.9%	22.1%	31.1%	6.8%

As the level of education increases, the participants are more reticent to approve curfews. 6.8% of participants with either masters or PhD degrees stated that they don't approve curfews under any circumstances. Those with higher education are less likely to approve curfews during protests.

On a scale of 1 to 5, to what extent do you approve the following peaceful protests?
(1: completely disapprove, 5: completely approve)



The highest rate of approval for peaceful protests were reported in the areas of minimum wage, women's rights and the environment. Peaceful protests received the same amount of support in the areas related to protests based on religious and ethnicity preferences.

*While asking the questions the word "homosexuals" was used instead of the proper LGBTI abridgment due to an expected lack of familiarity within the Turkish society in the light of former surveys.

To what extent do you find the below mentioned peaceful protests right?
 (1: I do not find right at all , 5: I find them totally right)

	AK Party	CHP	HDP	İYİ Party	MHP
March for retirees that don't receive benefits due early age	3.43	3.70	3.47	3.22	3.15
Alevis' marches to demand acceptance of Cemevis as places of worship (Cemevi = Alevi gathering places)	3.28	3.90	3.88	3.43	3.32
Women rights march by women	3.93	4.25	4.08	3.65	3.65
Marches of homosexuals to defend their rights	2.83	3.62	3.60	3.27	3.24
March for education in mother tongue by Kurdish people	3.46	3.82	4.24	3.61	3.38
March for opening İmam Hatip schools in a neighbourhood by parents	3.64	3.54	3.96	3.66	3.34
March to increase minimum wage	3.90	4.30	4.17	3.90	3.82
March against activities such as mining and Hydroelectric plant building on rivers that harm the environment	3.57	3.97	4.19	3.76	3.72

The table above shows the highest and lowest approval rates per each of the parties' voter bases. Red cells indicate the lowest two points scored and green cells indicate the highest two points scored by supporters of each political party. The results show that, despite the increasing polarization in the society there are more than one issue that supporters of different political parties seem to agree on. Surprisingly, the supporters of HDP, İYİ Party and MHP score the highest approval for peaceful protests regarding the environment. Retirees that don't receive benefits due to early age do not have many sympathizers across political parties. Similarly, "Marches of homosexuals to defend their rights" receives minimum support across political parties. "March to increase minimum wage" receives support across political parties.

On the other hand, approval for peaceful protests follows suit with political identity. For example HDP voters show the highest support for "March for education in mother tongue by Kurdish people", and "March for opening İmam Hatip schools in a neighbourhood by parents" receives the lowest approval among CHP voters.

Finally, across supporters of political parties, the HDP electorate appears to be most supportive of peaceful protests.

SECTION 3: COVID-19 TRACKING

Physical interaction has been the single most harmful factor in the fast spread of the COVID-19 virus. Among other measures, many governments around the world developed location tracking apps to both warn citizens of COVID-19 dense areas in a city and to identify individuals for treatment and quarantining. The development and use of such geo-enabled applications by governments, albeit for fighting the pandemic, has raised issue regarding privacy. In the third section of the survey questions were asked to understand the reaction of the public towards these apps.

When the COVID-19 pandemic is over, would you download an app developed by the state that has access to your everyday movement data, in order to ensure your medical well being and security?

	Yes	Don't Know	No
Female	47.8%	4.7%	47.5%
Male	45.2%	3.3%	51.5%
Total	46.3%	3.9%	49.8%

The respondents were split in their answer to the above question. While men are less likely to download such state devised app, the difference between men and women is not significant.

**On a scale of 1 to 5, how acceptable do you find the following statements?
(1= completely unacceptable, 5= completely acceptable)**

	1	2	3	4	5	Total For Turkey	Total For the US
Do you think it is acceptable or unacceptable for the government to use people's cell phones to track the location of people who have tested positive for the coronavirus in order to understand how the virus may be spreading?	9.9%	13.3%	34.7%	11.5%	30.6%	3.97	2.95
Do you think it is acceptable or unacceptable for the government to use people's cell phones to track the location of people to ensure they are complying with experts' advice on limiting physical contact during the coronavirus Outbreak?	8.8%	4.2%	25.7%	24.1%	37.2%	3.76	2.45

Finally, respondents were asked to evaluate how acceptable they find two statements regarding tracking for the purpose of fighting the pandemic. We used statements that were also used by PEW Research Center in the US between April 12-15 to be able to make a comparison. The results show that the respondents find it much more acceptable for the government to track locations of individuals for fighting the COVID 19 pandemic.

FINAL NOTE

The study on the perception of the rights have shown that many of the concepts considered as the fundamental rights by the more liberal societies were not perceived as such by the Turkish society. “Right to a fair trial” received the highest level of acknowledgement as a fundamental right by 65% of the respondents. “Right to protest or hold meetings” was, on the other hand, considered not to be a fundamental right by more than half of the respondents, even though it was clearly defined under Fundamental Rights and Duties section of the Turkish Constitution.

Overall, the respondents have shown a higher respect for the state or rather the government than their own rights. Four in ten respondents either agreed or totally agreed that the state may restrict their fundamental rights when it deems necessary. The rate of agreement with the statement was over 50% for the AK Party voters.

Another point that stood out throughout the study was that even though the polarization in the Turkish society is very apparent, when it comes to rights, the perceptions are very similar. MHP and İYİ Party voters who represent a more Turkish nationalist stance were in total harmony with the HDP voters representing a more Kurdish nationalist stance regarding the issues that are not to be subject to peaceful protest. LGBTI rights were in particular disregarded by the majority of the respondents.