

from: THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN TURKEY

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IV INVOLVEMENT IN SOCIETY AND LIFE SATISFACTION

The goal of social inclusion is the integration of individuals in society in order to improve their satisfaction with life. Involvement in society and life satisfaction take many different forms, including informal association with friends, living in a congenial neighbourhood and seeing people at work or in voluntary activities. Likewise, influences on life satisfaction are variable: friendships are formed on the basis of personal choice, whereas housing reflects income and trust in public officials will reflect the character of national government. The European Quality of Life Survey asks the same questions about involvement in society and life satisfaction as in old and new EU member states. However, the answers are not always the same.

IV. 1 The place of women in society

Ataturk proclaimed, 'The ancient Turk considered men and women to have equal rights' (inscription at his memorial at Anitkabir). Believing that Islam limited the rights of women, Ataturk sought to promote a secular way of life for women as well as men, and Articles 2 and 10 of the Constitution repeat this aspiration. Turkish women gained the right to vote before women in France and Switzerland. However, in keeping with its national traditions, Turkey remains a society in which gender roles are often sharply differentiated (see Alber, 2006: 378-382).

Attitudes about gender roles differ between generations. When TNS-PIAR asked a nationwide sample of married Turks in 1997 about the circumstances of their union, 69 percent said it was an arranged marriage, and the modal response was that the couple had not met prior to the marriage being agreed. By 2005, the same question found that the modal group, 46 percent, reported that they had met their spouse and the proportion with an arranged marriage had fallen by 15 percentage points. Among younger, unmarried Turks, 90 percent think the best way to find a spouse is by dating and getting to know a potential partner, while only 10 percent endorse an arranged marriage.

Although women have tended to lag behind men in education, the gap is closing. According to official statistics, 90 percent of adult men but only 67 percent of adult women were literate in 1990. As of 2003, a rise of 14 percentage points in female literacy and 6 percentage points in male literacy has narrowed the gender gap to 14 percentage points. The near complete mobilization of children in primary education has reduced the gender gap there to 6 percentage points (<http://nkg.die.gov.tr/en/goster.asp?aile=3>). The level of education has been rising among women as well as men. In the 20-24 age group, 34 percent of women have had a good secondary or tertiary education, compared to 16 percent age 40-44 and 3 percent among those above the age of 60. This is now little urban-rural difference in the gross attendance of girls at primary schools: it is 94 percent in urban areas and 88 percent in rural areas. However, there are big regional differences. While 75 percent of girls are in secondary or tertiary education in developed regions of Turkey, in the least developed parts of the South and East, only 31 percent participate (Koc and Hancioglu, 2005: 24, 26). Official statistics report that the increased attraction of secondary and tertiary education has led to a decline in the proportion of both men and women age 15 plus in the labour force. (<http://nkg.die.gov.tr/en/goster.asp?aile=2>).

There are very striking gender differences in the employment patterns of men and women. Men are more than five times as likely as women to participate in paid employment (Table IV.1.1). Moreover, women are more than twice as likely than men to be unpaid family

helpers rather than in paid employment. Since a majority of female adults are homemakers, who are unpaid and have no retirement age, women are much less likely to have the benefit of retirement on social security.

Gender differences account for the substantial discrepancy between labour force participation in Turkey and in EU countries (cf. Table III.2.1 and IV.1.1). There is no statistically significant difference in the proportion of adult men in work in Turkey and in the EU. However, there is a great gulf in the labour force participation of women. The EQLS survey found that three times as many women in the EU 15 are in paid employment as in Turkey. In a complementary manner, three times as many Turkish women were homemakers as in the EU 15.

Table IV.1.1 Economic status of men and women in Turkey

	Female	Male
	(percentage)	
Working	12	67
Family helpers	8	3
Unemployed	3	10
Homemaker	69	-
Retired	4	15
In education	1	3
Ill/disabled	2	2

Source: TUIK survey of Turkish population, 2003. Interviews with 5,304 respondents

The low level of female participation in the labour force cannot be explained by large families, which are found in a limited minority of households. The concentration of women on activities within the house is consistent with Moslem norms that segregate men and women in the mosque and stipulate that women should not work with strangers. However, women who have more education are more likely to be employed. Among women age 15-29, there is a 40 percent difference in employment in favour of those with a university as against a primary school education; among women age 30 to 44, the difference is 35 percentage points, and among women age 45 to 60 it is 26 percentage points. Among men education makes little or no difference to their likelihood of being in work.

While there are some gender differences in how Turkish workers evaluate their working conditions (cf. Table III.2.2), they do not show any consistent pattern. Men are more likely than women to say that they can influence their working conditions and less likely to find their job stressful or constantly involving tight deadlines. However, women are more likely to regard their work as well paid and less likely to feel themselves to have boring or unhealthy work. Men and women are just as likely to view their job as offering good future prospects. The slight differences between Turkish men and women in the evaluation of their working conditions are much less than those between Turks and workers in EU 15 countries.

Turkish women find it more difficult than men to balance the demands of home and work. This is striking, since the minority of Turkish women who work are more likely to be unmarried or without family commitments that could increase demands on their time (cf. Hancioglu and Ergocmen, 2005). More than three-quarters of Turkish women in employment report that they lack the energy for household tasks and two-thirds lack the time for household tasks (Table IV.1.2). By contrast, in new EU member states and in the EU 15 countries, there is virtually no significant difference between men and women in balancing demands of work and other aspects of social life.

Table IV.1.2 Evaluation of work-life balance

	Turkey		New EU 10		Old EU 15	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
	(% having problem monthly or more often)					
Problem with:						
Having energy for household tasks	48	77	61	61	50	52
Finding time for household tasks	47	66	40	35	26	25
Concentrating at work due to family responsibilities	28	27	11	14	9	11

Note: New EU includes Bulgaria and Romania, since replies their replies are very similar to countries admitted in 2004.

Source: European Quality of Life Survey, 2003, European Foundation. Interviews with 13,631 working people in 28 countries.

Although there are substantial differences in the roles of men and women in the Turkish economy, there is no difference in evaluations of their standard of living. The median man and the median woman place themselves at 5 on the 10-point scale of satisfaction with living standards. Likewise, among the Turks who are clearly dissatisfied with their standard of living, there is no significant difference between men and women.

IV.2 Informal and formal social networks

Individuals are normally involved in both formal and informal relations with other members of society. Friendship networks not only provide affection but also can be useful in securing help in times of need. Involvement in formal organizations is a necessary step in individuals becoming linked in a vertical network that can represent individual views at the national and the European levels (Rose, 2006a). The more integrated individuals are in networks, the less likely they are to feel the effects of social exclusion.

Collectively, informal and formal social networks are often referred to as social capital, constituting a stock of non-monetary resources that individuals can rely on to get things done on a routine basis, for example, child care or a car ride to work, or when emergencies develop borrowing money (see Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 2000). In the most developed European Union countries, policies of the welfare state guarantee citizens benefits through public organizations. However, formal bureaucracies can continue to be complemented by informal social networks. In new EU member states and developing countries, informal social networks are essential in helping individuals achieve a satisfactory quality of life in the absence of welfare state support common in developed EU countries (Dasgupta and Serageldin, 2000).

Networks exist at three different levels of society. Bonding networks are face to face and often informal, involving strong ties between friends, neighbours and people in a single community. They are immediately relevant in getting things done where people live. But bridging organizations are also needed to integrate people in national affairs and even more at the European level. Membership in the local branch of a nationwide voluntary organization, whether a charity or a political action group, has elements of both bonding and bridging, as local organizations are linked with national affairs through a national headquarters. Bridging ties that cross national boundaries are especially relevant in countries in which there is a shortage of resources to enhance the individual quality of life.

IV.2.1 Informal bonding networks

The basic social network is the household, and very few Turks are isolated by living alone. Whereas the EQLS found that in the EU 15 there were 25 percent living alone and 14 percent in new EU states, only 4 percent of Turks live alone.

The overwhelming majority of Turks have a multiplicity of informal networks on which to rely for psychological or material support (Alber, 2006: 372-376). The household does not insulate or isolate its members from informal social contacts. In the EQLS survey, 89 percent of Turks report having contact with friends and neighbours at least once a week, the same proportion as in old and new EU member countries. Moreover, most Turks either live near their parents or have adult children living near and nowadays are able to keep in touch by phone.

Informal contacts provide social support for individuals independently of the state. Friends can offer emotional support to a person who feels depressed, wants advice on personal matters, or needs help because of illness. If short of money in an emergency, a person may turn to someone in an informal network for assistance, as well as or instead to a public institution. The level of informal support in Turkey is high. Very large majorities say they can get support from others; the proportion ranges from 96 percent confident of help when ill to 80 percent confident of being able to get money in an emergency (Table IV.2.1). Altogether, 71 percent of Turks report being integrated in all four informal support networks and only one percent are not involved in any. The level of involvement in informal networks of support is just as high as in EU member states, old and new.

Table IV.2.1. Availability of support networks

	Turkey	Bulgaria	Romania	New EU	Old EU
<i>Q. From whom would you get support in each of the following situations?</i>					
	(percent saying have someone to give support)				
If ill	96	97	98	99	98
Advice personal matter	91	94	98	96	97
If feeling depressed	95	95	97	95	96
If needed money in an emergency	80	79	79	83	89

Source: European Quality of Life Survey, 2003, European Foundation. Interviews with 26,257 people in 28 countries.

Turkish confidence in getting support from others is grounded in experience. During the past year, the EQLS found that 39 percent of Turks had regularly given money or food to others and 19 percent reported receiving informal help. The larger proportion giving help implies that households in need often receive help from two different sources. Consistent with Turkey's lack of a universalistic welfare state, Turks were more than half again as likely to give or receive help as are citizens of EU 15 countries.

IV.2.2 Participation in voluntary organizations

Voluntary organizations of civil society provide a link between the top down activities of government and bottom up demands of citizens for government action to improve the quality of life. Civil society organizations reflect many interests, ranging from sports, culture and local affairs to local branches of national organizations such as trade unions, agricultural cooperatives and political parties.

Involvement in voluntary organizations is low in Turkey: in 2003 the TUIK survey found that only 9 percent said they belong to any voluntary organization. By contrast, in EU member states an average of 45 percent belong to at least one voluntary organization (Rose, 2006a: 15). When the EQLS survey asked in detail about organizations, the findings were very similar. Only 4 percent of Turks said that they had attended a meeting of a charitable or voluntary organization in the past month, and 3 percent had served on a committee or done voluntary work for an organization. In addition, 7 percent said they had contacted a politician or public official on matters of broad policy concern. Because a large portion of the labour force works in marginal jobs or is self-employed (Figure III.2.2), membership in trade unions is low. The Ministry of Work and Social Security reports that just under 3 million workers belong to trade unions.

Throughout Europe, involvement in voluntary organizations tends to be limited to a minority of a country's population. However, the EQLS survey finds that the size of the minority tends to be higher outside Turkey. In the EU 15 a total of 14 percent had attended a voluntary organization meeting in the past month and 7 percent in New Member States, compared to 4 percent in Turkey. Similarly, 13 percent in EU 15 countries and 7 percent in New Member States had been involved in a political action group in the past year, compared to 6 percent in Turkey. The very low level of political involvement in Turkey was, however, matched by similarly low levels in Bulgaria and Romania.

A big majority of Turks do participate in elections; in the six parliamentary elections since the 1982 Constitution was adopted an average of 86.8 percent of Turks have voted. The Turkish practice of voting but not participating in civil society institutions is common to the great majority of European Union countries (Rose, 2006a: chapters 3-4). Turkish elections are competitive; however, the requirement that a party receive a minimum of 10 percent of the popular vote to qualify for seats in Parliament limits the number of parties that are represented in the Turkish parliament (TUIK, 2005: chapter 7).

IV.2.3 Bridging networks

Bridging networks enable individuals to make contact with people in other cities or regions or in another country. Thus, they are of central importance for population migration. Whatever the push to leave a backward region, people wanting to migrate need guidance about where to go and when they arrive in a strange city or country emigrants benefit from support by friends, kinsmen or former neighbours.

The migration of Turks from rural villages to the cities shows that people living in remote villages have bridging networks that can be used to leave home in search of a better quality of life for themselves and their children. Migration to cities has also created "village type" networks in cities, where migrants from the same village or social group can cluster together for mutual aid (White, 2002). The scale of Turkish emigration to Germany has also created trans-national bridges linking Turks with the European Union. About 1 in 16 Turkish-born adults is now living abroad and an additional fraction of Turkish residents has worked abroad. This implies that most Turks are likely to have at least one relative or friend living abroad.

The revolution in telecommunications has radically altered the way in which Turks learn about what happens outside their local community (cf. Lerner, 1958). Turks are no longer dependent on what can be heard on the radio or viewed on television. Instead, many Turks have kinship and friendship ties with the Turkish diaspora. When family or friends migrate to another part of Turkey, to Germany or to another EU member state, ties can be kept active through the use of cell phones and the Internet.

However, the bridges that connect Turks in Anatolia with fellow Turks in distant European countries are narrow. Whereas a phone conversation with a relative in Germany can be conducted in Turkish, contacts with non-Turks usually requires knowledge of a foreign language. The low proportion of Turkish adults who report a basic knowledge of English, today the *lingua franca* of Europe, reflects the relatively recent introduction of compulsory

secondary education in Turkey. It also is a reminder of the divide between the well educated, cosmopolitan Turkish elite and the mass of the Turkish population.

IV.3 Evaluating concentric circles of society

Individuals can view society in terms of a set of concentric circles. The home and neighbourhood are most immediate and adequate space in a house and a clean, safe neighbourhood make a difference to the quality of everyday life. Beyond that, people are more or less involved in circles of society that they meet less frequently or are more remote in terms of income, ethnicity or other social characteristics.

IV.3.1 Housing and neighbourhood

Turkey is a land of home-owners: in the 2003 TUIK survey 72 percent were living in an owner-occupied household, divided evenly between those in a house and those owning a flat. Years of high inflation have prevented the development of a mortgage market; hence, Turks have not been able to use bank loans to buy their house. Many Turks in both urban and rural areas live in houses that have been built with the help of family and friends. Among those who are not home-owners, one-fifth are renters and the remainder live with relatives or in a house connected with their work.

The physical stock of housing is below that in the EU 15 countries. According to the EQLS survey, one-third of Turks say they have a shortage of space compared to one-sixth in the most prosperous EU countries, and almost one-third say their house is damp or has rot, three times the proportion in EU 15 countries. However, seven-eighths of Turks report they have an indoor toilet, virtually the same as the level in the EU 10 and more than in Bulgaria and Romania, and not far behind EU 15 countries, where there is virtually complete provision of indoor plumbing. Notwithstanding some complaints, Turks tend to express satisfaction with their housing. In the 2003 TUIK survey, 63 percent said they were satisfied or very satisfied; 25 percent described themselves as moderately satisfied; and only 12 percent described themselves as dissatisfied.

Although tending to be satisfied with their housing, many Turks report problems in their neighbourhood with conditions that are the responsibility of municipal or regional authorities (Table IV.3.1). As a consequence of urbanization, almost half live in areas which offer insufficient access to green recreational areas, and the inferior infrastructure in rapidly expanding cities causes two-fifths to rate water quality as low. In addition, more than one-quarter complain about air pollution and noise. Crime prevention is a classic responsibility of public agencies. However, 39 percent said they did not feel safe when walking alone in their neighbourhood at night, almost double the percentage feeling unsafe in EU 15 countries. The percentage of Turks reporting themselves dissatisfied with their neighbourhood is on average double that in EU 15 countries and almost double that in new EU member countries.

Table IV.3.1. Problems in local environment

	Turkey	Bulgaria	Romania	New EU	Old EU
	(% reporting many problems)				
Shortage of green space	46	18	17	15	16
Water quality	41	31	21	20	15
Air pollution	29	24	26	21	18
Noise	29	19	19	19	18
Streets unsafe at night	39	39	35	32	21

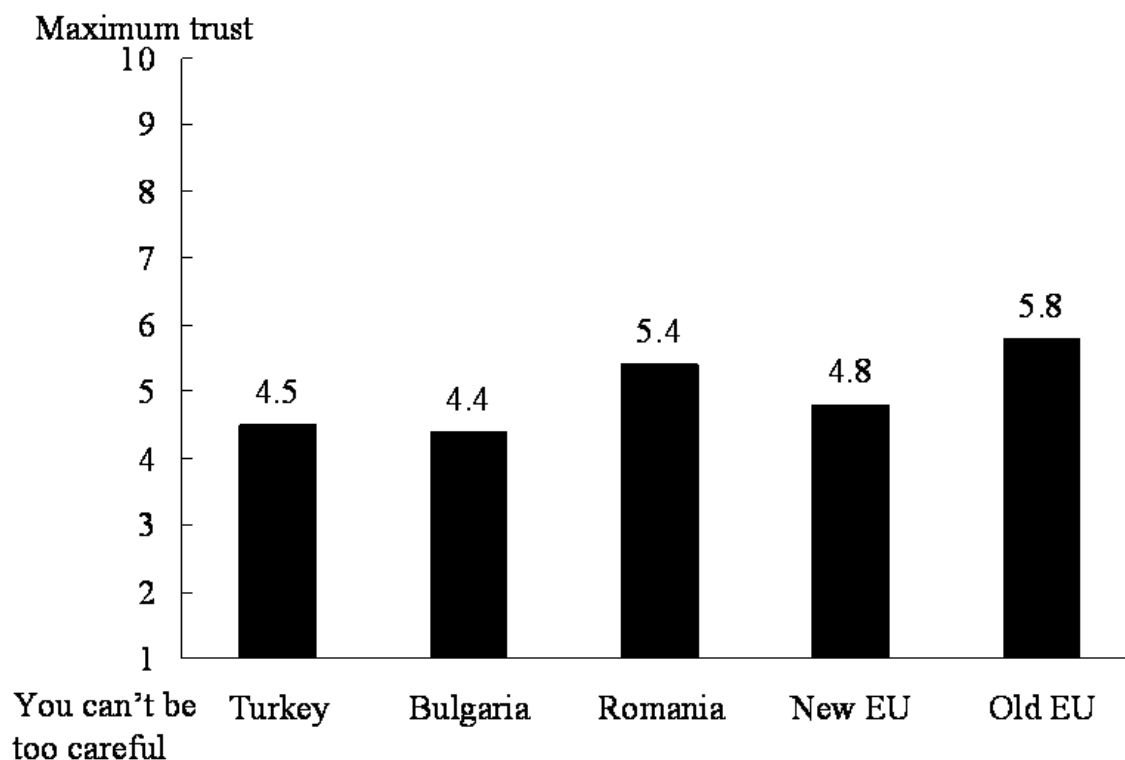
Source: European Quality of Life Survey, 2003, European Foundation. Interviews with 26,257 people in 28 countries.

IV.3.2 Trust and tensions in society

The radius of trust is important for social cohesion, because trust in other people predisposes people to cooperate for collective action to their mutual advantage (Fukuyama, 1995). If most citizens are on guard, feeling you can't be too careful when dealing with others, this inhibits cooperation. The radius of trust varies substantially among European member states. When Turks are asked to indicate their degree of trust in others, 69 percent are inclined to the view that you can't be too careful in dealing with other people, placing themselves at the bottom five points of the trust scale (Figure IV.3.1). The mean score on the 10-point trust scale, 4.5, is a little below that of new EU member states where Communist regimes bred distrust, and substantially below the mean level of trust in people in EU 15 countries.

Even if individuals would like to keep their distance from those whom they distrust, people cannot live in isolation; however, social relations can be tense. A battery of EQLS questions about relations between social groups shows that many Turks see their society as full of tension (Table IV.3.2). Three-fifths feel tension between rich and poor and almost half feel tension between management and workers. By contrast, only a third in old EU countries sense tensions along economic lines. The perception of tension among racial and ethnic groups in the EU 15 countries is just as high as in Turkey; however, the causes are different. In Turkey, ethnic tension arises from problems with Kurdish groups claiming greater autonomy or independence. In old EU member states, tension is a consequence of immigration from outside Europe, especially from Moslem societies.

Figure IV.3.1 Level of trust limited in much of EU



Source: European Quality of Life Survey, 2003, European Foundation. Interviews with 27,257 people in 28 countries weighted according to national population.

Table IV.3.2 Tensions in Society

	Turkey	Bulgaria	Romania	New EU	Old EU
	(% reporting a lot of tension)				
Rich and poor	60	53	53	52	32
Management and workers	48	37	49	47	34
Racial and ethnic groups	46	13	33	34	47
Men and women	34	9	17	8	12
Young and old	33	17	29	17	15

Source: European Quality of Life Survey, 2003, European Foundation. Interviews with 26,257 people in 28 countries weighted according to national population.

Tension between men and women is perceived by 34 percent of Turks, a level substantially higher than in EU member states. Moreover, the Turkish figure actually masks a gender gap. Among Turkish women, 42 percent see a lot of tension between the sexes, compared to 25 percent of Turkish men. By contrast, in EU countries there is little or no gap in perceived tension between the sexes. One-third of Turks see tension between young and old too; there is no difference between the older, middle aged and youthful generations on this count. In old EU and new EU countries, where perceived tension between young and old is substantially lower, there is also no age gap.

IV.4 Satisfaction with life

The policies for which government is responsible are not an end in themselves, but a means to the end of increased welfare for citizens. For example, education is not only a means of getting a job that pays a good wage but also a means of getting a better understanding of society and an individual's role as a citizen, a neighbour and a parent or spouse.

IV.4.1 Satisfaction varies between domains of life

Whether a person reports satisfaction differs between domains of life. Turks show the highest level of satisfaction with their family life: the mean score of 7.8 is closer to the top of the satisfaction scale than to its mid-point (Table IV.4.1). Moreover, it is not significantly different from satisfaction with family life in EU 15 countries and slightly higher than in new EU members. The high level of satisfaction with family life across Europe implies there is more than one model of a satisfying family life, for most Turks report they are satisfied even though they are poor by comparison with Europeans, their children do not secure as good an education and most women do not work.

A big majority of Turks register satisfaction with their own health, notwithstanding complaints about the state's health services. The mean score of 7.1 is little different than for New Member States but less high than in the EU 15 countries. The youthfulness of Turkish society is an important factor in raising the national level of satisfaction with individual health. Among those under the age of 30, a total of 82 percent are positive about their health. Among Turks age 60 or over, 53 percent report satisfaction with their health. The effect of good national health services on older people is evident in the EU 15 countries, where the proportion of older citizens positive about their health is 18 percentage points higher than in Turkey.

Education is much more dependent on government policy than is health, and there is widespread dissatisfaction with the education system. The mean score of 4.7 is near the

bottom of the six domains evaluated. Moreover, the gap between Turkey and other countries is exceptionally large: in EU 15 countries the mean score for satisfaction with education is 7.0 and 6.4 in new EU member states. The negative evaluation of education is consistent with free public provision of education lagging a generation or more behind both new and old EU member states. Moreover, the number of applications for university places from Turkish youths far exceeds the number of places that the state finances.

Table IV.4.1 Individual satisfaction with domains of life

	Turkey	Bulgaria	Romania	New EU	Old EU
	(Mean level of satisfaction with 10 equals most satisfied)				
Family life	7.8	7.1	8.1	7.6	7.9
Health	7.1	6.5	7.3	7.3	7.7
Housing	6.5	6.4	7.2	6.7	7.7
Job	6.3	6.3	7.4	6.9	7.4
Education	4.7	6.4	7.8	6.4	7.0
Standard living	4.6	4.0	6.1	5.6	7.2

Source: European Quality of Life Survey, 2003, European Foundation. Interviews with 26,257 people in 28 countries weighted according to national population.

The attitude of Turks toward their material circumstances is mixed. Even though the standard of housing is not so high as in EU countries, satisfaction with housing (mean score: 6.5) is almost the same as in new EU member states. Turks tend to be satisfied with their job (mean score: 6.3), albeit job satisfaction is not so high as in new or old EU member states. However, Turks tend to be dissatisfied with the standard of living that their work provides. The mean score of 4.6 is much lower than in EU countries. However, the cross-national difference in satisfaction with living standards is not so great as that between per capita income in the EU 15 and in Turkey.

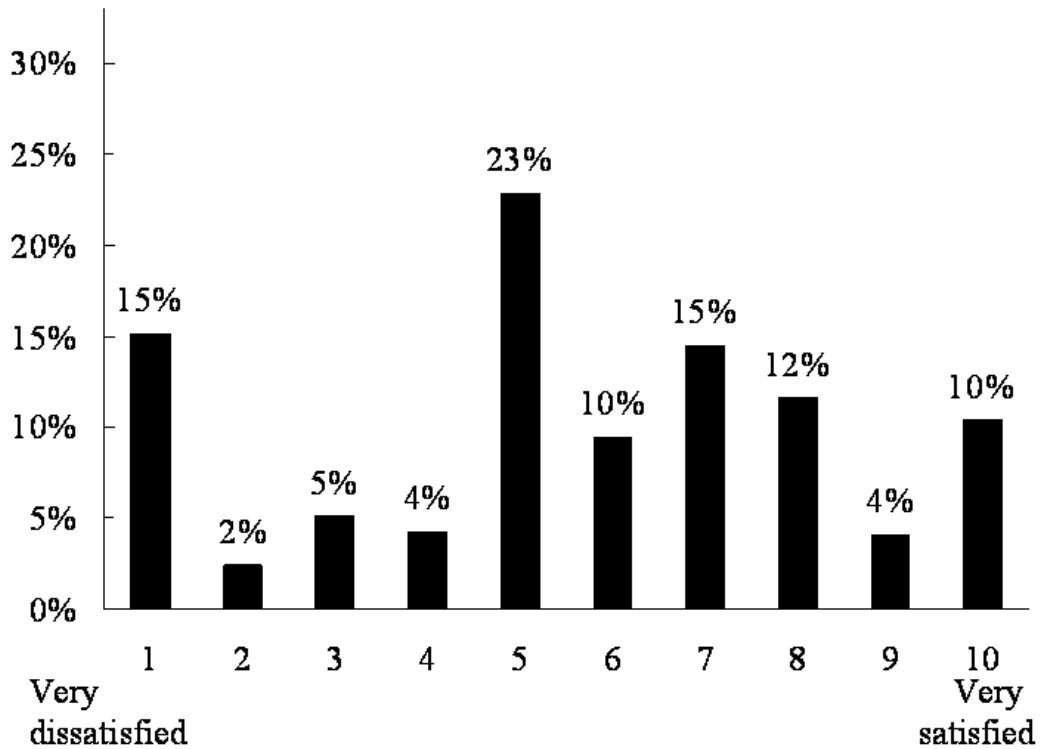
Satisfaction varies much more across different domains of life in Turkey than in EU countries. Among the older EU member states, the gap between family life, where satisfaction is highest, and where satisfaction is least high, education, is only 0.9 points on the 10-point scale. In new EU member states, there is a gap of 2.0 points between satisfaction with family life and the standard of living. In Turkey, the gap between satisfaction with family life and the standard of living is 3.2 points. The positive evaluation that Turks make of family, health and jobs is significant, because these are areas of life which almost every Turk thinks is important.

IV.4.2 Overall life satisfaction

Whereas government departments subdivide their tasks between different domains, such as health, housing, and education, individuals see life in the round, with attitudes toward different domains of life being correlated. A holistic measure of overall life satisfaction is therefore appropriate in order to capture the net effect of balancing more and less satisfying aspects of life.

Turks differ in the extent to which they express overall satisfaction with life (Figure IV.4.1). Half give an unambiguously positive reply of 6 to 10 and a fifth select a 5 rating. The mean level of life satisfaction in Turkey is positive, 5.6. However, one in six Turks expresses extreme dissatisfaction and one-quarter give clear evidence of dissatisfaction, rating their life at 4 or below. In the EU, overall life satisfaction is highest in the older member states, where 83 percent clearly show satisfaction and the mean level of life satisfaction is 7.4.

Figure IV.4.1 Overall life satisfaction of Turks



Source: Calculated from European Quality of Life Survey, European Foundation. Interviews with 996 people in Turkey, 14-28 July 2003.

Substantial variations in life satisfaction within each European society reflect differences between individuals within each society. Thus, it is necessary to test the extent to which people subject to the same public policies differ in their life satisfaction because of individual differences in age, income, gender, health or other social characteristics. Ordinary least squares regression is an appropriate statistical method for identifying which of dozens of potentially important influences do have a statistically significant effect on life satisfaction. Conducting the analysis separately for Turkey and for a pooled data set of the EU 15 countries can identify whether variations in individual life satisfaction are similar or differ as between EU countries where life satisfaction tends to be higher and Turkey, where it is not so high.

Table IV.4.2 Influences on life satisfaction: a regression analysis

	Turkey			EU 15		
	b	Beta	Sig.	b	Beta	Sig.
Health self-assessed	.62	.22	.000	.38	.23	.000
Destitute: rent, food, utilities	-.66	-.19	.000	-.42	-.12	.000
Policy satisfaction	.24	.18	.000	.21	.18	.000
Trusts people	.15	.16	.000	.14	.16	.000
Income quartile	.38	.15	.000	.11	.07	.000
Female	.45	.08	.025	.02	.01	.352
Age	.01	.03	.382	.01	.07	.000
Education (age finished)	.04	.01	.741	.11	.04	.000
Class tension	-.15	-.03	.263	-.15	-.05	.000
Safe neighbourhood	.09	.04	.236	.03	.01	.057
Church attendance	.02	.01	.672	.05	.05	.000
Manual worker	-.09	-.01	.639	-.14	-.04	.000
Urban area	-.20	-.03	.310	-.04	-.01	.098
Employed	-.01	-.002	.938	.01	.004	.592
R ² : variance explained:		R ² =24.2%			R ² =21.5%	

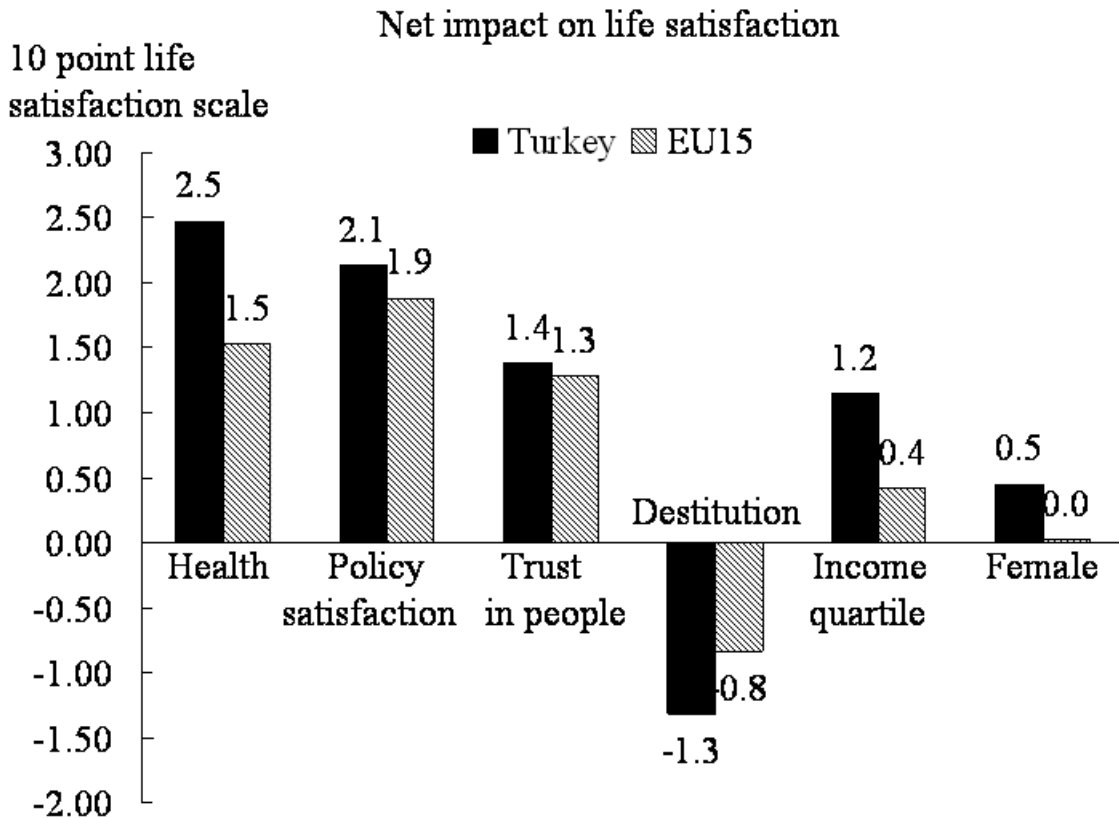
Source: European Quality of Life Survey, 2003, European Foundation. Interviews with 26,257 people in 28 countries weighted according to national population.

Altogether, regression analysis can account for 24.2 percent of the variance in life satisfaction in Turkey and 21.5 percent among citizens in the older European Union states (Table IV.4.2). In both analyses, a few influences are large, a few are limited and some lack any statistical significance at the .05 level. Figure IV.4.2 focuses on the six influences that have the most impact on individual satisfaction with life in Turkey and in the oldest EU member states.

Self-assessed health has the biggest influence on life satisfaction. The healthiest Turks have a life satisfaction rating two and one-half points higher than those who feel least healthy, net of the effect of all other influences. The healthiest citizens of old EU member states get a boost of one and one-half points on the scale of life satisfaction.

The extent to which individuals are satisfied with public policies has a big impact on overall life satisfaction too. The more satisfied people are with the public provision of pensions, social services, education, health and public transport, the more likely they are to be satisfied with their own lives. Net of all other influences those most satisfied with public policies are two points higher on the life satisfaction scale than those who are least satisfied. In Turkey, where policy satisfaction is much lower, the impact of policy satisfaction is much the same.

Figure IV.4.2 Major influences on life satisfaction in Turkey and EU-15



Note: Impacts calculated as the range of each independent variable multiplied by the b-coefficient reported in the OLS regression analysis in Table IV.4.2.

Source: European Quality of Life Survey, 2003.

Although trust in other people tends to be limited in most of Europe, within every country there are substantial differences between citizens in the extent to which they trust others. There is a positive association between trusting other people and being more satisfied with life. Being at the top of the trust scale rather than being very wary of others increases life satisfaction by one point. This is the case both in Turkey, where trust tends to be low, and in EU 15 states, where trust in other people is not so low.

Destitution, doing without necessities, is the chief economic influence on life satisfaction. Turks who frequently have trouble paying rent and utility bills and run out of money to pay for food are likely to have their satisfaction with life depressed by one and one-third points and in EU 15 countries, a smaller very deprived group is likely to see their life satisfaction lowered by almost one point. While the statistical impact is strong at the extremes, only 5 percent of Turks can be categorized as doing without all three necessities. By contrast, half report being able to pay for all three types of necessities throughout the year.

An individual's position within their national income distribution also has a notable impact. The life satisfaction of Turks in the highest income quartile is more than one point higher than that of Turks in the lowest quarter of the distribution of national income. This substantial impact of income appears to be associated with a relatively high level of income inequality in Turkey. The impact of income differences on life satisfaction in the EU 15 countries is only one-third as strong. However, being better off in income in Turkey is insufficient to raise a Turk to the level of life satisfaction found among low income groups in EU 15 countries (Fahey et al., 2005).

In EU countries where differences in the social roles of men and women are far less than in Turkey, gender has no statistically significant impact on life satisfaction. It does in Turkey, but not in the direction expected. Net of the influence of age, health and other factors, women score half a point higher on the life satisfaction scale than do men. While the impact is substantially less than other indicators in Figure IV.4.2, the fact the distinctive position of women in Turkish society does not create dissatisfaction is a caution against imposing West European ideas of gender priorities on Turkish society.

Among the many potential influences tested statistically, in Turkey eight fail to achieve statistical significance at the .05 level. Whether a person is employed or outside the labour force or a manual worker or not makes no difference to an individual's quality of life. Nor does living in an urban or rural area or in a neighbourhood where there is a fear of crime. People who perceive tensions in society are just as likely to be satisfied with their lives as those who do not, and Turks who go to a mosque (primarily men) are not significantly likely to be more satisfied with their lives. In older EU member countries, the regression analysis produces a similar pattern. Given the many thousands of interviews included in that analysis, five other influences are statistically significant, but the impact of each is limited, and four completely fail to register any significant influence.

IV.5 Policy implications for social involvement and life satisfaction

In a free society there are limits on the extent to which government can or should try to influence many areas of an individual's life. Nonetheless, government can have an indirect or direct influence on some domains of life and on major determinants of overall life satisfaction. This is especially the case in Turkey, since life satisfaction tends to be below that in most EU states.

◆*Policy satisfaction and trust.* Satisfaction with public policies not only reflects how much money the government spends but also whether the money is spent well or badly. The relatively low level of trust among Turks and relatively high rating of Turkey on corruption measures (www.transparency.org) emphasizes that, even without a major increase in money, there is scope for increasing policy satisfaction through more effective and fairer delivery of existing policies.

◆*Neighbourhood quality.* Since the majority of Turks are home-owners, they have incentives to invest their own labour in home improvements. However, households cannot provide the services that make their neighbourhood cleaner and safer. Local government, even more than national government, is in a position to reduce crime in the streets, noise and air pollution, and deliver clean water to houses.

◆*Destitution and income distribution.* Individuals in the bottom half of the income distribution of a society are relatively poor, but they need not be destitute and EQLS data confirm this (see Table III.3.1). The evidence calls attention to the need for specifically targeted policies to address difficulties that minorities of Turks have in paying rent, meeting utility bills and, to a surprising extent, being able to buy enough food.

◆*Tensions in society.* Differences between rich and poor are major sources of tension in Turkey and these are affected by both taxing and spending policies of government. In addition, Turks are very anxious about ethnic tensions. The halt in military engagements between Kurdish rebels and Turkish security forces offers opportunities for constructive long-term measures to reduce ethnic tensions. The state's capacity to take actions to ameliorate the relatively high tension between women and men in Turkish society is problematic.

◆*Life satisfaction by domains.* Where life satisfaction is lowest--the standard of living--government has most influence. The standard of living depends on the rate of economic growth and sound management of social as well as economic policies. Education is not only a question of spending more money in aggregate, which is inevitable given the country's demographics, but also in making expenditure more effective, especially in terms of

raising the skills and employability of the mass of youths who leave school for work at age 14 to 16.

The full text is available from:

<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef0719.htm>

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