



Youth Perceptions of U.S.-Turkey Relations

Turkish Heritage Organization recently conducted a survey of American and Turkish citizens between the ages of 15 and 30 to understand their views on U.S.-Turkey relations. Survey respondents were asked to answer the following question:

What are your thoughts on the current state of U.S.-Turkey relations, and what is your hope for their future?

The following is a selection of responses from the survey. They have been reprinted with the permission of the contributors.

Lawrence Laws, 29
L.L.M. Candidate at Koc University



“I believe that U.S.-Turkey relations are unfortunately looked at in mainly security and geostrategic terms. When thoroughly unpacked, we would see that in fact Turkey and the U.S. have strikingly similar social and political histories and conditions in a lot of respects. My hope is that we are able to see these similarities and help each other uphold the mutual ideals and principles that both societies hold so dear.”

A. L., 20

“Politically, they're at an all-time low due to Erdogan's body guards assaulting U.S. citizens. Also, the decision to arm the YPG has further made the situation worse. The situation in Syria is forcing the U.S. and Turkey to keep strong relations, as the U.S. must rely on Turkey to stabilize the region. Hopefully relations will stabilize after the Syrian Civil War and both countries will work together.”

Allison F., 25
Former Fulbright ETA in Turkey



“One of the largest hindrances to the relationship is a fundamental misunderstanding of the other. In my experience, Americans do not understand that Turkey has been a liberal, thriving democracy. In the same token, Turks tend to feed into many American conspiracy theories.

The leaders of the two countries are also damaging relations. Erdogan has regressed democratic progress, and his purges cannot be condoned by the United States. President Trump is tactless, and he is not instituting any reform to better the relationship.”

F. Yalcin, 20
Vice-President of UCLA Turkish Student Association

“Due to the United States’ continued support of Kurdish rebel groups in northern Syria and the recent altercation between Turkish nationals and YPG sympathizers, U.S.-Turkey relations are the worst they have ever been in the modern era. In my opinion, it is possible for these issues to be resolved through diplomatic channels as long as both sides are open to working with each other to strengthen U.S.-Turkey relations. It is my belief that because Turkey holds such an important geographic location, the United States will have no other option than to work with and alongside Turkey to solve many of the issues that the Middle East faces today and will continue to face in the future.”

Cagla Giray, 24
Turkish National and Doctoral Candidate in Human Development and Family Studies at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

“I believe Turkey and the U.S. have a long-standing reciprocal relationship that is built on mutual and open communication. As a Turkish national residing in the U.S., I have had an opportunity to be a cultural insider in both contexts. Looking from this perspective, even though radical political and socioeconomic transitions

are prominent in both countries, U.S.-Turkey relations seem to be sustained by a supportive and growing collaboration.

As a psychology scholar investigating Americanization in Turkey, I have also had an opportunity to translate my sociocultural insight with analytical tools. Taking on an integrative lens, I see that the remote influence of U.S. culture (via globalization vehicles such as media, food, and consumer goods) have led to visible reconfigurations in social ecology and thus reshaped the silhouettes of modern life in Turkey. The amicable representation of the U.S. has led Turkish citizens from every age to adopt American behaviors, values, and identities in Turkey.

On the other hand, in the U.S., Turkey is still perceived to be a unique context bridging Europe and Central Asia and thus an authentic synthesis of East and West. Accounting for the fragile developments, physical conflict surrounding Turkey, and growing psychosocial war in both countries, my concern is the lack of high-quality resources and tools to promote objective information. I hope that leaders, educators, and community members will start and/or continue to provide adequate knowledge and skills that will allow both the Turkish and American population to distill adverse global and/or national-level repercussions from the existing positive connection and growing potential between the U.S. and Turkey.”

..... ◆

THO would like to thank the above individuals for their contributions to this profile series.



..... ◆

Turkish Heritage Organization (THO) is a young, independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that promotes discussion and dialogue around Turkey’s role in the international community and issues of importance in the U.S.-Turkey bilateral relationship.

Founded by a group of Turkish-Americans with backgrounds in community leadership and run by a staff with demonstrated interest in and commitment to Turkish-American relations, THO strongly believes that any successful bilateral relationship rests on cooperation and constructive discussion between the people of both countries.

1250 Connecticut Ave NW
Suite 202
Washington, D.C. 20036

www.turkheritage.org

✉ info@turkheritage.org
 🐦 @TurkHeritage
 📘 fb.com/turkishheritage