

# **TURKEY'S DIVERSIFYING FOREIGN RESIDENTS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The movement of people from less developed regions of the world to the more advanced countries has been widely studied with regard to its implications for economic growth, international security and socio-political consequences in receiving countries. Turkey, critically placed in one of the most volatile regions of the world, has a very diverse and dangerous neighborhood. Thus, the country plays an important role in the migration of people from neighboring countries to Western Europe as a buffer state. Although Turkey's role as a transit country has been well documented in the literature, what is less known is that the country also receives increasing number of immigrants, both from Middle East but also more recently from Western Europe. This study is an attempt to uncover new aspects of migration concerning Turkey. First it finds that, Turkey is gradually becoming one of the new destinations of migration, as the official statistics clearly demonstrate. Secondly, the study also analyzes a survey data conducted by the authors regarding demographic characteristics, socio-cultural orientations and integration process of the foreign residents in Turkey. The results of the survey research indicate that foreigners are not subjected to any serious and widespread discrimination either by the authorities or by the communities in Turkey. Among the participants, 36.9 per cent state that they have sensed no discrimination when applying for a job or at work places. The percentage of those feeling themselves secure in Turkey is 87.7, while those feeling unsafe is only 12.3 per cent. The major difficulties the foreigners confront are unemployment, economical problems and excessive bureaucratic process especially in obtaining a work permit.

## **KEYWORDS**

Foreigners in Turkey, immigration, foreign population, human mobility, citizenship policy, social integration, ethnic diversity.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Turkey has been both a well-known transit country in the flows of international migration and historically a land of immigration. What is unique to the new immigration movement in Turkey is that sociologically the immigrants to Anatolia during the 20th century were mostly of the "relatives" of the Turkish people, it is the first time the citizens of the Western world such as German, British and Russian nationals have recently begun settling in-mass in Turkish towns and villages. This new wave of immigration increasingly started to diversify the foreign population living in Turkey.

Indeed, the population of foreigners in Turkey has grown steady in the last decade for two reasons. Firstly, worsening political, economic and security conditions in the eastern and northern neighboring countries pushed despaired people toward relatively more developed and more democratic Turkey. Secondly, Turkey has recently become an attractive tourist destination for millions of western people, and a considerable number of them each year decide to settle in the southern costal cities. Thus, official statistics show that total population of foreign residents in Turkey is about 161.000 in 2001, which were only 72.000 in 1994. Unofficial estimates, however, put the figure up to 500.000. Growing number of illegal immigrants constitute a real challenge to Turkish government in terms of border security, illegal employment and extradition costs. With the relaxation of legal limitations on the real estate ownership for the foreigners in the wake of Turkey's integration process to European Union, it is expected that the foreign residents in Turkey will likely to further expand in the years ahead.

Although, there is an abundant literature on examining the experience and integration process of immigrants in such countries as the US and Canada, for instance, very little studies are available on the issue of immigrants in the new settlement areas. In the same way, despite their apparent increases in the larger cities of Turkey, studies exploring the status, profiles, cultural orientation and adjustments of the foreigners in Turkey are quite limited. As the growing recent political debates in the country over Christian missionaries and real estate sells show, "the issue of foreigners" will likely to continue to be discussed by Turkish public and mass media in Turkey. In this paper, firstly we will examine the foreigners in Turkey by drawing on

historical trends by relying on official statistics in the lights of the existing immigration theory. Secondly, we will draw attention to composition of the immigrant population in Turkey in the last decade. Thirdly, we will present and discuss the findings of an exploratory survey research on foreigners living in Turkey conducted in selected cities by the authors. Finally, we will discuss the potential problems that may arise from the increasing number and diversity of foreigners in Turkey, especially with regard to cultural clashes, xenophobia, and security in the milieu of the rising nationalist feelings among Turkish people due in part to Turkey's integration process with the EU.

## 2-AN OVERVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Foreigners are indispensable subject of wide range of debates from migration, identity, citizenship, human rights, integration to security.<sup>1</sup> While a great deal of attention has been paid to the importance of foreigners in Turkey, virtually there are few analytical studies that have gone beyond daily news and official statistical reports. This study arouses out to consider "foreigner issue" in Turkey with more details. Indeed, it is ambitious to attempt to discuss this highly complicated issue, if we consider that even the definition of who is foreigner is blurred in terms of legal, political and sociological approaches. Widespread usage of the concept of foreigner refers to a person belonging to or owing allegiance to another state. Related to this political meaning, stateless people, people who have dual and multi citizenships, asylum seekers and refugees are to be included in this definition.<sup>2</sup> Although human movements are accepted as the one of most globalized issues, still nation states with the assistance of international agreements and organizations widely reconstruct and redefine who will be included under the concept of foreigner in a given country. In the case of Turkish legal system, for instance, four types of foreigners are recognized. These are stateless people, refugees, asylum seekers and minorities.<sup>3</sup> Thus, except minorities, the

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<sup>1</sup>A. İçduygu and E. F. Keyman, "Globalization, Security, and Migration: The Case of Turkey", *Global Governance*, Vol. 6 (3), 2000, pp. 193-206.

<sup>2</sup>International Organization of Migration (IOM), *Glossary on Migration*, IOM, Geneva, 2004.

<sup>3</sup>A. Çelikel, *Yabancılar Hukuku*, Beta, İstanbul, 2000, p. 17.

origin of the foreigners is immigration. Indeed, Turkey, as one of the most significant routes of international migration flows, receives a great number of illegal immigrants each year. With the intention of permanent stay or temporary workers turned-to be immigrants, people come to Turkey from different countries as diverse as Ghana or Former Yugoslavia. Turkey's position in international migration circle is summarized as follows<sup>4</sup>:

- 1) Turkey is a receiving country, particularly from neighboring states,
- 2) Turkey is a transit country, which is widely used by asylum seekers from south to north and from east-to west,
- 3) Finally, Turkey is also migrant and refugee producing country (sending country).

Recent changes in the volume, direction, composition and types of global human mobility reflect that international migratory flows towards and from Turkey have indicated not only a growing tendency but also to contain a diversity of migrants of various migration status in terms of status of foreigners.<sup>5</sup> Immigrant's types and their legal status in Turkey include;

a. Refugees: To be entitled to receive refuge status in Turkey depends on definition of national identity and citizenship policies. Turkey's 1924 Constitution and also 1934 Law on Settlement include detailed provisions on who can immigrate and be settled in Turkey and, in that sense; they are very explanatory in terms of who are the drafters of the law considered to be suitable to become citizens of Turkey. The law in its origin provides the possibility for individuals that are faithful to Turkish descent/ethnicity and culture (*Türk soyu ve kültürüne bağlı fertler*) to be accepted as immigrants and refugees to the country. Article 3 of the Law on Settlement also leaves it to the discretion of the Council of Ministers to determine who as an

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<sup>4</sup>A. İçduygu and E. F. Keyman, 2000, p.6.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 7.

individual as well as the people of which countries can be considered as belonging to Turkish culture.<sup>6</sup>

b. Asylum Seekers: Person seeking to be admitted into a country as a refugee and awaiting decision on their application for refugee status under relevant international and national instruments, in case of a negative decision, they must leave the country and may be expelled as may alien in an irregular situation, unless permission to stay is provided on humanitarian or other related grants.<sup>7</sup> Until the adoption of the 1951 Convention on Refugees, Turkey did not, in its national law, have legislation in governing asylum and foreigner related affairs. All that existed previously was the provision in Law 2510 that only individuals of "Turkish descent and culture" could be granted refugee status. Although Turkey receives asylum-seekers very intensely, it was not the practice of the Turkish government to grant these people full refugee status, let alone citizenship.<sup>8</sup> Despite the fact that Turkey, applying the 1951 Geneva Convention with a geographical limitation, does not have any legal obligation to recognize refugees from outside Europe, unprecedented mass influxes of people from the Middle East have resulted in Turkey becoming a *de facto* country of first asylum. In light of this perceived vulnerability and as a result of experience gained during the seemingly uncontrollable mass influxes into Turkey during the Gulf Crisis, Turkey has implemented a new regulation on asylum seekers effective 30 November 1994, and entitled "Regulation on the Procedures and the Principles Related to Mass Influx and the Foreigners Arriving in Turkey or Requesting Residence Permits with the Intention of Seeking Asylum from a Third Country".<sup>9</sup> Due in part to increasing pressure from NGOs and EU, Turkey has recently prepared a national action plan on the asylum and migration issues in the light of EU standards that include political and legal measure to be

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<sup>6</sup>K. Kirişçi, "Disaggregating Turkish Citizenship and Immigration Practices, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 36 (3), 2000, p.2.

<sup>7</sup>International Organization of Migration (IOM), 2004, p.10.

<sup>8</sup>Kirişçi, p.10-11.

<sup>9</sup>International Organization of Migration (IOM), *Transit Migration in Turkey*, IOM, Geneva, 1995.

undertaken by the government in order to harmonize Turkey policy with the EU acquis.<sup>10</sup>

c. Transit Immigrants: Transit migration through Turkey can be viewed as one of the most common of all recently established mobility flows amongst Africa and Asia and countries of Europe. It has become clear that thousands of migrants from the developing world who enter Europe are using Turkey as a transit land on their way to their preferred destinations.<sup>11</sup>

d. Circular and Shuttle Migrants: They are short-termed and voluntary migrants who move to a country other than that of his or her usual residence for a short time period for purposes of recreation, holidays, business and particularly for trade involving informal trade and irregular working rather than being formal resident. Foreigners from CIS and Eastern Europe move to Turkey for selling goods which they take with their baggage and buying goods from Turkey to take their country. In Turkey, it is called as "baggage trade". Goods of this kind of trade can not be limited according to its volume and can not be subjected of any regulation if it is carried with the passenger.<sup>12</sup> Besides, Istanbul's central role for circular and shuttle migrants which generally look for trade opportunities, Trabzon, Edirne, Antalya and other border cities welcome these migrants, too.

e. Retired Migrants: These are the people of sixty-five years old and older age who relocate in different sessions of the year.<sup>13</sup> Some educated and well income retired citizens of European countries particularly from Germany and UK have recently preferred to live in Turkey in increasing numbers because of its temperate climate, low prices and friendship of Turkish people. Numbers of German citizens in Alanya and Side and British citizens in Marmaris and Bodrum have considerably increased in recent years.<sup>14</sup> This kind of immigration

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<sup>10</sup>For details of this plan see, <http://www.egm.gov.tr> (12.07.2005).

<sup>11</sup>Kirişçi, p. 6.

<sup>12</sup>See [http://www.lasiad.net/bticareti\\_genel.html](http://www.lasiad.net/bticareti_genel.html) (10.07.2005).

<sup>13</sup>See <http://www.remi.com/support/glosarry.html> (10.07.2005).

<sup>14</sup>Z. Özcan, "Avrupa Kaçkınları", *Aksiyon*, No. 544 (May 9, 2005), pp. 41-47.

movement of retired people is widespread in some Mediterranean countries such as Spain, Italy and Greece.<sup>15</sup>

Indeed, these immigration categories are not totally independent from each other, rather they are frequently overlapped. In a migration process, the same migrant can obtain any of these categories or can be identified with any of them.<sup>16</sup> For instance, transit migrants might obtain refugee status when a transit migrant or asylum seeker could not migrate to a third country or h/she can turn into an illegal immigrant overnight when the visa expired. People who have refugee status can attempt to be an asylum seeker in a third country. Transit country can become destination country and vice a versa.

Turkey, indeed, in the last decade has increasingly experienced a large scale immigration of foreign nationals comprising transit migrants, illegal workers, asylum seekers, refugees and registered immigrants. As İçduygu and Keyman emphasizes, "these flows are often inextricably intertwined and the legal environment has not been sufficiently able to distinguish between, e.g. asylum seekers and irregular migrants, or smuggled and trafficked persons"<sup>17</sup> In the last decade, the number of illegal immigrants caught by the security officials every year on the average reaches 100.000, while the foreigners with residence permits in 2004 alone exceeded 150.000. It can be concluded that Turkey not only plays an important role in transit and circular or irregular migration that have been pointed out by others, but also it has recently become a final destination for growing number of immigrants<sup>18</sup>, which may show a new trend for Turkey. For example, Didim a small coastal town city in the south-west Turkey has now become an attractive residential destination especially for British citizens. It is estimated that some 6.000 British people bought real estate in the city. According to Didim municipality

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<sup>15</sup>King, R., "Southern Europe in the Changing Global Map of Migration" in *Eldorado or Fortress? Migration in Southern Europe*, R. King, & G. C. Tsardanidis (eds), New York: St. Martin's Pres, 2000. pp. 1-26.

<sup>16</sup>Eder, S. and Selmin Kaska, *Irregular Migration and Trafficking in Women: The Case of Turkey*, IOM, Geneva, 2003.

<sup>17</sup>İçduygu and Keyman, 2005, p.157.

<sup>18</sup>Eder and Kaska., *Irregular Migration*.

records, the number of water bills issued in English language rather than in Turkish already exceed well over 3.000, that caused the real estate prices rise up to tenfold which in turn boomed the construction sector (currently 7 thousand houses are under construction) in the city with about 38.000 population according to 2000 population census.<sup>19</sup> Similar trends are observed alongside the Mediterranean sea-side cities such as Alanya, Marmaris and Bodrum.

Table 1 illustrates the growing tendency at the volume of foreigners in Turkey. It shows that there were a total of 161.254 legally registered foreigners in 2001, while it was accounted only 72.766 in 1994. They take no account of illegal foreigners. It is estimated that official number might be more than doubled if the illegal immigrants are included. The available data also demonstrate that one-third of foreigners arrive in Turkey for education and seeking job opportunities. But arrival reasons of about half of foreigners are not reflected into the statistics.

**Table 1: Foreigners who live in Turkey by reasons for their presence**

Reason	1994	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Resident	14 180	119275	114894	113566	108743	114315
Education	14 116	24 574	23 946	21 548	21 810	22107
Work	13 816	24 198	22 414	22 556	21 650	21140
Other	30 654	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
<b>Total</b>	<b>72 766</b>	<b>168 047</b>	<b>161 254</b>	<b>157 670</b>	<b>152 203</b>	<b>157 562</b>

*Note:* NA: Non-available

*Source:* State Institute of Statistics, *Turkey Statistic Annual Report*, 2004, p.71.

An examination of the nationality of the foreigners reveals that Turkey has welcomed people from diverse range of countries as shown in Table 2 pointing out which countries' citizens move through

<sup>19</sup>C. Başlangıç, "Didim'e İngiliz Öpücüğü" (*A British Kiss to Didim*), *Radikal*, (27.06.2005).



Turkey especially as immigrants. Turkey's geographic position, its nearness to Asia and Europe and its comparatively better conditions in economic and political terms, make the country a natural route for migrants who were pushed from the third world countries to Europe because of economic, social and political problems. Since the early 1980s, the country has found itself in a situation whereby thousands of asylum seekers, mainly from the Middle East, Asia and Africa were entering the country. Turkey has responded to these flows with the application of general laws on foreigners coming into the country. Thus, Turkey becomes a well used transit country for the citizens of Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Palestine and some African countries. The first large-scale arrivals of non-European refugees to Turkey, who may also be considered as transients, were Iranians. After the Islamic Revolution in 1979, thousands of Iranians, with and without valid documents, sought refuge in Turkey. Iraqis are the second largest non-European refugee population who arrived in Turkey between 1988 and 1991 in three mass inflows. Apart from the Middle Eastern flows from Iran and Iraq, there was a significant but comparatively small movement of asylum seekers to Turkey from Africa and Asia. The most recent group of transit migrants to arrive in Turkey came from Bosnia during the civilian war in former Yugoslavia and Chechnya because of Russian military operations in the region in the early 1990s.

**Table 2: Origin Country of Foreigners**

Origin Country	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Bulgaria	21.734	28.496	30.873	49.061	53.951	61.355	61.658	58.075
Azerbaijan	1.870	2.717	3.082	4.857	6.439	7.970	10.564	10.044
Greece	6.128	6.488	9.060	7.422	8.018	7.703	7.308	6.578
Iran	4.422	3.998	4.369	4.627	4.831	5.979	6.117	6.567
Russia	-	-	2.998	4.532	5.423	5.158	6.871	6.235
US	2.899	3.732	7.284	7.406	6.401	6.246	6.446	5.546
Iraq	1.173	1.036	1.925	2.573	3.469	5.361	5.506	5.482
Germany	2.974	4.245	5.415	6.480	6.639	5.079	5.339	5.436
Others	6.158	2.830	3.508	4.617	5.377	5.069	4.491	5.204
Yugoslavia	1.483	1.451	1.520	1.649	1.812	4.482	4.408	4.036
Kazakhstan	-	1.187	1.145	1.695	2.417	2.579	3.676	3.503
Afghanistan	1.081	1.766	2.695	2.933	3.151	3.604	3.464	3.373
UK	1.607	2.100	2.560	2.966	3.702	3.171	3.281	3.192
North Cyprus	2.010	2.322	2.679	3.087	3.273	3.129	3.129	3.027
Stateless	2.657	2.598	2.283	3.09	3.151	3.145	2.734	2.882
France	1.770	1.975	2.400	2.643	3.131	2.895	3.144	2.766
Ukraine	58	335	780	1.314	1.862	2.064	2.326	2.290
Turkmenistan	-	1.677	1.989	2.332	2.371	2.397	2.529	2.242
Kyrgyzstan	-	512	937	1.120	1.357	1.557	2.128	1.587
Italy	1152	1.236	1.544	1.655	1.804	1.540	1.544	1.393
Uzbekistan	-	391	454	652	806	896	1.188	1.391
Syria	95	110	109	1.191	1.299	1.456	1.431	1.312
Romania	598	748	1.110	1.582	1.886	1.713	1.440	1.304
Japan	834	976	994	1.152	1.170	1.152	1.198	1.186
<b>Total</b>	<b>72 766</b>	<b>84 727</b>	<b>107 473</b>	<b>135 914</b>	<b>151 489</b>	<b>162 229</b>	<b>168 047</b>	<b>161 254</b>

*Source:* State Institute of Statistics, *Turkey Statistic Annual Report, 2002*, p.22-25

### 3-SURVEY RESEARCH

Although there have been a passionate political debate about foreigner related issues such as foreigners' attempt to buy real estates, to open churches in the newly settled towns and cities, perception about illegal immigrants' threat on sovereignty and border security at the national political agenda, very few researches have been carried out on the issue of foreigners in Turkey. The main objectives of this exploratory survey research are to contribute to the actual production of literature on foreign population in Turkey by quantifying and addressing the scale of immigration by way of conducting a survey research in order to find out the main socio-economic characteristics of the foreigners living in Turkey. To that end, and to provide some insights to ongoing political debate on foreigners, the study particularly seeks:

- To evaluate the arrival reasons of foreigners, their origin countries and their legal status according to the Turkish law.
- To study demographic characteristics of foreigners such as their sex, age, marital status and family situation that can be important factors to decide to live a foreign country.
- To investigate their employment status and contribution to Turkish economy.
- To analyze integration process and other challenges that they must overcome being a foreigner.
- To explore foreigner's further intentions and expectations of living in Turkey.

The research used self-completed questionnaire method. We distributed some 300 survey forms in Turkish, English and German to foreign residents, out of which 130 returned to the researchers. All of the respondents are legal foreign residents who were registered by Security Directorate, Foreigners Department. The surveys were carried out in Ankara, Konya and Antalya provincial centers in the late 2003. First of all, we chose these three cities in order to diversify the sampling. Secondly, these three cities welcome the different types of foreigners: For instance, while retired and shuttled foreigners mostly prefer Antalya, a famous coastal tourist destination in the south, for residence or for temporary stays; a significant proportion of foreigners arriving in Turkey were making their ways to the west

through Ankara or come to Ankara for education. At the same time, because of its university's foreign student population, there is a considerable number of foreign students and also some Middle East citizens living in Konya. We are aware that a survey research covering all of Turkey's districts might have provided more comprehensive results. However, due to constraints set by our limited financial resources and involved survey costs, we had to design such a restricted survey. Having stated this, nonetheless, we believe that this exploratory study will shed light on foreigners issue in Turkey by providing at least a snapshot picture of foreigners in Turkey and may also stimulate further research on the issue.

#### 4-SURVEY FINDINGS

##### 4- 1. Socio-Economic Characteristics

More than half of the respondents were male (as 55 percent), while 45 percent were female as presented in Table 3 below. The age distributions of the foreigners show that a great majority of them quite young; the median age group is 25-34, with a 43.8 percent. This finding supports the idea that usually younger people tend to be more willing to leave their native countries in search for a better life abroad than older generations. Consistently, more than half of the foreigners in the sample are not married, and more than 60 percent of them live without their families.

**Table 3: Socio-Economic Characteristics**

Sex	N	%	Marital status	N	%
Male	72	55.4	Married	62	47.7
Female	58	44.6	Single	68	52.3
Age			Living with own family		
Between 18-24	40	30.8	With family	49	37.7
Between 25-34	57	43.8	Without family	81	62.3
Between 35-44	20	15.4	Education level		
Between 45-54	12	9.2	Primary or less	6	4.6
55 and plus	1	0.8	Secondary	66	50.8
			University	58	44.6

Examining the education level of respondents reveals that foreigners in Turkey constitute a highly educated group. While more than 50 percent have a secondary level of education, 44.6 percent hold a university degree. These results can be construed that Turkey is attracting fairly skilled numbers of immigrants, who may be mobilized in Turkey's Endeavour for bridging the economic development gap with the advanced countries (see Table 3). It may also imply that educated people are more easily motivated for starting a new life and for exploring new opportunities in a foreign country.

#### 4- 2. Employment Status and Length of Stays

According to the respondents' self-reported employment status, half of them are employed full time or had their own business as presented in Table 4. On the other hand, a significant 27.7 percent of them are unemployed and 23 percent are enrolled students. One of the most important factors of the high rate of unemployment among foreigners is that they had to get work permits for a full time job, and obtaining such a permit is quite difficult and cumbersome process in Turkey. Thus a large number of legal and illegal residents in Turkey have to work in informal labor market for lower paid temporary jobs.

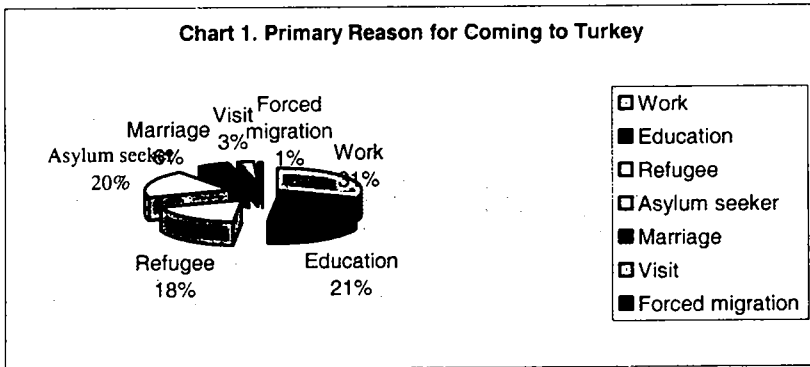
**Table 4: Foreigners' Employment Status and Length of Stays**

Emplo	N	%	Length of Stays	N	%
Stude	31	23.8	Less than one year	21	16.2
Full	52	50.0	One to three years	42	32.3
Unem	36	27.7	Three to six years	27	20.8
House	11	8.5	More than six years	40	30.8

Table 4 also provides insights regarding foreigners' duration of stays in Turkey. While 16.2 percent reported to have been in Turkey for less than one year, 32.3 percent lived in the country between one to three years. Those who lived in Turkey more than three years constitute a total of roughly 51 percent. It can be interpreted the last group of foreigners are potentially more likely to settle in Turkey than the other groups.

#### 4- 3. Primary Reasons for Coming to Turkey

As frequently pointed out in the literature that Turkey plays different roles in international mobility of immigrants, there is a wide range of diversity in the arrival reasons of foreigners under study. Primary reasons that brought the foreigners into Turkey can put them under several categories. The difficulty of sorting out under which category they can be placed results from the conceptual and legal distinction between their primary reasons of arriving in the country and the status that was given them by Turkish state. In any case, one third of the respondents arrived in Turkey for finding a job, while 20 percent has come for education. The 38.5 percent of foreigners were classified as refugees or asylum seekers by the state. Again these data confirm Turkey's role of a receiving country and a transit country for international immigration.



#### 4- 4. Country of Origin: Where are they coming from?

Examining the origins of foreign nationals in Turkey is crucial in understanding the dynamics of immigration affecting Turkey. The data in Table 5 show that, more than one third of the foreigners in the sample consist of Iranian and Iraqi people. According to survey results, number of the foreigners from surrounding Middle Eastern countries and Asia are less than expected. This can be explained partly by the fact that our survey were participated only by the foreigners who had official documents and registered by the Security

Directorate Foreigners' office. Many Middle Eastern nationals, however, usually enter the country via illegal ways and thus they are underrepresented in official statistics. Same results can be said to reflect in our study. The relatively high percentage of German nationals reflected in the sample is related to the selected cities. As mentioned above, Antalya province is mostly preferred by the retired foreigners from Germany in order to settle there because of its warm climate and natural beauty. Also Antalya is the most famous tourist destination in Turkey, where millions of tourists enter via air and sea ports every year, among them German citizens outnumber many other nationals.

**Table 5: Foreigners' Self-Reported Nationality**

Country of Origin	N	%
German	24	18.5
Iranian	26	20.0
Iraqi	16	12.3
Greek	9	6.9
Bulgarian	8	6.2
Russian	7	5.4
Turcoman	6	4.6
Moldovan	4	3.1
Afghan	3	2.3
Rumanian	3	2.3
English	2	1.5
Kazakh	2	1.5
Kyrgyz	2	1.5
Ukrainian	2	1.5
White Russian	2	1.5
Birmania	2	1.5
Dutch	2	1.5
Other	10	7.7

#### 4- 5. Integration Process and Challenges of Foreigners in Turkey

One of the most important problem foreigners usually confront is the difficulties to learn language of the country they arrive in. Unless foreigners do not learn the language of the host country, they have to continue to remain as foreigners regardless of how long they live there. When they learn the language of the host country, they begin to communicate, their integration process is accelerated and their lives become easier.

Table 6 shows that one-fifth of the respondents speak different Turkic dialects, who are citizens of Iraq, Iran or Azerbaijan with Turkish ethnic origin. 20 percent of the sample speaks German; approximately 15 percent speak Persian and another 7 percent speak Russian. The other languages of the foreigners are Arabic, Kurdish, Romanian and English. This is a clear indication of the diversity of foreigners in Turkey.

**Table 6: Native Language of Foreigners**

Native Language	N	%
Turkic dialect	27	20.8
German	25	19.2
Persian	19	14.6
Russian	9	6.9
Arabic	7	5.4
Kurdish	7	5.4
Turkmen	6	4.6
Romanian	6	4.6
English	3	2.3
Azerbaijani	2	1.5
Flemish	2	1.5
Dutch	2	1.5
Afghan	2	1.5
Other	13	10.0



For immigrants attaining the skills of communicating in host country's language is much more important in order to survive and integrate to the local communities where they live. According to our survey findings, the majority of the foreigners participated in the study have the skills to communicate at varying degrees in Turkish. While nearly fifteen percent understand what is said but can not speak in Turkish; one-fifth of the sample could not speak or understand in Turkish at all. Most of the participants learn Turkish without any formal education. Foreigner who attended Turkish language courses such as Turkish Learning Center (TOMER) of Ankara University or other schools constituted one-fifth of the sample.

**Table 7: Foreigners' Communication Skills in Turkish**

	N	%
<b>Communication skills in Turkish</b>		
Can not speak or understand at all	25	19.2
Understand but can not speak	19	14.6
Can communicate in Turkish	86	66.2
<b>How they learned Turkish</b>		
Attended Turkish language courses	18	13.8
At school	8	7.0
No formal language education	103	79.2

#### **4- 6. Problems and Challenges Foreigners Face**

In order to determine what kinds of problems foreigners face, an open ended question was directly asked to the participants in the study. Nearly one-fourth of respondents gave no answer to the question (see Table 8). The most frequently faced problem mentioned was the economic problems in general. Unemployment was mentioned by one-fifth of the sample group; language and communication and traffic system each is mentioned by 18 percent that followed by obtaining work permit from the authorities (11.5 percent), discrimination (10.8 percent) and bureaucracy (7.8 percent).

On the whole, social difficulties were cited less than economic and bureaucratic problems. Only 10 percent of the participants reported to have felt discrimination and prejudgment because of being a foreigner in Turkey, while gender-based discrimination was mentioned by only seven respondents. Nearly five percent reported having cultural orientation and adaptation problems. Another five percent mentioned difficulty of obtaining citizenship rights.

**Table 8. Commonly Perceived Problems by Foreigners**

Perceived problems	N	%
Economic problems	44	33.8
Unemployment	27	20.8
Language and communication	24	18.5
Traffic system	24	18.5
Obtaining work permit	15	11.5
Discrimination and prejudice	14	10.8
Bureaucracy	10	7.8
Complaints about health system	9	6.9
Cultural orientation and adaptation	7	5.4
Gender discrimination	7	5.4
Obtaining citizenship rights	7	5.4
Problems at educational system	7	5.4
Unresponsiveness at the state offices	7	5.4
Transportation	4	3.1
Not benefiting from state services	3	2.3
Not benefiting from political rights	1	0.8
Problems about religious differences	1	0.8
Bureaucratic difficulties in real estate ownership	1	0.8
Other	6	4.6
No answer	33	25.4

#### **4- 7. Final Decisions of Foreigners to Live or Leave the Country**

Foreigners' further intentions of living in Turkey or leaving for another country or returning home provide great insights for us in

understanding and clarifying Turkey's place in the international migration. Because the survey included different types of foreigners living in Turkey, there is no homogeneity among foreigners regarding their final destination decisions, too. Overall, 41 percent of the sample plan to live in Turkey, while 23 percent constituted the group that plan to migrate to a third country (see Table 9). Eighteen percent of respondents consider returning home, the latter group of foreigners mostly came Turkey for education and intent to go back after graduation. Furthermore, these results give an opinion that Turkey is not described as only transit country or target country. It hosts a wide range of people from east to west with different intentions. Some immigrants come to the country for education but end up staying a permanent resident after finding a good job. On the other hand, some foreigners initially arrive here with the purpose of settling in but later might decide to move to a third country if their expectations are not met by the opportunities available in Turkey.

**Table 9. Foreigners' Final Decision**

Intention	N	%
Continue to live in Turkey	54	41.5
Arrive in a third country	30	23.1
Return home country	24	18.5
No opinion	22	16.9

## 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

One of the emerging issues in the international politics in the post-cold war era has been international migration. In an increasingly globalized world, people from Southern countries move (or have to move) toward the North in an incessant search for a better economic life, for security or sometimes for more freedoms and democracy. The movement of people from less developed areas of the world to the more advanced countries has been widely studied with regard to its implications for economic growth, international security and socio-political consequences in receiving countries. Turkey, critically placed in the one of the most volatile regions of the world, has a very diverse and dangerous neighborhood. Thus the country plays an

important role in the migration of people from neighboring countries to Western Europe as a buffer state.

Although Turkey's role as a transit land has been well documented in the literature, its role as a receiving country has not been paid adequately yet. This study primarily has been undertaken to uncover new aspects of migration concerning Turkey. First it finds that, Turkey is gradually becoming one of the new destinations for migration. As the official statistics clearly demonstrate, the number of foreigners living in Turkey has increased considerably from 72.000 in 1994 to 161.000 in 2001. Estimates regarding illegal immigrants, however, put this number more than half a million. Thirdly, Turkey has also been very recently discovered by the new type of immigrants from European country citizens. Mostly retired citizens but also some well off people choose Turkey's coastal towns for living due to climatic and economic reasons. Thus the newly established local communities already become an integral part of Turkish cities. It can be fairly argued that Anatolia is now experiencing with an entirely different type of immigration at the start of the 21st century, which has already become a part of political debate in the country as well.

This study also represents a new methodological approach to the foreigners living in Turkey with its use of survey research technique. The data indeed provides evidence that foreigners in Turkey display a great diversity in terms of their country of origins, legal status and mother language. While 41 percent of them want to live in Turkey for the rest of their life; the others would like to move to a third country or return home.

Additionally, the study underlines the problems faced by foreigners living in Turkey. The results of the research indicate that foreigners are not subjected to any serious and wide-spread discrimination either by the authorities or by the communities in Turkey. Among the participants in the survey, 36.9 percent state that they have sensed no discrimination when applying for a job or at work places. The percentage of those feeling themselves secure in Turkey is 87.7, while those feeling unsafe is only 12.3 per cent. The major difficulty the foreigners facing is unemployment and economical problems due to failure to obtain a work permit or the bureaucratic difficulties encountered in obtaining one. The other problems are the

health insurance, the difficulties involved in educational field and the cultural adjustment.

Finally, the study also calls for a closer look to foreigners in Turkey that requires both a larger and more representative survey research as well as qualitative techniques such as in-depth interviews for creating a comprehensive base of knowledge on the issue that may provide great insights for policy makers in what would be a potentially divisive and conflicting area of politics in the country. Nonetheless, we believe that this study is a humble but not insignificant contribution to the existing literature and we also hope as well that it will stimulate further scholarly attention in Turkey.