

# INDIVIDUAL GIVING AND PHILANTHROPY IN TURKEY

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# PREFACE

Civil society organizations (CSOs) are at the heart of Turkey's democratization process. Today there are more than 109,000 associations and 5,075 new foundations (established after the Republic) operating along with many informal organizations such as platforms, initiatives, and groups. Their areas of work are mostly concentrated in social solidarity, delivering social services, education, health and various rights-based issues. Over the past years, the not-for-profit sector in Turkey has grown both in size and

the level of participation, and played a significant role in providing services and contributing to the democratization of the country. Despite all of these developments, legal constraints and financial sustainability continue to pose a challenge for the future of the sector. It is of critical importance for CSOs to ensure their financial viability to make a difference in society and contribute to social change through their activities and work. Research shows that the main income sources of CSOs in Turkey include membership fees,

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grants from national and international organizations, individual and corporate donations, public funds and revenues generated from the sales of products or services. According to the information received from the General Directorate of Foundations and the Department of Associations in 2014 the income from donations made up approximately 40% of the total revenues of associations and 39% of the new foundations. In other words, donations are the highest income item both for foundations and associations. Despite the importance of donations for the financial sustainability of CSOs, results of the “Individual Giving and Philanthropy in Turkey” (Report) conducted in 2015 in 68 of Turkey's 81 provinces with the participation of 2,495 respondents, show that giving through CSOs in Turkey is low. Also, compared to an earlier study conducted in 2004 and published by TUSEV in 2006, “Philanthropy in Turkey: Citizens, Foundations, and Pursuit of Social Justice” there has been a marked decrease in

donations made to CSOs (from 18.4% in 2004 to 12.9% in 2015) in the past decade.

According to the findings of the Report, the sum of all donations made in one year is approximately 228 Turkish Liras (approx. 77.5 USD and 69 Euros) per capita. This amount equals to 0.8% of Turkey's GDP in 2014. However, in the case of giving through CSOs which is approximately 16.7 TL (approx. 5.6 USD and 5 Euros), this rate drops to 0.06%. According to the report “An Overview of Philanthropy in Europe” prepared in partnership with Observatoire de la Fondation de France and Centre d'Etude et de Recherche sur la Philanthropie, the ratio of donations to countries' GDPs is 0.2% in Europe and 1.5% in the USA.

A comparison of these results with data from Turkey suggests that individuals in Turkey do make donations at internationally comparative levels, but they do not prefer giving to CSOs. Even though the overall donation amounts are

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not necessarily lower than the ones in European countries and the USA, the fact that individuals prefer direct giving and do not make their donations through a CSO is a significant finding.

What does philanthropy mean to Turkish people? If donations are not made to CSOs, then how is it made and to whom? According to the results of the Report, philanthropy is mostly understood as helping the poor and those in need. Activities such as supporting a student's education, giving scholarships, building schools and dorms, giving sadaqa (charity) to the poor and building mosques are also described as acts of philanthropy and are highly preferred by Turkish people. These responses are similar to the findings of TUSEV's 2006 Report, and even though a decade has passed, they show that the perception of philanthropy in Turkey has not changed and that a more traditional approach prevails. The Report also indicates that individuals in Turkey prefer performing what they describe as

acts of philanthropy mostly for their family members, neighbors or fellow townspeople. On the other hand, we observe an increase in the percentage of respondents who prefer to give to someone in need and who shares the same language, culture or religion. In other words, similar to the findings of the first report, Turkish people continued to prioritize relatives and fellow townspeople in their philanthropic giving. The fact that the recipient shares the same culture, language and religion to the donor also had a positive influence on the decision to give. Underlying reasons for individuals' giving behavior are quite similar to the findings of the 2006 Report. Fulfilling religious obligations is number one with 32.5%, among motivations for individual giving. Social norms and traditions, individuals' feeling indebted to their communities and self-fulfillment are also other reasons that motivate Turkish people to give.

When individuals were asked whether they preferred to give

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directly to those in need or through an organization, 88% said directly while 12% stated that they preferred to give through an organization. Similar to the results of the 2006 Report, the majority of individuals in Turkey chose to give directly to those in need, rather than giving through CSOs. Within the 12% who preferred to give through an organization, 34% opted for a public organization while only 18% chose CSOs. These percentages show that CSOs are not necessarily preferred among the small group of people who chose to give through organizations.

When asked for reasons why the donors did not prefer to give through CSOs, the responses were similar to the results of the 2006 Report: donation amounts are low (52%), donations are made irregularly (26%), organizations are not trusted (13%) or the organizations are not recognized (5%). These responses show that donors perceive the low amount and irregularity of donations as the main reasons for not donating to

CSOs. Despite this perception, as CSO representatives, we do know that even the smallest amount of donations become very significant for an organization especially if it is made regularly. Thus, it would be right to argue that CSOs need to emphasize the value and importance of small donations in their communication efforts. Report also highlights the problem of the lack of trust in Turkey which results in low level of social capital. Only 10% of the respondents said they can trust most of the people, while 90% said one can never be too careful while dealing with other people. In other words, only one out of ten people in Turkey trust others, and Turkish people tend mostly to trust their family members and fellow townspeople. This situation points to lack of social capital in the country and results in the tendency to give to individuals with parochial ties, rather than giving through organizations. An interesting contradiction to this finding is the fact that the highest amount of donations (53.2 TL, approx. 18 USD

and 16 Euros) made by Turkish people is given to street beggars.

In addition to the persistent lack of trust between individuals and towards organizations, the percentage of individuals who believe that CSOs can be influential in the solution of existing societal problems and in their areas of activity has decreased compared to 2004. In 2004, the percentage of respondents who believed CSOs could be effective in solving existing problems for a better society was 54%. However, in 2015 it went down to 41%. While in 2004, only 9% of the individuals believed that CSOs could not have an influence, in 2015 this figure increased to 14%. Additionally, individuals think that CSOs have limited influence both over their activity areas and over state policies. Thus, it can be argued that the low level of trust between individuals and towards other organizations as well as the negative perception of the impact of CSOs does not provide an enabling environment for giving through

CSOs. Furthermore, a certain lack of knowledge on the notion and role of civil society is another factor contributing to the mistrust and negative perceptions on civil society in Turkey.

When the respondents were asked why they did not choose to participate in CSO activities, 32% said they did not have enough money to spare time for such activities. The number of individuals who point to economic insufficiencies as the reason for their lack of participation in civil society activities has increased since 2004. Other reasons are as follows: 14% are not interested in such activities, 10% do not know anybody who participate in such activities, and 7% do not trust such organizations. In summary, economic reasons, lack of interest in CSO activities, and lack of confidence in the organizations are perceived to be major hindrances to participation in civil society activities.

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How do Turkish people choose which CSOs to give? For 84.6% of the respondents, the most important criterion was their trust in the organization to use the donation in a way that fits the cause, while for the 84% it was their trust in the sound management of the organization. 83.6% of the individuals said transparency of the organization they gave to be of importance, while 56.6% reported sharing a similar political and world view with the organization mattered while giving. In line with these responses, one can argue that in order to reach out to more donors and raise higher amounts of donations, CSOs need to increase their recognition and establish relationships of trust with the donors.

Strikingly, 66% of individuals who care about the trustworthiness and transparency of CSOs do not do any research on the organization prior to giving; 68% do not receive reports from the organizations regarding their activities. In other words, although respondents say

they value transparency and accountability of CSOs, a majority do not do any prior research on the organizations before making a donation and do not receive information from the organizations as to how their donations were used. This points to a contradiction between individuals' expectations from CSOs and their behavior towards them.

Parallel to philanthropy and giving traditions in Turkey, 20.5% of the individuals choose CSOs that help the poor and needy, while 13.9% choose those that help the orphans. These two groups are followed by 11.8% education, 9.1% helping children and youth, 8.4% families of martyrs and veterans. The areas in which individuals in Turkey choose to give the least are art, culture and historic preservation, animal care and protection, and helping refugees.

The percentage of those who engaged in CSO activities and made donations other than paying membership fees have dropped

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significantly since 2004. In 2004, the rate of participation in CSO activities was 22.7%; however, this dropped to 15.8% in 2015. Percentage of those who donated to CSOs was 18.4% in 2004, dropping to 12.9% in 2015. It is observed that, over the past decade changes in the perception of civil society and low social capital made a negative influence on giving trends.

Findings of the Report point to an overall decrease in civil society participation (membership, volunteering, giving, etc.) over the last decade. Additionally, the role of civil society is not understood clearly, and CSOs are not necessarily perceived as influential actors. These results point to an important disconnectedness in the relationship between CSOs and Turkish society. Taking into consideration all of these results, we believe that in this environment, the most important step towards raising the amount and frequency of donations made to CSOs would be to increase the visibility of CSOs

to raise awareness about their role and impact.

Because the majority of individuals in Turkey make small and irregular donations, CSOs need to develop and adopt new strategies for fundraising and increase their recognition by using various communication channels actively. It is believed that, if CSOs continue to preserve healthy relations with their existing donors and pay efforts to increase the number of regular donations, this would have a positive impact on individual giving in Turkey.

Since only a small number of individual donors receive reports and regular updates concerning the activities of organizations they support, it is of crucial importance for CSOs to make their reporting regular, widespread and accessible to ensure transparency and build trust. According to the Report, only 25% of the individuals express an opinion on how their donations should be used (conditional donation). Thus it will add to the



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sustainability of donations if CSOs listen to donors' requests and take their recommendations into consideration so that they can pursue a more participatory fundraising strategy. New giving tools such as online and mobile giving have not become widespread in Turkey yet. Findings of the Report show that 7.5% of individuals engage in mobile giving, while only 1.9% donates online. These tools are still new in Turkey, and they have a great potential for increasing the amount and frequency of individual donations in Turkey. Thus, it is going to be important for CSOs to invest in these tools and consider them as part of their fundraising strategy.

It is crucial for CSOs to build and strengthen trusting relationships with their donors and with society at large to improve the perception of civil society in Turkey. Confidence in civil society can be enhanced if CSOs better explain themselves and their objectives to the society. Showing they operate in line with their commitments and making this

more visible could be one of the ways for them to build trust. Additionally, CSOs should show that they are managed in a democratic and transparent way, that they work with integrity both financially and ethically and that they are accountable for their actions. Civil society, assuming a uniting role among public and private sectors and international organizations as well as increasing intersectoral cooperations, will also play a major role in strengthening society's trust in civil society and CSOs' activities. A positive change in the perception of civil society and an increase in donations can be foreseen as the trust towards civil society is strengthened among individuals.

Donors can also have an active role in contributing to the development of philanthropy in Turkey. Donors should take into account the role of civil society organizations as building blocks of democratic life and crucial actors in terms of providing services and supporting struggles for human and civil rights.

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Similarly, it is important for donors to realize that their donations are crucial for CSOs' sustainability. Furthermore, they can search for different ways to engage in civil society (by volunteering, sharing of expertise, etc.). More importantly, donors need to work closely with the CSOs they support and be more involved by sharing their recommendations and following up on how their donations are used.

As TUSEV, we believe that development and strengthening of civil society is crucial to Turkey's democratization process. We think that it is of utmost importance to accumulate and share knowledge on philanthropy to make sure that effective strategies are adopted to promote culture of giving and to have a strong and viable civil society. We believe that using up to date information to identify the perceptions of Turkish people on philanthropy, their motivations and giving behavior set the foundation to achieve these goals. In light of the information gained from this Report, TUSEV will continue its

work to develop the culture of giving in Turkey and to diversify and increase the resources channeled to CSOs. We will also keep working to bring CSOs and philanthropists together more frequently to introduce different giving models and to disseminate information on both civil society and giving. We hope that this Report will contribute to developing the culture of giving in Turkey and would like to thank our project supporters who trusted us towards reaching our purpose.

**Tevfik Başak Ersen**  
Secretary General, TUSEV

You can use the QR code  
to access the full report.



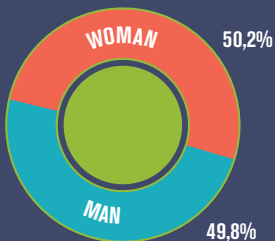


Dates of the fieldwork:

**August 29- November 29 2015**

Number of provinces research was conducted in: **68**

Total number of interviews: **2.495**



Age average **41,6**

Urban residents **81,2%**

**14,8%** University graduate

**39,5%** Primary school or below education

Monthly average of household income per capita **659 TL**

Monthly average of household income **1,739 TL**

