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# 2023 TURKISH PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS AND KURDS



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## **2023 Turkish Presidential Elections and Kurds**

The 2023 Turkish Presidential Elections draw attention as an election with different meanings if an early election is not held, as it will take place on the 100th anniversary of its founding. With the elections to be held, whether Turkey will move to a new crossroads or continue on its way with the current system will find an answer. Therefore, while the interpretation and analysis of the upcoming elections have already begun, the different results in various surveys make it difficult to understand the voter's decision. It is relatively difficult to analyse voter behaviours in Turkey, where economic and political developments change rapidly and radically. At this point, the Kurdish votes, which can determine the fate of the election, are of great importance. In the upcoming period, as the elections approach and the future of the elections are discussed, the position of the Kurdish voters in Turkey will be addressed more. Because the attitude of the Kurds will determine the election results, it will be crucial and reasonable to examine and analyse the attitude of the Kurdish voters.

In the 2023 elections, the number of voters, including domestic and international, is estimated to be 63 million 965 thousand. Based on the participation rate in the 2018 elections, 54 million 301 thousand 16 people are expected to vote in the Presidential elections and 54 million 288 thousand 423 people in the parliamentary elections. The Justice and Development Party - AK Party and the Peoples' Democratic Party - HDP- have the most Kurdish votes. On the way to the 2023 elections, it is not easy for The Republican People's Party - CHP and The Good Party - IYI Party, which have similar views on many issues, to come together on a common ground for the solution of the Kurdish issue. In fact, while the CHP is closer to the AK Party in this regard, the IYI Party insists on the classic The Nationalist Movement Party -MHP line.

The survey conducted by Optimar between 19-22 September with 1938 people using face-to-face survey method gives important results regarding the presidential elections. According to Optimar, President Erdogan comes first with 39.2 per cent in the poll. It is followed by Mayor of Ankara Mansur Yavaş with 13.6. Mayor of İstanbul Ekrem İmamoğlu, who was in second and third place before, has regressed in the latest polls. CHP's leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu has risen to third place with 8.7 per cent with the moves he has made recently. Despite declaring that she is not a presidential candidate, the leader of the IYI Party, Meral Akşener, is in fourth place with 8.1 per

cent. Former HDP leader Selahattin Demirtaş comes in fifth place with 7.8.

According to this table, no candidate can be elected president in the first round. Because to be elected in the first round, it is necessary to get 50% of the total votes. Therefore, according to the survey, it seems highly likely that the election will go to the second round.

CANDIDATES	VOTE RATE %
RECEP TAYYİP ERDOĞAN	% 39
MANSUR YAVAŞ	% 13.6
EKREM İMAMOĞLU	% 8.7
MERAL AKŞENER	% 8.1
SELAHATTİN DEMİRTAŞ	% 7.8

Source: Optimar

Erdoğan gets the votes of 81.9 per cent of the AK Party members and 68.6 per cent of the MHP supporters. But Erdoğan also has significant Saadet Party and IYI Party support. 7.8 per cent of IYI Party members and 33.3 per cent of Saadet Party members say they will vote for Erdogan. Kılıçdaroğlu's vote comes from the CHP and the MHP in second place. But the alliance partner IYI Party members do not vote for Kılıçdaroğlu.

Optimar asked if Erdoğan and Kılıçdaroğlu had stayed in the last round of the presidential election, who would you have voted for? 41.2 per cent of the respondents say Erdogan and 34.7 per cent say Kılıçdaroğlu. But floating votes are at the highest level with 24.1%. In August, Erdogan was 47.4 per cent, and Kılıçdaroğlu was 31.8%. Recent moves seem to have brought Kılıçdaroğlu forward.

Despite the signal to continue as mayor, Ekrem İmamoğlu is the second candidate who received the most votes against Erdoğan. While Erdoğan gets 42.6%, İmamoğlu gets 38.0% support. Floating votes has decreased to 19.5 per cent.

If those who say they are undecided are dispersed, the AK Party will receive 39 per cent and the CHP 24 per cent. In the survey, where the MHP was 10.9 per cent, the IYI Party came out with 9.9 per cent. HDP's vote rate is 9.1 per cent. If those who say they are undecided disperse, the AK Party will get 39 per cent and the CHP 24 per cent. In the survey, where the MHP was 10.9 per cent, the IYI Party came out with 9.9 per cent. HDP's vote rate is 9.1 per cent. According to the current electoral system, the 10%

threshold is still valid. According to the latest poll, the Kurdish nationalist HDP and the Turkish nationalist IYI Party seem to be below the threshold. Another Turkish nationalist party, the MHP, is passing the electoral threshold.

PARTIES	VOTE RATE %
AK PARTY	39
CHP	24
MHP	10.9
IYI PARTY	9.9
HDP	9.1

Source: Optimar

Metropoll Research's September 2021 survey was based on support for alliances. In the survey, there are also the percentages of those who say, "I am not close to either alliance, but I would choose the Nation/People's Alliance". Accordingly, those who say that I am not close to either of the two alliances but I would prefer the Nation Alliance is 5.0 per cent, while the rate of those who say they prefer the People's Alliance is 2.6 per cent. In the Metropoll Survey, the rate of those who say they have no idea/answer is 10.6 per cent.

VOTER CHOICE	VOTE RATE %
<b>I am closer to the Nation Alliance.</b>	43,2
<b>I am closer to the people's alliance.</b>	38,2
<b>Total of those who prefer Nation Alliance</b>	48,7
<b>Total of those who prefer the People's Alliance</b>	40.8
<b>Undecided/No idea</b>	10.6

Source: MetroPoll

According to the survey results, the People's Alliance fell 8 points behind the Nation Alliance, while a remarkable decrease was observed in the total votes. The distribution of votes within the scope of alliances is important and will play a significant role in shaping the post-election parliamentary order and government system. At this point, there is no doubt that the decisive votes will come from Kurdish voters and young voters.

Konda, another research company in Turkey, received 39 per cent of the votes for the Ak Parti, 24.8 per cent for the CHP, 19.3 per cent for the IYI Party, 19.3 per cent

for the HDP, 11.7 per cent for the HDP, and 8.9 per cent for the MHP in its latest survey published in September 2021. The most striking finding in the survey is the voting rate of the IYI Party, which reached almost 20 per cent. On the other hand, it should be reminded that in the research conducted by both Optimar and Konda, the total voting rates of the AK Party and CHP yielded similar results. In the results where the MHP fell below the election threshold, the total vote rate of the People's Alliance was 41.6 per cent, while the total vote rate of the Nation Alliance was 44.1 per cent.

<b>PARTIES</b>	<b>VOTE RATE %</b>
<b>AK PARTY</b>	39
<b>CHP</b>	24.8
<b>IYI PARTY</b>	19.3
<b>HDP</b>	11.7
<b>MHP</b>	8.9

Source: Konda

ORC Research's survey on 2023 Presidential elections was conducted between 1-5 October. Accordingly, while the AK Party's vote is below 32 per cent, it is noteworthy that HDP has fallen below the 10 per cent threshold. However, despite this, there is no noticeable increase in the voting rate of the CHP. While the IYI Party has 13.1 per cent of the votes, the MHP receives 9.4 per cent of the votes. As an interesting result, The Democracy and Progress Party - Deva Party, founded by Ali Babacan, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Economy, who had been in politics in the AK Party for a while, received 4.7 per cent of the vote. According to the survey, the Future Party, founded by former Prime Minister and AK Party Chairman Ahmet Davutoğlu, captures 2.9 per cent of the vote. The result is that some of the AK Party's votes are directed to these two newly established parties.

<b>PARTIES</b>	<b>VOTE RATE %</b>
AK PARTY	31.9
CHP	25.9
IYI PARTY	13.1
MHP	9.4
HDP	8.1
DEVA PARTY	4.7
FUTURE PARTY	2.9

Source: ORC

The Presidential Elections research of the Center for Socio-Political Field Studies covers the dates 10-22 September 2021. Two thousand people participated in the survey study across Turkey. According to the survey results, the votes of the AK Party fall below 30 per cent. The difference in votes between the AK Party and the CHP appears to be 1.7 per cent. While the IYI Party has 10.2 per cent of the votes, the HDP receives 9.4 per cent of the votes. In the study, where the undecided voters were determined as 8.2 per cent, the voting rate of the MHP was only 6.6 per cent. The rate of those who stated that they would not vote in the election is 7.7 per cent. While the AK Party seems to have lost 10.5% of the votes; It was observed that CHP, IYI Party and, HDP partially increased their votes.

<b>PARTIES</b>	<b>VOTE RATE %</b>
AK PARTY	27.2
CHP	26
IYI PARTY	10.2
HDP	9.4
MHP	6.6

Source: Center for Socio-Political Field Studies

According to the September research of the Yöneylem Social Research Center, when the undecided and those who will not vote are excluded, 26.8 per cent of the voters prefer the AK Party, and 21.3 per cent prefer the CHP. While the IYI Party and HDP pass the election threshold, the AK Party's partner MHP cannot pass the election threshold.

PARTIES	VOTE RATE %
AK PARTY	33.7
CHP	26.5
IYI PARTY	13.7
HDP	10.2
MHP	8.8

Source: Yöneylem Social Research Center

The HDP supported the candidates of the Nation Alliance and did not nominate candidates in the western cities of Turkey for the AK Party to lose in the local elections. Thus, the CHP won Istanbul and Ankara 25 years later. In the 2023 elections, we can see making such manoeuvres to vanquish Erdogan with the support of HDP. Kılıçdaroğlu [said](#), "We can solve the Kurdish problem with the HDP". So he rebutted the thesis that HDP supporters will not support him if he becomes a candidate. He also said that "The state cannot deal with an illegal body. For example, İmrali is not a legitimate body. Who is the legitimate body? We can see the HDP as a legal body. If this issue is to be resolved, we can solve it with a legal body"

On the other hand, it is not easy for the CHP and IYI Party, which have similar views on many issues, to come together on a common ground for the solution of the Kurdish issue. In fact, while the CHP is closer to the AK Party in this regard, the IYI Party insists on the classic MHP line. By the way, AK Party saw in the Istanbul elections that it could not win the elections without the Kurds. For this reason, the votes of Kurdish voters in the 2023 Elections will directly affect the fate of the election.

At the root of Turkey's ongoing structural problems is the unresolved Kurdish issue. The Presidential Government System did not create the Kurdish problem; it has always existed as an ongoing problem since the establishment of modern Turkey and even earlier processes. For this reason, the Kurdish Question is on Turkey's agenda in every election. It is also a fact that a party that cannot get Kurdish votes has no chance to come to power in Turkey. It will continue to be investigated how the Kurdish voters, who have such critical importance, will make a decision in the 2023 elections, but the economic situation, political and cultural rights and, the issue of terrorism will be the determining factors in the decision.

Kılıçdaroğlu, who aware of the potential return of Kurdish votes, is striving to

expand the Nation Alliance. At this point, HDP seems to be the critical party because it is still the party most preferred by Kurdish voters. Having difficulty collecting Kurdish votes, CHP can severely attack the 2023 elections thanks to HDP. If HDP's cooperation in the Nation Alliance is finalized, there may be a serious increase in the voting rate of the Nation Alliance. Thus, the CHP aims to break Erdogan's influence on Kurdish voters with HDP votes. Citizens of Kurdish origin in the region mostly vote for HDP, while citizens of Turkish and Arab origin mostly support the AK Party. Zazas tend to both parties but tend to the AK Party more.

In such a situation, we can claim that the Kurdish votes in the presidential elections will mainly distribute between the Ak Party and HDP. In the face of Erdogan's undisputed charismatic leadership on the People's Alliance front, the candidate of the Nation Alliance will be highly critical. It seems essential that the presidential candidate should be someone who will embrace the Kurdish voters. However, a long-term conflict is likely between the Turkish nationalist identity of the IYI Party and the Kurdish nationalist identity of the HDP. Although the CHP leader is trying to gather the entire opposition wing, it is clear that his job is not an easy one. For the AK Party, which needs Kurdish votes to win the election, the MHP's attitude and political language have a restrictive effect. The only advantage of the People's Alliance in this regard is that the presidential candidate is already known; Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Although the opposition front, which constantly and persistently demands early elections, tries to act as a single bloc, it does not have a concrete presidential candidate, and this creates a handicap that needs to be taken into account.

It is a fact that Kurds living in Eastern provinces, which are more affected by socio-economic problems, seek solutions for issues such as fair citizenship, education in their mother tongue, cultural rights, and unemployment. Religious and right-wing Kurdish voters and secular and left-wing Kurds want to take part in Turkish politics by having the freedom to express their own identities. PKK terrorism and the state's struggle against terrorism have inflicted deep wounds on the Kurds. Ultimately, however, the willpower of the Kurds is strong enough to shape the geopolitical dynamics of the region beyond Turkey's borders. As a result, it would be appropriate to state that the choice of Kurdish voters in the 2023 Presidential Elections will have a direct impact on the shaping of Turkey's future.