Philanthropy in Türkiye

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MUSLIM PHILANTHROPY INITIATIVE
LILLY FAMILY SCHOOL OF PHILANTHROPY
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Acknowledgments

About LFSOP

The Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy in Indianapolis is dedicated to improving the world by training and empowering innovators and leaders to create positive and lasting change. The school offers undergraduate, graduate, certificate, and professional development programs, as well as research and international programs through The Fund Raising School, the Lake Institute on Faith & Giving, the Mays Family Institute on Diverse Philanthropy, and the Women's Philanthropy Institute.

About Muslim Philanthropy Initiative (MPI)

The Muslim Philanthropy Initiative is a project of the Dean and the Lake Institute on Faith and Giving and is part of the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy. MPI focuses on understanding and helping further enhance contemporary and traditional aspects of Muslim philanthropy in all its facets. MPI convenes scholars and philanthropy professionals to explore issues and research in the field, hosts symposiums and seminars, and provides education and training. By seeking further research in this understudied area, helping to develop thought leadership and inform conversations, and training philanthropic and nonprofit leaders within Muslim philanthropy, the initiative helps build capacity in the Muslim philanthropy sector while adding to the body of knowledge about the rich tradition and practice of philanthropy in Islam.

Acknowledgments

The Muslim Philanthropy Initiative would like to acknowledge Turkish Red Crescent for co-sponsoring this research and report; the Lake Institute on Faith and Giving, Women Philanthropy Institute, and Research Department at the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy for their support in our research. We would also like to acknowledge Uservision for data collection and Chuck Smith Design for design.

Turkish Red Crescent Academy

The Turkish Red Crescent Academy is the research, training, and publication department of the Turkish Red Crescent Society. Established in February 2020, the Academy is committed to advancing humanitarian studies and undertakes rigorous scientific research that shapes institutional practices and contributes to humanitarian literature. The Academy also organizes symposiums, publishes academic works, supports external researchers, and develops comprehensive training programs, leveraging both traditional and digital platforms to ensure wide accessibility. Its areas of focus include disaster and emergency response, philanthropy, humanitarian aid, public health, and blood services.

Key Questions and Findings

The Republic of Türkiye is an urbanized country with a diverse culture influenced by both Eastern and Western cultures due to its geographical position and historical role. The tradition of charity (almsgiving) is deeply rooted in the culture of Türkiye society, which is influenced by cultural and historical factors including the Islamic principles of giving. This survey was conducted among 1,210 respondents across the major urban areas to unfold individual giving patterns. The respondents were asked a series of questions centered on charitable giving, zakat, and volunteering. The survey revealed some interesting and exciting findings

Key Questions

1. What is the most preferred and least preferred giving method of monetary donations?
2. What motivates donors to engage in philanthropy?
3. How do donors prefer giving?
4. What form do donations come in?
5. What are the zakat statistics for donors?
6. When do people participate in volunteering activities?

Key Findings

- Donors are driven by compassion, and helping those in need remains the main motivator for philanthropic giving in Türkiye.
- Food, hunger alleviation, and relief remain the top recipients of both philanthropic and zakat giving in Türkiye.
- Monetary giving constitutes the largest part of the giving. Sixty-six percent of the total donations come in monetary form, while 15% of donors confirm that they give time as a form of giving.
- However, informal and in-kind giving constitutes a large part of Turkish philanthropic practice as nearly 19% of total giving being in-kind. The majority of the donors (67%) preferred to donate directly to individuals in comparison to institutions.
- Most of the donors (59%) confirm that they gave zakat in 2023 with Ramadan being the most important time for zakat giving by individuals.
- Among the organizations that individuals tend to trust the most, civil society and public institutions take the lead. This was followed by religious charities and local charities. Companies were the only type of organization for which the percentage of individuals who trusted was less than those who distrusted.
- Those who participated in the volunteering activities mostly participated during a time of disaster (19.3%) and relief (16.6%).
- In-person and online giving constitute the most preferred ways of giving for donors.

Republic of Türkiye: Overview and Philanthropy

The Republic of Türkiye is a country that "rests on a historical heritage in a geographic passageway between the continents of Europe and Asia that renders it an inherently heterogeneous society" (Siddiqui & Campbell, 2023). With a total population of 85 million and a GDP of 907.1 billion USD in 2022, some of Türkiye's neighboring countries are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Greece, Syria, and Iran (TUIK 2024).

The country has a diverse age distribution, with a significant proportion of its population being under 35, reflecting a relatively young demographic profile (TUİK, 2024). Urbanization is prominent, with the majority of people living in cities, particularly in major metropolitan areas like Istanbul, Ankara, and İzmir. The rural population is steadily decreasing as more people move to urban centers in search of better economic opportunities. Türkiye's population growth rate has been moderating, but the country remains one of the most populous in its region.

Key sectors driving its economy include manufacturing, agriculture, automotive, textiles, and tourism. The country is also rich in natural resources, including coal, lignite, and gold, and it has been expanding its renewable energy sector.

Historically, Türkiye has inherited the legal and social legacy of the Ottoman Empire, which governed the region for six centuries until its dissolution in the early 20th century. Today, Türkiye functions under a presidential system of government, established by a constitutional reform in 2017, where the president serves as both the head of state and the head of government.

Türkiye's rich history spans several millennia, with its lands having been home to numerous ancient civilizations, including the Hittites, Greeks, and Romans. The most significant historical influence, however, comes from the Ottoman Empire. The legacy of the Ottoman Empire is evident in Türkiye's architecture, culture, and legal traditions. Modern-day Türkiye, founded in 1923, inherited this vast historical and cultural heritage.

Türkiye's landscape is diverse, with a mix of high mountains, flat plateaus, and fertile coastal plains. The eastern part of the country is known for its rugged, elevated terrain, while central regions feature rolling plateaus that gradually become lush agricultural lands along the coasts. The northern areas are characterized by dense forests and steep hills, while the southern coast is renowned for its warm Mediterranean beaches. Türkiye is also prone to natural disasters, including earthquakes and floods due to its location along major tectonic fault lines.

Philanthropy in Türkiye

According to the latest data, in February 2024 there were 100,760 registered associations and 5,994 foundations operating alongside informal organizations working in areas mostly concentrated in social solidarity and social services, education, health, vocational training, sports, and religion (International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, 2024).

Despite the NGO sector in Türkiye heavily relying on a volunteer workforce, there is currently no legal regulation specifically governing volunteering. However, legal frameworks are in place designed to encourage charitable giving, such as tax incentives, which aim to promote and support philanthropy within the country.

Türkiye holds the distinction of being the largest host country for refugees worldwide (IOM, 2024, p. 44), a testament to its significant role in providing refuge and support to displaced populations. This status reflects Türkiye's ongoing commitment to addressing global humanitarian crises and managing complex migration flows, particularly from regions in conflict such as Syria.

Furthermore, Türkiye is recognized as one of the leading donors of humanitarian aid when measured in proportion to its national income (Development Initiatives, 2023, p. 37). This standing underscores the country's substantial contributions to international relief efforts, demonstrating its dedication to supporting humanitarian initiatives and addressing global needs. Although government spending constitutes a significant majority of international aid expenditures, public donations also play a major role.

Literature Review

Charity is deeply rooted in the tradition of Turkish culture where showing generosity to those in need is prevalent. In Türkiye, philanthropic activities can be broadly categorized in two main types: formal and informal philanthropy. Formal philanthropy involves organized efforts typically carried out through established institutions such as foundations, charities, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These entities operate within a structured framework, often with legal recognition, and engage in a variety of social, educational, and humanitarian initiatives. Informal philanthropy encompasses more spontaneous, community-based acts of generosity. These include traditional practices like neighborly assistance, zakat (charitable giving in Islam), and other forms of direct, person-to-person support. Both forms of philanthropy play a vital role in addressing social needs and fostering a culture

of giving in Türkiye, reflecting the deep-rooted values of solidarity and mutual aid within Turkish society. However, given the complexities of individual philanthropic initiatives and foundations, it is difficult to determine the magnitude of the spread of philanthropic activities (Çarkoğlu, 2023). Muslim endowments in Turkish society also have a positive and significant impact on their overall philanthropic activities.

Although Islam is the largest religion in Türkiye, the country's demographics also include Christian and Jewish communities. While Sunni Hanafi Muslims comprise the majority, many sectarian groups exist, most significantly the Anatolian Shi'a group of Alevis, which is estimated to be around 15% of the population (Carkoğlu, 2023). Additionally, there is a divisive line among the Muslim population surrounding lifestyles of ideological stances regarding the role of religion in social life (Philanthropy in the Muslim World). There are the conservative Sunnis who are more observant of religious practices and there are those who take a more secular stance and are less observant of religious obligations and traditions (Carkoğlu, 2023). This divide is important to note as it influences giving behavior (Philanthropy in the Muslim World).

When considering individual giving behavior, we need to understand that demographic characteristics and social beliefs or motivational mechanisms play a critical role. The factors that impact giving behavior include religiosity, age, education level, owning a home, marital status, children, parental income, and history of volunteering (Çarkoğlu et al., 2017). Whether it is religiously motivated or not, philanthropic giving or helping people by volunteering time or donating cash is highly prevalent in Turkish society (Çarkoğlu, 2023).

Çarkoğlu et al. (2017) analyzed the determinants of individual giving in Türkiye using a binary variable based on the data of CAF World Giving Index 2010–2014 and the *Individual Giving to Civil Society Organizations in Türkiye* 2015 study which indicated that nearly 52% of men are more likely to make donations than their women counterparts. 56% of recent graduates and 67% of people from rural areas are likely to donate more than their counterparts. In addition, 40% of religious community members (those who pray namaz) are more likely to donate compared to their counterparts. The study also showed that age and interpersonal social trust are positive and significant predictors of giving (Çarkoğlu et al., 2017).

However, it is noteworthy that informal giving is a crucial part of the philanthropic landscape in all countries around the world. In terms of Turkish society, people are likely to donate or volunteer directly to individuals or causes. In a study conducted in 2004, 2009, 2015, and 2021 by the Third Sector Foundation of Türkiye, it was found that 75% of respondents donated directly to people in need in 2021 compared to 87% in 2019, 88% in 2015, and 87% in 2004. On the other hand, institutional giving rose gradually from 12% in 2004 to 22% in 2021, with intermediate rates of 10% in 2015 and 12% in 2019 (Aytaç & Çarkoğlu, 2022; Çarkoğlu & Aytaç, 2016; Çarkoğlu, 2023).

In terms of religious giving, zakat and sadaqa are important forms of giving in Türkiye's society. Being one of the five pillars of Islam, zakat is linked to an individual's wealth, and it is performed as a duty by every Muslim; whereas sadaqa is linked solely to voluntary duty. In the study, *Individual Giving to Civil Society Organizations in Türkiye (2019, 2021)*, it was found that 58% of the respondents in Türkiye confirmed that they gave sadaqa in 2019, which increased by 5% (63%) in 2021. In addition, 27% of respondents confirmed that they provided zakat in 2021, an increase from 23% in 2019 (Aytaç & Çarkoğlu, 2022; Çarkoğlu & Aytaç, 2016).

Data and Methodology

The primary objective of this survey was to obtain information on charitable giving patterns across major urban centers in the Republic of Türkiye. The data for this survey were collected from 1,210 respondents from various urban cities located inside Türkiye at the time of the survey. The survey questionnaire included a demographic section followed by questions related to charitable giving, zakat, and volunteering.
Some survey questions were administered only to subgroups. For example, zakat timing questions were applied only to respondents who indicated paying zakat during the previous year (2023). Similarly, the volunteer motivation questions were administered only to respondents who indicated they had volunteered more than 0 hours during the 2023 calendar year.

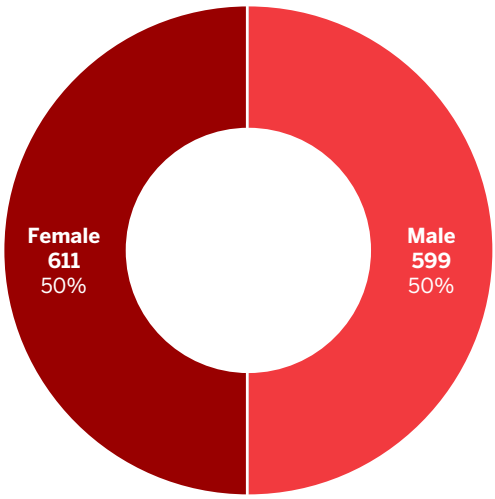
We used pie charts, one-way and two-way bar charts, and histograms to summarize variables of interest from the survey. For summary statistics we computed means and standard deviations. For operational purposes, some Likert-type scales were treated as interval scales. Scale scores were obtained by averaging the underlying item scores.

Results

Demographics

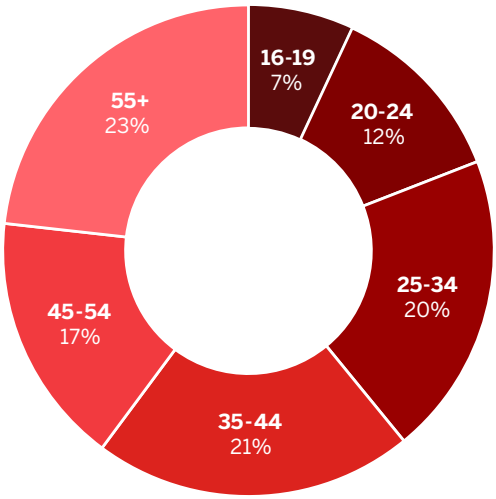
Gender

Overall, the gender ratio among respondents was balanced. There were 12 more female respondents than males. However, in terms of percentage, the sample was evenly split between the two genders.



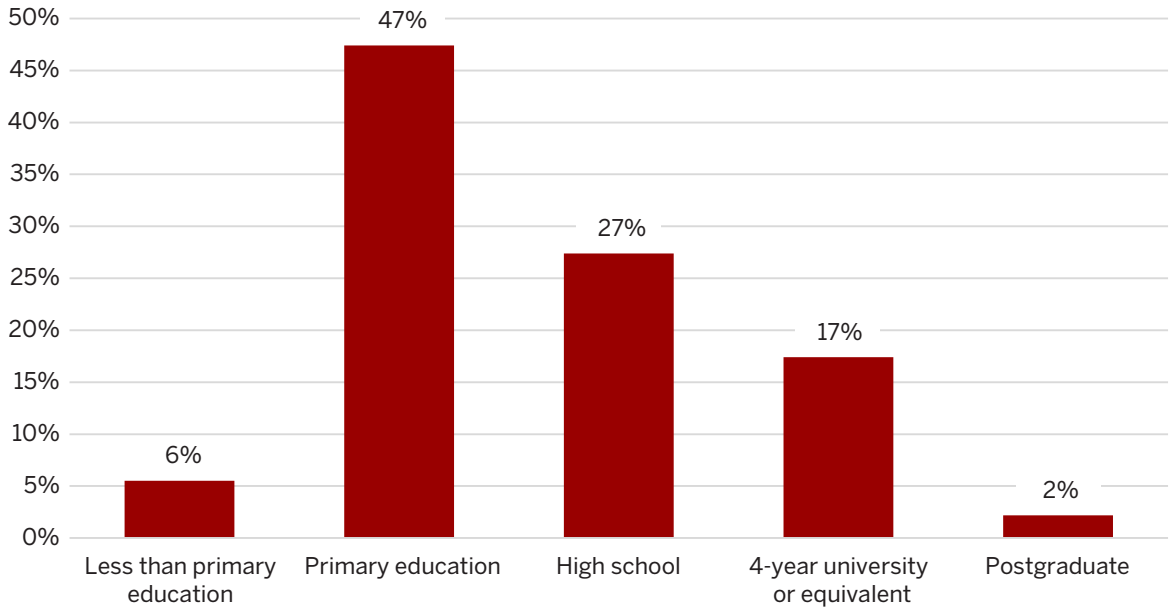
Age

Almost two-fifths of the survey respondents (41%) fell in the 25 through 44 age category with another quarter (23%) in the 55+ category. The remaining one-third either fell in the 45 through 54 age group (17%) or were under 25 years old (19%).



Education

Almost half of the survey respondents (47%, *n* = 574) indicated having primary education as their highest level of education. Only 8% of the respondents indicated having more than four years of university education (*n* = 27) or less than primary education (*n* = 67). Of the remaining respondents, almost a quarter (27%, *n* = 332) had completed high school, and slightly fewer than a fifth (17%, *n* = 210) had a four-year bachelor's degree or equivalent.

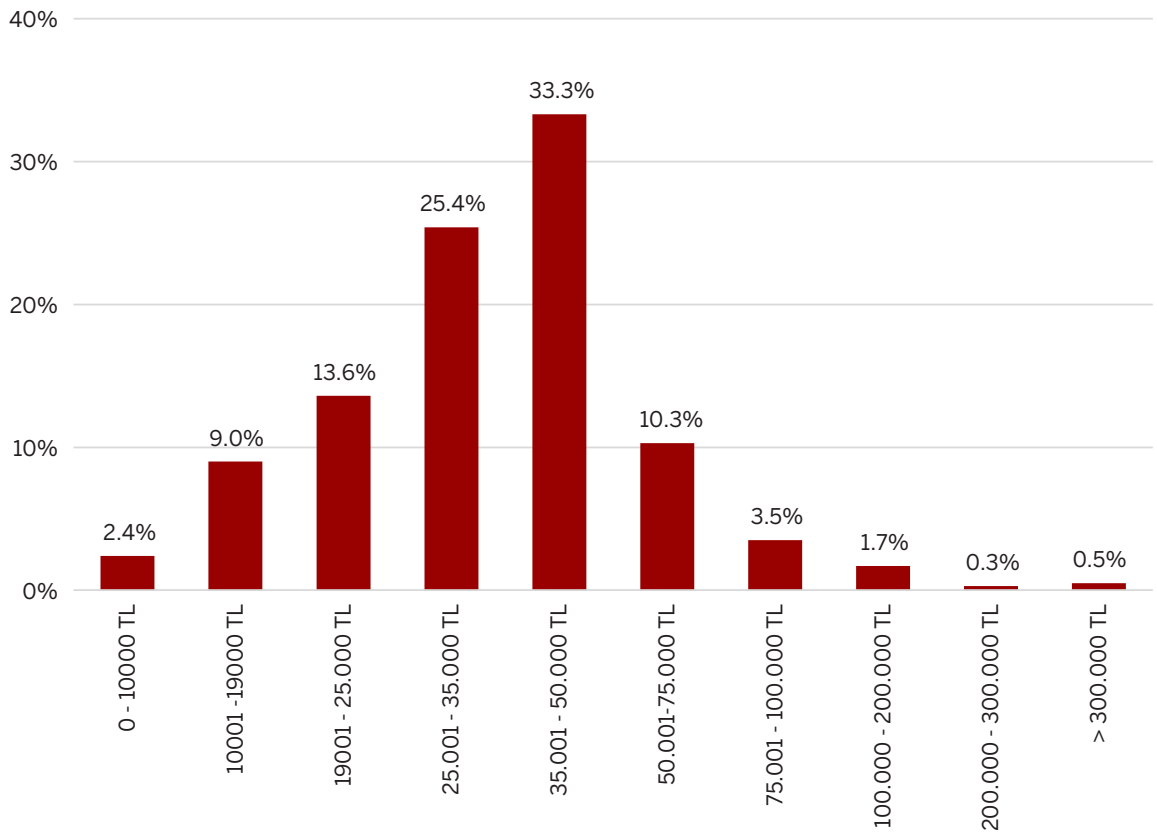


[1] The TL to USD conversion is based on a mid-year (June 30, 2023) exchange rate of 1 USD = 26.04 TL. https://www.xe.com/currencyconverter/convert/

Household Income

Monthly household income was measured in Turkish liras (TL). One-third of the respondents ($n = 403$) indicated falling in the 35,001–50,000 TL (USD $1,344–$1,920) category.[1] Another quarter of the respondents (25.4%, $n = 307$) indicated monthly household incomes of 25,001–35,000 TL (USD $960–$1,344).

Thus, almost three-fifths of the respondent households earned between 25,001 and 50,000 TL per month, which translated into USD $11,521–$23,041 per annum. Only 16.3% of the respondents reported household earnings of more than $23,041 per annum (16.3%, $n = 198$).

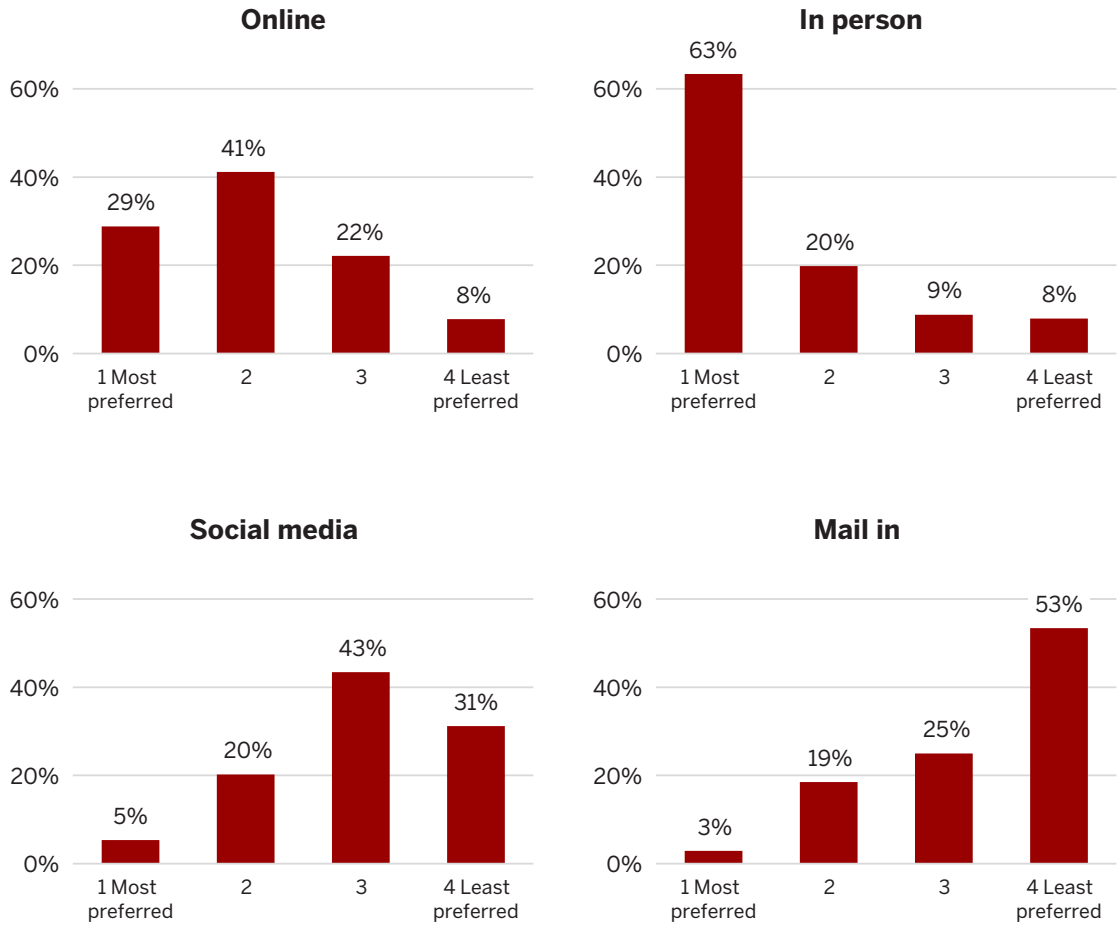


Charitable Giving

Preferred Mediums for Monetary Donations

In-person and online donations remained the most preferred mediums for individuals to give monetary donations.

Four questions on the survey collected information on respondents' preference for methods of giving monetary donations. Response choices for preference ranged from 1 (most preferred) to 4 (least preferred). For interpretation, we used a rating of 1 or 2 as an indicator of positive preference and a rating of 3 or 4 as an indicator of negative reference. Among the overall sample (*n* = 1,210), more than three-quarters (83%) of the survey respondents indicated their preference for in-person donations, 70% indicated their preference for donating online, while only 25% preferred social media and 22% preferred mail-in donations.

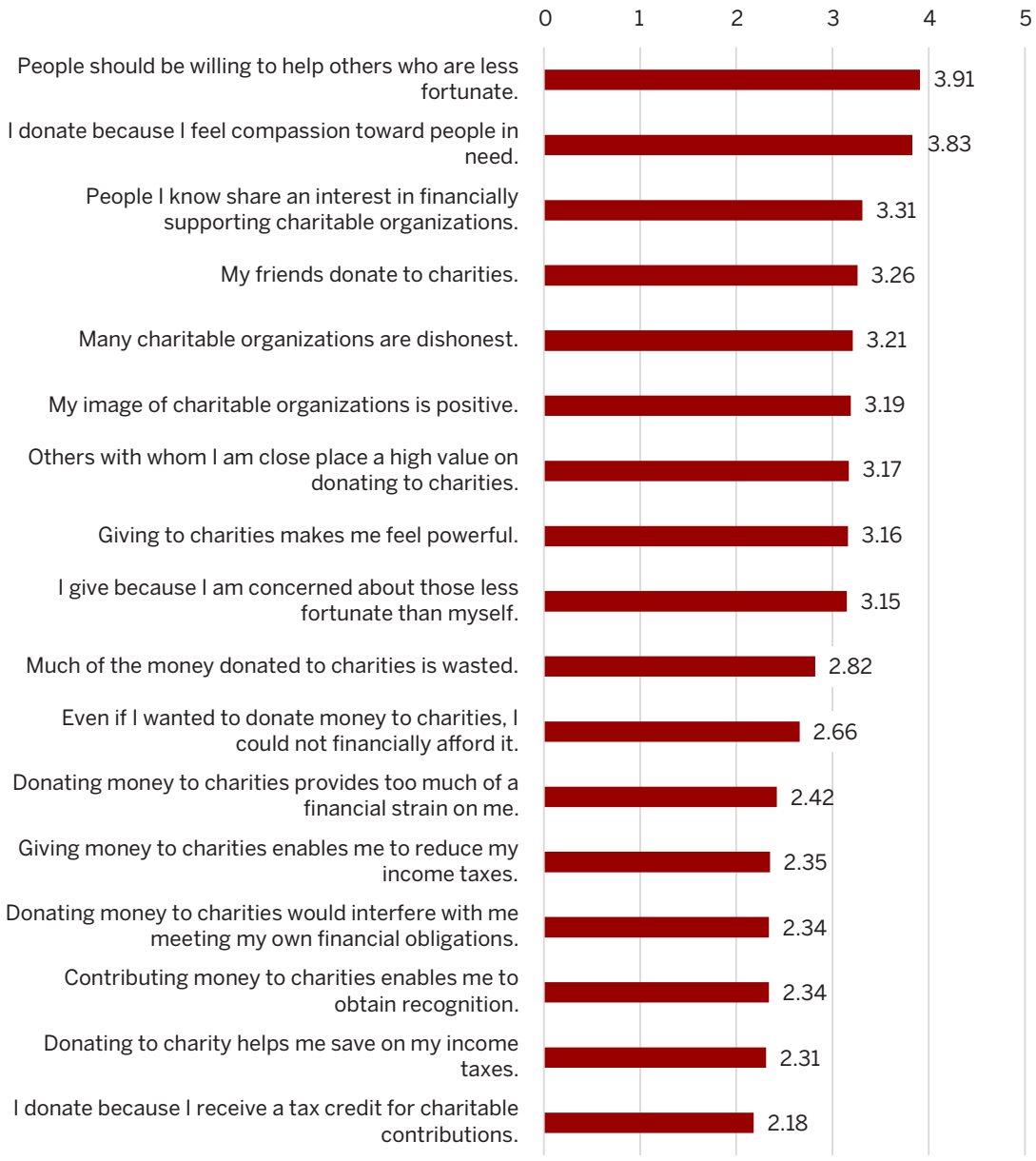


Donation Motivations

Compassion and the desire to help those less fortunate remained the donors' top motivations.

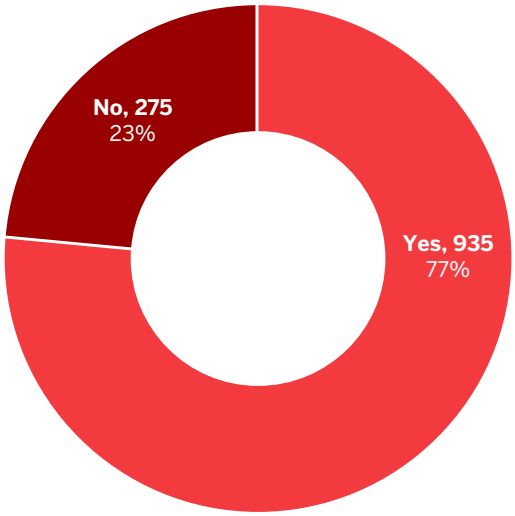
Seventeen survey items measured a respondent's motivation to donate, for example, "I donate because I feel compassion toward people in need." For each item, the response choices ranged from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. The responses to the 17 items were averaged for each person to obtain a single donation motivation score with high values representative of higher motivation.

Descriptions of the donation motivation items and scale and their summary statistics are provided in the following graph. The highest score was associated with "People should be willing to help others who are less fortunate" (M = 3.91), and the lowest score was associated with "I donate because I receive a tax credit for charitable contributions" (M = 2.18).



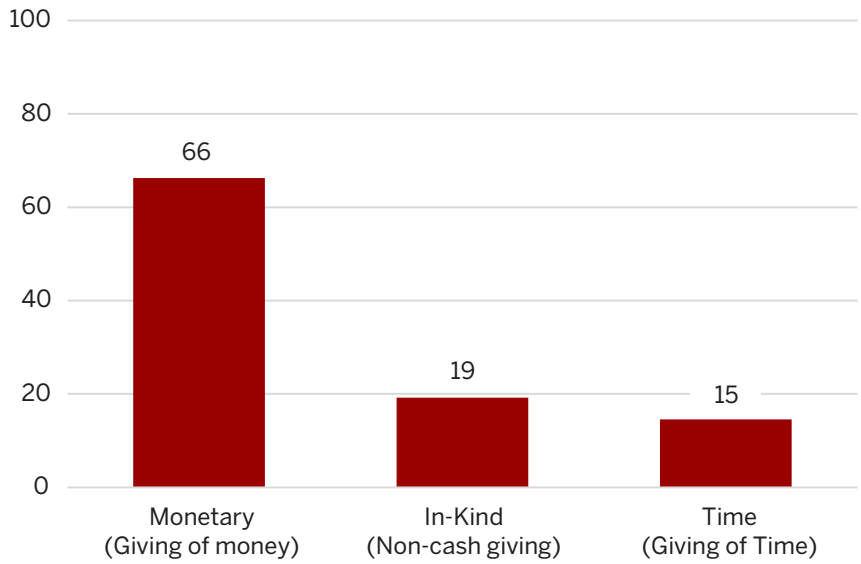
Donor Status and Giving to Individuals versus Institutions

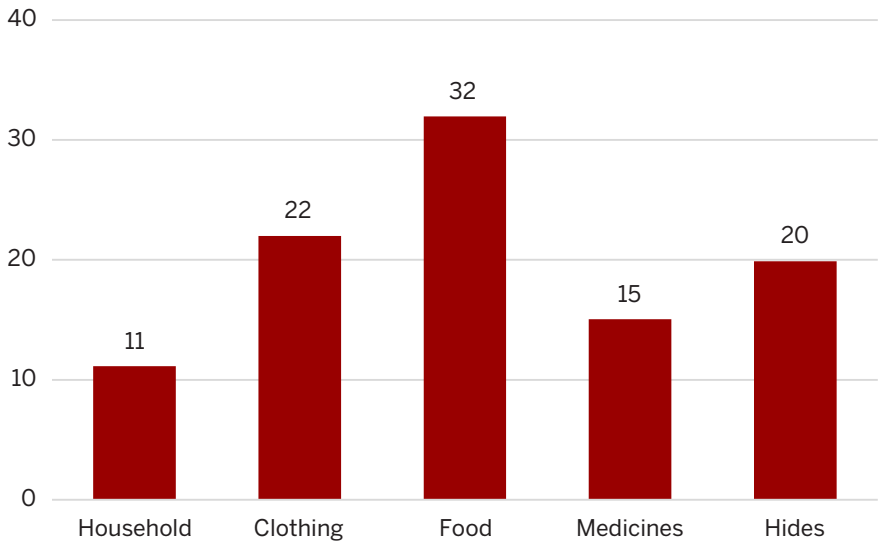
Among all respondents, more than three-quarters (77%, *n* = 935) indicated they had contributed to a philanthropic cause in 2023. This finding shows a high prevalence of giving in Türkiye.



Type of Giving and Categories of In-Kind Giving

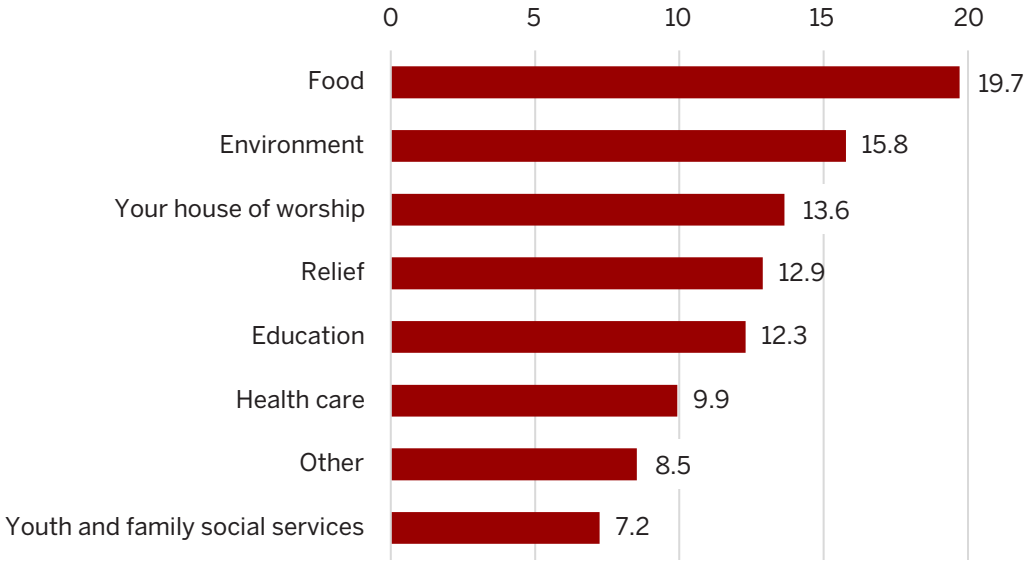
Most of the giving came in the form of monetary giving. Among respondents who indicated giving to a cause in the past year (2023), a majority (66%) of the contributions were made in monetary terms, with the remaining made in-kind or by contributing one's time. However, in-kind continues to constitute nearly one-fifth of total giving. Among in-kind giving, the largest category was food (32%), followed by clothing (22%), and then by animal hides (20%).





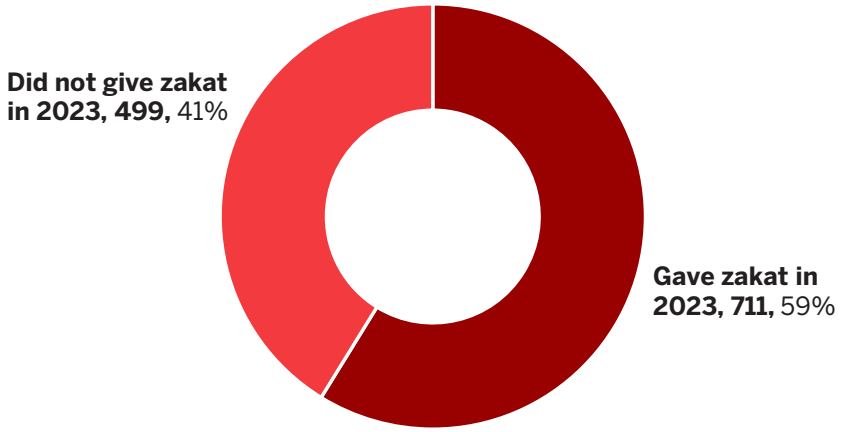
Charitable Causes

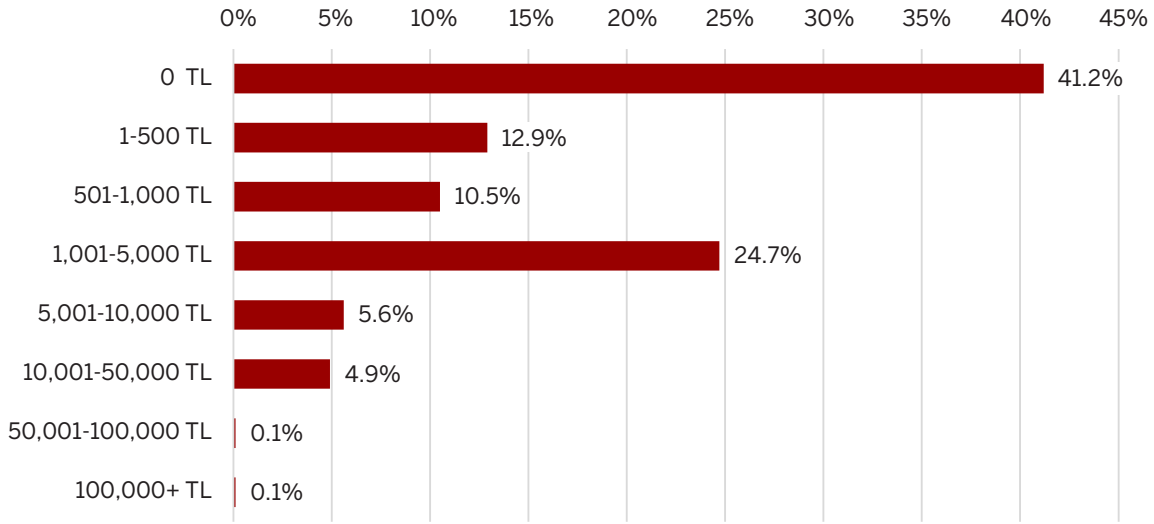
A set of survey questions collected information on the percentage of a respondent's contributions to various charitable causes. The average results for the full sample are summarized in the following chart. These results suggest that, on average, the largest charitable cause was food, which accounted for almost a fifth (19.7%) of all charitable contributions. This was followed by environment (15.8%), and then by the respondent's house of worship (13.6%). Ignoring the *Other* umbrella category, the three least important causes in this list were youth and family social services (7.23%), health care (9.9%), and education (12.3%).



Zakat Giving

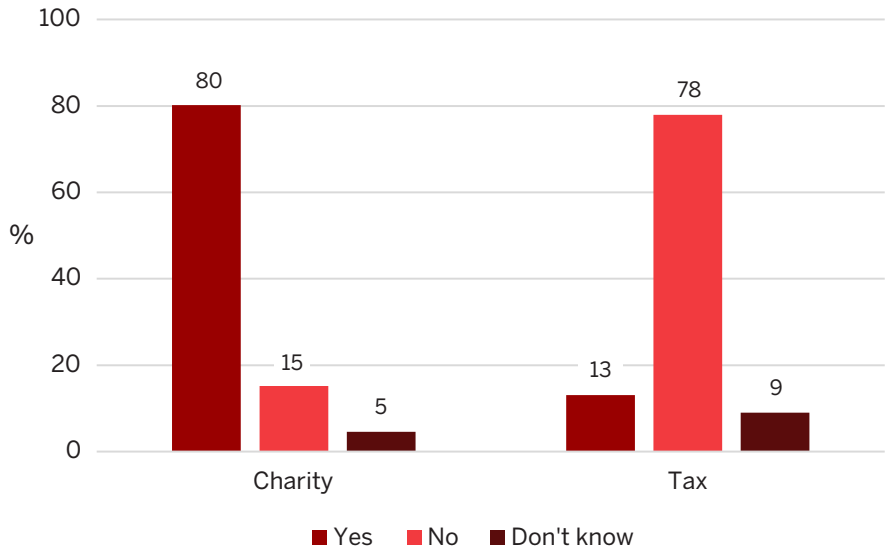
Almost three-fifths (59%, *n* = 711) of the respondents indicated giving zakat in 2023. Among this group, the highest number of respondents (*n* = 299, 42%) indicated giving between 1,001 and 5,000 TL (USD $38–$192) in zakat during that year.





In addition, when separately asked whether zakat was voluntary (a charity) or obligatory (a tax), the majority of the survey respondents viewed zakat as a charity (80%), compared to 13% who considered it as a tax (78%). These findings are similar to those we have found in our surveys on Muslim-American giving where the respondents also considered zakat as a form of charity rather than a tax.[2]

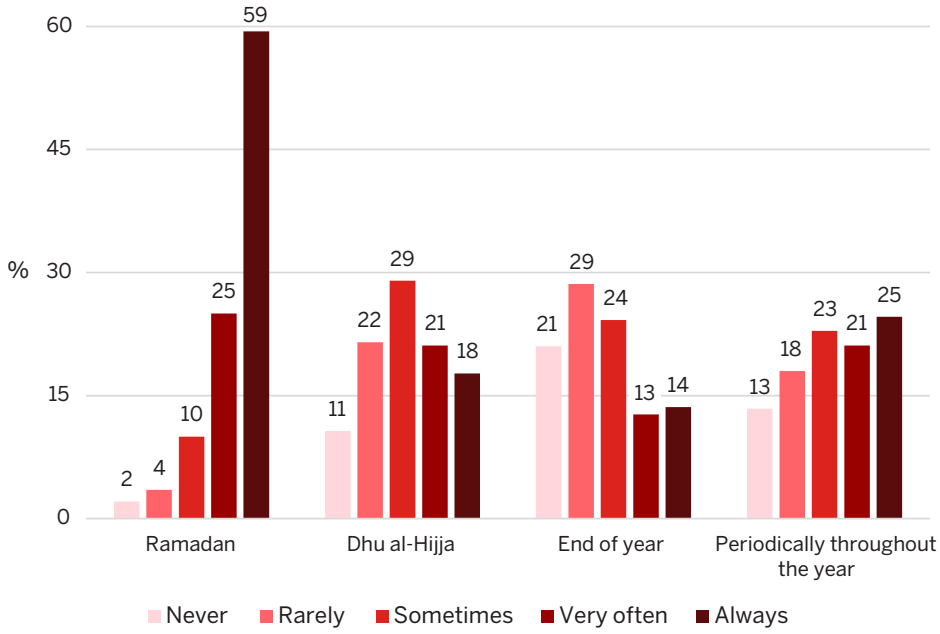
[2] See "Muslim American Zakat Report 2022" (available at: https://scholarworks.indianapolis.iu.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/67d82c1b-16a3-4253-92e6-79ed0b92e6b8/content)



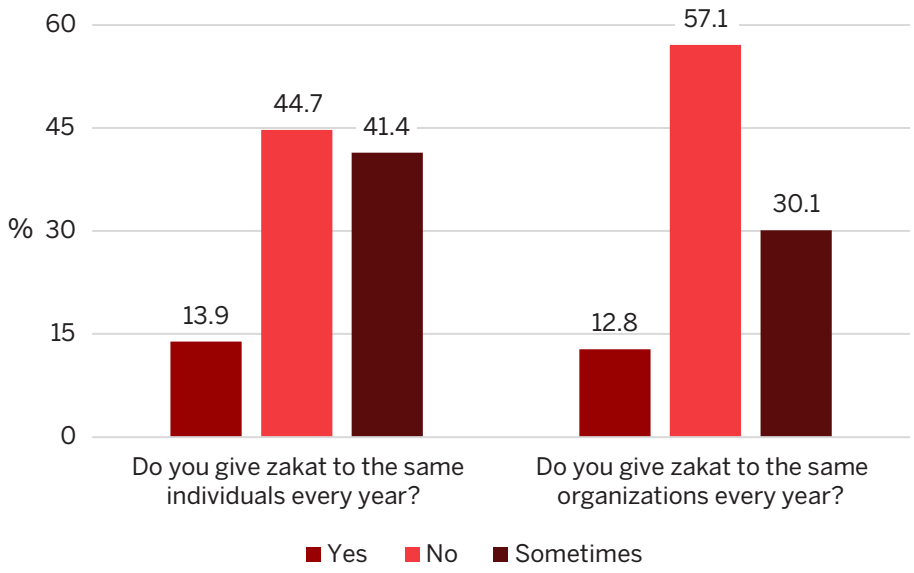
View of zakat as a non-obligatory charity versus an obligatory tax: To the best of my knowledge, zakat is a non-obligatory charity, *n* = 711. This statement was administered only to individuals who gave zakat in the past year (2023).

Zakat Timing and Consistency in Giving

By far the most preferred time for giving zakat was the month of Ramadan with 84% of the respondents very often or always giving zakat during this month. In comparison, the second, third, and fourth most preferred times were periodically throughout the year (46%), the month of Dhu al-Hijja (39%), and the end of the year (27%), respectively. The majority of the respondents indicated that they did not always give zakat to the same individuals or organizations over time.



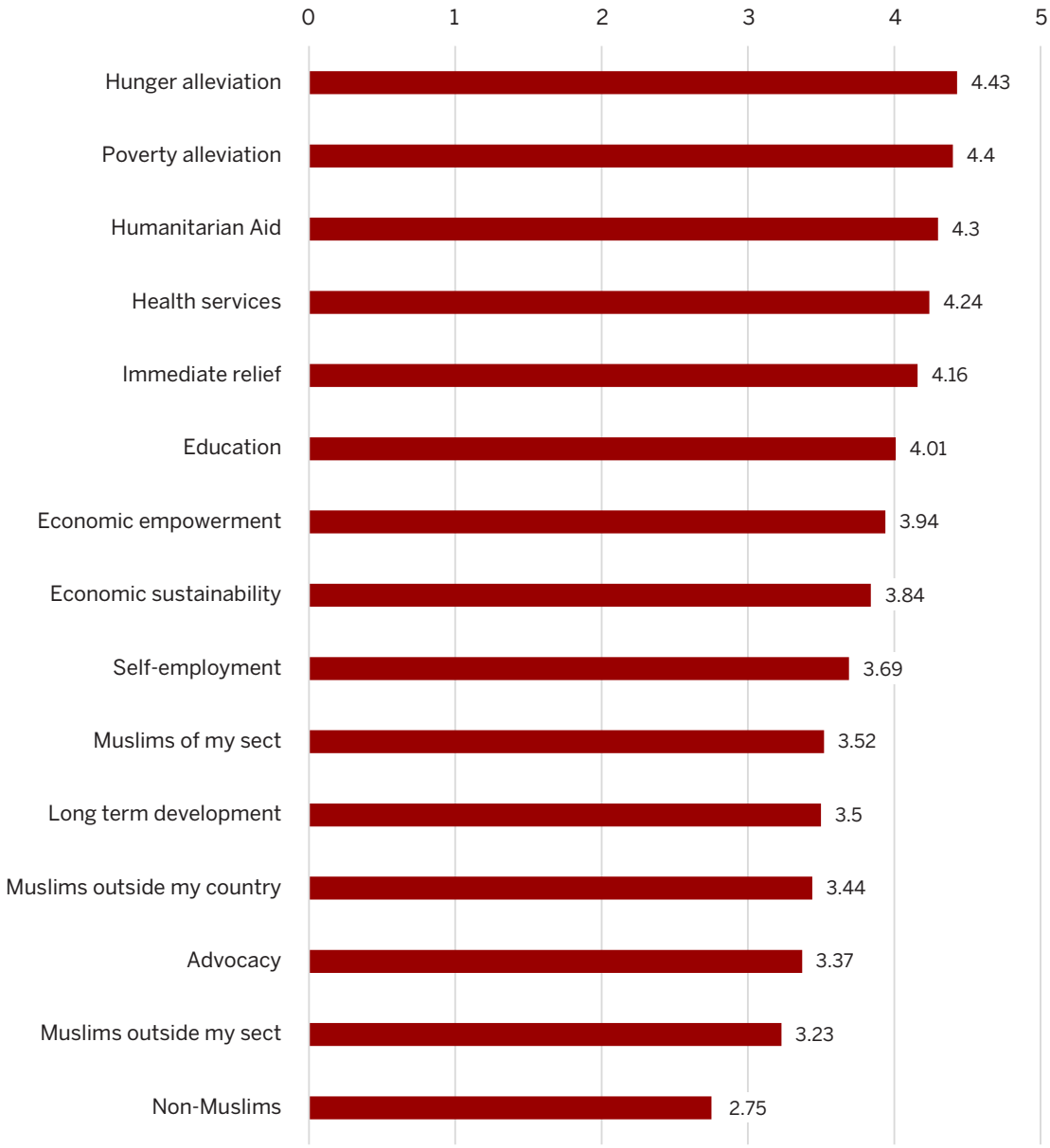
Using the scale in the preceding chart, please indicate the frequency with which you gave zakat during the year, *n* = 711. This statement was administered only to individuals who gave zakat in the past year (2023).



Zakat Importance

Fifteen survey items measured respondents' perceptions of the importance of various causes for which zakat should be given. For each area, the response choices ranged from (1) not important to (5) very important. The responses on these 15 items were averaged for each person to obtain a single importance score with high values representative of a higher level of importance.

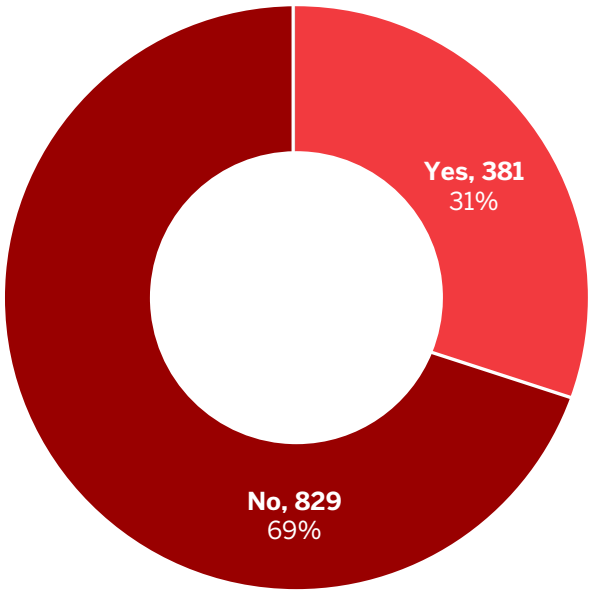
Descriptions of the zakat importance items and their summary statistics are provided in the next chart ranking the means for items of importance. The highest score was associated with hunger alleviation (*M* = 4.43), and the lowest score was associated with "giving zakat to non-Muslims" (*M* = 2.75). This was consistent with findings from other parts of the survey suggesting that food comprised the largest part of individuals' charitable giving.

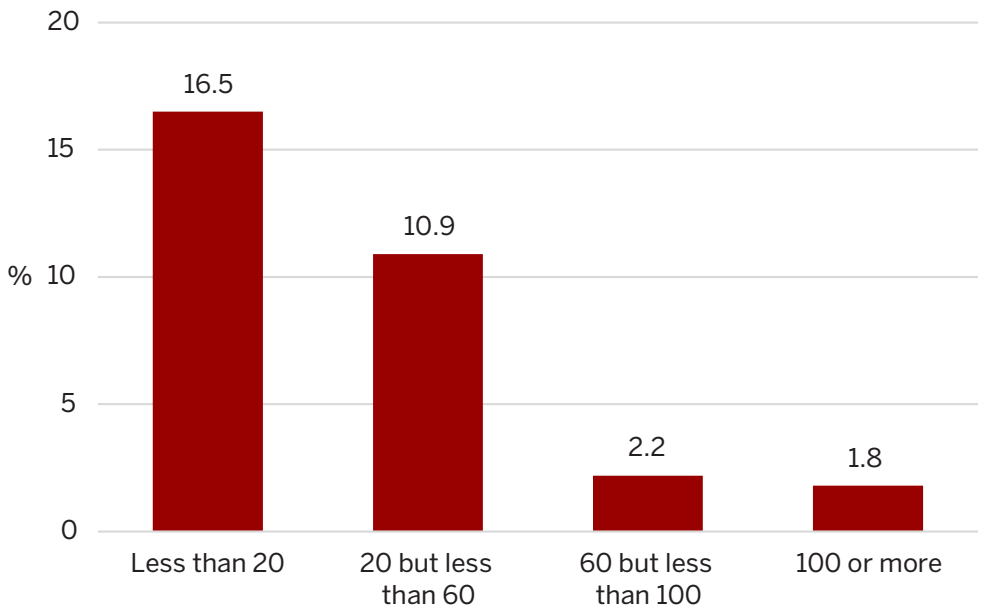


The distribution of zakat importance was negatively skewed, indicating that most respondents in the sample had an above-average or average perception of the importance of various zakat causes with relatively fewer individuals indicating low importance.

Volunteering

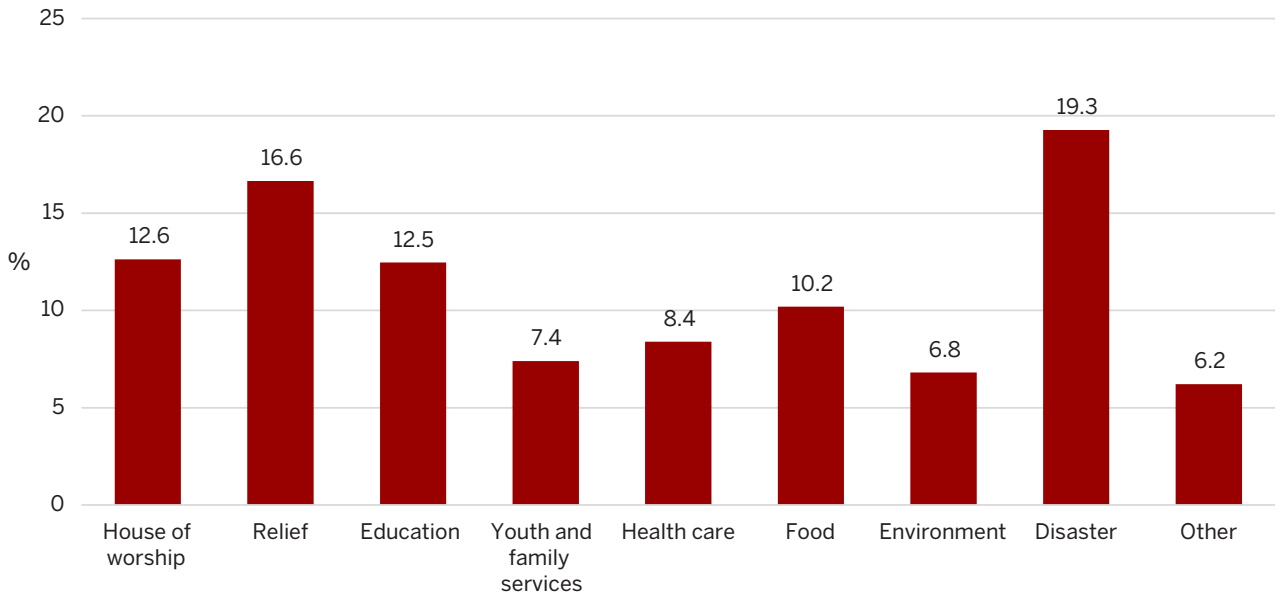
Slightly under a third of the survey respondents (31.4%) indicated volunteering for a cause in 2023, with a majority (52.5% among these volunteers [16.5%/31.4%], or 16.5% of the overall sample) volunteering less than 20 hours. The distribution of hours volunteered was positively skewed with only 5.8% (1.8%/31.4%) of the volunteers (i.e. 1.8% of the overall sample) volunteering 100 or more hours during the past year.





Volunteering Causes

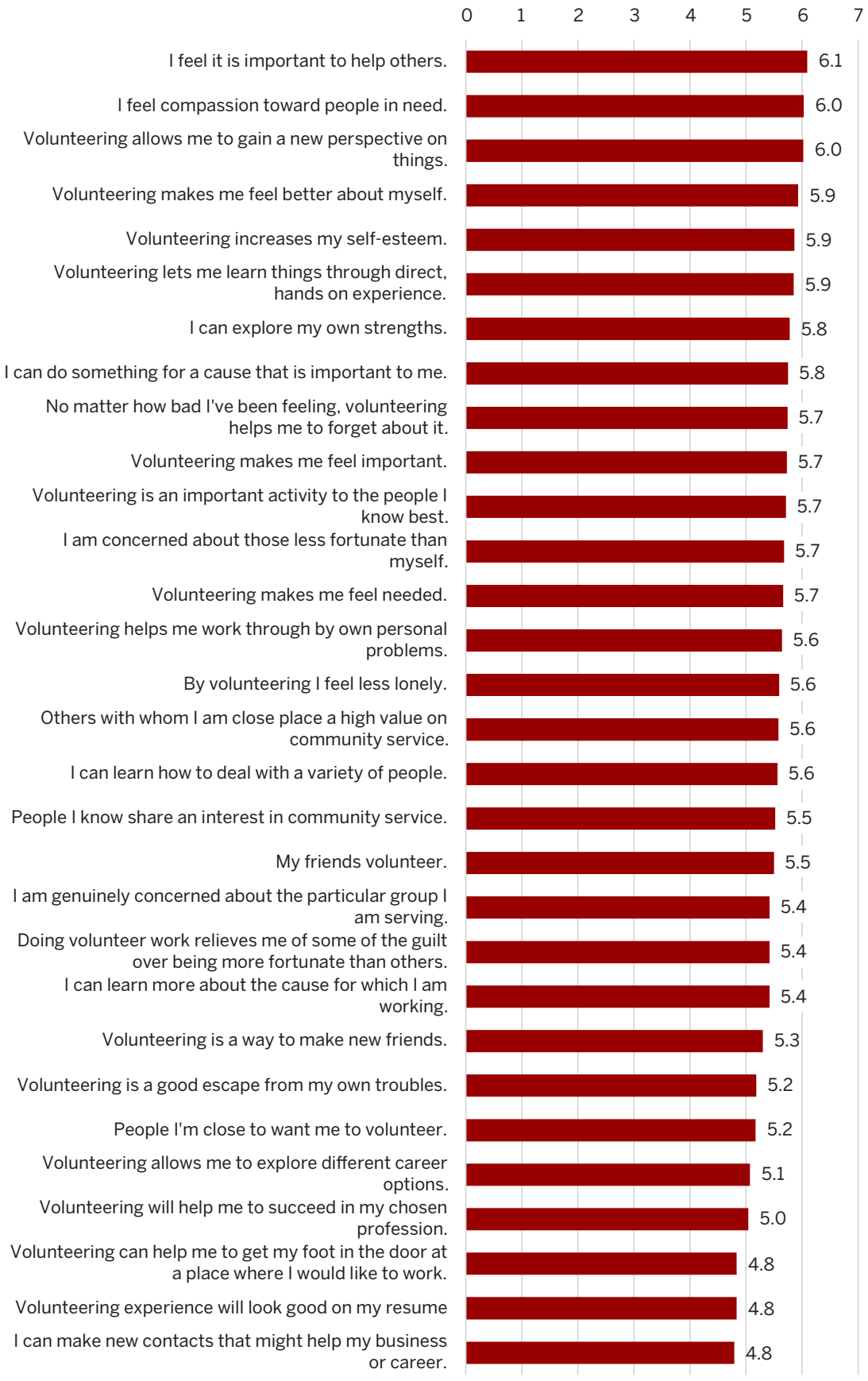
On average, the top three volunteering causes among those who volunteered included (1) disaster relief (19.3%), (2) general relief (16.6%), and (3) one's own house of worship (12.6%). In comparison, excluding the *other* umbrella category, the bottom three categories included (1) environment, (2) youth and family services, and (3) health care.



Volunteering Motivations

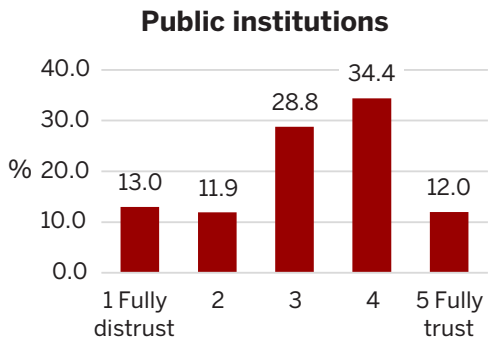
30 survey items measured a respondent's motivation for volunteering. For each area, the response choices ranged from (1) not important, to (7) very important. The responses on these 30 items were averaged for each person to obtain a single score with high values representative of a higher level of volunteer motivation. Descriptions of the volunteer motivation items, and their summary statistics are provided in the next table with a corresponding chart ranking the means for these items. The highest score was associated with "I feel it is important to help others" (M = 6.09) while the lowest score was associated with "I can make new contacts that might help my business or career" (M = 4.79).

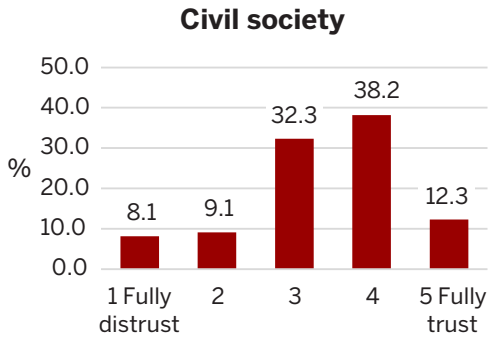
The distribution of zakat importance was negatively skewed indicating that most respondents in the sample had overall above-average or average volunteer motivation with relatively fewer individuals having low motivation.

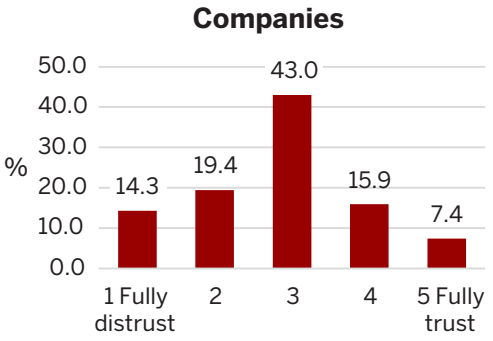

0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
I feel it is important to help others. 6.1
I feel compassion toward people in need. 6.0
Volunteering allows me to gain a new perspective on things. 6.0
Volunteering makes me feel better about myself. 5.9
Volunteering increases my self-esteem. 5.9
Volunteering lets me learn things through direct, hands on experience. 5.9
I can explore my own strengths. 5.8
I can do something for a cause that is important to me. 5.8
No matter how bad I've been feeling, volunteering helps me to forget about it. 5.7
Volunteering makes me feel important. 5.7
Volunteering is an important activity to the people I know best. 5.7
I am concerned about those less fortunate than myself. 5.7
Volunteering makes me feel needed. 5.7
Volunteering helps me work through by own personal problems. 5.6
By volunteering I feel less lonely. 5.6
Others with whom I am close place a high value on community service. 5.6
I can learn how to deal with a variety of people. 5.6
People I know share an interest in community service. 5.5
My friends volunteer. 5.5
I am genuinely concerned about the particular group I am serving. 5.4
Doing volunteer work relieves me of some of the guilt over being more fortunate than others. 5.4
I can learn more about the cause for which I am working. 5.4
Volunteering is a way to make new friends. 5.3
Volunteering is a good escape from my own troubles. 5.2
People I'm close to want me to volunteer. 5.2
Volunteering allows me to explore different career options. 5.1
Volunteering will help me to succeed in my chosen profession. 5.0
Volunteering can help me to get my foot in the door at a place where I would like to work. 4.8
Volunteering experience will look good on my resume 4.8
I can make new contacts that might help my business or career. 4.8

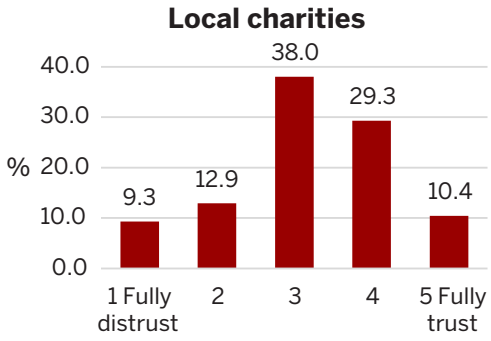
Institutional Trust

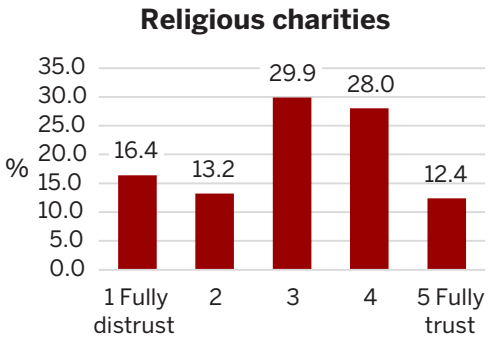
Individuals had the most trust in civil society and government organizations, with lower trust in the corporate sector and religious and local charities. Five survey items measured a respondent's trust in different kinds of donor organizations. Using 1 or 2 as an indicator of lack of trust and 3 or 4 as an indicator of trust, the five kinds of donor organizations ranging from most trusted to least trusted were civil society (50.5%), public institutions (46.4%), religious charities (40.4%), local charities (39.7%), and companies (23.3%).











Conclusion

This report utilized a representative national sample of 1,210 Turkish respondents to collect their views on various aspects of giving, including donation motivations and preferences, types and causes of giving, zakat views and practices, volunteering trends, and donor and institutional trust. The descriptive results suggest that Turkish givers have a unique donor identity and unique views and practices about various kinds of giving, whether it be charitable donations, zakat, or volunteering—for example, the finding that an overwhelming majority of Turkish respondents believe that zakat is a non-obligatory charity as opposed to an obligatory tax, or the preference of Turkish givers to mail in their donations as opposed to giving in person. Such characteristics of the Turkish population are a function of the unique social, economic, and political makeup of Türkiye that distinguish it from other Muslim populations around the world. Our report helps provide a deeper look into giving behavior in Türkiye and, more importantly, highlights the importance of individual country-level studies of such behavior.

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Philanthropy in Türkiye

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