



Insights beyond borders: Turkey-Armenia relations through public eyes

Analytical report

The analytical report “Insights beyond borders: Turkey-Armenia relations through public eyes” was published by the Hrant Dink Foundation as a result of the joint research conducted by the Caucasus Research Resource Center (CRRC)-Armenia Foundation and the KONDA Research and Consultancy Company in 2023-2024.

This report outlines the findings of an original primary research on the public perceptions in Armenia and Turkey about Turkey-Armenia normalisation. The contents of this report are based on two parallel research initiatives, conducted simultaneously in Armenia and in Turkey. Methodological commonalities and differences are transparently communicated in the main sections of the report. In both countries a quantitative and qualitative study was undertaken and the research is representative of the general adult population of both countries.

The report comprises 4 chapters:

- Preface;
- Chapter 1. Armenia under the lens: exploring public sentiments on normalisation;
- Chapter 2. Turkey under the lens: exploring public sentiments on normalisation, and
- Chapter 3. Expert insights: synthesising commonalities and differences in Armenia-Turkey normalisation, co-authored by Dr. Erman Bakırcı and Dr. Sona Balasanyan.

Some findings from the research may be summarised as follows:

* There is a dichotomy in how the communities of Turkey and Armenia perceive each other. While the historical and educational narratives are negative, many people in Armenia regard ordinary people from Turkey as more friendly and open to ordinary contact. **The more they establish contact, the higher the rate of openness, increasing the opportunity to move forward.** The same pattern is observed among people from Turkey as well. This suggests that the **negative perception is often viewed through a historical and intergenerational lens** rather than a personal one.

* The “looking-glass self” concept suggests that our self-identity is a reflection of the way we believe others perceive us. Viewed through the lens of the “looking-glass otherness”, the research highlights the **complex interplay of perceptions and mutual reflections between the two nations.** The surveys underlined the mutual awareness of each nation's governmental positions and how these might influence their interactions.

* The research points to a prevailing perception in Armenia of **Armenians as historical victims** and **Turks as the perceived aggressors** or enemies. In turn, respondents in Turkey asserted that their ancestors suffered due to Armenian uprisings.



- * The research showed the power dynamics at play, with **Turkey being portrayed** among the people of Armenia **as a stronger state compared to Armenia**. This power asymmetry contributes to a complex dynamic between the two societies and influences their interactions, perceptions of each other and the importance they place on the normalisation process.
- * Approximately 50% of the population of Armenia believe that **normalisation is likely within the next five years through dialogue and communication**. Society in Turkey is more pessimistic regarding the prospect of normalisation.
- * **Unresolved historical traumas** contribute to feelings of anxiety and fear about the future. Many of the respondents in Armenia worry that opening the border could lead to a repetition of past conflicts and a loss of national identity. A significant portion of the population of Armenia views the existing issues between Armenia and Turkey as deeply serious and complex. Only 23% of the population of Turkey thinks that the existing issues between the societies are very serious and complex.
- * **Economic cooperation is seen as a feasible starting point for normalisation** in both societies. Urban residents and older individuals are more inclined to buy Turkish products than rural residents and younger people.
- * The public considers the **government** of Armenia's role in normalisation very important, with a majority deeming it crucial. A similar pattern is observed among the population of Turkey.
- * There is a cautious openness towards normalisation in Armenia currently, with the **population of Armenia favouring some form of engagement with Turkey**. Younger respondents are more sceptical about establishing relations in Armenia. **For the society in Turkey, there is more neutrality towards Armenia**.
- * A notable discovery was the substantial **lack of information about Armenia and the society of Armenia among respondents from Turkey**. Despite a general desire for improved relations and peaceful coexistence, deep-seated mistrust and nationalist influences remain formidable barriers.

The prospect of normalisation between Armenia and Turkey remains complex and divided. Historical issues, gender and age disparities in perceptions in Armenia, neutral approach towards Armenia in Turkey, and the perceived power asymmetry between the two states highlight the challenges ahead. Despite this, there is potential for progress through targeted engagement with women and youth in Armenia and through addressing educational biases in both countries. The research highlights the necessity for balanced, well-prepared, and careful steps by proactive politicians to overcome societal prejudices and navigate potential obstacles effectively. Both societies recognise the critical role of their governments in leading normalisation efforts, underscoring the need for bilateral engagement to achieve lasting peace and cooperation.